

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Daingean** Ref: **620**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **249**
Category: **C** Date(s): **06/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	36
The Built Environment	50	32
Landscaping	50	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	26
Litter Control	50	31
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	249

Overall Development Approach:

Go raibh maith agaibh go leir! Thank you to all the voluntary workers who have gone to so much trouble this year and in previous years to make Daingean an ever improving place in which to live, work and in which to spend leisure time. You have a reasonable membership, although we imagine that you would be grateful for extra help!

You list LEADER and the Oak Partnership, Offaly County Council, and NOCDNL (?) as the agencies and bodies who help you. You hold monthly meetings, and it is a good idea to have them on the 1st Monday of each month, as this makes it easier for people to remember.

You have a newsletter, and you hold a public meeting if you think this is needed. You also mention a local bulletin. Is this in a town/parish newsletter?

We are glad that you meet with the school staff and children 4 times a year. They have helped in litter picks.

You have a very positive response to the competition which will serve you well, and is nice to hear. We see that you have a festival in August every year. What do you celebrate? Is there a special theme?

Some of the writing in your application form was most difficult to read. Please make it more legible in future! You risk information being lost or misinterpreted, as a result. You also need to make sure you fill it in accurately under the different headings. This adjudicator spent a long time trying to decipher certain parts. Your map with attached key simply listed various reference points such as the church, Town Hall etc. It should be annotated to show this year's project locations.

To increase your marks it is very important to prepare a TidyTowns Plan. A three or five year plan is

recommended. A plan need not be prepared professionally. However, you should try to get the views of the community at large when preparing the plan and take into account other plans for the area such as Local Area Plans / County Development Plans prepared by the Local Authority under the Planning and Development Act 2000/ County Heritage Plans/ Agenda 21 Plans etc.. Unfortunately, not having such a plan automatically loses you marks in this section of the competition, as per the adjudication guidelines.

The Built Environment:

You quite rightly prioritise Daingean Town Hall as the first item in this part of the application form. But you do not say specifically what the project you undertook in relation to the Town Hall for this year. You may mean the window boxes. Your next entry here for projects for 2009 under "The Built Environment" section relates to Flower beds on the canal bank. This is a landscaping project.

We see, however, that you intend painting the windows in the Town Hall as a planned project. The entire area around the square is in need of a planned, architecturally designed renewal. The Town Hall (former Courthouse) needs some good conservation work. We hope that your Local Authority will find funding in the future to do this. But this may be some time away due to present financial constraints. The Welcome to Daingean Fair / Martin O'Reilly Sculpture is celebrating local heritage.

The Grand Canal Bridge is a good feature, and is neatly weeded.

The old canal building needs a new use, and conservation

The Gaelic Bar is clean with unusual takeaway arrangement – a natural setting /wall etc. Seery's is very dilapidated. The stone and brick property beside Seery's is very nice. Quinn's Centra is very clean and has a good limestone insert /nice doorcase.

The Library was well presented with a new plaque. There is a good house opposite the Library, but beside it is a house for lease with too many signs on its frontage and gable. The house beside the Library needs painting and the tree outside it is lying at an angle. A planning application was noted in this window.

Midwal Installations, a stone building has cement mortar, and really this should be lime mortar to best conservation practice standards. The building has good brick window surrounds.

The Midway Park Hotel (although it has some name sign letters missing) was well presented. However, last year's adjudicator asked that that signage damage should be repaired before this year's competition. The Grove was well presented, although the roof had moss. There were flowers and a nice garden with gate through to the neat curtilage beside.

There are lots of nice arches/old coach entrances extant. Please try to retain these, as they add greatly to the character of the street. The Cosy bar looked well, even though it is for sale. There were quite a number of properties for sale, and it can be difficult to keep such properties looking well.

The Health Centre looked well. The guest house for sale looked poorly. The Blackthorn had a lot of signs and clutter, but otherwise looked well.

The Church of Ireland gates need restoration.

The Catholic Church and its grounds were extremely well kept. The new school looks very well.

The old school still has original windows. Please try to retain these. This area could do with a little replanting.

