

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Shannonbridge** Ref: **850**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **267**
Category: **B** Date(s): **05/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	36
The Built Environment	50	39
Landscaping	50	38
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	24
Litter Control	50	33
Waste Minimisation	20	7
Tidiness	30	19
Residential Areas	40	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	34
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	267

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 Shannonbridge an ever improving place in which to live, work and in which to spend leisure time.

You have 10 members, which is a reasonable number, if they are all active members, and you draw on other volunteers for additional work. You have a good relationship with Offaly County Council, FAS CE Scheme, West Offaly Partnership, and Roscommon County Council. It is good that you are being assisted by the neighbouring local authority, and it is very good of them to be cooperative, as they have all their own villages to care for too. It shows great spirit! This is not always the situation in villages that have a dual local authority presence.

You obviously have a good PRO, who uses good communication channels. Please be sure to send notices to all churches represented in your area. You engage well with the school.

You see the benefit of the competition in fostering good community action and focus, and this is a good thing for us to hear.

Thank you for the application form which was clearly filled in, with helpful photographs. Your application form does include planned projects under each section. However, to increase your marks it is also 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 / County Heritage Plans/Agenda 21 Plans etc. prepared by the Local Authority under the Planning and Development Act 2000. Unfortunately, not having such a plan automatically loses you marks in this section of the

competition, as per the adjudication guidelines issued to each adjudicator.

Thank you for your map, which is a good base, but you could have annotated road names, and project locations more comprehensively.

The Built Environment:

You list the conservation project at the Old Fort Building on your application form as a project for this year, but you give no further details other than that the Tourist Office and Community Office are going to occupy the space. You also are exploring the possibility of developing the fortifications as a Tourist Project. Is there not a master plan for the entire venture, and if there is not - should there not be? Is this conservation project being run/funded by Roscommon County Council? What architectural conservation and archaeological expertise is engaged in the project? Does it refer to the fortifications only as shown on your map and in your photograph i.e. on the northern side of the approach road or also to the Fort building on the south of the approach road, as would appear may be the case in your written application form?

There is a lovely single storey house at the fort side of the bridge, with good window mouldings.

The bridge is a magnificent 16 arch structure, which can only be appreciated from the quayside. The lights on the bridge are in very poor condition, and indeed are not contributing anything to the lovely stone bridge, as they are simply reproduction heritage style lighting. We would encourage you to discuss their replacement with the relevant authorities. Could lighting be provided from the road base rather than attachment to the bridge? There are several issues to be considered in lighting a protected structure, such as this bridge. These include visual suitability, potential interference or damage to the structure, light pollution, traffic safety etc. We would recommend that you try to move forward on this issue, as in their current state they form a negative impact on arrival. Talk to the Architectural Conservation Officers in your local authorities, and to the Engineers and Heritage officers also with regard to lighting and its effects on, for instance, bat roosts in bridges.

Lukker's pub, near the bridge, has a lovely, marble lettering, but the external lighting fittings detract from the marbling, and it has the older timber sash windows intact in part of the structure. The newer windows are also well chosen in timber. Gates at Lukker's and the adjacent building require paint. There were some weeds in Lukker's gutter, which will not help the maintenance of the building, apart from looking untidy.

We note your discussions re the derelict site with the ESB, but what are your proposals for the 17 acres, if you are successful? And we note that you plan to engage with owners of derelict sites, in general.

The Mallet /Rhodes foundry river machinery is interesting (it has a little rust) and is located beside the every neat stone tourist facility on the south quay. It is a shame that its windows have to be wire meshed for security. The gravelled area around the building is very appropriate.

Lock House is uniquely located, is in good condition in a prominent place also. The window replacements look a little out-of-character. The raised pointing is also out-of-character, so be careful when restoring older buildings to follow best conservation practice. The tourist information board is nicely located outside, and there are a few floral displays also here.

The Garda Station is well presented. You have not redone the stone wall at the Barracks, which was also mentioned in last year's adjudicator's report. It is still a "project in planning". The two houses opposite the barracks need repainting.

Supermac's was well presented, as was the Health Centre, although the Health Centre could do with a little planting in front. The cottages for sale opposite Moran's will, hopefully be sold and improved before next year. The boarded up site for sale with large auctioneering signs takes from the streetscape, and hopefully by next year will be developed or the hoarding / signage made to look less intrusive

The street has retained its building line, which is good. Some fenestration in new buildings is somewhat out-of-character with the streetscape. The yellow house, with ornamental trees in planted pots outside, was very well presented. It would appear to have a lovely over-door window/case, so it is a pity to obscure that with a plant box.

There is a lovely traditional gate in the street leading into a neat yard, which looks like a "rays of the sun" design.

Moran's is well painted with floral displays. The old church is a sadly forgotten building, hidden away just off the main street. What can you do to resuscitate it? It still has its foundation stone plaque, although the date is obscured by an ugly security light.

The houses on the approach to the school are good.

Landscaping:

The landscaping at the fort area and along the riverbanks is very good, as is all the quayside hard and soft landscaping along the north and south quays. It respects the riverside heritage, both built and natural.

Glimpses down a country lane from the village in the vicinity of the Garda Barracks were admired.

The green open space opposite the church is looking well, and the completion of the flower bed was noted.

