

# Tidy Towns Competition 2009

## *Adjudication Report*

Centre: **Castleconnell** Ref: **1045**  
County: **Limerick** Mark: **222**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **08/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	23
The Built Environment	50	29
Landscaping	50	29
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	14
Litter Control	50	32
Waste Minimisation	20	6
Tidiness	30	21
Residential Areas	40	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	32
General Impression	10	6
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>222</b>

### **Overall Development Approach:**

Welcome Castleconnell to the 2009 National Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for the entry form and Map. Well done to your committee of six people for your work and the organising of quarterly meetings, and two public meetings per annum. It's also positive that you receive support from Fás, and disappointing to note the absence of support from Limerick County Council or your Councillors. Your engagement with local schools through a dedicated committee member will pay rich dividends into the future— it is important to communicate a sense of pride in the environment to children, while they are young, in the hope that they will retain that characteristic into their adult lives.

We note your inability to achieve improvements in areas outside of your control, but we would encourage you to persevere with the relocation of overhead cables underground, this will dramatically improve the streetscape of Castleconnell. The use of public meetings, emails and texts to communicate with your community is appropriate. We would encourage you to fully complete the entry form; there was no information supplied under some categories, including Built Environment-Projects Planned; Landscaping ;Wildlife and Natural Amenities; Litter Control-Projects Planned; Tidiness-Projects Planned; Residential Areas; Roads, Street and Back areas- Projects planned. It's also recommended that your committee would prepare a very short concise action plan for Tidy Towns activities for say 2010-2012. This would enable you to set Aims and state Objectives and set specific annual targets over the three year period. This would be an advantage in any meetings with the County Council or other potential partners, both public and private sector. It's advised that consultation with the local community and with the Council should take place during the plan preparation. Ideally, your plan should clearly explain what you are trying to achieve each year, the approach planned and indicative costs for each project, any supporting agencies and an indication of the lead partner. We also suggest that you attempt to increase the numbers serving on your committee to spread the workload.

Additional marks are available in the competition for the preparation of such a plan. There is no need to get a

professional involved in the plan preparation; a simple plan can be prepared by your committee over a period of the winter months. One further suggestion is for your committee to organise a visit to some other town or village in the Shannon Region that has more experience of participation in Tidy Towns, the benefits of such a meeting with these other committees would be great. It would show you the benefits of planning and setting targets that are achievable. It is suggested that you do simple and interesting projects that will involve local people. The lovely natural and manmade facilities that already exist in Castleconnell would be the envy of many less privileged towns and villages throughout the country. Please persevere with your good work.

### **The Built Environment:**

The town has a lovely blend of mature and well presented buildings and residences from another age and more modern buildings that hopefully will mature as gracefully.

A visit to Ahane GAA Club, founded in 1926, with the modern Clubhouse and wonderful pitches officially opened in 1995, was a pleasant experience. This is a wonderful green field facility, with playing fields and floodlighting of benefit for the whole community. The entrance to Mackey Park had a lovely plaque to commemorate the great Mick Mackey, but the entrance could do with some painting and tidying around the front walls. Weeds are in evidence which could be removed.

The Castle Oaks House Hotel has a lovely entrance behind which mature trees and nice shrubberies surround this lovely complex. Well laid out grounds is a nice feature of this hotel and leisure centre complex, situated on the banks of the river Shannon. The landscaping near the holiday cottages and the hotel grounds was of a high standard. It is good to see recycling facilities in the car park of the holiday village. Some weed growth was seen in the car park of the leisure centre.

Impressive buildings include the SuperValu supermarket complex and Ti Seán restaurant, along with the Green Cross Pharmacy, all found in a new development. It is a pity to see many vacant units in this development however. A sign of the current economic climate. ACM Community Resource Centre with some nice hanging baskets is an attractive building. Buildings to impress include Castleconnell Parish hall, The Worrall's Inn, Tony McDermott Victualler, The Shannon Inn, Tom Maher Pub, the Art Gallery, The church is an imposing feature in the centre of the village. Charco's Pub looked well despite the derelict house next door.

The wonderful stone building which housed The Irish Harp Centre is a magnificent structure overlooking the Shannon River. Meskells shop and private residence is a lovely maintained, well presented premises in red and cream matching colours. Bruach na Sionna was a fairly new, mixed use development, just off the main street, but was in less than tidy condition. Some of the commercial units are vacant and in need of a clean-up. Castleconnell National School is on a nice mature site with lovely yellow potentilla shrubs in full bloom at the main gate. The building looked very well painted in green and cream, with the Ahane colours flying proudly over it.

