

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Naas** Ref: **382**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **273**
Category: **G** Date(s): **06/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	38
The Built Environment	50	38
Landscaping	50	39
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	31
Litter Control	50	33
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	273

Overall Development Approach:

Naas is welcome to the 2009 TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for your very detailed submission including supporting documents, photos and newspaper clippings. The map included in your submission was a real help on adjudication day. We would encourage you to include on the plan an annotated key highlighting any particular areas or projects you wish the adjudicator to visit or areas where you have completed projects in the past year. It may be useful to include a larger scale plan of the town centre which would be a great help for the adjudicator. While some areas were noted on the plan not all of the projects outlined in your submission were located.

Your approach in reviewing targets set out in your 2006 Five Year Plan is good to see. You should do a review of the projects planned and those completed. You can then reassess your goals as set out in the plan and see where you may need to concentrate your efforts for the coming years.

The range of organisations you liaise with is evident in your submission and you demonstrate that the successful TidyTowns Committees are those that harness the expertise and goodwill of a variety of groups.

You have a very active committee and the strategy of breaking down your area into 5 districts seems to be a successful one. As you say in your submission it means that committee members can focus activities and the burden of administration can be reduced. Your approach to recruiting volunteers is commended as you recognise that short project based recruitment may be the best approach. We would encourage you to distribute high vis jackets with your logo on all projects as this is a way to ensure that the public at large are aware when work is being done by the community for the community. We also welcome your exchanges with other tidytowns committees as this is a great way to learn what has been successful in others areas and also to exchange information on the many projects you have underway in your community.

The Built Environment:

Overall the town of Naas has retained its core area very well and as the housing areas to the margins of the town establish and settle in they create a well presented surroundings to your town. The works to the forecourt of the Courts along with the improvements at Poplar Square are well done and add much to the streetscape. The use of seasonal planters really enlivens the spaces and add a dash of colour. The mix of plant species used in the planters at the courthouse especially were admired, a change from the ubiquitous geranium and nasturtium mix. We hope the run down court building on Basin Street, to the rear of the court, will be upgraded next. Even if the doors here could be painted and the windows washed it would improve the appearance of the street.

In the town centre the Five Lamps Pub was admired with its climbers as was the traditional frontage of M Prout and Kalu. We look forward to the completion of the Heart of the Town next year. Due to the current economic climate many towns now face the possibility of empty shop units in key town centre locations. The use of one of the empty shop fronts on Main Street as a display for a local play and displaying trophies was a good way to temporarily use the empty unit.

The new Naas GAA building alongside Scoil Bride is a welcome addition to your community infrastructure. The old entrance at St Corbans Cemetery was admired. As was the lovely grounds of St Davids with its informative tourist sign. The entrance piers of the Naas Court Hotel are lovely as is the frontage of the old Hotel with its planted urns and water feature. It is a pity that bins are stored in such a prominent position at the entrance to the hotel.

Landscaping:

The roundabouts at the entry to the town were well presented. The sculptural roundabout at the entrance to the town at Oberstown was particularly noted. Well done on the sponsorship obtained to complete such a high level of landscaping. The grass at the bundle of sticks roundabout needed mowing and ensure any dead trees are removed from the new landscaped areas as part of your five year maintenance contracts here.

The canal is a lovely resource for you and was well used on adjudication day with many walkers using the paths. The Old Gasworks was very well presented. The sli na slainte signs here need to be cleaned.

The lakes area was admired and was full of bird life on adjudication day. The new planting and ongoing management regimen here were very well done. We wonder about the pockets of ornamental planting surrounding the palms along Lakeside Park and beside the excellent Vista Centre. They seemed out of place beside such a wild area. Perhaps they should be reconsidered and more native planting installed here or leave the area grassed. The development of the riverside area at Blessington road was admired and we look forward to seeing how this area establishes and matures.

The two playgrounds at Oldtown and beside the Holy Child National School were well maintained and well used on adjudication day. Perhaps a hedge could be planted to the play area boundary at the open space here at Cleevaun and the park needs more tree planting. This could be done as part of tree week and with the help of the local school children? It is a shame that the temporary fencing is still in place at the concourse in front of the new County Council Building as it certainly impacts on the setting.

Thank you for your photographs of the various sites during the spring as this allows us see how the areas are outside of adjudication day.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

We wish you luck with your efforts to open up the Oldtown Woodland Gardens for public usage. This area of the town, incorporating the canal, mature garden and the remnants of old estate plating is a real oasis of natural amenities so close to the town centre. We read with interest the initial habitat survey done on the site here and wish you luck with developing these areas and your participation in the KCC biodiversity programme. As you are aware each area in itself may not attract birds/butterflies etc but collectively Naas can become a mosaic of plants and habitats types that will combine to increase biodiversity.

Have you done an overall audit of the habitat types within the town or even within each district? This can allow you see what habitats you have and where you can increase biodiversity. You may be able to identify areas such as the old swimming pool site or the Abbey Graveyard which could be suitable for enhancing as pocket habitats with perhaps bird or bat boxes being installed, in conjunction with local school children? You could look at the Biodiversity plan done for Ballymun as an example; it is available on the BRL website.

