

# Tidy Towns Competition 2009

## *Adjudication Report*

Centre: **Castleblayney** Ref: **709**  
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **234**  
Category: **D** Date(s): **04/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	37
The Built Environment	50	33
Landscaping	50	29
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	26
Litter Control	50	28
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	13
Residential Areas	40	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	25
General Impression	10	8
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>234</b>

### **Overall Development Approach:**

Thank you for the very comprehensive and detailed application form, plus the copy of the 2008 Resource Handbook, which is an excellent publication geared specifically to the needs of Communities in the County. The map of the Town was extremely helpful for one whose geographic knowledge of Castleblayney is limited. You have a very proactive committee of 19 with additional personnel that you can call on when required. As with most Tidy Towns Committees, you strive earnestly to improve and the results of your interaction with the Local Authority, other development agencies, the business fraternity and most importantly the local community, are there to be seen.

The adjudicator was particularly impressed with the strong relationship that the Committee has forged with the Local Schools, this type of interaction is extremely important, as it gives children of all ages a sense of pride of place. Credit has to be apportioned to the Teachers who have facilitated this type of connectivity, which no doubt will benefit both, the pupils and the town in the years ahead.

Good to note that the self confidence of the community has been restored in recent years and hopefully, despite the times that we are presently experiencing, this type of self determining spirit will go from strength to strength. Your comments on the Town Market House have been noted, there is very little a Tidy Towns Committee can do except to keep lobbying through the relevant channels. Last year's report suggested that a basic 3 Year Plan be put in place, this has been done to good effect with realistic targets being set.

A simple, understandable and realistic plan is the key to the achievement of one's aims and objectives, overelaborate aspirational plans seldom work effectively. Additional marks have been awarded for your efforts in this category.

### **The Built Environment:**

The concern expressed in this section, that it looks unlikely that any refurbishment work will be undertaken on the Market House, is unfortunate, but your assumptions are probably right, given the economic harshness that prevails at present. As was stated in last year's report, it is hoped that, in time, this iconic and historic building will be restored to its former glory. On the positive side, the derelict service station at Lakeside has been painted and tidied up, and it is amazing what a simple coat of paint can do in terms of transformation. The work done on the footpaths at New Street and Conabury were visited and noted. The buildings around the Conabury area including the Alms Houses, National School and the impressive private residence Conabury House were maintained to a high standard.

The Church of Ireland and its surrounding grounds were very impressive and credit to those entrusted with its upkeep. Similarly, the RC church and adjoining large graveyard were very well presented. The Resource Centre at the Beech Street corner looked resplendent on what was a very fine day, nice bright colour with excellent disabled access facility. The following appealed to this adjudicator for no other reason than that they were well presented and tidy, Campus Oil Service Station on the Monaghan Road, McGuigan's and Castleblayney Livestock Sales on Muckno Street contrast in styles, but both very effective. On the subject of Muckno Street, except for the aforementioned premises and one or two others, it seems to lack a bit of vibrancy and is slightly dated. It would be an ideal subject for a street renewal programme at some later stage, maybe slightly aspirational in the times that prevail!

Both Beattie's and Ui Ceallaigh had attractive shop fronts, as had Conlon's Café and the Shebeen. The Glencairn Shopping Centre, a focal point in the town, was very well managed and all premises were clean and attractive. The relatively new hotel of the same name also deserves a mention for presentation, as well as providing an excellent pot of tea and scone. Like all similar sized towns, Castleblayney has its problems with dereliction most notably in the area from Lakeview up Muckno Street, how one deals with this type of problem is open to debate. That said good work is being undertaken by the committee in encouraging all business and private dwelling owners to play their part by presenting premises to an acceptable standard.

### **Landscaping:**

This is a category that the Committee in conjunction with the Town Council has worked hard on over the years focussing on, not alone maintaining the good standard that prevails, but also identifying additional areas for new planting initiatives. As one who has a fondness for gardening, I was impressed with the colourful planting arrangements that one sees around the town and its outskirts.

You have exercised good judgement in working with the road contractors GAMMA, which will give you a say on what is planned for the by pass. The planting at Midezenty Park is beginning to take shape and will mature ,and add to the facility as the years progress.

The park is an excellent amenity and the cooperation and support of the eleven bodies involved is to be lauded. Some lovely individual gardens and smaller public shrub beds were noted for their effectiveness, it would be remiss to single out one for individual mention, suffice to say that example set will hopefully encourage others to get into the green fingers mode. Window boxes and hanging baskets complement individual buildings, not overshadow them, which is what prudent planting is all about.

One little negative in this category, the shrubbery at the Bog Road Lakeview Junction is spoilt by the obtrusive and rather large advertising sign "planted" in the middle of it. It seems as it has been there pre the shrub bed, so I suppose its removal is not an option! Lake Muckno Park and surrounds, whilst having beautiful walks, lack a little overall colour that could be supplied by well planned shrub beds at various intervals, especially near the Black and White Islands shore. This is just a personal observation and it may not be practical for many reasons to undertake such a scheme. Overall, steady progress has been made in this category.

