

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Shinrone** Ref: **293**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **264**
Category: **B** Date(s): **27/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	38
The Built Environment	50	36
Landscaping	50	39
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	26
Litter Control	50	31
Waste Minimisation	20	9
Tidiness	30	16
Residential Areas	40	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	264

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

You have a good organised approach to your work in that you are part of the larger Shinrone Community Group. This give you access to information and extra person power when needed. It also is a great way of communicating your message and project plans to the wider community.

You acknowledge the assistance of the FAS CE scheme, which you say is excellent and the support of other groups in your area, the financial support received from Offaly County Council, and the professional advice and help which they bring to you. You are also lucky to be in the Shannon Development area, and they too, and the ESB are acknowledged, and last but by no means least, the enthusiastic committee.

You do not appear to tell us how many members you currently have, although you give us lots of other information about the group!

You are involved with the National School with the support of your local Environmental Awareness Officer. We are delighted to hear that two schools have received the "Green Flag". Well done to all concerned! We are especially glad that you promote Junior TidyTowns in the schools. As well as being equal citizens of our villages, young people have a lot of new ideas, technological ability, and energy!

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 / 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.

We are delighted that you consider that you get a fair assessment from the annual adjudication. We hope that this year's adjudication lives up to this standard!

Well done on your involvement with submissions to the County Development Plan.

Your map was accurate, but showed few names of estates etc. Neither did it show each project for 2009.

The Built Environment:

The Catholic Church is on a highly visible site, in a triangle between two approach roads. It is well maintained with nice grounds.

The Church of Ireland is a lovely building in magnificent surrounds. The high stone walls, arched gates and steps of the property opposite the Church of Ireland were mature and well maintained.

The "Foodstore" opposite the Church of Ireland is a truly wonderful building of vernacular, architectural merit, and was the cleanest and tidiest premises seen in this adjudicator's travels in 2009. There was no obstruction of the footpaths with merchandise, and the owners were busily sweeping and cleaning on adjudication day, although it would be hard to see what sweeping was needed! Incidentally, the shop retains original shelving, as curiosity brought us inside! A lovely two storey house opposite, with one boarded window on the first floor, could do with a repaint.

The Castle Bar was well presented, and occupies a strategic site below the castle and on the junction of three roads.

The Methodist Church – whilst not architecturally uplifting - would be improved with landscaping on the street side.

Cloughmoyle School building looks really well with its nice red door and bargeboards, and old stone school sign. It is a pity that the windows have to be "meshed."

There are some lovely terraces of houses in the main street, one facing the Roscrea Road, and the other in a dip below the street, just beyond. Colour is used effectively.

Well done on getting the area in front of the school upgraded. It looked really well on adjudication day, with its lovely stone walls and bright green gates and clean new pull-in surfacing. The haybarn opposite, with its luxuriant growth is looking well. However, the vent area in the hall beside still needs attention and the hall still needs painting. This was remarked upon by last year's adjudicator.

Spains is in a strategic area and looked very well, and a vivid red garage gate was admired in this area also. A very nice, well maintained, black gate was noted at the Roscrea approach, close to a stone house which was well presented, although regrettably the windows were uPVC replacements for the original timber windows. A good grey farm gate was observed in the end house of the estate facing the Castle Bar. This house also had well maintained garden railings and gate. "E Guest" is a nice, old, simple shop front that might be painted.

McNamara's is a lovely building with a fine steeply pitched roof, and retains some of its original fenestration. It was looking very well on adjudication day in its fine colour. A little of the gable requires a repaint, near the nice gable plant creeper.

There are two fine tall houses at the bottom of the street on the Cloughjordan side. Both could do with a little attention. It is unfortunate that the house with the "garden" curtilage has had window and some railing replacement, which are not in character with the originals. The house on the streetside has retained its lovely windows (except for the disused shop front insertion). We hope that the full building behind the river area will be brought back into use and conserved properly.

