

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Tubber** Ref: **285**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **281**
Category: **A** Date(s): **03/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	38
The Built Environment	50	35
Landscaping	50	41
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	24
Litter Control	50	39
Waste Minimisation	20	11
Tidiness	30	21
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	37
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	281

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 Tubber an ever improving place in which to live. 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.

You have a good membership for a small village, and there is certainly a pride in your place amongst the community. You meet regularly, especially in the summer months. Well done on your bag packing event which raised you €2,500. You are lucky to have a good supportive business in the Cat and Bagpipes, and also to have a very generous Drama Group.

You are generous in your praise and acknowledgement of your FAS workers, and they deserve this praise, as the village is looking very well, thanks to all concerned.

We are also glad that you have a good relationship with Offaly County Council, and that they are assisting your flood relief and planting efforts.

The GAA is also generous in allowing you use of its equipment and the Offaly Leader Group are also supporting you.

With regard to communication, do not forget to send your notices to other denominational churches that serve

the area. The Tubber notes are a good, regular way of getting your news and notices across to readers, and you obviously have a good PRO.

We wish the school well with the Green Flag award entry.

We like the fact that you appreciate the benefits of this competition, which transcend all other benefits – in your own words "it fosters community development and co-operation".

You have a good sense of humour too – and yes, you will like it this year because you are gaining extra marks, and they are well deserved!

Your village may be lacking in very distinctive natural features, but you have a distinct advantage, which few other villages in Co. Offaly appear to have, you have a relief road by the village, so you can enjoy a reasonably quiet traffic zone.

And finally, the fairy godparent granted your wish with regard to visiting time. It was exactly when you hoped it would be!

The Built Environment:

St Manchan's National school is a lovely, modern, renewed and extended building with a good design, which also incorporates the history of the National School in the village, having as it does the dates of the previous school foundations on its front elevation in good stone signage. The school is well landscaped and set in front of a nice, gravelled and planted area along the roadside. Original feature stiles have been retained, and edged in bright blue.

The church is a little drab, (inside it is impeccable) and could do with a repaint outside, perhaps in anticipation of next year's competition. It too is in a strategic location in the village. The grounds are small in scale and could do with a little softening. All that exists are two flower tubs at the statue to the rear of the church. The Community Centre looked reasonably well.

The Cat and Bagpipe building complex is very traditional, and the associated single storey building across the road, where the perfectly painted post box is located, is a wonderful example of Irish rural, vernacular out houses. The entire complex is painted brightly and it has floral displays, and the only fault that one could find with it all is the fact that the Christmas decorations are still in situ. This was remarked upon by last year's adjudicator also. And we understand the bother and expense of renewing such décor, but we would encourage you to see if there is anything you can do about it, as it does not look good in late June/early July!

There is a fine, 5-bay house with good doorcase on the main Clara Road, which is well presented, but has had uPVC replacements for its sash windows.

The GAA, including the new gym, is very well presented with nice gates and good clean road frontage and excellent, tall, cared-for hedging.

The Rural and Community Development Centre is outside the main village, but is really beautifully landscaped and fenced appropriately, and the cascading water /stream feature was much admired, and erected in memory of a Trustee of the Local Group Water Scheme. What a lovely idea! We are not so sure about planting flowers at the base of trees, as along this stretch of road on both sides, as it can look fussy visually, and the flowers can take from the sustenance in the ground which the trees need.

Thank you for your photographic material also. It was informative and colourful.

The sculptures in the Rose Garden looked well to an observer "roadside."

The village name signs on all "wells" are both in Irish and English.

Landscaping:

The lovely Village Park at the Motorway approach is very simple and effective. It looks well and gives screening from passing traffic, and the trees in turn absorb emissions. The grass is well cut, and the fencing is simple, clean and in good condition.

The flowerbed along the approach road from the Park, surrounding a power pole and just before the school (opposite side), is very colourful with its red yellow and orange floral display.

There are some lovely, native trees around the village – like the young oak tree near the Tullamore directional sign, close to the school.

The trees and flower pots, in the vicinity of the car park area beside the church, were admired.

There is a lovely shrub planted triangle at the junction near the school, with two clean, new directional signs included in the planted area. The edges are trim and neat, and even the adjacent sluice valve sign is sparkling!

The entire planted areas of car park/landscaped area/pump and water feature in the vicinity of the church and the Cat and Bagpipes are absolutely wonderful. Well Done! This is hard and soft landscaping at its natural best without fuss. The theme is carried across the road to the lovely, bow shaped planting at the historical interpretative board. But to be honest, despite the path and arched exit onto the road and “invitation” to cross over - this adjudicator did cross in trepidation of traffic. Would you consider putting all this interesting information on the same side of the road, where everything else is and where there is space to park while one studies your local heritage?!

The simple pinks, reds and white bedding plants around the pump are most attractive and so well maintained!

The red rose bed, set against the stone wall at the junction near the Historical sign, is stunning and classical in its simplicity, and effectiveness. This space is very nicely laid out, with a good green gate and other shrub edging.

