

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Shannon** Ref: **88**
County: **Clare** Mark: **273**
Category: **F** Date(s): **24/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	47
The Built Environment	50	34
Landscaping	50	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27
Litter Control	50	27
Waste Minimisation	20	16
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	32
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	273

Overall Development Approach:

We are delighted to welcome Shannon to the 2009 Tidy Towns Competition and would like to thank Shannon Tidy Towns Committee for submitting the entry together with your Action Plan 2009 – 2010, Draft Landscaping Plan for 2009 and copy of your excellent multi-lingual Anti Litter Poster. We particularly appreciated the excellent Map of Shannon which was very helpful during our visit.

We noted that your Committee continues to have 4 Executive Members and 4 Committee Members, holding regular meetings throughout the year in addition to meetings with various groups and officials of the local authorities. The meetings, added to the various Tidy Towns projects which are undertaken each year, must involve a very heavy workload for your Committee. Considering the size of Shannon and the wonderful work which has been taking place since Shannon Tidy Towns was founded in 1973, perhaps it would be advisable to try and get a few additional people to join the Committee and share the workload.

Your commitment and enthusiasm have obviously encouraged Clare County Council and Shannon Town Council to support your work and we congratulate you on managing to secure a grant of €2,000 this year to assist with your litter management and landscaping projects. One of the key aspects to Tidy Towns is that people work together to get things done and it is great to learn that you have the support of various organisations including Intel, MacDonalds, Shannon Youth Club and the Order of Malta – their contribution to your efforts is highly commendable.

The use of local media, social diary, parish newsletters and the Shannon.ie website would seem to be very appropriate communication strategies to reach the wider community. The use of projects, competitions and the Green Schools Programme to promote awareness of environmental issues to the schoolchildren is also fitting. We were delighted to learn that 5 Shannon Schools have already achieved Green Flag status and we wish the other schools every success in their preparation – it is not an easy task but it will be well worth the

effort.

Festivals and indeed the Tidy Towns Competition, are usually the sign of a healthy community where people happily work and playing together so we hope that your St Patrick's Day Parade, Funfair and Circus have been and will be very well supported and enjoyed by all.

The Built Environment:

Shannon has certainly grown and improved over the years. We thought we knew the town – having visited the Town Centre several times over the years. However, we must thank you for giving us the opportunity to discover Shannon's hidden charms.

As we toured the town we were very impressed by the excellent signage throughout, both traffic signs and the excellent nameplates on roads and residential estates – we must compliment Shannon on the wide use of Irish.

Ballycasey Business Park and nearby apartments were well presented with good signage and car parking facilities. The Old Lodge and Oakwood Arms Hotels were attractive buildings in neatly maintained grounds. St John and Paul Church was impeccably presented with excellent landscaping (weed control activities were observed during our visit).

Shannon has a fine selection of schools, most of which seem to have extensive and well maintained grounds. Public buildings which impressed during our visit included the Fire Station, the Town Hall with pretty flowerbed outside, the Garda Station with its new planted containers, Shannon Health Centre/Shannon Doc with shrubberies and well cut grass and the Library with bench seating outside.

The Sky Court Shopping Centre offered an excellent range of shops to locals and visitors alike. The Town Square is a wonderful amenity and it was a good idea to locate an Oratory within the Square (hopefully it will open soon). Petrol Stations in the town were operating within very tidy forecourts. McDonalds and Lidl premises were also neatly presented. Murphy's Cottage Restaurant operates in a wonderful thatched cottage.

The Shannon residents of all ages are very lucky to have such a fine selection of sporting facilities covering almost every activity. We were particularly impressed by the GAA grounds, Shannon Town United grounds and Slattery Park - St Senan's Rugby Football Club. We noted that the Leisure Centre was undergoing renovation and hopefully it will be fully operational again in the near future. The Town Park is a fine facility and should offer great potential when it is taken in charge by the Council.

Landscaping:

Your draft plan for landscaping was impressive and planting observed as we strolled through the town was of a very high standard including the wonderful display on the Ballycasey roundabout; the excellent flowerbeds and shrubberies along Bealach Bri; the inspiring mixed displays of bedding plants, shrubs and trees on Bóthar Mór and the planted circular containers at the junction near St Patrick's School. Raised flowerbeds were also admired at the shopping centre on Fergus Drive and the flowerbeds in the Jubilee Garden at St's John and Paul Church were lovely. The planting in front of the Ballycasey Frog was cute. Cascading tiered displays spotted at several locations were very effective.

We noted your intention to add shrubs to the sculptured feature on the roundabout near Lidl but on the day of our visit this had not taken place. We look forward to admiring the display of plants on a future visit.

The children's playground (Tir na n'Óg) is very well equipped and was certainly getting plenty of use during our visit – luckily it was a fine day so there were lots of happy faces!

Our visit to Illaunamanagh Graveyard was thought provoking. It was lovely to see that it was so well maintained – a sign of a very caring community, well done. The location of the graveyard is absolutely perfect, overlooking the river.