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

The planting arrangements at Midzenty Park have been commented upon under the landscaping heading and of course all this activity contributes to the attraction of various species of wildlife. Castleblayney has so many natural wildlife habitats on its door step that it would be the envy of other less fortunate centres around the country. The key is to exploit and manage these to the best advantage that benefits the town and its community, and that is within the spirit of good wildlife preservation. As a committee, you seem to have succeeded in doing this with initiatives such as the commissioning of a nature trail research study, interaction with the local angling club and through the promotion of Lough Muckno as a venue of Excellence for Course Angling. I feel that the committee might benefit from engagement with the local schools to encourage them to come up with a wildlife project that would be complementary to what you have already put in place. For instance, the marshy area on the Bog Road near Industrial Park is a possible location that might be considered for the future.

### **Litter Control:**

Like most centres that want to progress in the competition, you have addressed area of litter control in an admirable fashion. Given the fact that the Town is extremely busy, even with the bypass in place, your efforts to make businesses and private residents very much aware that Castleblayney has a strong anti-litter policy are very worthwhile. Getting the school children involved in organised litter picks and clean ups is big plus, as kids enter into these type of activities with gusto and learn good practice that will stay with them for life. Little pockets of litter were observed at a few locations in the Town (Muckno Street) and on the outskirts (Keady Road Bridge), but overall the standard was quite good. Keep promoting the message of anti-litter and it might be worthwhile to consider some additional visible reminders around the town directed at the transients that pass each day. Some innovative graphic designer might come up with a slogan that can be converted into poster form.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

Your list of projects outlined as undertaken and planned in your submission indicates that you have embraced the concept of Race against Waste and have made an extra effort under this heading this year. For this you gain an additional mark. It is good to note that you are building up a relationship with Shabra Plastics that will benefit both the residential and business communities. School projects are extremely important as they involve children at an early age and give them the proper foundation in waste management that they will take into their adolescence and adulthood, so let's hope that the Schools in question will benefit fully from the Green Flag involvement.

The Race Against Waste website will give you further information on additional suitable community projects that you might wish to consider. Keep up the ongoing promotion amongst all sections of the Community and do act on further ideas that you may get from the aforementioned website.

### **Tidiness:**

The standard in this category was acceptable with room for improvement. It is easy for an adjudicator to sit in judgement, but some of the problems that you encounter, such as untidy side and back areas, are in reality often outside your control and you have to be sensitive to this. Derelict properties may be a result of long term unoccupation or absent landlords, but untidy public areas are a different matter. The area down on the White and Black Island shore of Lake Muckno needs to be monitored regularly, people seem to congregate for drinking parties with add on activities, if the stack of burnt out cans, smashed bottles, cigarette butts and used condoms is anything to go by.

I am aware of the great work you are doing as committee liaising with the Town Council and local Resident Groups, but having such an open resource as Lough Muckno does bring additional problems. Maybe I just hit it on a bad mid-week day and the good summer weather might have been part responsible. Can't win them all. Keep up the good work of influencing people to keep premises and surrounding areas tidy and impress upon them that long term it's for the betterment of their own town.

### **Residential Areas:**

The seven initiatives that you have highlighted in your submission will certainly pay dividends into the future, already this is the case with the newly formed residents associations. Four of these newer areas were visited and examined in detail and the standard of presentation of premises and adjoining gardens was top class. Thanks for providing additional map with names of newer estates; much appreciated. Special mention to the residents of the large local authority estate Drumilliard for the manner in which they have maintained both their properties and the communal green areas. The entrance has been enhanced with embedded nameplate on stone base and two attractive flower tubs, simple but effective. Some older terraces of houses were admired, most notably at Lakeview and the unique houses on Church Street, and those on Monaghan Road. The idea of a providing a TidyTowns Van is novel, but also very practical. I am sure that a number of businesses could be approached for collective sponsorship. Good work being undertaken in this category certainly deserves an increase in marks this year.

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

First impressions on entering the Town from the bypass are positive, with improved road surface, good road markings, clear directional signage and a well maintained roundabout with tidy verges. The Keady Road entrance is well maintained in that it provides good traffic calming signs and road markings alerting one to the fact that its is quite an acute entrance that has to be approached with caution. The old Dublin entrance is quite acceptable and enhanced by some fine residences on the way in. Castleblayney Faughs boundary wall does not reflect the improved changes that have taken place within the Grounds, a coat of a bright colour exterior paint would not go amiss. The Monaghan Road now adorned by the ubiquitous Lidl Sign was for the most part

well presented and managed. Internal roads and paths in and around the Lake were in reasonably good condition, allowances were made for some infrastructural work here and there.

**General Impression:**

It was nice to re visit 'Blayney after many years and see the positive things that have happened in the interim. Despite the advent of the Bye Pass, it still has a large volume of traffic passing through which can lead to congestion, probably at is worse, on Friday. The committee is doing excellent proactive and practical work, and this is paying off with good progress being made in the TidyTowns Competition each year. Keep up the endeavour and encourage new people to join you.