

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Emo** Ref: **413**
County: **Laois** Mark: **269**
Category: **A** Date(s): **25/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	35
The Built Environment	50	33
Landscaping	50	35
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	32
Litter Control	50	38
Waste Minimisation	20	11
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	34
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	269

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for your interesting documentation with pointers as to what should be particularly seen. We notice that Emo House is rarely mentioned except in relation to events and walks – it strikes us that it is one of the unique glories of Emo, the others being the park, the sweeping roadside verges and Gandon's church. Perhaps you are being too modest. Several Tidy Towns committees lay claim to features that are quite some miles distant! Your map was somewhat difficult to follow: would there be something to be said for using the local A4 size Rural Place map produced by the Ordnance Survey, onto which you could pencil any additional information? Have you considered introducing a work programme which would include projects to be started/continued/completed over specified periods of time? The formal setting down of objectives can create impetus and enthusiasm.

The Built Environment:

What is wonderful about the superb neo-Classical Emo Court and the interesting Coolbanagher Church is that they are still there, and what is more, maintained to such a high standard. The fine Gothic Roman Catholic church is beautifully presented in its churchyard dominated by ancient yews. The market shed is probably also mentioned by the judges every year, and this is because their continued maintenance is a source of perennial admiration. This year we had the new National School to admire, and it is not only an attractive building, but very attractively set in spacious grounds, bounded by fine trees. (It was thought odd that with official emphasis placed on the Irish language, English is visually predominant.) The older hall nearby will need freshening up with paint before next year. The former school is a charming building; it is hoped a useful purpose will be found for it and that the prefabs can be dispensed with. Siopa loma and the Gate House Bar were seen as first class examples of their particular styles. The Craft Centre was also well presented with its amazing range of decorative products including baroque statuary.

Landscaping:

In spite of the difficulties you report with the absence of the LCC mower, the grass spaces had been cut, though not all the clippings removed – it was assumed that this would happen shortly. The 'replace and repair' procedure reported where building work had been undertaken was certainly seen to have been an effective rescue operation. The planting in the RC churchyard as well as new planting in the school grounds enhances these important precincts enormously. Have you thought of bulbs for spring showing? – for example bluebells would grow wonderfully well under the school trees. Let us know of any initiatives which we are unlikely to see, especially those of young people. The village was well served by floral tubs, baskets and window boxes.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Thank you for passing on the information about Biodiversity Week and drawing attention to the newly set up marked walkways in Emo Forest and to your participation in the Dawn Bat Watch. The very strong tradition of tree planting and tree maintenance continues. The Laois Walks Festival and the Sli na Slainte have an ideal venue in Emo, with walks of varying lengths and duress. The forest is a wonderful resource for its own inhabitants and also for those who come to enjoy their natural habitats.

Litter Control:

Your participation in the Clean Up week and the obvious pride in which residents keep their surroundings has the right results. It is discouraging to hear of dumping and that you have had to contact the litter warden. No dumping was seen at the time of adjudication. Smart litter bins were noted.

Waste Minimisation:

This is a category which will gain in importance over the years. The many recycling activities described on your entry form are admirable. It is good to read that you also encourage the purchase of composters from LCC.

Tidiness:

The activities described under this heading are also admirable. A building near the Craft Centre was seen to be in need of re-roofing.

Residential Areas:

Houses on the road leading to Coolbanagher are very individual, with a variety of well kept frontages – stone walls, hedges, wooden palings. There are several very attractive roadside gardens here and on the road to Monasterevan. Some boundary walls need freshening up with paint on the side road of ten or so houses. Here it would be preferable not to leave poisoned weeds as the brown remains can look worse than the weeds themselves!

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The surface of the main roads are excellent but the road from the entrance to Emo Court to Coolbanagher is poor. Railings, lamps, wooden bollards and other street furniture is very good. The car park at the school was spic and span and well marked; the car park at the crafts centre was also well kept. The surface of the main roads is excellent but the road from the entrance to Emo Court to Coolbanagher is poor. Railings, lamps, wooden bollards and other street furniture are very good. The car park at the school was spic and span and well marked; the car park at the crafts centre was also well kept.

General Impression:

Your entry form reads very modestly. It is some years since this adjudicator visited Emo and so was not prepared for the very impressive improvements which have taken place, though from past experience, the thorough continuing maintenance was definitely expected. Every good wish for your worthy endeavours and for your very hard work.