Castleconnell Railway Station is a nice attractive old world station, and was in fine clean condition. The well painted exterior, stone wall platform and pretty flower boxes together with hanging baskets make this a nice feature of the town.

Opposite the railway station is the Garda Station, which was in reasonable condition. E.J.Guerin and the Kingfisher Angling Centre were in very good condition. The Church of Ireland at Stradbally was quite quaint.

### **Landscaping:**

The town signs at the entrances to Castleconnell present an ideal opportunity for some landscaping projects. The signs are in good condition with some good floral displays, but more could be made of this opportunity. The floral displays at the lovely Chapel Close are excellent and could be used as a model for other areas. The hanging baskets were very attractive along the central streets. The little village pump, in the railed triangle at the top of the Main Street, was very pretty with the pink and purple bedding plants. The FAS office and ACM premises were eye catching, with beautiful hanging baskets and window boxes. The Martin MacCaba Nature Trail plaque, erected by a previous Tidy Towns Committee is a nice memorial for an obviously dedicated man. There was an opportunity to present this area in colourful display of flowers. The large shrubbery near the car park was appealing, but it needed to be weeded and some additional plants could be used to enhance the impact. The linear park along the river was well maintained, with grass well trimmed. At the junction near Charco's the shrubbery was enticing.

As was suggested in last year's report, there is a great potential for creating an impressive floral display at the village pump in the park. Before planting is undertaken, it would be important to repair and upgrade the stepped setting, repaint the pump and tidy the area around it.

There are many lovely gardens attached to private residences throughout Castleconnell.

No projects were listed in your entry form

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

The riverside park is a lovely feature of Castleconnell with nice car park area, with some memorials to Tidy Towns pioneer Martin McCaba -'If you want to see his work look around you' and there is lots to see, the majestic Shannon River, the footbridge to Doonass and the ESB fishing stands. There is also a nice memorial to a world Champion John Enright 1865-1908. The memorial plaques on the footbridge to the Seventh Engineer Field Corp of 1942 could tell a tale.

The old water pump is a nice feature, as is the landscaped shrubbery, which is unfortunately partly covered in weeds. This litter bin was in good condition at the entrance.

The short drive to Castleconnell Boat Club at the Worlds End is another pleasant experience in the area.

These two areas are magnificent facilities for the residents and visitors alike, and a project to survey the Wildlife and Birdlife of the area could be carried out with the advice of a local enthusiast, the erection of Information Panels on the indigenous wildlife could be a result. The local National School might be encouraged to get its pupils involved in the project, but do seek advice from a wildlife enthusiast before undertaking the survey.

The riverside park was a fine amenity area with a lovely pathway, bench seating, angling stands and a good car park. The story of the Shannon River itself and the links to Ardnacrusha and hydro electricity could also be considered, as indeed could the story of rowing on the Shannon and the presence of Rowing Clubs in the town and close by in Limerick.

These could potentially be projects for 2010, as nothing was listed for 2009 in your entry form.

### **Litter Control:**

Rather than list a project as a continuation of an existing scheme, its suggested that the details of an existing scheme could be articulated in the category.

Litter was seen at the car park in front of the rowing club, even though there was a bin here. Grass clippings were placed in the concrete litter bin at the Car park at the Riverside Park, not the appropriate place for this debris.

Well done on the daily street cleaning programme by your volunteers and Fas. Your weekly litter patrols seemed to be working fairly well in the centre of the village, however, some of the litter bins were in need of replacement including a couple of the concrete bins in the park area.

As suggested in 2008, it would be advisable to develop a litter control plan and submit it with your Tidy Towns entry. Aspects which should be covered in the plan include a survey to identify problems, such as litter black spots, key causes of the litter, number and distribution of litter bins and the frequency of litter collections. You should also include details of proposed solutions, targets to be achieved and how you propose to monitor progress.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

Well done on your works currently underway on a local recycling facility. You mentioned that you already have one for wood and garden waste, but this adjudicator failed to locate the facility in the town. Please mark these facilities on your map. We commend the schools within the Parish which have achieved the Green Flag; this is a coveted award which is hard-earned, so well done to all concerned. At Castleconnell National School, the school building, signage and grounds were immaculately presented. We wish you well with your plans to get recycling facilities for the village.

