

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Avoca** Ref: **250**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **254**
Category: **B** Date(s): **17/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	35
The Built Environment	50	35
Landscaping	50	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	18
Litter Control	50	33
Waste Minimisation	20	9
Tidiness	30	21
Residential Areas	40	32
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	254

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for your completed application with clear map. There are 11 committee members in Avoca TidyTowns and there is a new Volunteer list which allows you to call on others for work days, including involvement from younger people. There are monthly meetings and weekly litter picks. There is support from Wicklow County Council, Fás, and the Vale of Avoca Development Association. You are commended on your use of email to communicate, setting up a website and in putting out a bi-monthly newsletter. Feel free to send a sample of this with next year's application. There are good communications in place. There are also strong links with the green schools committee. For next year, it would be good to see some strategic forward planning. Perhaps getting input of the community at a public meeting and through surveys, into what are the priority areas to tackle, and set out objectives for 3, 4 or 5 years ahead. Projects should be costed as far as possible, and assigned target dates and lead partners. You could still use the timescales of 'a bit of work; time and money; long term big projects'. In fact it sounds as if you have been planning, so submit evidence of this with the application to gain further marks. Well done on making progress to date and good luck in this years competition!

The Built Environment:

The bus depot and post office at the bridge are well presented with a clearly visible and attractive sign. The building at entrance to the depot may need to have the walls washed. The building on village end of bridge – Margaret Nagles, is run down but another coat of paint of key parts (doors and windows) would help. Fitzgerald's looks good and is of course recognisable from Bally K, the lanterns are attractive. The national school is well painted, and has a new front wall. The adjacent tower building should also be painted as should the front and side wall to be washed. Nice planting of beds and hanging baskets here. Hendleys looks very inviting, especially on approach over bridge where you can see the flowers and foliage on back terrace. The church railings, building and grounds look well. There is good mixture of coloured foliage and benches.

Shops in town are all neat and brightly painted. The mini-market stands out and adds vibrancy. There are some nice baskets and tubs put out on show. Garda Station looks smart and has nice plantings. The plans for wheelchair access were noted and approved of. Health Centre building looks ok, but the pillars need to be freshened up. Credit Union is delightful, and the old courthouse is put to good use as an IT centre.

Landscaping:

Where planting, keep in mind the year round interest and seed/ berry producing shrubs. Could do something with the back wall of the school, a mural or other project? This adjudicator spotted the inviting bench, water feature and lawn area by the old courthouse and was heading in to catch the evening sunshine but was disappointed to find it locked. What a pity this is a restricted area. Is it due to anti-social behaviour? Perhaps it could be left open and monitored by Garda on duty? How fortunate to have a landscape gardener and designer on your committee. There are many opportunities for enhancing aspects of the village with planting climbers, trees and tidying up very wild areas, and these are pointed out in your application.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The proposed wildlife area was noticed as this adjudicator walked into town. This patch is already wild as no access from pedestrians, so what is planned apart from a litter pick? If there is no access for people, how is it being used for education purposes or how is the habitat being enhanced from what is already there? Perhaps there are objectives here that are not coming through in the application so please submit further info. It is good that the newsletter will be used to inform locals, and Avoca tours are promoting local natural and industrial heritage through walking tours.

Two local walking routes have been established from Avoca. There should be an info panel, or guidance available freely for visitors to the village. How are they promoted? A loop route would be great, perhaps up to the other bridge on Rathdrum side, or at a higher level above town. Incorporating heritage of copper mines as well as biodiversity along the trail would be interesting. Is there information on the biodiversity and heritage aspects available for people? Further evidence of this should be submitted, or plans for it in future.

Litter Control:

On day of adjudication, there was no litter anywhere, so well done. The regular litter patrols, and ongoing education activities are paying off. There are plenty of bins in the area, regularly emptied. You are commended for the campaign to keep the Avoca Recycling centre, which involved much media coverage. It's a great amenity to have, and because it was almost lost will have more value and be well used.

Waste Minimisation:

With the fantastic Avoca Recycling Centre, there are good facilities available to everyone so no excuses for not recycling! There is also a strong emphasis there on reuse with the book shop, and other goods for swapping. Credit is due to the staff who are approachable and helpful. The info stand on sustainability at the market is a great way to promote all things sustainable and it is noted that this will include energy efficiency as well as waste minimisation.

Tidiness:

Need to fix up the edge of the church car park where there's some rubble and a broken sign. Nice lamppost there and well placed bins. The phone box is missing glass, although is working perfectly. Its sad that its to be taken away but that must be the story all round the country with advent of mobile phones. It will be interesting to see if there is any response to the call for comment on keeping it there. Are they used by anyone? If not used better to remove. There's a bit of graffiti on bins.

Broken wall at side of house beside Nagle's. This house is also terribly neglected. This route into town presents worst impression as there's a derelict site on one side (could the hoarding be painted?) and a derelict house on the other. Be persistent in dialogue with owners of derelict buildings and in communications with the Council. There is a good understanding of what is required in this section so keep up the good work and it will pay off.

Residential Areas:

Millmount has new footpath and trees planted outside. There is a nice lamppost in front of the two houses, with a building site at the back. The building opposite could do with painting wall. All the private houses seen have nice gardens and are well cared for. The row opposite the mini-market are delightful. The old post office is an interesting building and will look terrific once restoration is complete. Station Road house's generally well looked after with just a few patches of overgrown weeds. Some benches provided here along with nice

plantings, especially at entrance. Is the 'No parking' sign meant to deter non-residents? Perhaps it would be more effective if it was better quality and stated "residents parking only". There are now representatives of all estates and residents associations on the committee so this should mean more successful partnership working.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The signs right at the bridge are fine, but the ones at the 50km/p.h. point should be cleaned to improve first impression. Approaches are good, neat verges, clearly painted roadmarkings with weed free kerbs. The landscaping with benches at one side, good footpaths for some way out on the other side. The paths could be maintained a bit better further out, however, and as there is still some pedestrian activity verges could be trimmed out as far as the Old Coach Inn. This is a lovely building also and presents a good impression on the approach from Rathdrum. In the village itself, the pedestrian walkway from Fitzgeralds is effective in leading to the actual path. There are no roadmarkings whatsoever higher up – perhaps this is a work in progress as surfaces are good so likely to be new. There are plans identified for footpath improvements.

General Impression:

There is a growing sense of community in Avoca, and it's appearance is definitely improving. There is a renewed energy coming through from the reformed committee so this should mean steady progress in years ahead.