The funeral parlour is neat and set in its own grounds. But it could do with some softening. Obviously, there is a need for car parking within the site, but this would appear to be uncontrolled. Could the site be landscaped with parking bays? The nice gate beside requires conservation work due to rust. Good attractive cottages are set off-line opposite the church, and look really well for that. They are also very well looked after.

The blue capping on the graveyard wall/ gate pillars on the Birr Road needs painting, as does the swing pedestrian gate. Planting is required to soften the front of the wall and parking area either inside or against the front of the wall.

You get involved with developers and have an input into the planning stage. On this, could you endeavour to encourage Irish naming for new housing, which will resonate with the local heritage? You could discuss this with the Heritage Section of your Local Authority. We look forward to your new bilingual signage.

Your efforts to encourage property owners in the village to maintain their properties to the highest standards are having good effect, and we particularly liked the fact that you give assistance, where required to help people to do this. This shows you to be a caring community.

When you are choosing new litter bins for the village, please be sure to take architectural and engineering advice on their selection; the first to ensure that they are suitable for your lovely village, and secondly to make sure that they are sturdy and easily maintained, and emptied.

Landscaping:

Your lovely grassed areas, with semi mature trees, and your stone planted raised beds edgings throughout the village were much admired.

The semi-mature line of trees planted in the main street area is very effective.

You are continuing to maintain the landscaping in the village, including the area around the riverside. Don't try to "do" all estate planting, as the planning authority will ensure that planting proposals and landscaping proposals are part of the developers' responsibility. You should be concentrating your efforts on communal public spaces.

The river area project developed a few years ago under the Urban and Village Renewal Programme is very nice, with its access to the river and its good planting. However, please see comments ensuing under other headings.

The grounds of the Church of Ireland were particularly admired, and they are maintained in pristine condition. The lovely mature trees including copper beech lend this part of the village a very established mature air. The carpets of daisies and dandelions that set off the stonework so well here were admired. The property opposite the church, with its greenery also adds to this. Perhaps, it is/was the Rectory? The green space opposite the Castle Bar looked very well, and gave a great sense of spaciousness in its classical simplicity.

The pump opposite the Castle Bar is "headless", although painted, and its "trough" was fairly colourless, with only some low green leaves on display! The green and seat area beside looked very well. The stone wall and hedging between the Castle and the Church of Ireland were wonderfully maintained. The footpath opposite needs weeding.

The open gates at the Castle Bar area were showing off a colourful mature garden area - too difficult to resist -and the sandwiches were good!

The small green space, with the seat between the little semi circle of houses near the river area, is a lovely tranquil space sheltered by the gable of the tall building on one side.

There was a lovely section of wall on the town side of the graveyard on the Birr Road with ivy and with lots of roses, and with lovely trailing baskets, much nicer than hanging baskets, hung across the wall. Well done to the person with these green fingers!

The semi-mature trees in the area near the church on the Brosna Road were admired.

The environs of the nursing/retirement home were well maintained.

Generally, you have simple natural planting in your village and we commend this and recommend that you continue to plant thus. Having said this - one could not but complement the brightly coloured hanging baskets on the lights!

The landscaping at the nursing home (rear curtilage) is hard landscaping, and the materials are not colour suited to the village.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You are maintaining the landscape well, and you are conscious of the need to provide wildlife corridors along road verges. You are also continuing to maintain the graveyard at the Church of Ireland.

Both graveyards are good wildlife areas. Part of the graveyard at the Birr Road is in regular use, and the other part is left as meadowland. We are delighted that Offaly County Council are involved in ongoing maintenance also with you, as you will be well advised with regard to graveyard environmental issues by the Environmental Section, and with regard to local graveyard heritage and wildlife habitat issues by the Heritage Section of the Council.

You continue to cultivate wild flowers in areas throughout the community. Perhaps, it would be helpful if you indicated these areas on your map. We look forward to the continued development of the river area to include habitat information.