### **Tidiness:**

Overhead wires are an issue not just for Castleconnell but for many similar sized towns throughout the region. The removal of these wires underground is a difficult task, to get the service providers to give their agreement to, but the benefits are so positive.

As suggested in 2008, you should persevere with your endeavours, as it has been possible in other towns and it may eventually be achieved in conjunction with other structural works in the area.

The Main Street, Castle Street and Church Street areas were generally tidy. One of the lifebuoys was missing from its case at the riverside. Many of the directional signs are in need of renewal, e.g. the one at Charco's corner for O'Brien's Bridge was broken, with the word Bridge missing. Another one for Fishing and Annacotty/Limerick was in need of repair, straightening and painting.

At the World's End car park there was a small amount of damage to the rear wall and the metal bench in the area needed to be painted.

Please persevere with your attempts to get the County Council to respond to your requests for repairs to signs to be carried out.

### **Residential Areas:**

Castleconnell is a mix of old world charm and newer homes. Many beautifully presented residences are to be seen at the entrance roads to Castleconnell and indeed throughout the town itself. Our congratulations to the owners of these residences. St. Flannan's Terrace features a series of nice bungalows, with many nice hanging baskets displayed. A lovely green area is seen in front of this terrace, with nice mature ash trees at the perimeter. The nearby St. Patrick's Villas was also neat and tidy, which continues in to a quiet cul-de-sac and another nice neat green. The kerbside paving needs repair around here however. Cois Sionna estate is a nice cul-de-sac of bungalows nicely painted, with some hanging baskets and flower boxes.

The area around Ahane GAA Club is highlighted by some lovely residences and well landscaped mature gardens.

The residential area of Stradbally North is a nice development, with a nice grassed green area in front of these white painted houses. The mature silver birch trees in the grassed area looked well, but the grass could do with cutting.

A row of nice cottages is seen on the left hand side on your approach to the riverside park, and at the end of these was the Irish Harp Centre, a lovely large stone building.

Chapel Close, a small cul-de-sac of cottages is a nice older housing development.

The entrance to Scanlon Park is marked by a nice stone plaque, with mature silver birch trees and nice grass areas. This older development has some nice houses, with good landscaping seen in many of them.

An attractive terrace of old-world houses is seen on route to the river bank at the World's End, with the feature of a fabulous wrought iron gate in one of them, displaying images of The Treaty Stone, a harp and a round tower.

Cedar wood Grove is a mature close of nicely kept bungalows. The grassed area could do with some maintenance

The development at Bruach na Sionna is a contrast to the older existing premises on the Main street. It is hoped that the Bruach na Sionna residences will continue to settle nicely and it will be more enticing when the retail units are occupied. We would recommend that bilingual name plaques be erected on the residential estates in the village.

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

The approach road from Lisnagry to Castleconnell is on a leafy sylvan setting, with newer houses mixed with older residences. Some high stone walls enhance the appearance of this approach to the village, but it is recommended that grass verges should be cut back. The quality of the approach road from this side of the village is very poor, and spoils the journey into the village.

It is a pity to see the road signs opposite Charco's Pub in a poor condition

Roads in and around the village were in a fairly good condition, with relatively few potholes. Grass margins were trimmed and walls were generally clear of weeds, although we did notice some weeds along the roadside at World's End. There were some fine mature trees along the approaches to the village.

Traffic signs and bilingual Castleconnell signs on the approaches to the village were generally in good condition and clearly visible. As was the case last year, at Charco's junction the sign for O'Brien's Bridge had been broken in half and should be replaced. On the road to the Boat Club, the thoughtful memorial plaque to David Quaid, in appreciation of his loyal and devoted service to the community, needs better maintenance. The graffiti nearby needs cleaning.

The Castleconnell Railway Station is a gem of a development and should be protected and further developed as appropriate. It's well presented and landscaped and every effort should be made to maximise its use as a commuter hub to Limerick and further afield.

**General Impression:**

Congratulations again on taking the initiative last year to rejoin the Tidy Towns competition and well done on the work you and your partners have completed this year. The old world charm of the town and its fantastic setting are quite unique in the region. Castleconnell has an enviable riverside setting, which offers wonderful opportunities for the local community and visitors. We look forward to your three year plan in 2010 and we wish you the very best for future years.