

# Tidy Towns Competition 2009

## *Adjudication Report*

Centre: **Newcastlewest** Ref: **465**  
County: **Limerick** Mark: **273**  
Category: **E** Date(s): **03/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	37
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	42
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	30
Litter Control	50	26
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	38
General Impression	10	7
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>273</b>

### **Overall Development Approach:**

Welcome Newcastlewest to the 2009 National TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for your completed entry form and the accompanying information including; Maps A and B, press cuttings from Limerick Leader dated 25th April and 21st May, and 6 photos of the town. While Map A was of benefit highlighting particular projects, Map B was of less use, as it had not a legend and only few references. Well done on the work of your committee of 20+, on their regular committee meetings and frequent meetings with the County Council and other organisations. It's positive for the town with a population of 3,600 people to receive support from organisations including; the County Council, Arra Development Ltd., Supervalu shops, Courtenay Lodge Hotel, Desmond Credit Union, and West Limerick Resources. Your communication strategy is also positive. Your engagement with the schools by personal visits and involvement in projects is proving worthwhile and will help generate ongoing interest in TidyTowns' activities among the pupils themselves and indeed their families. A recommendation for your committee is the preparation of a short and concise Three Year Action Plan for TidyTowns for 2010-2012. This would help establish Aims and Objectives and set targets on an annual basis. The completed plan would assist the committee in discussions with existing and new partner organisations for funding and other supports. During the plan preparation, it would be important to have consultations with the community at large and the County Council. There is no need to get a professional to prepare the action plan, it could become a project for a sub-committee group of TidyTowns, to bring a draft to the overall committee for agreement.

### **The Built Environment:**

Newcastle West is well served by some excellent buildings; both public and private sectors are well represented to service the population of this part of west Limerick. Public buildings that impressed included; St

Ita's Hospital, the Schools, the Business Park, the Garda Station, Library, Fire Station, the Medieval Complex, and the Revenue Commissioners offices.

The Newcastle West Health Centre at St. Ita's Hospital had a combination of older historical buildings and newer more modern buildings, which blended well in well kept grounds. The newly completed Hospice Facility and Alzheimer Unit make this an excellent Health Centre for the town and the region.

One of the highlights of our visit to Newcastle West was our look around Desmond Hall. The 20 year restoration carried out by OPW was completed this summer. The magnificent work has left the town with a wonderful legacy. The medieval complex was spotlessly clean, litter free, and is in excellent completion. Our visit to the town was worth it for this alone. In fact, it could be said that the complex is a well kept secret, there was little evidence of promotional signs for the medieval complex.

The Garda Station, Library and the Fire Station all looked well. The Shannon Development Newcastle West Business Park has a nicely landscaped entrance.

Gaelscoil O'Doghair, established in 1985, is a lovely building, with brilliantly coloured murals, including native Canadian symbols of the First Natives Totem poles and an Inukshuk sculpture painted on exterior walls. The Inukshuk is the symbol for the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics. The grounds were nicely landscaped, and in the car park one of the schools' 4 Green Flags flew proudly next to the Tricolour and the Limerick green and white. Desmond College with its Green Flag flying proudly looked very well. Situated in nicely landscaped grounds and with a well maintained building, the overall impression was very good. Calvary Cemetery exterior wall needs painting, and some weeds were seen.

The commercial centre of the town features many fine buildings around The Square, Market Yard, Bishop Street and adjoining streets. Credit must go to the owners of some of these fine premises, including: Cowpers Jewellers, Begley's Hardware, All Season's, AIB, Bank of Ireland, The Knights Inn, Bella Sola, J.O'Riordan, Quay Wines, The Shamrock Bar, Griffin Brothers Butchers, Aphrodite, O'Sullivan's Pharmacy, Gatsby for Men, Noel's Menswear, Ela Maria, Alley Cuts, Kokoon Beauty Salon, ShannonDoc, Courtenay School (1826), the Bookstore, Super Valu, the former Carnegie Library (even if it has been spoiled somewhat by the tenants signage), Rashers O'Flaherty, The Curvy Closet and Marguerites Coffee House. The Objekt Design Space, with residential units overhead looked well.

