

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilcormac** Ref: **287**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **237**
Category: **C** Date(s): **07/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	37
The Built Environment	50	32
Landscaping	50	33
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	21
Litter Control	50	27
Waste Minimisation	20	9
Tidiness	30	16
Residential Areas	40	28
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	237

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 Kilcormac an ever improving place in which to live. Thank you for your carefully completed application form.

You have a good membership, although we are sure that you would not refuse extra help!

You hold monthly meetings, and you are an autonomous group within Kilcormac Development Association and are in attendance at the Kilcormac development Association Meetings also. This is good from the point-of-view of exchange of ideas and help, which can be seen in, for instance, the help you get with clean-ups.

You list six bodies and agencies that support you. This is impressive. You also have a good PRO, as you use several different channels of communication.

Your liaison with the schools is very positive, and you engage all age groups of school goers. This is very good, as often only Primary Schools are involved in Tidy Towns. We are delighted that you have recruited new members from the Transition year.

You feel that the competition has enhanced towns and villages throughout Ireland, and we agree!

St. Patrick's Day is an important day in Kilcormac. We are also glad that you celebrate your local saint and heritage on his feast day, which is also Midsummer's day, with a sponsored walk!

Your map was not of any great help to the adjudicator, as the scale was too small and none of your actions or

projects were marked on it. Neither were any of the landmarks or housing estates marked on it. Remember that the adjudicator is a stranger to your town, and does not know where anything is located on arrival. It makes for a lot of travelling and hard work to catch up with local place names and street / road names!

Your document "Kilcormac Tidy Towns Entry 2009" has a few elements of longer term planning listed in a dated fashion. However, to increase your marks it is very important to prepare a Tidy Towns 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:

The school on the Ballyboy Road is neat, with good deciduous trees. The school on the Kinnitty approach at the entrance to Parc Naomh Cormac has some letters missing - Scoil Mhuire Scoil Naisunta.

The GAA block wall requires softening, but this has been commenced with a planting scheme.

You have a lovely streetscape, which most people are travelling too fast through to appreciate. Perhaps, you might give some advance indication of your lovely riverside area, if your Local Authority agree? This might encourage people to stop and admire your street, and your river area. There are generic signs, which indicate a picnic pull-in area

There is a derelict property beside the Ulster Bank with a salvageable shopfront. The O' Suillabhain front now needs a repaint, and also the black gate beside Mitchells.

The Post Office is neat, but has too many signs. Feighery's is well presented, but has too many signs in its windows, which detract from its good overall appearance. Frankford House retains some of the local heritage in its name, but the sign needs cleaning. The convent grotto is nice, but the building itself could be brightened up. The closed chemist opposite needs attention, including the old sign overhead. There is a nice lane between Coffey's and Heffernans. Heffernans is somewhat cluttered.

The Catholic church is nice, but the area contains other buildings in need of painting on the nearby roadside. Last year's adjudication also mentioned this. The Community Hall looked well.

The butchers shop in the Square still has not got its roof painted; see last year's adjudication report.

The pump on the Birr Road is being maintained.

Well done on assisting with the submission to the Offaly County Development Plan. This is helpful to your Local Authority and establishes good relations.

In the current economic climate, it is unlikely that there will be funding for the undergrounding of services and removal of wirescape, but keep this in mind for the future.

We support your efforts to have the Square regenerated. This will be a great architectural and landscape challenge, and we know you will be supported in this by your Local Authority, as resources permit.

Please do not look on your "derelict" buildings as a disadvantage and your "greatest constraint". You will not be faulted by this adjudicator, nor were you faulted by previous adjudicators for not being able, as a group, to restore and conserve such buildings all at once. This will happen in time. All we would ask is that you encourage the owners to weed and tidy around them. Many of your "derelict" buildings are of architectural and streetscape merit, and are awaiting new owners and new use. Simply try to make them look presentable, with help of the owners where you can elicit cooperation. Have a look at the Tidy Towns Handbook.

Landscaping:

The river area is a lovely peaceful oasis in the centre of town. There is very good landscaping here. The picnic tables were admired, and there was no litter about. The Millstone and surrounding floral displays were admired.

You are involved in a lot of maintenance this year, and you plan some clean up to expose the whitethorn hedging at both sides of the pump, as well as work to the planters in the Square.

The picnic area on the Tullamore Road was admired.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You live in an area which is of much importance from a habitats point-of-view. Could you be more specific about your work with Lough Boora Parklands Group, and can you say how you can integrate that into the actual village? To say you liaise with them is good, but we would like to know what way this works, and how you help them.

You have huge potential to progress in this area, and you are certainly maintaining your natural environment.

Kilcormac, with its deciduous tree cover and river world, has potential of its own from a habitats perspective. 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 the 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. Be consistent in having such 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.

Perhaps, the Heritage Section of your Local Authority could help you in this regard also. 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:

There were just a few pieces of litter in Parc Naomh Cormac. There was some litter on the verges on the Kinnitty Road. We really like your "Adopt a Patch" scheme.