The picnic area is very appealing, and the new picnic furniture is solid and attractive. The vista along the long green space, beside the busy road, with its lovely tree planting enhances the site, despite the adjacent heavy traffic. The hedging and grass are well tended, though be careful not to cut hedges between the 1st March and 31st of August annually as 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 during this period. This is for the protection of nesting birds.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Your planting proposal for the Park area to encourage butterflies, bees, and insect wildlife is good, as are your bird boxes. Your other proposals here too are welcome. Perhaps, your local school could help you with these? 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. 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 enter any one of the project types mentioned. You can gain extra marks in this section in 2010 if you even start this happening.

Litter Control:

There was no evidence of litter in Tubber. The bins were clean and emptied. You obviously have a good methodology with litter. It would be good if you could tell us more about how you engage people in compliance and what your proposals are for the furtherance of your good litter status.

Waste Minimisation:

It is good that you are composting. However, waste minimisation is about more than this. 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.

Tidiness:

The name signs (wells) on all approaches are pristine and bright. And there is unity in their design.

The hay barn and prefab in the field facing one, as one leaves the Motorway road and heads towards the village near the Park, look untidy and it would be good if they could be screened, as this may be the first impression a person gets of Tubber if approaching in this direction.

Along this, road surfacing needs to be carried out .

The Tullamore directional sign near the school junction with the Park road is dirty, and needs cleaning. The back of this sign is in worse condition; facing traffic exiting the village towards the Park, so overall perhaps it should be replaced.

The recycling area was extremely well kept and the notices and the bins were in good condition. The three well-tended flower tubs in front of the bins added a dash of colour. A most ingenious wooden trellis and trailing shrubs surrounded the free standing oil tank in the same area. The adjudicator is not one hundred per cent sure if this complies with regulations! In any event it looked charming!

The few bollards beside the church gate appear to have been hit in a small way, and could do with repainting.

You obviously have a committed local engineer, as all your road signs are in pristine condition, apart from the one or two mentioned.

We are not so sure about the 3 grouped and framed political posters in the Rose Garden, but with that amount of screening I suppose we won't deduct too many marks! (none)

Residential Areas:

The standard of residential property presentation in the village is very good. The houses along the approach road from the Park towards the village are well landscaped, with good fencing and hedging.

There is a delightful, lemon coloured house on the road leading down by the Historical signs (Kilfoylan Road), with excellent hedging and landscaping. There is a good, off-white house also here and it also has nice boundary planting, and there is another property with a fine hedge and floral border beside.

The stone "trough" boxes of flowers in the stone boundary frontage of a house, on the road that branches off from the school, were greatly admired, as was the Rose Garden and its wonderful boundary displays, as well as the garden itself, which looked so interesting from the roadside.

The house in the triangle between the Park Road and the road leading out to the Rose Garden is also very well looked after .

The Parochial House is a good characterful building.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The immediate impression on the approach from Horseleap is a little sad, as burnt weed edges greet the visitor in the road margin beside a wooden fence (left hand side approaching). We wonder about the environmental policies with regard to weed killing. However, the picture quickly improves when one gets closer to the village and one sees the lovely stone walls and neat houses with good hedges. A clothes line very close to the road detracts a little here. Then there are 6 semi-detached bungalows on the left, which are very well presented. Some nettles on the left hand side could be trimmed in this area. There is a lovely rockery on the left hand side of the road, also with great roses and shrubs with grasses, and daisies on the opposite side. The Well signage was admired, and whereas the signage in another village may seem "twee", there is a very good indigenous reason for it to be here because of the name of the village.

The field opposite this nice area is a bit untidy, with a few signs and a disorderly opening into the field.

You asked for planting on the motorway approach and a lot has been done with planting all the way from the roundabout to the village. But the roundabout needs tidying and the trees need some of the choking weeds removed, as well as augmentation, as they are at large distances apart. The trees also need staking.

However, this is a good start, considering this section of the motorway was only opened lately. You know you have arrived in the village because of the trimmed Well sign again on this approach. The cul-de-sac road at the end of the village, beside the Park / motorway approach, could badly do with resurfacing.

The Clara approach is amazing insofar as you appear to have taken responsibility for half the countryside! You really have adopted the whole long approach and tended it very well with trees and care.

The road opposite the Horseleap approach is leafy and rural. The 50 kph sign is slightly bent. There is a lovely grass border along the left hand side of this road approach.

Footpaths throughout are very well weeded.

The side road, which branches off at the school, has some lovely gardens and clean community alert signs. It also has very well tended green edges along the roadside and at the speed limit end, benefits from parkland trees belonging to a Big House.

General Impression:

The general impression this adjudicator has of Tubber is of a very vibrant, rural community, who really are prepared to work hard at what they believe in, and whose efforts are showing in the wonderful impression of a small village, which has not been blessed with huge natural advantages - yet making itself to be a most memorable place from which the visitor comes away with positive and happy feelings. We feel that -with attention to some of the areas where you need to progress - that you will be soon well on the way to achieving high marks in all future competitions.