

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Coolboy** Ref: **1986**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **210**
Category: **A** Date(s): **18/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	35
The Built Environment	50	30
Landscaping	50	25
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	8
Litter Control	50	30
Waste Minimisation	20	4
Tidiness	30	16
Residential Areas	40	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	210

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome to TidyTowns and thank you for your completed application. This is a superb new entry and can see this village going far in the competition. It's difficult to raise funds and garner support, but now that a start has been made, and you're in the competition, it should be easier to get support from other organisations such as Wicklow County Council. Try applying for funds for specific projects under the LA21, for example for waste minimisation, and the Heritage fund for wildlife or heritage related ones. There are seven on the committee, with meetings held once a week. There are also public meetings every fortnight. There is support from Coolboy Post Office, Geogans store, The little moon pub, Coolafancy N.S., Carney ploughing Society and the community. Messages are spread by putting posters in local shops, and the local press and radio. There are also good links with local schools through competitions and clean-ups. In future years, build on community involvement by gathering input into a plan for your area. A 3, 4 or 5 year plan should set out priorities, with realistic timescales, lead partner and costings of projects.

The Built Environment:

Buildings are very well presented. All private residences are spruced up with fresh paint and nice gardens and many tubs & window boxes in place. The pub and Post Office are clean and bright. There are attractive lamp-posts, which contribute greatly to the appearance of the streetscape, which is good, especially on the southside with the fantastic views. Also, the water fountains are in good nick, as are the pumps. The large handball and sports centre is in good repair, but would be better presented if painted, at least on the side wall. It still has the Christmas lights up too. There are several ornate benches around the horse chestnut tree on village green, along with more picnic benches. All are in excellent condition.

Landscaping:

Could improve the field boundary to the left of the bridge, coming from Aughrim, and the green area on

opposite side of road. Its neat, but this is a suitable location for feature planting or other, suitable to location. There is a very nice old bench and small green area called St. Faic's well. It would be interesting to promote the heritage or importance of this. I assume the well was the hole in the ground covered over by plywood and a brick? This could be enhanced. There is a very attractive beds planted throughout and in front of the little moon, which also has nice window displays. The beds have beautiful summer colour but attention should always be given to providing year round interest – such as coloured foliage in varied forms and evergreens, and importantly for wildlife, plants that produce seeds and berries.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The river running through is the obvious natural feature to focus on under this section. It is mostly native vegetation that runs alongside. An area is being cleared at time of visit, presumably to open up the view. Be careful of not tidying it up too much as left wild it is more valuable habitat. In addition, removal of bankside vegetation can reduce bank stability. It would be good to see some interpretive panels promoting biodiversity and a host of other projects could be done in partnership with young people. Promoting walks and making some accessible trails would enhance marks here. The riding centre is a natural spot to promote as a nature area. It would be nice as a park, or just a trail with some education activities.

Litter Control:

Very clean, no problems seen. Might need a bin at the picnic area, or depending on approach being taken, may need some anti-litter signs encouraging people to take rubbish away with them. There is a bin in front of sports centre, and the grounds here were spotless. This might be a suitable spot for recycling bring banks? There is another bin outside the post office which is open top so this should not be left out overnight. Keep up the litter patrols, and the working in conjunction with school groups. It's working so far. If there are any problem areas, ask for support from the council litter wardens. To identify problem areas, carry out a survey and feed results into a strategy. Promotion of responsible behaviour in relation to littering also counts for marks here so be sure to include info on same in next years application.

Waste Minimisation:

Well done again on partnership with the school, particularly for creating end use for the worm tea and compost. You are commended for promoting home composting in the community. Does the school have a Green Flag? Please provide more info on any further links as in the green schools programme, schools must inform and involve the wider community. There could be further marks here, but it is difficult to judge on information provided so far. Please provide further info on waste management in the community such as any statistics on amount generated and recycled. Importantly, it would be good to find out householders, schools and businesses attitudes to prevent waste arising in the first place. Is there a recycling collection in Coolboy? Where are the nearest bring banks? How is the TidyTowns committee involved in minimising waste? See the Race Against Waste website for guidance, as well as consulting council environmental officers.

Tidiness:

The derelict building on left as coming from Aughrim could have appearance improved, but this is often beyond control of the TidyTowns committee. If the owner is in agreement, painting doors and/or window boards can make a huge improvement. The fence on left of bridge looks a bit broken, if this could be replaced would be good. It's at the base of the ESB pole which is quite visible on entry. Derelict sites or fields are well screened with shrubs and bedding plants at boundary wall at one, and a sturdy timber fence and good quality gate at another. A few signposts (such as Stop sign at Gorse haven) are rusty and could do with attention. Any new signs consider use of Irish. Most signs are clean. Be careful of having too many signs at the Tinahely junction and make sure all are good quality and clean.

Residential Areas:

Woodview Heights is a very well maintained estate. Grass lawns are trimmed, all kerbs are free of weeds. Houses and gardens are neat in appearance and there is no litter in sight. There is ample space to put some feature planting into communal areas or to plant trees. Perhaps at the path edge or boundary with road would be suitable, of course depending on community preferences. There is also a good natural hedgerow there on one side and this should be left as is and not mown any closer to leave space for wildlife. Another estate is Gorse Haven and is equally well presented. It has more trees and good natural habitat by the river. Coolattin Way could tidy up the green space at entrance and the main green area. Paths are good here. There is another small complex of houses, Coolattin View which is clean and modern. It could improve boundary fence at back. It should be softened in time as it matures.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Good presentation of approaches from the 50km point. The village signs are clean and clear. Roadside verges are mowed. May like to enhance the name signs in future, or get bigger ones, but as they are suits the village character perfectly well. From Aughrim direction some of the signposts need to be cleaned, and although outside of the village area, do contribute to first impression or a visitor looking for Coolboy. The junction with stop sign has very poor surfaces with potholes and this needs to be addressed. The stonewalls are all cleaned and planted. The bridge in the village is a nice feature and it was tidy with good visibility. The road surfaces on approach from south are better, with good traffic control and parking lay-bys. The paths opposite the post office are in a poor state, however the majority are new and in excellent condition.

General Impression:

Coolboy gives a good impression overall. If this is the starting position in the competition, it will do very well. The village is charming, and the location on the hill provides the visitor with wonderful views. There is a strong sense of community cohesion and pride of place. Keeping up the litter control, maintenance of landscaped areas, and general appearance of buildings are the basics, and then focus on one or two other areas each year to build steady progress.