

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clones** Ref: **710**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **235**
Category: **C** Date(s): **27/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	44
The Built Environment	50	34
Landscaping	50	29
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	15
Litter Control	50	30
Waste Minimisation	20	11
Tidiness	30	13
Residential Areas	40	24
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	235

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for the comprehensive application from and the attached map, which made it easier for this adjudicator to identify relevant areas of a town that one was not too familiar with. It is quite a while since the adjudicator visited Clones and this was the first time that I had the pleasure of spending time in a place that is known by reputation as being the home of the Ulster Football Final or the birthplace of Barry McGuigan. It is good to note also that the GAA do contribute positively to the well being of the Town by covering the cost of clean ups after big matches. From first impressions, the town has more potential than its present standing in the Competition suggests.

The Committee of 8 is relatively small and maybe you could try to enlist the help of other during the winter period, which is usually the planning time of year for most organisations. The support of the Town Council, Community Forum, County Council and other organisations and businesses such as the local Super Value Franchisee is the key to further progress. It is noted with regret that the Forum is working on reduced resources, these type of initiatives have been the life blood of many communities, the length and breath of the country – a sorry sign of the times when essential help options like these have to be cut. The Summary of work indicates the progress that has been made and the future projects list looks to be very practical and not just a list of ideas built on aspirations. Do keep the planning momentum going as the Town will benefit in time.

The Built Environment:

The town - as it appears today - dates from 1600s and it's very obviously an Ulster town, with large Presbyterian and Methodist churches to rival those of the Catholic and Church of Ireland. The solemn and impressive St Tiernach's Church (Church of Ireland) gives out onto the fine Diamond, where the old and new developments blend together very well. It would be impossible to comment in detail on the ongoing work that

is being done by the committee in conjunction with statutory bodies, suffice to say that it has produced results and also brought issues that contentious, such as dereliction and bad presentation, to the forefront. I am not in total agreement with the comment in last year's report that there was "considerable variance in the standard of presentation". Yes one encounters a number of run down buildings, but overall presentation of buildings and surrounding areas was quite uniform. The following is a cross section of comments on buildings new and historic that appealed to this adjudicator, parallel with this there are some observations noted re dereliction or room for improvement.

St Joseph's Temperance Hall, if I can recall on the Roslea end of Town, is a nice building with a strong link dating back to the turn of the last century, but its in need of a simple coat of paint to make it even more appealing. A fine restorative job has been done on a noble Victorian building, the Cassandra Hand Centre. The churches of Clones have a special significance in that they are part of the historical fabric of the town, all were kept to a very high standard, so credit is due to those who look after them.

The new County Library was very admired for its appropriate modern design. Some very nice shop frontages were noted and among these were The Cuil Darach Restaurant, nice mix of blush stone and cranberry colours with teak doors, not so sure about the wall sign, but that's a personal opinion. Barry, Hickey and Henderson may have been a bank in a former life, FJD Surveyors nice tastefully presented frontage, William Earls (has he Munster connections ?) and Son, The Roost Bar which seems to be a favourite with Ulster Football fans, P Geoghegan with the unique service of Flesher, and Butcher and also the Gruaigaire next door for identification with the Irish language.

St Tiernach's School is very impressive and one presumes that the Sacred Heart School down the road is closed. The new Fire Station is a fine new and vibrant building well designed, and easily accessible. The proprietors of Anglo Irish Meats deserve to be congratulated on the manner of presentation of their factory and bay area around it, this is an industry that one does not always associate with tidy premises. Largy College on the Newbliss Road is a nice new modern building with very well maintained grounds. On the negative side, like any town of similar size, dereliction and untidy unoccupied buildings are a problem, but as a committee you are aware of this and are doing all you can to address it.

One main factory site on the Roslea Rd Junction is a bit of an eyesore, even if the weed growth in the grounds was cleared, it would be progress. Finally, an audit of business premises signs should be done, as there are still too many plastic type signs to be seen around the town.