You do say that you will carry out hedge cutting as appropriate times of the year, but on the Brosna Road it would appear that some of the hedge cutting on this road took place quite recently and you are reminded 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.

Well done on continuing to accumulate information now after the visit of the Wildlife Ranger. Perhaps, the Heritage Section of your Local Authority could help you in this regard also. Your schools could also become involved. The provision of a wildlife survey and management plan contributes to the marks in this section. Remember to endeavour to do progress in this for 2010! Findings can subsequently be made public on information panels as you propose. You have received funding for this. You do not say from what source. 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. With such a good environment in the town, 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.

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 was little litter in Shinrone on adjudication day - other than at the riverside area. This is great commitment on your behalf and also on FAS workers behalf, and you are to be applauded for that! Your emptying of the bins on a daily basis is excellent. And you continue with the Community Clean-Up.

We look forward to seeing the extra bins. You also are targeting initiatives at the National School with regard to litter. This is good, because it educates the children in litter management, and also gets through to the parents on the same subject.

One crisp bag was seen at the entrance to Shinrone Oaks. Just outside the estate, there were two pieces of discarded paper. It is not a lot of litter, but it would be better if it were not there.

Unfortunately, there was some litter – plastic bottles and papers around the seating area at the river on

adjudication day. This was also the case on last year's adjudicator's report. You will have to target this area in your daily clean-ups. And there was a small amount at the recycling area. The recycling area was fair, but a cardboard box was left there, and there were small bits of rubbish and dirt underneath the bins.

Waste Minimisation:

It is a pity that you did not enclose a copy of the letter you sent to businesses about waste minimisation. Remember that waste minimisation is about more than not recycling – laudable as recycling is. It is also about more than composting – and composting is good. 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. You could increase your marks considerably in this section by so doing. 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.

We are glad to see that the Environmental Awareness Officer is visiting your schools.

Tidiness:

Surprisingly, probably the untidiest area in Shinrone is the river area, of which you could be justifiably proud if it was fully presentable. It is a lovely, tranquil spot, and aspects of the space were inviting on adjudication day. However, apart from the litter dealt with already, the river area requires weeding of the gravel areas.

The grating at the near arch of the bridge was very overgrown with weeds pushing through the "gated area". This is a pity in an area which has been developed for the community with goodwill. The sign, which really should not be attached to the stone bridge, looked shoddy. The condition of the litter bin was bad!

The Shinrone sign on the Roscrea approach needs cleaning. Good road signs can make a big difference in a village, and you are lucky to be getting some new signs.

The site beside Deanery Furniture (good) was very poor with very poor gates, and scattered machinery and general air of neglect.

The site behind the river area (partially restored building) needs tidying/landscaping.

You continue to weed kerbs and footpaths – we hope in an environmentally friendly way! You do this on a four week rota. The footpath in the Castle area was probably on that week's rota, as it needed some weeding! Your sweeping is carried out in conjunction with the Local Authority. I am sure they appreciate your efforts also. One farm gate area, almost opposite the Church of Ireland, could have done with weeding.

The Quakertown Road, where the Garda Station is located, needs fence repair beyond the 50kph speed limit.

The area of the Cloneden construction site facing the main road, near the church, could either screen or remove its signage and few remaining materials.

Signage at Clover Lodge/Clover Court looked out of place and out of scale with your nice village.

The recycling site could do with significant improvement - painting the wall behind and landscaping. A large, grey farm shed building in this area is also in need of painting. The car park area here is a sea of ugly rough surfacing, which needs to be fully landscaped, surfaced and marked out. The Sui An Roin sign was interesting, but really refers to parish heritage information, which is fine, but it would be good to have village

heritage information also available. The old wooden stake tied on to the pole supporting this information board did not appear to have a function.

Offaly County Council pumping station could do with being “cheered up”!

