

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Walsh Island** Ref: **292**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **252**
Category: **B** Date(s): **06/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	33
The Built Environment	50	32
Landscaping	50	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	19
Litter Control	50	41
Waste Minimisation	20	11
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	32
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	252

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 Walsh Island an ever improving place in which to live. You have one meeting per month, and you have a committee of 8. This is a reasonably sized committee for a small village, but I am sure that you could do with extra help. FAS and OAK Partnership help you. Do you have a working relationship with your Local Authority? We are glad that you communicate in a democratic fashion with the community by holding public meetings. The vegetable garden at the rear of the school is an engaging way in which to relate to the young people. Threshing day must be a good get-together for you all.

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 adjudication guidelines. Your map is very diagrammatic, but was helpful. The application form could have been filled in more comprehensively.

There is however certainly a pride in your place amongst the community.

The Built Environment:

The maintenance of flower beds, which you mention under the "Built Environment" heading in your application form, really is part of the Landscaping section, where you reiterate the maintenance of planted areas etc. the projects you plan are "wishing well construction, and placing of farm machinery in village." We would not encourage you with these proposals, as they can make a village look rather "twee" and indeed machinery can make a green space look untidy, unless it is meticulously landscaped and maintained. Rather we feel you should be concentrating on the conservation and presentation of buildings, treatment of derelict sites, and the other things mentioned under this heading in the Tidy Towns handbook and indeed in the application form, and in the comments in this adjudication, especially those mentioned under the "tidiness" heading.

The GAA Centre looks well, but the grounds need finishing and landscaping.

The school is in a nicely screened site. The school gate is very badly rusted (this was also remarked upon in last year's report) and the fascia, and road elevation are generally very poor. The path opposite is weed free, but the school wall needs repainting badly. Otherwise, the school looks clean.

The house opposite the school is very neat with lovely mown grass and trees, and tubs outside. But is this pull-in area with tubs not meant to be a pull-in/parking area required in planning permission?

The church is very well maintained, together with the grounds and graveyard. There are lovely old gravestones in the graveyard and some old yew trees. It has original gates. The church splay walls appear to be original, but the decorative concrete wall is, otherwise, not in keeping with the character of the site, and might be planted. There is a small crack in the graveyard wall.

The Forge is excellently presented, and is a really lovely and obviously much cherished part of your built heritage with really good landscaping. There is a fine sturdy seat opposite the Forge in a nice green space.

Kavanaghs/P.O. looked very well on adjudication day.

Interestingly, your name signs spell "Walsh" and "Welsh" on two different approaches!

There is a nice simple farm gate close to the ESB substation, but it requires straightening, and its splay walls require painting.

Landscaping:

The landscaped areas at the Portarlinton and Edenderry approach roads are very nice. The signs for the village are in naturally planted and simply landscaped areas, and are very effective. Do not try to improve on these. Just maintain them well! The semi-mature trees at this point on the Edenderry Road look very well.

The well area is very pretty, apart from the Black Well sign which requires repainting, and leaves a good impression as one leaves the village for Edenderry.

You have this year again maintained planted areas and planted bedding plants throughout the village. This is

good, but please remember to plant shrubs and long lasting semi mature trees, as the maintenance of these will be easy and will give you all year around landscaping. You plan to get housing estates involved in planting their own areas. As already remarked upon, the planting at the Forge is exemplary.

Last year's adjudicator asked if there was a possibility of developing the old handball alley as a landscape project? Have you considered that since?

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The maintenance of the wild area and the relic area at Garymona is a good project. You do not appear to have any new projects listed under this heading. This is a pity. There is much more that you can do in this regard to increase the enjoyment and educational value of your village's native wildlife and natural amenities.

You could be well advised by, for example, The Heritage Section of Offaly County Council. The provision of a wildlife survey and management plan contributes to the marks in this section. 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? 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.

It would appear that the hedge close to the GAA centre was trimmed recently. 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.

Litter Control:

We are delighted to see that litter is patrolled daily. This is a big commitment, but it pays dividends. You state that you will create ongoing awareness of litter disposal, but you do not detail in any way as to how you will do this, except under the Waste Minimisation heading you say that you are working with local children to be active on litter. You seem to be mixing up litter control and waste minimisation a little.

Beyond the school there was some litter on the roadside. There was a little litter in the seat area near the forge.

