

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Portlaw** Ref: **241**
County: **Waterford** Mark: **238**
Category: **C** Date(s): **02/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	29
The Built Environment	50	32
Landscaping	50	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	23
Litter Control	50	28
Waste Minimisation	20	5
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	238

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome to the Tidy Towns Programme for 2009 and thank you for the Completed Entry Form together with the range of photographs and most helpful map suitably annotated. Even the heavy rain that greeted us on arrival could not hide the progress that has been made in the presentation of this most interesting of Irish towns over the last number of years. The approach between the two tall and regal walls until the imposing Church building closes the view is one of the more dramatic entrances to an Irish town we have enjoyed. The improved car park was well set off by the grassed area to the front and the flower bed in the corner.

Many individual houses were well and brightly painted with a good sprinkling of the Irish language. Complements on the splendid and easy to read street signs which are an excellent improvement. The Central Square is very impressive and is being well maintained. It is really sad to see the condition of the once great entrance gates and the remnants of the now ruined gate lodge. Can nothing be done? Also of concern is the state of the seemingly discontinued development at Church Court.

The Built Environment:

The many iconic buildings of Portlaw were in the main looking well on the day of adjudication. The yellow house with the red window shutters certainly caught the eye as did the Cotton Mill Pub and the Forge Inn. The Community Centre was well painted and neat in appearance while The Credit Union Building is missing the letter L in its name. The tall Catholic Church, Saint Patrick's over looking Portlaw is, with the surrounding cemetery, presented in a very fine manner. The small Garda Station itself was fine but some weeds outside the kerb here took from the overall impression. The library was a positive element in Malcomson Square as was the Flower shop in strong, successful colours. The offices of Brid Trihy looked neat while the Church of Ireland and especially its robust gates were well presented. The forge on Clonmel road was well presented with a good floral display to the fore. Remove the yellow sign and make good the ground damage here for

best effect. Repaint the doorway, perhaps in a bright colour for dramatic effect against the fine stonework..

Landscaping:

The newly built River Walk is indeed a splendid facility and anticipation of its imminent opening must be rising. In concept, design and construction standards it seems to be the ideal role model for such an amenity in any town. These same standards of excellence are very apparent at the splendid Grotto in Factory Street. We were impressed by the planting in Connolly Street and the large open spaces there with the communal grassed area being well maintained. The smaller scale and longer established amenity area at the junction of Brown and Upper Brown Streets was being well maintained. Saint Patrick's church grounds and cemetery featured no less than three flag polls but all were devoid of flags. The flying of flags is one of the least expensive enhancements one can recommend, bringing colour and movement to the scene in an instance.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The impact on this category of the new riverside walk is hard to underestimate. It opens up the probability of enhanced contact with bird life in that area in which herons, swans and perhaps even the occasional kingfisher can be observed. Have regard to the feeding needs of the bird population when selecting flowers and shrubs for use in private gardens and housing estates. Native, berry bearing shrubs are to be preferred. Do not overlook the claims of smaller, incidental spaces for use as natural habitats. The school grounds especially may offer opportunities in this regard. Discuss the options with a local bird life enthusiast or consult the Wild Life Officer attached to Waterford County Council or the Office of Public Works for ideas as to how to proceed.

Litter Control:

Litter management continues to be a difficulty to be overcome in Portlaoise. There was a good supply of appropriate designed litter bins in evidence on the day of adjudication. Your regular litter patrols are clearly having a beneficial effect in most streets, many of which were almost clear of any litter. There was a major black spot just before the Bridge which was very disappointing with serious amounts of discarded items here.

Waste Minimisation:

The location and presentation standard of your bottle bank is certainly in the higher end of the norm and well done to all involved in this presentation. It is clearly being used and the area well respected. This section of the competition is also about encouraging a change of mind-set in respect of waste minimisation in addition to dealing with material recycling as such. Literature is available from Waterford County Council and elsewhere to help individual households and the community at large to reduce usage of scarce and expensive energy, reuse items where appropriate and recycle materials wherever possible so that the final amount of waste carried to landfill is minimised. Many towns have staged an information evening to discuss the value and methods of home composting and related topics. These have proven to be of value to the individual householders and to the community at large.

Tidiness:

Many elements and factors call to be considered in this 'catch all' category. The overall impression of Portlaoise is of a neat and well painted, caring community. It is the sad lot of these reports to have to focus on the few negatives noted during our visit. The former entrance gates and lodge to the factory has been noted already while the old Convent building on Scrouty Road gives rise to concerns as well. There is a growing amount of sizeable dumped items populating a field on the road leading from the river to Malcomson Square – we noted a fridge/freezer, car and other large items. Remove or screen are the only two options here. The kegs from the pub beside Gruaig would be better stored in a side or back yard with a suitable gateway to screen them from view. Your efforts to have the overhead wires removed should continue.

Residential Areas:

Woodlands Estate has matured excellently and the individual homes and estate streets were a joy to observe on the day of adjudication. The use of the open spaces here to enhance the local scene was done with flair to great effect. The longer established Georges Street was colourful, with streets, paths and front walls neat and well swept. Many of the houses on Carrick Road had a character about them that only time and care can bestow. The houses on Bridge Street were well coordinated and suitably painted. They are a credit to their owners. The new developments on Oakville were a delight as were the two new houses on Rathcormuck Road. We admired the planting at the entrance to Beechwood Grove. The new infill buildings on Factory Road which enjoy the views of the splendid Grotto opposite are fit in well in this area, respecting the proportions and atmosphere of this long established street. Talbot's Tec Road was well swept, free of all litter and featured a very fine display of roses.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The main approach roads were well swept, featuring strong and suitable town name plates, a number in impressive stone. This collectively gave a wonderful first impression, which was fully vindicated by the town's presentation. Check the visibility of speed limit signs as a few have become obscured by encroaching vegetation, notably on the Rathcormuck Road. We admired the new parking markings at the cemetery car park. Scroutey Road was well swept with charming wide, well presented verges and hedgerows, but the road past the old factory entrance was very much below par both as to surface condition and neatness of the sides.

General Impression:

Portlaoise has improved very much over the last few years and is now a joy to visit. The renewed interest in the Irish language, a heightened appreciation of nature and wild life, coupled with the enhanced presentation of Malcomson Square and especially the Grotto all contribute to a feel good factor for the town. To everyone and each agency associated with this year's entry our best thanks and applause for your great and successful efforts. Please keep up the good work and you are wished well in next year's competition.