

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Thomastown** Ref: **908**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **225**
Category: **D** Date(s): **26/06/2009**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2009 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 29 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 31 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 32 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 19 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 28 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 8 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 16 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 23 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 32 |
| General Impression | 10 | 7 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 225 |

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Thomastown to the 2009 Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for the very detailed entry documentation that gave a very clear picture of the 2009 work programme for your hard working Committee and Champions. The maps supplied were excellent and indeed, at first the one-way system here seemed complicated, but your maps soon sorted out any initial difficulty. As suggested in last year's Report, the documentation does not need to be so voluminous as long as the adjudicator gets a clear picture of your various projects for the year. The before and after photographs told a great story of real progress. The Minutes of meeting demonstrated the level of detail at which your structures operate. You have developed a strong Local Authority partnership and this is so important for future progress in Thomastown. It was sad to read, that there does not seem to be a similar partnership with the Schools here and the development of this should be a key objective in the year ahead. It is suggested that, in your 3 Year Plan, you have a separate section for each of the ten adjudication categories.

The Built Environment:

You have undertaken many projects under this heading for 2009. The Farrells' Fountain project and the new wall at the Soup Kitchen Memorial have made a real difference. The adjudicator was most impressed by what you have achieved at The Concert Hall – a real transformation. Derelict property improvements that you mentioned were examined, including that at Maudlin Street. The 'Facades' project is a most welcome initiative that will bring results year on year if continued and will hopefully, result in big changes in retail façade presentation. This initiative is highly recommended as quite a number of facades need presentational improvements in terms of lighting, signage, wirescape and colour. However, some good examples also stand out. Healy's Pharmacy is one of them. Here the colour, architectural detailing and signage all impressed; window clutter however, needs attention. Across the road, the Blackberry Café also catches the eye for the good use of colour here, no projecting signage or obtrusive lighting were noted, all complimented by the

hanging baskets and window boxes. On Logan Street, Framewell is one of a number of premises in Thomastown that would benefit from repainting. The Church of Ireland building, set into the remains of a much older Church, dominates the top of Market Street and the landscaping here was also admired. On or near Chapel Road, the old School needed to be repainted together with the road side railings. The rusty yellow road sign here also needed to be replaced. Is there any new use in mind for this old School? The Library was admired and the colours used here work well to show off the buildings to best advantage. Across the road, the car park was satisfactorily presented. Along Marshes Road, the old Town Walls, visible in the field on the right and by the road, helps to demonstrate the importance of Thomastown in earlier times. The approach to the Railway Station creates a very poor first impression. The road surface is very bad and most banks and verges seemed to have been abandoned to nature. After all, this is the approach road to an important public service and not a wildlife sanctuary! Has the old platform here been improved since last year?; however, the presentation here was reasonable. Can the railings of the bridge be painted matt black, as it would make such a difference to the impact of this approach? Along Pipe Street, the apparently closed James Farrell & Sons premises would be improved if the broken windows were repaired. If this façade is to be developed then it is suggested that the tiling be removed.

Landscaping:

You have undertaken many successful projects in respect of landscaping for this year and the planting at the Concert Hall, and other locations is welcomed. It was great to see that the Oak trees at the river frontage have been replaced, following from the previous problems here. New Whitebeams, along Market Street, will provide a great legacy for future generations in Thomastown. The new planters at various locations were admired and these bring a splash of colour where most needed. Tubs, hanging baskets and flower troughs were admired in many locations and have the same positive effect. Incidental landscaped spaces also play an important role, such as that in front of SuperValu, though perhaps some additional planting here might be considered. In the context of this adjudication, you have made major progress on the ground since last year's Report.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The new Barn Owl boxes are, no doubt, welcomed by the Owls! It was encouraging to see that you have acted on the findings of the Wildlife Survey and that areas have now been designated for wildlife attention. Thank you for marking these on the map provided. The distribution of the biodiversity leaflet to inform others was a good initiative, as this issue is often misunderstood. The river banks and the river itself has such great potential for wildlife. However, the adjudicator was not conscious of seeing any wildlife information boards or panels. Perhaps they were missed?

Litter Control:

Well done on getting the second litter trailer. It appears that your activities for National Spring Clean Week were excellently organised locally. The Bring Centre in the SuperValu car park was very well presented and this is a good location. There is still litter problem in Thomastown based on the adjudication day visit. Along by Marshes Road, near the town wall sign litter was present and litter dumping was evident in Mill Street car park. On the Waterford road, inside the 60 KPH, litter was also present and along Market Street. At least two overflowing litter bins were noted also. Extremely bad littering was present at Lady's Well National School by the entrance gate and inside the wall. The adjudicator was not sure whether this School still operates or not, but that does not change the litter problem. Bad littering along the walkway, by the river at Mullin's Castle, was also noted.

Waste Minimisation:

The open Workshop with the County Council participation is an excellent project for this category and could be repeated each year. The adjudicator was most interested in the fact that some of the Committee has used the Greenhome Survey. Is there a possibility of extending this to non Committee members? The promotion of the WEE collection is highly commended.

Tidiness:

The cleaning and repainting of signage is commended and what a really big task this is. Weed growth along Chapel Lane disappointed while the piles of stone in the New Ross Road car park detracted a little from an otherwise, excellently landscaped car park. Weed growth was evident in the Mill Street area. Some display of retail goods on the pavement in Market Street was observed. This should be discouraged; it can look untidy and can cause problems for the disabled.

Residential Areas:

It is great that two new Residents Associations have been formed; the Action List document is excellent. The housing estates visited generally were quite well presented and good grass areas at Maudlin Court stood out. At the entrance to The Belfry, signage graffiti needed attention. The mixed levels in this estate are attractive, as is the fine mature landscaping. Individual private houses were also in general well presented and good

landscaping was noted at several properties. Have you considered organizing a Tidy Estates with prizes as Vouchers for a Garden Centre?

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The new tarring in the Chapel Lane area marks great progress and the repairs at the Library car park were examined. On the N09 approach, opposite SuperValu, the narrow verge here looked a little rough and one light standard needed to be re-erected in an upright position. The sloping grassy bank, opposite Treacy's, was admired on the Kilkenny approach. On the New Ross approach, at the very large car park opposite Campus, the natural landscaping on the high cliff here was greatly admired. The road out towards the Railway Station is a very pleasant and one quite well presented. Weed growth at kerbs, opposite the Station entrance road, needed attention. The Mill Street are has the potential to be really attractive and there is a sense of milling history here.

General Impression:

Well done on all your hard work for this year and we look forward to visiting Thomastown next year. In the meantime, good luck with all your projects.