Waste Minimisation:

Under this heading, you state that you have a bottle and can bank maintained at the school. It is good that you encourage recycling. Waste minimisation is about more than recycling. 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 road gravel edge also needs to be tidied around the entrance sign areas, especially at the Geashill side. Opposite the school area, what appears to be the remains of a golfing range(?) equipment or such like, is rusting and untidy. This area needs tidying and screening, and the associated shed needs plastering, if adequate screening is not forthcoming. The wall opposite the house between the church/school requires repainting. There is a nice hedge planted beside on the dormer house site.

On the village side of Rose Cottage the barn area and machinery /blocks on site needs screening, as it looks somewhat untidy.

The dead clippings from the hedge cut near the GAA pitch should be taken away and composted, and not left in situ. Weeding is required on the access road to the GAA; the road needs repair, and the walls (already scudded) will need to be plastered.

The vacant site opposite Ring O' the Fort access needs cleaning and tidying. A protruding manhole also needs attention. The Guinness sign on the ESB pole near the pub in the village needs renewal. Some frontages in the village need surfacing, including part of the pub front curtilage. The verge between near the School sign requires trimming and cutting of nettles behind the barbed wire fence. The barrier outside the school is crooked.

The recycling area was clean, but the bins are worn and grubby. It is located in a nice site screened with trees. Road markings in this area need repainting. There is a rusty sign and a field entrance needing weeding between Church View estate and the next houses; otherwise, this area has lovely mown grass. The school signs in the area of the Forge are very clean. Part of the beige with orange capped wall below the shop could do with repainting, although the house itself is excellent otherwise, as is the garden. Offaly County Council water treatment plant gate is rusting. A site with lorries and machinery on a site within the Coolgarry housing estate needs screening. The ESB substation entrance on the Edenderry Road needs tidying.

Residential Areas:

Parker's Hill area has good semi mature planting, but has one dead tree. Some other trees need restaking. There were no weeds along the footpaths and the grass was cut and the cut grass had been removed – hopefully for composting.

The floral display at Rose Cottage opposite was excellent and much admired.

At Ring O' The Fort, lots of weeding is required at the entrance and on footpaths and green space. The grass requires cutting, and the stones therein should be removed. Nice semi-mature trees have been planted in this estate.

The Island Lodge estate requires wall plastering around the open space and the trees need to be restaked. The house along the frontage was well presented, and the estate was virtually weed free.

Church View Estate is very well maintained with old and new houses and tall sycamores. It is very pleasant.

Two houses on the far side of Kavanagh's are very well planted.

The Coolgarry housing area, which is quite extensive looked very well, with nice planting at the entrance to the housing at the village side. The bigger estate section (outer side from village) was generally good, with nice rose and hydrangeas in some gardens. Some eaves require weeding and some frontages require tidying. One wall near the entrance to the outer estate needs cleaning/painting.

You are trying to create awareness of what needs to happen to improve the area, and you plan to work with developers on estate signage. This is good, and do not forget to try to have names of estates chosen which have a connection with your local history or geography. All to the good also, if these names are Irish

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

There are nice planted areas at the approaches to the village. The single piece of farm or turf machinery would be effective, if it were explained – especially if it were peat or turf related, given the bog island nature of the village hill area. The edging along the road could also be improved here. The picnic table was admired. Around the lovely bog oak, the wild grass needs trimming.

The name sign on the Portarlinton/Tullamore/Geashill approach is slightly bent, and it is also becoming obscured with the nice hedging. However, the area in front of the sign badly needs weeding and this equally applies to the other Edenderry entrance name signage area also. This creates a poor impression, at what are potentially lovely, classically simple first approaches to the entrance to the village. The name sign (also in Irish) on the Portarlinton/ Tullamore/Geashill approach is nicely set off with hedging.

The Coolgarry approach is rural and quiet.

The Edenderry Road Well area is also very attractive.

You intend to communicate with the Local Authority about road surfaces. Just remember that in straightened times the Local Authority has a very limited budget for local roads, so the more you can do to make your village look well, the better the case you will have in asking for assistance

General Impression:

The general impression is that Walsh Island community are trying hard to progress the environmental upgrade of the village. It is a very rural village with little built structure. What is in the village is scattered over a long length of roadway. This makes your task quite difficult, but you would be well advised to concentrate on what you have and to improve the standard of all that is currently in the village before you start to add any extra items or areas to be maintained. You need to engage with the new residents. Perhaps, you are already doing this. But you do not make that clear. They will be needed if you are to increase your workpower and your marks in future years, and it will also give them a sense of belonging in their new surrounds.