The Bus Stop” area is quite shoddy, and could do with brightening.

The Top garage has a good stone wall background and was neat. In the area of Landy’s, there was a lot of signage.

The pump in the centre of the village has a lovely backdrop of plants including lavender. There is no need for planters here – keep it simple. And anyway some of your half barrels are getting old.

The neat surrounds of the “Doyle” cross monument were noted.

Residential Areas:

The cul-de-sac estate near the GAA grounds has laurel hedging, trees and very good gardens, with one or two exceptions.

The nice Local Authority estate is well screened and planted.

The small estate of houses opposite the church close to the Brosna and Birr Road junction are built along a turn/curve in the road and look well and are well landscaped. They have a beautiful stone wall boundary with good bargeboards which are a feature of the county. There is a lovely grove of trees at the entrance to the Cloneden Construction estate (no name as yet). Grass needs cutting in this estate, which is partially developed, behind the row of single storey new houses facing the church, especially in the seating area. Likewise, the unfinished area of the estate should be screened off.

At the Rathbaun estate, there are lovely semi-mature trees in the grass verge.

Shinrone Oaks looks well but weeding is needed of the footpath inside the entrance gate, and on the public road fence area. There were some nice roses etc. planted in the area of the cottages on the Roscrea approach.

The two storey houses on the Cloughjordan approach at an angle in the road are good big-estate type houses, one being in better condition.

An estate on the Cloughjordan approach was well planted, but unfinished. St. Mary’s area was very well presented.

The small group of single storey houses, opposite the river area, was kept very nicely, with an elegantly simple raised stone planted area in the centre of the access area.

The estate at the bottom of the street on the Cloughjordan approach was well cared for and even had “free range” hens pecking around in one open plan garden area! As the gardens are open plan, one wonders how this works! The planted area surrounding the mature tree at the entrance to this estate is beautifully developed and landscaped.

We hope that the estates themselves will have enough interested residents to look after their own patch, whether they are Tidy Towns’ members or not! You appear to have had problems in this area, and perhaps you feel this is the best way for you to operate. But it is adding a big extra load to your resources.

We are delighted that Coillte have donated trees.

Please name your estates on the map you submitted and on the ground

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The Birr approach is clean and neat with lovely mature trees, with well cut hedges. The grass along the footpath on the graveyard side needs weeding. Otherwise, the hedges along this road are trim and have mature planting. Where there are insets of concrete block walls along the road boundary, it would be good if these could be planted or plastered, or both. In front of one of these block walls, there was a need for gravel weeding.

The Brosna Road is a lovely approach with hedging and a very rural feel. Remember to leave some long grasses on the inside of grass margins uncut in order to form a wildlife corridor. There is a lovely vista towards the church. There are some gates which need painting. A co-ordinated gate painting for the village and approaches would look well. There is a good stone wall here, with a lovely inbuilt seat, which seems to be a feature in parts of County Offaly.

The Roscrea approach is through parkland scenery. The gable of the house at the speed limit sign needs painting, and some weeding in the frontage of the adjacent house would make this entrance to the village tidier. Well done on your planting here. The lovely approach uphill to the village past good properties brings one to the Health Centre, the fence of which needs replacement.

The Cloughjordan Road has a number of unoccupied, but well presented unused houses/sheds/farm buildings, which is interesting. The stone wall with poppies and grasses was admired. Opposite this was a wall with an adjacent footpath in need of some weeding. Off this approach, the lovely character full road to Cloughmoyle was admired.

As with every other category, your work in this area is extensive. You are certainly a very eager, active group!

General Impression:

You are an eager, active group, as we have already said, who know what you are about, and are going about your work like busy beavers. We admire your energy, and we think you are going to go from strength to strength in this competition. East Offaly has in general done well within the county in this competition and it is nice to see such a potentially successful group emerging in the West! But do try to remedy the minus points (e.g. riverside), now noted in two consecutive years!

