

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Laragh** Ref: **260**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **245**
Category: **B** Date(s): **23/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	33
The Built Environment	50	31
Landscaping	50	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	25
Litter Control	50	38
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	16
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	245

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for your completed application with map. There is a lot of work for the committee of just 4 to do and you have made progress. It would be great if you could recruit more volunteers. Get creative on this issue and find out what other towns do. There are monthly meetings at present and monthly clean-ups. Many towns have set evenings each week to get together, so perhaps the frequency needs to be increased without commitment from volunteers to be there every week. Many towns also have volunteer lists who they can call on for special work days, rather than requiring on-going commitment. It depends on what suits locally so don't give up and you will find a way to garner more support. There is support from Dúchas and Wicklow County Council. There are also strong links with the local green school committee. It would be good to put together a plan outlining the priorities for the area over the next few years. Community input should be requested, in form of public meeting, or distributing response forms, etc. Perhaps this would garner more interest in the work of the Tidy Towns committee and encourage more people to get involved.

The Built Environment:

St. Kevin's National School is a beautiful stone building with some nice planting and colourful windowboxes on display. It has a very modest sign. There is a good info panel in the village and it's unusual to see two phone boxes, both in good state of repair. Many villages are losing their phone boxes through lack of use!

Lynam's looks great, as does the other large pub (Heather House?). McCoy's is not bad, but care should be taken not to overload the pavement outside with stock. There are good quality litter bins placed around the village. Brocknagh centre looks very well, clean front and nice plantings.

Landscaping:

There has been some nice planting of climbers, roses and evergreens.
At the Glenmacnass junction (Dublin side) there is nice planting of foliage with year round interest

The village green has fantastic mature trees and provides a warm and welcoming focus to the village. Especially so as there are so many tourists passing through, and the tables and seating outside look inviting, with old trees providing shade when its sunny.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

There is a wealth of natural amenities in the surrounding areas. Please submit more information on how the trails of national park are promoted by the TidyTowns committee. Is there a biodiversity aspect to the promotion? If the rangers are running activities, there would be plenty opportunities to tie in with that and further info would be of interest to adjudicators. The wildlife garden at St Kevins is a lovely space and bird boxes were noted.

Litter Control:

There was hardly any litter on day of adjudication, despite it being a very busy afternoon with many tourists in the area. There was a light scattering in places but there were plenty of bins. It must take vigilant watch to keep on top of litter management. Is there a litter management plan for the area, with identified 'hot-spots', schedule of clean-ups, litter patrols, education and awareness activities, links with the litter warden? Please provide further information in next years application. It is good that the committee works with the school through the green-school programme.

Waste Minimisation:

The segregation of litter is good, and well done to the school on achieving green flag status. To gain marks in this section, there are a host of projects that could be taken on. There may already be activities underway that would count here but you need to tell us about them! Any promotional work to encourage people to prevent waste or have more sustainable lifestyles would count. Has there been a waste audit done of any local businesses? Has there been a household survey carried out? How much waste is generated and how much of this could be further prevented or reduced? There are also aspects of energy efficiency that could be promoted here. Revisit the Race Against Waste website, Change.ie website, and talk to council environmental officers as well as other environmental organisations for inspiration. Continue to work in partnership with schools and if businesses could also come in on a partnership approach, even better.

Tidiness:

There is some new signage for the village. There is a derelict site near junction to Brockagh Centre which looks awful – was there a fire? What is planned to screen this site? Some painted hoarding would work well.

Residential Areas:

The houses near McCoy's are well kept, just some overgrown grass at the edges on entrance to the area and the fence is in need of repair. The housing estate on the Rathdrum road is without a name sign but looks good, with big open green spaces, benches and large planters. This must be Beechwood. There are large stones placed on the grass too, presumably to deter parking, but these are not unattractive. Most private houses are very well kept. The fantastic sculpted hedges were greatly admired.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

On the Rathdrum approach, the new bilingual Welcome to Laragh sign is very good, however the black and white namesign after this was obscured by vegetation. Suggest you remove the older sign.
On the approach from Wicklow, the arrival at Laragh is announced by the brown Clara Lara funpark sign which is in a poor condition. After that, a host of Bn'B signs. Be careful that these are kept in check. The council litter warden can advise on what's permitted as regards signage. An overkill of scattered signs will create a poor impression, but of course this has to be balanced with providing adequate direction for tourists. The name sign at the village itself is fine, and is clearly visible. The verges are mowed but there is some bare ground which could be enhanced by planting or reseeding.

General Impression:

Laragh is a pretty place, busy with tourists in the summer, and the services available in the town reflect this. It is also steeped in history and this is suitably cherished. There seems to be a lack of wider involvement and all work being left to a few. This seems to have resulted in a bit of a slowing down of any progress, possibly due to lack of energy. It would seem timely to have a renewed approach and focus on what's gone wrong and how it can be overcome. The village is in a lovely place and many people want to visit, so there is something there worth celebrating. I hope things will move forward again in the near future, and the very best of luck with your on-going efforts. Well done on work to date.