Shannon has a lovely spacious and airy feel about it with a wonderful range of large greens, excellent floral displays and some fine native trees, it is a credit to everyone involved in its presentation.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Shannon offers huge potential for projects under this category, not only in the excellent River Walks area but also at other wooded locations around the town – we were thinking of Tullyvarraga Hill or Tullyglass Hill.

It is good that you have sought the guidance of the County Council in relation to the erection of appropriate wildlife signage at the River Walks. A Shannon Wetlands display sign was observed on the Tullyvarraga Road.

This is an ideal category to involve local schoolchildren and teachers in appropriate projects and your contact within the County Council might start things rolling by recommending some beneficial activities for consideration.

Litter Control:

We congratulate Shannon on recently achieving 13th place out of 60 towns surveyed in the Irish Business Against Litter report, this was a very credible performance.

It is good that the National Spring Clean Week has been well supported in Shannon and that Clare County Council has committed so many resources to ensure that the town remains clean and tidy. The assistance given by the County Council to community groups and residents associations should be an inspiration to many other towns and local authorities around the country.

There was a very good supply of litter bins around the town and all seemed to be coping well within their capacity.

During our visit the town was relatively litter free but we did notice some broken glass in the car parks at the Town Centre. As this could cause safety issues, it would be important to regularly monitor the situation. We also spotted a rather sad looking chair which had been dumped near one of the trees at the start of the River Walk.

This category is not only marked on the absence of litter during the inspection but it also includes the planning process for litter control. Valuable additional marks can be achieved by submitting a litter control plan as part of your entry submission. Areas to be considered under such a plan would include a survey of problem areas, key litter generators, number and locations of litter bins and schedule of litter collections. Suggestions for resolution of problems, clear targets as the plan is rolled out and a clear method of monitoring progress should also be included.

Waste Minimisation:

The Recycling Centre at Smithstown is an excellent facility and being very well maintained. It is good to note that it has expanded its services to include green waste. The bottle bank near Tir na nÓg was very clean and tidy.

The proposed Composting and Waste Minimisation Workshops at the Recycling Centre should be very informative and we hope that they will be well supported by the community.

Tidiness:

The co-operation between the Tidy Towns Committee, Clare County Council, Shannon Town Council and the wider community is commendable and has certainly been paying dividends. The overall impression of the town during our visit was that it was well managed and in general quite tidy. While we were there, weeding was taking place and grassed areas were being cut, the activities were quite impressive. It was good to observe the cycle lanes on both sides of the Road near St Caimin's.

There was some weed growth along the pavement leading towards St Aidan's Community School which seemed to have been overlooked but the school itself was very well presented. The little traffic triangle near St John's School would benefit from some appropriate planting to enhance its appearance. There appeared to be a dumped car and caravan in a car park at Drumgeely Hill – perhaps this needs to be investigated.

Two pieces of graffiti was spotted on our tour – 'Sorry' on a building near the Gort Road junction with the Drumgeely Road (one wonders if the artist was 'Sorry' for the graffiti!); near the Town Park (opposite Lios Daróg sign) there was a Litter sign which had been defaced by graffiti and needed to be cleaned or replaced.

Ongoing developments in the town were being carried out without too much disruption.

Residential Areas:

Shannon has an extensive stock of good quality residential estates, most of which were very well laid out, and some fine individual homes. The standard of maintenance and garden presentation was generally very high. It was good to see that all estates we visited were clearly identified.

Well done Intel on your sponsorship of the Best Kept Areas, Best Kept Schools and the Best Kept Small Business. Competitions of this type are excellent ways to ensure that the everyone plays a part in improving their environment. Congratulations to the Senior Citizens Club for helping its members with upkeep of their homes – it is obvious that Shannon has a very committed community and is in safe hands.

Some of the residential estates we admired on our travels included Inis Ealga with its eye catching name plaque; Cúl na Gréine an attractive development of white properties with some hanging baskets, young trees and green areas; there were several fine new developments in the direction of Ballycasey and established developments which looked well included Tullyglass Hill, Tullyglass Court, Ballycasey more and Gleann an Oir.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach roads and network of roads throughout Shannon are very good and the standard of pavements is also high but obviously their condition needs to be continually monitored to ensure that problems are tackled as they arise. So far the County Council has served Shannon well and hopefully will be able to continue its excellent work.

General Impression:

We congratulate the Tidy Towns Committee on their achievements to date and particularly on the partnerships that you have nurtured with the likes of Clare County Council – Shannon is certainly benefiting from your co-operation, long may it continue.

Having first visited Shannon in 1973 it is hard to believe how much it has improved over the intervening years. It is now a wonderful town in which to live, work and play and a credit to everyone who has committed energy, enthusiasm and hard work in bringing it to the stage it has reached. No doubt, we will witness many more milestones in its evolution over the coming years and we look forward to seeing the changes on future visits.