The entrance to the Tesco Supermarket was clean and the car-park was well laid out. Mick McCoys Bar on the Dromcollogher road looked inviting. Killeline Nursing Home is found next door to Woodfield Grove on the Dromcollogher Road. Killeline Leisure Centre is situated on the same site. Killeline Nursing Home had some nice landscaping at the entrance, while some grass cutting was needed at the leisure centre. The Pallas Foods complex on the Foynes Road had nicely landscaped grounds. The Ballintemple Inn looked well. The Ballygowan Complex in the Demesne has a lovely entrance, with attractive landscaping and mature trees on its grounds. The car parking area here was very attractive.

The Grotto, next to the Churchtown Entrance to the Demesne, was very nicely kept, with some nice seating and stone walls in this well landscaped area. The litter bin on the footpath next to it could be improved, it is felt. Churchtown Day Hospital on the Old Mill Road looked neat and tidy. The church and the adjoining grounds looked well also.

Newcastlewest has an excellent portfolio of residential properties.

### **Landscaping:**

On the Limerick approach, the raised shrubbery with box hedge used to spell Newcastlewest was attractive under the shade of a wonderful mature tree. The Castle Demesne is a magnificent facility and the envy of many other towns. It was certainly being enjoyed by many people during our visit, mainly walkers. The stone pillars and attractive metal arches at the entrances were appropriate. Display Maps, picnic areas with the timber framed litter bins, benches and parking areas were in good condition.

Nice seated area and landscaped area at the turn off on the Abbeyfeale Road for the Cullenagh Entrance to the Castle Demesne.

Lovely landscaping evident on the Arra River.

The residents' project in Sharwood is a credit to the community. Consisting of a linear park with new standard lampposts, traffic bollards, standard trees, stone wall renovations and stone paving, all with well cut grass, it enhances the residential area as a whole.

The Cemeteries were well maintained. The Grotto nearby was imposing, with mature trees and shrubs and well constructed stone walls incorporating bench seating. We did notice, however, that most of the timber used on the wall seating in the area needed to be re-varnished. Throughout the town, we spotted colourful

hanging baskets, suspended from lampposts and buildings, particularly in The Square, the Market Yard and at the riverside.

It was obvious that residents throughout the town were taking pride in their homes, with examples of thoughtful landscaping, hanging baskets, window boxes and planted containers in all developments visited.

The Famine Cemetery/Reilig na mBocht is a nicely maintained memorial.

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

Coming from the town entrance, The Castle Demesne looked tidy, with some wonderful mature trees. Some kerbside weeds were in evidence, however. The children's playground area was in full swing, (excuse the pun,) on a beautiful summer's day. The goalposts in the playing field would benefit from a coat of paint, and the nets in these goals have fallen into disrepair. Overall, the Castle Demesne is a wonderful facility for residents and visitors alike. The superb mature and semi-mature trees are a natural setting for birdlife and wildlife. The timber Welcome signs were highly appropriate and in good condition, as were the litter bins surrounded by timber poles, and the reminder to take home dog fouling is appropriate. The wrought iron gates and nice stone pillars blend well with the ambiance of the park. The mix of park benches and picnic tables from indigenous wood looked well on the new tar macadam area, near the Cullenagh entrance. On a lovely summer's day, the park was getting great use, with walkers of all ages, and some dogs (even if they were not on a lead) enjoying the facility.

This is an ideal area for the creation of wildlife habitats to encourage various species. As previously suggested, a survey of existing habitats and wildlife in the area could be very useful and might be a suitable project for the local schools, under the guidance of a wildlife enthusiast. The results could then be used to decide what plants and facilities need to be provided for the existing wildlife and also to encourage other species.