There is a 3 storey derelict building beside a shop. The shop has a plethora of signage – projecting, and on the ground - National Lottery, O2 Top UP, HB, Calor etc. – far too much signage.

The old stone walls of the Reformatory look well.

The Water Tower is a very elegant piece of architecture

You are adopting a good approach in asking people with derelict sites just to keep them presentable and safe. Remember that some "derelict sites" are Protected Structures just waiting for a new owner who will conserve and restore a valuable part of your heritage.

Landscaping:

The Canal area is in an unspoilt, natural state, and we ask you to endeavour to keep it that way. It is an arm of nature and beauty right on the doorstep of your small town. It is simple, classical and fuss free.

Your landscaping projects listed for 2009 state that you intend to landscape the canal bank on Mill Road. We would encourage you to simply maintain the canal banks. You do not say what landscaping you propose there, but we would suggest a minimal intervention, as the banks are looking well and natural. Some native tree planting may be appropriate. Be advised by, perhaps, the Heritage Department of your Local Authority. Likewise, with the Church of Ireland Cemetery; you need to consider professional advice on the maintenance of graveyards, which we are glad to see you are seeking from your Local Authority. Graveyards are historic places, with abundant wildlife. They may be part of a National Monuments or the curtilage of a Protected Structure, and by association, therefore also protected. Is the graveyard in the ownership of the Church authorities still? Be sure to consider the views of the local Church of Ireland community.

There is a nice grove of trees at the entrance to the town from the Rhode road. There is good tree planting in the Main Street.

The bus stop is nicely sheltered under a tree. The lovely deciduous mature trees around the ruinous Church of Ireland were admired. The green space outside the Church of Ireland looked well.

The parking area opposite the Catholic Church needs softening; and this is one of your projects for 2009. Keep working on that!

A raised flowerbed in this area was admired.

Your daffodil display in your photograph looked lovely.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The cemetery can be a great haven for wildlife. You do not give any details of your proposals with regard to your work here. Neither do you give any indication of where "Boggy Bank " is, and again you state that you have projects undertaken this year for the canal under this heading, but you give no details.

You plan other projects – an area in the cemetery (?) (very difficult to read the writing here) to cater for wildlife. What exactly do you mean by this? Is not all the cemetery holding wildlife? Do you mean for interpretation of wildlife? We also note that you have arrangements with the Fishing Club to ensure areas of the Canal are kept free for wildlife. Is not all the canal an area for wildlife? The adjudicator is a stranger, so you need to elaborate on your proposals/mark them on your map clearly.

Daingean, with its deciduous tree cover, canal and river world and remoteness from polluting atmospheres and human disturbance is wildlife Paradise. You should build on this and maximise your efforts in order to progress in this area.

Perhaps, your local school could help you with this? Do you have a young person studying Environmental Science in a 3rd level institution from the area who might require a thesis topic? The provision of a wildlife survey and management plan contributes to marks in this section. Remember to endeavour to do this for 2010! Findings can subsequently be made public on information panels. This more detailed information would add to the enjoyment of your town for local and visitors alike, and would serve good educational purposes. In relation to this, please be sure to put design research into the proposed notice boards themselves. Have new street furniture designed in an innovative and appropriate fashion. Note also that black street furniture is the most difficult colour for people who are visually impaired to see. And you should also ensure that the Irish names for all species are included.

Biodiversity describes the variety of life on earth. There is now a special competition, you will have noted in your information pack "Notice Nature Award".

You could increase your overall marks considerably by spending time on progressing this section, but do not

rush this, as it is worth doing well!

Litter Control:

The litter bin outside the Post Office was full to overflowing.

Outside the Town Hall there was a small amount of litter near the litter bin and seating.

The recycling bins and signage at the recycling area is very poor. We are not sure that this is the best place for litter bins. There was some litter under the bins. The clothes bank was, in contrast, clean.

You have lots of projects in planning here. We would like to know more about your litter picks. We see you mention them under "Waste Minimisation" . You have had two this year. What anti litter promotion do you engage in?