The trees in the school grounds are nice. We look forward to your planned projects. A lovely simple white wall with two flower containers attached and with some floral containers on the wall beside the yellow house were much admired. They were classically simple and effective.

The semi-mature trees and planters in the street help to screen the vacant site. Perhaps, it is not a good idea to plant flowers under these trees, as these flowers are tiny and look out of scale and fussy. They also absorb plant nutrients required by the larger tree.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

We already alluded to the fact that you did not state what you would use the 17 acre ESB site for. You already mentioned it under the "Built Environment" heading. Now you are referring again to it under this section as "Regeneration of the Ash Field site", so it is unclear what your intentions are in this regard. We are glad that you are involved with the Corncrake project. You plan to continue with these projects.

There is much more that you can do in this regard to increase the enjoyment and educational value of local habitats.

Perhaps, your local school could also 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 village 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 and have such new street furniture designed in an innovative and appropriate fashion. Remember when choosing street furniture that black is the most difficult colour for the visually impaired to see.

And you should also ensure that the Irish names for all species are included.

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 was very little litter in Shannonbridge on adjudication day

There was a pint glass (empty) in the "headless" village pump beside Lukker's, and another abandoned pint glass also on the adjacent clean seat.

There was a small collection of litter inside the Offaly County Council pumping station gate. It appeared to be too far away from the gate to have been thrown over the gate. Perhaps, it fell off a vehicle?

We are glad that you have developed a relationship with the Litter Warden, and that you conduct litter picks on a regular basis. How often is "regular"? It would be interesting to know, as you appear to have good results.

Waste Minimisation:

You are maintaining the bottle bank, and you plan to work with the school on recycling projects.

However, waste minimisation is about more than segregation and recycling. It involves the prevention of waste 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 can refer to the Race Against Waste booklet available from the Tidy Towns Unit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government.

You could increase your marks considerably in this section. 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 a local park. You can gain marks by doing some of these things for 2010.

Tidiness:

Some letters are missing from the Shannon river sign on the bridge. This also forms an untidy first impression.

There are far too many signs for the Old Fort Restaurant and Bistro. Please liaise with the owner/occupier to try to rationalise signage. The gable signage on Lukker's gable is also strident and out-of-scale. The large sign on the front elevation also takes from the building.

Part of the railings on the bridge, village end, need painting.

The Quay itself is a lovely old river area and is being well looked after, with stonework and paving in good order, and with lovely semi-mature trees in gravel areas. There were just a few weeds in the access splay gravel area to the north quay.

The town recycling bins were very shoddy and looked particularly badly, located, as they are, in such a beautiful area. The bins for the boats are in better condition, but they could do with some screening.

Moran's Burmah sign is dirty and broken. The pavement outside is cluttered with shop items and signage, and this looks untidy and is also unsuitable for people with mobility issues. The school road sign opposite the church has a very rusty pole.

The containers and machinery in the compound/ field on the way down to the power station site need screening. Otherwise, the approach to the power station area is impressively landscaped with gravel and boulders, against a backdrop of natural hedging/wood and with new fencing.

The school needs weeding inside the playground.

A rusty sign, which is not in use, outside somewhat rusty pink and white railings, and boundary wall on the street needed attention.

The street paths were virtually weed free, and your project with FAS /CE for this year has borne fruit,

A forest of signage exists at the Clonmacnoise junction, just outside the village. Not alone was there a lot of official directional signage, but this had been added to by two large free standing signs. This looks untidy. This was also mentioned in last year's adjudicator's report.

Residential Areas:

Your residential areas looked well, as did your town houses. Remarks made under "Built Environment" also apply here with regard to residential properties. You are supporting residents in their efforts to maintain green spaces. Make the proposed stone name signage simple.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach from Co. Roscommon to the West is in need of weeding at the speed limit sign. The wall adjacent to the coarse fishing sign is broken. There are potholes in the approach to "Welcome to Shannonbridge" sign, and the footpath on the right hand side requires weeding. The embankment on the left is very attractive, and must be a good habitat for wildlife. The "Ely O'Carroll" sign looks well, and has good floral displays adjacent. The grass on the bank is very neatly cut and there is a great sense of enclosure. Some road signs need repair, and a wall needs painting nearby.

There is a lovely vista across to the village, as one crosses the bridge, with the exception of a few corrugated roofs needing painting.

The Clonmacnoise Road has a good "Welcome to Shannonbridge" sign. The water tower splay needs weeding. Banks are good, as are trees on this road. Some weeding and surfacing is required in front of the new house. A nearby farmyard needs a tidy up, opposite the junction of this road with the main road. The farmhouse on the corner has railings, which need repainting.

The Birr road is looking well with just one vacant site, which needs screening. It is a leafy and green approach.

General Impression:

Shannonbridge is a lovely village with a unique heritage on the river Shannon. It is in an area frequented by tourists due to the river cruising visitors, and also in relation to its proximity to Clonmacnoise. It is good to see that you are using your built heritage as part of the tourism endeavour, as it is important to find new uses for buildings in order that they may be conserved into the future. You have a stock of unique buildings, which many villages would envy. The main street retains its vernacular feel. You are a group who are working hard, but you would be well advised to plan for the short term of 3 to 5 years, so that you have a focus and direction that prioritises projects and cost them – even roughly. Then you can move forward and call on the assistance of the agencies, bodies, and local business.