Newcastle West AFC grounds are at the rear of the Demesne, and the parking area in front of the club is commendable. The GAA grounds parking area looked clean and tidy, with the boundary wall painted in the club colours of black and white looking impressive. The plaque commemorating 125 years of the GAA was a nice feature.

The Ionaid Pobail Community Centre is a large complex and in reasonable condition. Some of the murals on the walls could do with a coat of paint, as could the centre itself.

The river side park on the Arra River is a wonderful natural amenity. The river was for the most part clean and free flowing, and it was nice to see Ducks and a Heron in the river. Also, during our visit to Desmond Hall, we were entertained by two Peahens just doing their thing.

The Sli Great Southern Trail would appear to be an excellent facility for walkers and cyclists and should be highlighted on an Information Panel in the town. While we did not have the opportunity to experience it, we look forward to a return visit.

### **Litter Control:**

On the entrance to the town from the Foynes sign the "Stop it Don't Drop It" anti-litter campaign billboard was clearly displayed.

Unfortunately, during our visit we saw some litter in the riverside park, even though there were litter bins here.

There was some dumping of seven or eight black refuse bags full of rubbish on Sheehan's Road, which is a pity.

Generally, the town was tidy and bins were in good supply throughout the town.

Litter management in a large town can be very difficult, but your involvement with community groups should be helpful in controlling any problem areas, particularly in residential estates. It was good to see that litter and dog fouling warning signs were visible in the town.

As stated in 2008, this category is not only marked on the absence of litter during the inspection, but it also includes the planning process for litter control. Additional marks can be achieved by submitting a litter control plan as part of your entry submission. Areas to be considered under such a plan would include a survey of problem areas, key litter generators, number and locations of litter bins and schedule of litter collections.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

On the day of our visit, a Friday, the Limerick County Council Recycling Centre was closed. From the sign on the gate, it was apparent that the centre was now only open on Wednesdays and Saturdays. This is a pity, and would not entice the less environmentally concerned to make the extra effort to recycle.

Congratulations to Desmond College and Gaelscoil O'Doghair on achieving the Green Flag. It was noted that Courtenay School was also flying a Green Flag, so well done to all involved. We must complement all the schools on the excellent presentation of their buildings, set down areas and grounds, they were looking very impressive.

Possible actions which you might consider include the organising of a waste minimisation workshop in conjunction with the County Council and circulation of leaflets on waste minimisation to households and businesses in the town.

### **Tidiness:**

The approach road from Abbeyfeale in parts was quite untidy, with grass margins in need of repair and cutting, in particular as one approached the signpost for Newcastle West. The trees lining both sides of this road were an attractive feature.

There were some examples of untidiness in Newcastle West. The remains of an old small trailer, without its wheels, was discarded at the side of the road near the town centre at the Arra River. Two public houses had beer barrels on the public pathway outside of their premises, these looked untidy.

The bus timetable sign for Bus Éireann could be of a better quality and more weather resistant. It looked shabby. There were three flags flying on the riverside park; the National flag, the EU flag, and the Newcastle West flag. These all seemed in very poor condition and due to their closeness to some lovely trees were unable to fly.

Overhead wires were visible in many areas of the town, their removal underground could be a target in your action plan

The industrial estates, supermarkets and petrol stations in town were generally well presented and tidy. We were particularly impressed by the Ballygowan site, which was very clean.

Display Maps throughout the town and Demesne were in good condition. Telephone kiosks around the town were in fairly good condition. The Public Toilets were presentable

### **Residential Areas:**

On the Buttevant/Dromcollogher road, the signage and road were in good shape. The Dromcollogher road had a mixture of older individual houses that were generally in good condition, and some newer housing estates which also looked well. These included Woodfield Grove, which had clean and tidy streets, and plenty of well landscaped gardens. Street lighting and "children at play" and "scoop the poop" signs were appropriate, and it was good to see bilingual signs for house numbers, which can be often absent in new developments. Speed bumps were in evidence to control speed of traffic. The Tic Toc Creche, with the slogan "Our time belongs to your child" at the rear of the development looked clean and impressive. With lots of nice open spaces and generally an uncluttered feel, the Woodfield Grove development was really quite impressive.