Waste Minimisation:

You are segregating litter in clean ups, and "making all businesses aware" of waste minimisation. You have sent a letter to all businesses in town. (Actually you list this under "projects planned", but you say you have sent the letters. Please be careful in filling in details on your form.) And are you sure that you are telling them that waste minimisation is about more than recycling, composting and segregating. It involves the prevention of litter accumulation in the first case. It is really what it says – to minimise on waste production before we, as a community, private or public create it in the first case. You might refer to the Race Against Waste booklet available from the Tidy Towns Unit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government. Consider organising or attending a Waste Minimisation Workshop with your Local Authority. In your local school, there will be opportunities to involve the students in an effort to work towards this end. Perhaps you might prepare a flyer/newsletter on this subject? As a local community you could look at some innovative and simple ideas such as organising a "Bring and Take Day". This would involve using a local hall / Community Centre for instance for a day - where everybody brings items they have no further use for, but which other people might want (and which under normal circumstances they might get rid of as waste), and puts them on display. The corollary is that somebody else needs these items. No monies change hands. Website versions of this idea have been set up in places also. Another group collected all broken crockery, and made a mosaic in their local park. You can gain marks by doing some of these things for 2010.

Tidiness:

There is redundant signage which is rusty beside a closed petrol pump half way down the street. Letters were missing. (Paddy Byrne?). This is poor in the middle of the street. A lot of properties could do with repainting in the street.

The lamp standards in the Square need renewal.

Vehicles were parked on the footpath in the area of the Garda Station in the town.

You state that you have removed old and not in use poles this year. Perhaps, marking the site of these pole removals on your map and giving us some photographic record would be good. You have removed graffiti, and sprayed weeds. Be careful that your weed removal methods are environmentally friendly.

We think you say (again hard to read) that the youth club is helping here with the local CE Scheme – helping in what way exactly?

A seat needs renewal on the canal bank.

Residential Areas:

The red brick fronted estate off the Rhode road has protruding manhole covers. Final surface treatment is required. The open space to the rear needs much more planting. The splay walls at the roadside need painting. The Local Authority estate off the Rhode road is very well presented. There is a mini "Larrys Miniature Village" on display here!

The Crescent of Local Authority houses could do with planting between the houses and the road..

You list "Planting flowers in the canal basin" as a project undertaken this year, and you list that you hope to put a flower bed on the canal bank, as a project planned here under this heading. This is not work in a residential area. Again, the application form is difficult to follow. And please refer to our comments under "Landscaping"

You are also getting people to maintain grass and keep their properties painted. How are you achieving this?

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach from Rhode goes past a nice entrance lane to Killaderry Cemetery. The surfaces at the edges on the left hand side on the twisting approach need resurfacing and look untidy. There are nice green open spaces on the right hand side on the approach. There is a newer footpath nearer town and a lot of well kept houses generally. All the footpaths in this area are well weeded. The graveyard is well kept. There is a very well maintained GAA pitch. Its walls, however could do with planting. The flag poles need painting. The Coologue sign needs renewal. Road signs in the vicinity of the GAA pitch are also rusting/bent.

There are potholes at Kilclonfert junction and a headless rusty sign. The road in the vicinity of the Water Tower needs resurfacing.

The Tullamore sign is bent at the junction. The Edenderry approach has a poor Daingean Sign, and there is a poor property near the town junction.

Sanderwood Stone Company at Townparks needs cleaning of the pebble dash finish, weed removal, and screening of the yards. There are good trees on the margin opposite.

You have asked local landowners to maintain boundaries on approach roads, and boundaries look well. Remember to remind them that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 to cut vegetation in a hedge or ditch, or on lands not cultivated between the 1st March and 31st of August annually. This is for the protection of nesting birds.

General Impression:

Daingean is rich in potential, as it has a wealth of natural and built heritage, but its potential must be planned for and acted upon as the opportunity arises. Care must be taken in being clear about what projects are feasible and appropriate. Refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook. And be careful with presentations and submissions to any agency or body - that the documentation is comprehensive, up-to-date, clear, correctly interpreted and categorised, completely legible and relevant to what you are trying to achieve.