Well done on your clean-up days involving the National schools, Transition Years, Foroige, and local residents and local groups. It sounds like a good "meitheal".

The recycling bins are very poor, but the signage is fresh. A few pieces of litter were evident.

As with wildlife interpretative Boards, be very careful in choosing bins. Please take architectural and engineering advice on their selection; the first to ensure that they are suitable for your nice vernacular streetscape, and secondly to make sure that they are sturdy and easily maintained, and emptied. And remember the issue of black already alluded to above.

Don't overdo the "litter free zone" signage, as signage can become cluttered and untidy in itself where too much exists.

Waste Minimisation:

Composting appears to be available in the Cemetery. Remember that waste minimisation is about more than recycling, and litter collection. 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:

Many of the comments under roads and built environment sections are also relevant here, as these buildings and roads are part of your village.

Two plant holders at the GAA verges were broken which looks untidy. Verges opposite the pitch on the other side of the road need trimming. At the entrance to the town, beyond the GAA, the recess space at the Ferbane sign needs surfacing, a gate needs fixing, and many of the comments under roads and built environment sections are also relevant here.

Well done on your cooperative approach with Offaly County Council regarding weed control, and maintenance of footpaths.

The McDonald International premises could be painted

Residential Areas:

There is an exceptionally nice enclave of new "eco friendly" houses, just off the Ballyboy approach to the town. They are beautifully landscaped to date (estate not complete), but to have no name sign as of yet.

Parc Naomh Cormac has well cut grass. The curved terraced houses are well designed and laid out on site, and the estate is full of character. The huge open space is mature. The houses are all presented very well and so are their boundary walls. Barriers need painting at the road edge.

The nice, new bright Older People type dwelling houses small estate on the road, by the side of the Parc Naomh Cormac, is in contrast with the gates and walls of the two storey house opposite.

Meadowlands is probably the saddest sign of the Irish recession seen in adjudications. This development was to be a big development, and only 6 houses have been developed. These 6 inhabited houses are lost at the very back of the development field - absolutely lost in long grass with ragwort (a noxious weed) and totally overgrown area. The actual name sign for Meadowlands is also totally overgrown in the access splay, and this adjudicator means overgrown. Please rescue this area before 2010 in some fashion, as to give its residents some pride in their homes! The huge advertising development sign is the only thing really that emerges out of the wilderness.

There are lovely roses at the entrance to the Local Authority estate, which is generally well presented, although the path edge needs repair at the open space. There is a burnt out house at the end of the estate facing the green area, beside a lovely creeper clad house which is at right angles to it.

You are working well with the residents associations.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The Ballyboy approach is by a tree framed entrance. The verges need trimming, and there are weeds which appear to have been dealt with in an environmentally unfriendly fashion, near the school sign on the approach. There are 3 double gates which need painting, also corrugated shed roofs needing painting, and associated abandoned objects in a farmyard. The "Caution children playing" sign is rusty. There is a lovely stone wall on the left with overgrowth inside and a broken fence on the right, also a rusty pole and a dilapidated old ballroom (?) type building. There is a hoarding facing the entrance to the square and other signage, and a very dirty whitewashed wall opposite. There are out-of season Christmas lights to the left of the hoarding - all in all not a great approach.

To the side of the Parc Cormac estate is a road with lovely deciduous trees. Grass needs trimming along the new path opposite. There is a lovely hedge approaching the junction.

The Kinnitty approach road verge needs trimming. St. Joseph's Cemetery is neat with nice stone gate and pillars, although the main wall is concrete. The paths are weed free in front of the graveyard. There are mature trees all around, as there appears to be an abandoned estate on the left. Part of this road needs resurfacing. Newly planted semi mature trees were admired. A farm building requires roof paint. The road edge needs trimming in places, and there are some areas of serious weed growth. There is a lovely hedge on the approach to the Sliabh Bloom mountain sign. There are a lot of weeds in the right of way, near the lovely row of cottages to the left, with their wonderful display of roses.

The Birr Road has good hedging, but also needs verge trimming and weeding. The Texaco garage is well kept, but could do with softening. Note that last year's adjudicator said the same thing. Two semi detached cottages on the way into the town could do with painting, and one needs a fence replacement.

The verges have been cut in places, but the cut grass was not removed for composting. The roses at the speed limit sign were admired. Gates, in general, could be painted.

The Ferbane approach at right angles to Main Street has a nice stone wall approach

The Tullamore approach is reasonably well cared for, and is through good rolling countryside. The Amenity area was admired.

General Impression:

You are a very organised group, and you have the capacity to plan well. You are informed of what is going on in your locality, and you are contributing to its advancement. You have the potential to continue increasing your profile in this competition. Concentrate on your strengths, and also look to improving your weaker points. You will do well.

Kilcormac suffers seriously from heavy traffic and this must be a problem for you in many ways.