Landscaping:

Some excellent work was being done in this category and there were some very nice arrangements to be seen both, in the central area of the Town, particularly the Diamond, and on the extremities. I would like to compliment Anglo Irish Meats on the way that green areas and flower beds have been maintained. Some of the arrangements on the outskirts, such as the one at the Newbliss Ballybay Junction, had a mix of annual bedding plants combined with long life shrubs. Just be aware that these areas can be overlooked and get a little cluttered, if not tended to on regular basis. Some lovely individual gardens were noted particularly on the nearer to town side of the Newbliss exit.

Many businesses had complementary planters and hanging baskets, and these seemed to be regularly looked after as there was no unsightly dead overgrowth to be seen. Fermanagh Street traders fared best in this regard, so its up to the remainder of the town's business people to come up to the same benchmark.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The Town has a number of wildlife habitats that could be exploited and brought to the forefront. The committee should consider consulting with the County Wildlife Ranger or equivalent person to see how a number of additional projects could be built into the body of work that has been done to date. Also, this would be an opportunity to involve the school children of St Tiernach's in a specific project that would help in the school's quest for a further green flag. Similarly, the Committee could approach the Principle of Largy College to tease out the idea of how that post primary school could contribute to wildlife conservation as part of the proposed town module for transition year students. This is an excellent transition year project that will have benefits for the town in the years ahead.

Litter Control:

There seems to be no individual pieces in your submission on either litter control or tidiness, that aside the litter control was good and there were no major litter black spots. Town Council employees were on a clean up mission on adjudication day and the main streets such as Fermanagh Street, McCurtain Street, Monaghan Street and Cavan or Cara Street were looking the better for it. The Diamond was litter free, on what was a

relatively busy day.

Waste Minimisation:

In contrast to the last section, there are quite a number of initiatives in place and being planned under waste minimisation, and in fairness some of these encompass tidiness. Keep up the good work and make sure to keep informed via the Race Against Waste website or through the County Environmental Officer of any offerings that may benefit the community.

Tidiness:

The standard was not as poor as last year's marks reflect, towns like Clones, because of its size, will have inherent problems such as untidy buildings and the like. The main objective is to get improvement, no matter how slight, year on year and you are succeeding in this objective. There were a few areas of immediate concern, Clones Tractor parts Building and adjoining area, which are in a central location, are quite untidy. An area surrounding the vacant factory plant on the Roslea Road has already been mentioned and the Abbey Gate House has weed growth in the gutters, although it looks like it's up for sale – in these times! Do keep the good work and do try to put specific measures in place for next year.

Residential Areas:

The standard of presentation of both established and newer private residences was very good. Quite a number of houses were complemented by some excellent and colourful gardens, where flowers seem to bloom in abundance. The newer houses that have been built individually or that form part of newer estates will blend into the town infrastructure in time. Full marks to the Committee for engaging with residents through the Community Forum. The results of your efforts are there to see as a number of estates visited on the day were presented to a very acceptable standard. There will always be a few non conformists, but Clones is not alone in this regard. Ard An Chiocher is quite a tidy estate, although I personally am against the spraying of edges with Roundup or its equivalent.

Jubilee Terrace, in situ since 1897, was very well presented and tidy in overall appearance. Carn View, with its lovely view overlooking the town, was rather mixed, but O Neill Park nearby was in good condition, both share a nice new modern school kids playground. Beechgrove and Oakview were very acceptable and some residents have taken great pride in developing nice garden frontages.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The entrances into the town were neat and tidy, and one or two by nature of their location were more inviting. The Scotshouse entrance has a nice straight sweep down into the town and it was complemented by mature trees and tidy footpaths, and good road surface. The Newbliss entrance possesses some really impressive residences with excellent gardens and, as one comes nearer, there is a nice terrace of houses with a mixed colour scheme.

General Impression:

As a Committee, you worked very hard to help improve both, the look and the image of Clones. As you rightly say, there is a new vibrancy about a place that has had its problems which were different from other towns in the Republic. I suppose its fair to say that Clones had more in common with some Northern towns due to religious tensions that prevailed and isn't it good to see that these are slowly being overcome. Clones was well familiar to me over the years because of its association with Ulster championship matches and I was fortunate to sample one for the first time on a fine Saturday evening. As adjunct, may I congratulate Antrim on reaching the final for the first time in 39 years and did their supporters enjoy it. To the Committee keep up the good work and the rewards will follow.