Litter Control:

We wish your sub committee every good luck with their litter control initiatives and the implementation of the Naas Litter Management Plan. Very little litter was noted in the core town centre on adjudication day so well done with all your efforts here.

While the main street was well maintained the rear lanes running off the main core seem to suffer from local business storing their waste and bins onstreet. This really impacts on the appearance of the lanes especially in areas such as Johns Lane where new shops are opening and facing onto full rubbish bins left at the rear of commercial properties. If the laneways, many of which have real character and are important circulation routes, are to be improved we feel this issue needs to be addressed. This was also an issue in the Town Council car park at Friary Road where three overflowing bins from the commercial premises were prominent in the car park. Can these be screened from view?

Some litter was noted to the old harbour area in spite of the bins provided here. This seems to be mostly cigarette butts and drinks cans. This is obviously a problem area for you and needs to be included in your litter patrols. Hopefully if some of the empty buildings in the area become developed it will increase supervision in this area.

Well done in your continued involvement with the National Spring Clean and we hope you achieve your aim of quarterly clean ups in each of your districts. Your interaction with the schools is also commended as is the Litter Free Zone awards to help communities gain recognition for the voluntary work they do to keep their areas clean.

Waste Minimisation:

We understand your concern at tackling this issue and commend you on the steps you have taken to address this category. Many of the items you suggest such as composting, recycling and allotments are all correct approaches and continued good luck with these.

In addition to reducing litter this category is also about the conservation of resources. The bike paths and walking bus initiatives are good to see. Have you considered advancing car pooling initiatives? These could be encouraged through your town web site or through www.dublintraffic.ie? Do your schools take part in the 'Ride to School Week' as part of National Bike week or the 'Cycle on Wednesday' initiative as part of the green schools programme.

Through your waste audit have you seen where rubbish is being generated from? Can you encourage local restaurant /take aways to use biodegradable food ware. These are all ways to advance this issue and gain you additional points.

The solar compactor opposite Hayden's pub was noted, how successful has this been? This is a very public indicator of your strategy and it was good to see it in such a prominent position.

Tidiness:

Generally Naas is a very tidy town and neatly presented. Very little graffiti was noted apart from some in the back lanes. The old swimming pool we know is one of the areas you hope to turn around and good luck with your plans for this area.

One issue we noted was the lack of secure bike parking in the town centre. Bikes were noted chained to the railing at the courthouse and to the post of the tourist information sign as there seemed to be no dedicated bike stands. These should be considered for a central, secure and passively supervised location in the town centre.

The old harbour area was a delight to find and we note your aspirations in this area. We hope the current climate will not impact on the rejuvenation of this area. The bollards here, as they are painted white, were quite dirty and added to the generally neglected feel of the area. The planted areas are also in need of weeding and in some cases cutting back where shrubs at the base of the trees have overgrown. These should be washed regularly or perhaps painted a darker colour which would not show dirt. Another issue here is the vandalism of life buoys. Perhaps signage such as 'A stolen ringbuoy – a stolen life', as used in other communities, could be attached to the poles of the life buoys. This is an issue that needs attention

It is good to see that a proactive approach to derelict building has been taken with your register. Where empty buildings are in such prominent positions such as at Superquinn the hoardings should be maintained. Here the ground floor and top floor window hoardings should be painted a dark colour as it is beginning to look tatty.

Residential Areas:

Generally your residential areas are maturing nicely and are well maintained. While the traditional estates such as at Millbridge and Oldtown were looking well the newer more dense area such as the Oldtown Demense area, which benefits from a management company, were also well presented. The entrance sign to Ashgrove could benefit from some of the surrounding shrubs being cut back somewhat.

Continued good luck with your now well established award system for residential areas. It is good to see that residents gain recognition for the efforts they put in to maintaining their own areas.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Your street name signs are a real addition to your town and certainly made orientation for the visitor very easy. Their simple design and clear lettering made them deserved award winners. Where they were attached to buildings they were very secure but on some of the outer roads where they were attached to low level posts some seem to have been vandalised. This is such a shame and perhaps a more secure method of fixing them will need to be devised.

The bus stops to the centre of the town seemed to have 4 poles at each stop which added to the visual clutter of the areas. Could some of these poles be removed and the bus signs/street signs streamlined?

While generally road signage was well maintained again, as noted in last years report, we noted a problem with the legibility and cleanliness of some of the pay parking signs in the town. This was especially true where they were near overhanging branches on the approaches such as on the Dublin Road but signs in the centre of the town such as beside the take away at Poplar Square need washing.

The tree planting to the new approach roads will certainly create an impressive avenue feel as they mature. Although to the margins of the town it is a pity that the setting of the 'Ball' sculpture at the Maudlings Interchange has deteriorated. While the grass can be left grow to develop a meadow perhaps a 3-5m strip along the road edge could be mown to neaten up the appearance of the area. Also a number of the mature trees here which really indicate the entry to Naas have deteriorated and are showing considerable dieback. Replacement planting should be installed here as it seems as if the trees are in a steady decline since the works to the road here were completed.

General Impression:

Naas has deservedly been a high achiever in the competition and we are glad to see how the structure of your committee has evolved and adapted to cater for the changing needs and growth in population of your town. The commitment of your committee can be seen in the results on the ground and the comprehensive submission you have compiled. We wish you every good luck in your future works.