Ferndale was another residential development on the Dromcollogher Road. This scheme of 4 bed semi-detached houses had a nice open green area, well landscaped at its heart and individual houses with open plan front gardens were developed to a good standard.

The Paddocks was another residential development on the Dromcollogher Road. Another large open area with nice landscaping was found in the centre of this development, but the grass in this and other common areas in the estate was in need of cutting.

Opposite the Paddocks, the unnamed estate was in fine shape also.

Palm Grove next to The Paddocks was a nice small housing estate, situated in a quiet cul-de-sac. The bilingual signs at the entrance were again good to see.

Castlevew was nicely signposted with more bilingual signs, but this older estate had grassed areas in need of some cutting. This stone entrance pillars and boundary wall were quite attractive features. Portland Drive, Hazel Grove and Kilcolman Drive (Bilingual Signs) and Daar Wood, Temple Green on the Foynes Road all looked well. The Cois Teampaill development looked well, with nice landscaping and a lovely stone entrance. Some kerbside weeds were in evidence.

Temple Green Estate was also noted on this road.

Ard na Tinsle house inside the entrance to the Carraig Desmond estate is a lovely residence. The entrance to the estate itself is very impressive. Evergreen Court on the Old Mill Road was another fine cluster of homes. Liosán group of houses and apartments to the rear in Liosán Court was nicely presented.

Credit must go to the owners of the wonderful Station House/Ticket Office, this is a beautiful restoration and a fitting tribute to the famine emigrant families. Indeed, a home awakened to new life ten years ago.

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

On the main approach road from Limerick, both sides of the road had neatly trimmed grass margins, and a nice display of pampas grass and other shrubs on the left hand side was seen, alongside the wonderful mature ash tree. The nice planting of the words Newcastle-West in the mini boxed hedge is a nice touch, but not quite legible to the passer-by.

The “Fáilte Go Caisleán Nua”/”Go nDéirí an mBothar Leat” signs on the entrance/exit to the town on the main Limerick-Kerry Road on both sides of the town are bright and clean, on well cut grass margins.

The sign indicating Newcastle West is twinned with the town of Chartres de Bretagnes in France was also in good condition.

Some lovely stone walls were seen at the new Foynes/Dromcollogher roundabout, and all appeared in very good shape.

The approach roads from Dromcollogher had nicely trimmed grass margins and hedges. The speed limit signs of 50Km/h were clearly visible. The main road has evidence of weeds at the kerbside however, next to the new footpaths, which took from the nice image.

The Foynes approach road had reasonable hedges growing, but they would look better with a trimming. Grass verges were trimmed, but litter was in evidence in the area. The 60Km/h speed limit signs were obscured by overgrowth.

The signage throughout the town is good, with bilingual signs quite common. Lamp standards were well maintained.

On the Abbeyfeale Road, there is an approx. 100m stretch of Lay-by in very poor condition, just in front of the Newcastle West/an Cáisleán Nua sign.

### **General Impression:**

Thank you for all the ongoing excellent work being carried out by dedicated people for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. One task to be tackled is to increase the number of visitors to the town by attracting some passing tourists travelling on the main Limerick/Kerry road and encourage them to visit, and appreciate the welcome of Newcastlewest. The capital town of County Limerick, Newcastlewest is an attractive and expanding town with an imposing commercial centre and many excellent new residential developments. The wonderful Castle Demesne and riverside walk are superb resources to be used and appreciated by the community. Some parts of the lovely town are little known, The Desmond Medieval Complex is magnificent, the Demesne likewise. The town is well served with many nice and well presented shops.

Well done on your resilience following the floods of August 2008.

We wish you many more achievements under the TidyTowns Competition.