

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Durrow** Ref: **412**
County: **Laois** Mark: **278**
Category: **B** Date(s): **22/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	45
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	26
Litter Control	50	32
Waste Minimisation	20	12
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	28
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	35
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	278

Overall Development Approach:

Durrow improves year by year and manages to keep up with the upper grade in the competition while standards are rising everywhere, introducing new initiatives. It is good that you have set yourselves annual objectives in your 3-Year Plan – many 'plans' are simply wish-lists – but beware of taking on too many projects all at the same time. Your map was helpful; ideally it should extend to show and name new housing developments which judges might miss; some committees enclose a district map to show approaches to their towns, e.g. in your case this would include the Leafy Loops; not essential, but adds to the interest. (It is a remarkable fact that no picture-postcard of this picturesque village could be found in any of the shops.)

The Built Environment:

This adjudicator has only passed through Durrow since the building by the bridge, the Red Lion Inn, was rehabilitated and so has not had an opportunity to congratulate those concerned. It makes an enormous difference, in a negative way by not having a large derelict building in a prime position and in a positive way by having a fine period restoration. The redevelopment of the Court House as a Library and Museum is a most dignified undertaking – the cleaning of the cut-stone exterior, painting of railings and woodwork, the provision of cobbles and gravel. (Unfortunately the interior could not be seen at the time of the visit.) Repainting of the railings at the Church of Ireland church, mentioned as needed last year, had not been done, though the signboard and doors were spic and span. The church tower is an important landmark feature. The Health Centre will need a coat of paint before next year. The neo-Celtic building in use as an infant school is another unique building worthy of its preservation; the community centre next door with its notable mural was admired. The Roman Catholic Church was looking very well in its well kept grounds. The shops and business premises were mainly very well presented.

Landscaping:

The Tae Lane emigration sculptural memorial wall and garden was also new to this adjudicator. It is a beautifully crafted and maintained precinct with a wonderfully spiritual dimension. May the roses bloom for ever here! It was good to see the equipment at the playground was in wood. Arriving in Durrow from the Abbeyleix side one is always impressed by the trim verges and boundaries going so far out into the country, by the stone plaques, picnic tables and seating nearer in, and by the wonderful expanse of trim lawns as one reaches the centre. The approach from the Cullohill side is less impressive. The Father Corrigan memorial is very charmingly presented. The waterside at Bob's Bar is another pleasing area of planting and there is fine planting in some of the housing estates, especially at Derrywood. Incidentally, do you plant bulbs for early spring showing? They provide colour at a dull time of year and once planted virtually look after themselves; excellent for roadsides and under trees.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Swans and ducks were seen enjoying the river. The river banks appeared to be well maintained. The abundance of nature walks in the neighbourhood is evidence of a real interest in wild life and a desire to share the riches with visiting walkers. The Leafy Loop is a first rate amenity.

Litter Control:

It is good to read that you entered the Inter Community Litter Challenge organised by LCC. The town was virtually litter free at the time of judging. Who, does anyone know, drops the litter that necessitates voluntary workers, including children, to pick up litter regularly? It is passing motorists? Well publicised fines can help as a deterrent.

Waste Minimisation:

High-lighting the best practice to business people as outlined in your documentation is a valuable activity. Starting young, it is interesting to read that children are introduced to making use of the correct bins in their playground. The Recycling Unit at the Texaco filling station was seen to be well kept and was certainly in demand.

Tidiness:

It is a pity about the Joyce premises because it is such a handsome frontage. It was good to see a prominent warehouse, the Topline, so well presented. Unfortunately numerous placards and advertisements on main roads give a scruffy effect and visually damage the fine approaches to the town. At the housing estate on the Cullohill road much mown grass was left lying and it was not clear what part of the fine grass space was meant to be trim and what was meant to be in a natural state.

Residential Areas:

The estate referred to above is Seanboise – the house's themselves are well kept and the use of strong colours is attractive. St Finian's Park has well kept house's and gardens and a splendid open area. There is an attractive unnamed enclave of individual houses on a height above the town, while homes on the lane beyond Lawlor's delightful garden centre, also pleased, due to their individuality and the use of a variety of fine stone, wooden and hedge boundaries; some promising new houses were seen under construction here. Please name the various estates so as we do not miss any. It was very good to see that many of the handsome old town houses which give Durrow its particular character retain their original timber window frames, fanlights and doors. One splendid five-bay mansion is in dire need of attention; it is hoped that it can rise again, like the Red Lion.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Surfaces are mainly well kept and there is much good paving, such as on the ancient bridge. Elegant lamps and street furniture are to be seen in most streets. Parking bays are well maintained and marked. The traffic is appalling but at least there is a controlled crossing on the Dublin-Cork road. We will be interested to hear what effect the opening of the motorway will have on the life of the town.

General Impression:

Durrow impresses both by its traditional appearance and by the huge amount of work that goes into the upkeep of its appearance. All categories in the competition are seriously addressed, some slightly better than

others but not one is in the slightest bit neglected. Every good wish for your future enterprises.