

# Tidy Towns Competition 2009

## *Adjudication Report*

Centre: **Mountrath** Ref: **284**  
County: **Laois** Mark: **228**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **23/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	31
The Built Environment	50	26
Landscaping	50	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29
Litter Control	50	26
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	13
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	24
General Impression	10	7
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>228</b>

### **Overall Development Approach:**

Congratulations to the Mountrath Development Association for your simple and straightforward three-year plan. Setting out your prime objectives in an orderly fashion will surely bring fulfilment, when the work is undertaken in each category. To date, Mountrath has done well in landscaping and planting, in wildlife conservation and the development of natural amenities, but not so well in some other categories, especially general tidiness. It is hoped that the programme you have set out for yourselves will bring additional marks where they are needed. When filling in the entry form, to avoid confusion, please give your information under the appropriate headings – for example, 'Tree planting on the riverbank' should not come under 'the Built Environment'. On your map, please mark and name the housing estates, and also any important buildings that should be seen: a stranger in a town can miss quite obvious things, though we hope not to. Where is Back Lane, for instance, mentioned in the text but not shown on the map? – we found it in the end, but it was surprising how many local people had never heard of it!

### **The Built Environment:**

The Church of Ireland church is beautifully looked after in its pristine enclosure; the fine Gothic Roman Catholic Church is also well maintained, though the approach is bleak: a really imaginative landscaping design would enormously improve that dreary car park. The Parochial Hall and the handsome Hall next door (name? not on map) are also important buildings well cared for. The main streets are full of handsome commercial premises, though some of them are marred by over-enthusiastic signage and advertisements, and a prominently derelict site in the town centre can do nothing, but detract from what is a street of much potential dignity.

### **Landscaping:**

The 'Failte' planting immediately catches the eye. There is a lovely display of bedding plants at and on the bridge, and in flower beds in other parts of the town. Excellent half-barrels were seen and also other floral adornments in containers, hanging baskets and window boxes were much appreciated. The playground was bright and clean. Several private homes contribute through well kept garden frontages; there is a charming length of roadside garden at New Line, which is probably privately planted: more of this kind of thing would be immensely uplifting.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

Tree planting comes under this heading. Much planting of young trees over the years is showing the benefits of that kind of thinking. Mountrath also benefits from the abundance of mature timber on the outskirts. Riverside planting, the layout of walks and the nature reserve show how seriously this topic is understood. (There is of course an overlap with Landscaping). It was interesting to read that the river had been dredged and widened, and water levels determined by weirs – this must have been a very considerable undertaking.

### **Litter Control:**

It is encouraging to read that you have set up a Litter Control Group. Has this group identified who drops the litter or where are the usual points?; and have there been any prosecutions? A series of well publicised fines can help as a deterrent. A surprising amount of disposable litter was seen at New Line, but it is clear that there has been an improvement. Best wishes to the group in their unenviable task.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

It is encouraging to read of your progress in this field – one which will become more and more important as time goes on, as the Waste Management officer probably told you in his talk. The clothing bank was noted. Please mark the location of recycling points on your map.

### **Tidiness:**

No amount of excellently nurtured hanging baskets or tubs of flowers will disguise a major derelict site – in fact, they will draw attention to it! Overhead wires and ugly poles do a great deal of visual damage: Shannon Street is so much more attractive because of the absence of these. One example of a rash of un-coordinated signs and advertisements is at the arrival point from the Dublin road, which greatly reduces the impact of the 'Failte' planting. There are all too visible untidy 'backs' between the bridge and the church. This is a comparatively low mark and one which could be increased without very great effort, but with the wholehearted co-operation of individual householders, the owners of business premises and the local authority.

### **Residential Areas:**

Brightly painted semi-detached cottages on either side of the Abbeyleix road are perhaps, the best kept neighbourhood of Mountrath – certainly this road gives the best impression of the town to the arriving visitor – congratulations to the residents. The houses of St Fintan's Park are maintained with great pride; this was an imaginative scheme in the mid 20th century and it has been kept up well; unfortunately, there was unusually weedy fencing and the remains of poisoned weeds on the road – this is something which the people, who do such a good job on Landscaping, could give advice on. Father O'Connor Crescent (not a crescent, a circle; and what a pity when the houses were laid out that they were put in such regimented straight lines!) was seen to be considerably tidier, with a splendidly kept central lawn. An unnamed estate next to Fr O'Connor Park has attractive fencing: more tree planting would help to remove its somewhat exposed look. Mill Lane is promising with its gables, dormers, bargeboards and stone motifs inspired by Victorian housing; the roadway should be raised urgently to the level of the protruding manhole-covers, which could be a danger to cyclists. An unnamed unfinished estate on the Port Laoise road is also promising, especially in its well advanced tree planting. Both of these estates will be assessed next year. Ard Erin appeared very mixed – some parts trim, others quite unkempt. Some boundary walls at Old Forge Crescent were seen to need attention and flourishing laurel hedges were in need of clipping. Moanbaun is a fine suburban estate that would be improved by more planting of trees and shrubs. Many fine old houses were seen on the Ballyfin road, some clearly of historic interest, and one or two in need of repair.

### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

It may be that construction traffic for the motorways is inhibiting the improvement of the main roads through the town, though they seemed to be stading up to it quite well. Plenty of pedestrian crossings were positively noted. A nice piece of riverside/roadside stone wall-building was seen at the entrance to Kinetics; unfortunately, the new concrete-block wall near the footbridge is far less admirable but perhaps, it is the intention to face it in stone? (One block was already out of place!) Attractive lamp standards were seen at Shannon Street. The major car park, between the street and the river, was well kept. It will be interesting to learn if the opening of the motorway will improve traffic circulation in the town (by reducing it) and make it

pleasanter for residents to go about their business. It is hoped so.

**General Impression:**

Mountrath is slowly, but definitely surely, growing out of its status as 'somewhere visitors pass through' to somewhere where it is pleasant to stop. The riverside, the planting, the attention to the natural amenities, some of the approach roads and most of the estates are now measured with the best in the County. It is hoped that in other respects the town will improve in the way the Development Association deserves, with all their imaginative planning and hard work.