

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Sixmilebridge** Ref: **89**
County: **Clare** Mark: **272**
Category: **D** Date(s): **24/06/2009**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2009 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 41 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 38 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 39 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 28 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 30 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 14 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 17 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 30 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 27 |
| General Impression | 10 | 8 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 272 |

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for continuing to participate in the Tidy Towns Competition for 2009. The completed entry form and sketch map, together with your Strategic Plan 2008 – 2009 were very helpful during our visit. Sixmilebridge Community Development Association has obviously been working very hard to ensure that the town progresses within the Competition but more importantly, that it achieves the aims of your very worthwhile Mission Statement, well done.

We note that you have 8 committee members attending monthly meetings and organising an AGM, annual Open Meeting and other meetings or activities as required. This is quite a heavy workload and, as recommended last year, we would certainly encourage you to expand the group if at all possible.

Your hard work and commitment have evidently encouraged others to get involved and it is good to know that Clare County Council, Shannon Development and local businesses have been supporting your endeavours so keep up the good work. Linking with the wider community through the use of Public Meetings, Parish Newsletters, local press and the website are all excellent means of conveying the Tidy Towns message. We particularly found the website informative and interesting. The encouragement of estates to form Residents' Associations and participate in the Tidy Towns effort is commendable.

The young residents of Sixmilebridge are the future guardians of the town and by fostering links with the Green Schools Committee and inviting pupils to various events, you have been taking positive steps to guarantee the town's environment will be protected for many years to come. Your initiative to encourage teenage pupils to suggest environmental projects which they can manage themselves is commendable and we look forward to following progress on this in the future.

The Winter Music Festival sounds like a wonderful event and no doubt helped to brighten up the long dark

nights in January. Festivals and the Tidy Towns Competition, offer great opportunities for people to work together and foster a good community spirit so we hope that it was well supported and enjoyed by everyone.

The Built Environment:

Sixmilebridge has an excellent location, being close to Shannon, Ennis and Limerick and, therefore, it has attracted large numbers of new residents in recent years. So far, the town has absorbed the new business and residential developments quite well but it is vital that the community remains vigilant and that the planning process continues to serve the best interests of Sixmilebridge.

On the Limerick approach we observed the small graveyard (good to notice the litter warning sign) and the tidy pavement leading towards the town. The Little Church was well presented with pretty bedding plants and stone wall. Homes along the roadside were attractive with some hanging baskets and neat gardens.

The Square was impressive with the lovely riverside green area, the thought provoking memorial to 'those who are gone' and the beautiful bridge with the O'Garney River flowing by. Shane M Gilmore's superb Miller Returns sculpture was very appealing.

Commercial premises within the town were generally well presented including several at the Square – The Olde House with its O'Regan connections, Queen, Dine & Wine Bistro beside the river, Bridge Surgery, Centra and McGrath's Pharmacy. Other business premises which we noted during our visit included the lovely brightly painted units near the bridge (Stiofán Fitzpatrick, Van Jon Jewellers and John Shaw), Garna House Retail Centre, the Auction Room, Tim Crowe Grocers, McGregor's, Next Door and The Greyhound Bar with the amusing 'Duck Inn'. We would like to repeat the recommendation that efforts be made to remove any inappropriate plastic signs from commercial premises. We were delighted to learn that the derelict house at the Square has been purchased privately and will be developed. We wish you every success with your continuing lobbying to tackle derelict sites.

The Church with its paving, shrubberies and cut grass looked well but two doors at the back of the Church would benefit from a fresh coat of paint. The Parish Office, Health Centre and the Grotto with its raised square flowerbeds, were impressive. We admired Kilfinaghty Public Library set within the charming renovated building and the walled grounds of the old graveyard. The School, nearby parking area and GAA grounds were well presented. The soccer grounds and the playground on the Shannon Road provided excellent facilities.

Landscaping:

The village pump across from the Auction Room and one on the green near the Church were lovely reminders of a bygone era. Throughout the town we saw some wonderful displays including the well maintained green areas with lovely petunias in timber planters on the Kilmurry approach. The walled red and yellow rose beds at the Square were beautiful and the bench seating at the riverside was really inviting. It was good to note that new, well staked trees had been planted at various locations including the Rowan trees at Rowan View (we could not find this estate on the display map index at the Square but we did manage to locate the actual estate). There were super stone-ringed begonia beds at the Shannon Road/Newmarket Road junction.

While we agree with last year's comments about Kilfinaghty Public Library's mature trees and appropriate maintenance, we would suggest that perhaps it would further enhance its appeal if some suitable shrubs were planted.

We commend your tree planting and replacement programme, this is an appropriate way to ensure that the town will retain its healthy and appealing charm. There were some excellent window boxes on view at many homes, obviously encouraged by your Window Box Competition, well done to all.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

We admired the superb range of resident birds, ducks and geese in their riverside home and the interpretative panel helped to identify the various species. The wildlife amenity area holds great potential to encourage more native wildlife to reside in the town. It would be a good idea to prepare a Wildlife Management Plan with guidance from a local wildlife expert, this would help to focus on key actions required to develop suitable habitats and food chains to cater for existing and new species of wildlife.

The proposed Nature/Walking Trails with accompanying maps would certainly ensure that residents and visitors enjoy many hours of pleasure exploring all that Sixmilebridge and its environs have to offer. We look forward to trying them out on a future trip.

Litter Control:

The litter control programme within the town seemed to be working fairly well and only a small amount of litter was observed during our visit. A few items were spotted on the grass verge near the soccer grounds and on the pavement in Pound Street but approach roads were generally very clean. The recycling area behind the Church was litter free, well done.

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:

We congratulate you on the initiatives which have been undertaken to date - including the workshops, promotion of the recycling facilities, segregation of litter by school children and representation on the Green Schools Committee – all of which indicate how important waste minimisation is to the town. Well done also on your donation of a shredder and window boxes to the National School.

Tidiness:

Sixmilebridge conveyed a reasonably tidy impression during our visit. Signage and footpaths throughout the town were generally clean and in good condition but do keep an eye on the bilingual signs on the outskirts of town as these can easily become hidden by vegetation. Grass at the Riverside Park was neatly cut but we noticed that the red bench still needed some attention and despite your lobbying, the buoy was still missing from its stand. The partially repainted white/blue cottage at the riverside is in a prime location and it would be good if the little garden area to the front could be suitably landscaped.

The recycling area was litter free but there was some graffiti on the bins and the sign behind them. A few potholes in the area needed to be filled. A bus shelter on Pound Street and a litter bin, next to the blue sign for the Recycling Centre, needed to be painted.

Residential Areas:

Sixmilebridge has seen a large increase in residential developments over the past few years and while it is encouraging to see that the town is growing in its appeal to new residents, it is also important to ensure that the characteristics which attracted them to the town in the first place are not destroyed by excessive strain on the town's infrastructure.

Well done on your work in helping to set up two new Residents' Associations – the Junior Residents' Group is particularly encouraging.

It was good to see that residential estates were generally clearly identified with nameplates displayed but we did notice that a small development beside the Auction Room does need to be identified.

We admired many homes as we strolled through the town including the lovely terraces behind the Grotto; the Shannon Road and Beechwood Grove homes with the superb landscaped areas; Mount levers with the lovely petunia displays throughout and the attractive planted containers in the cul de sac of bungalows at the rear of the development. Cluan Droichead was a nice development with sapling trees and well cut grass and we suggest that the planting of colourful shrubs or flowerbeds would further enhance its presentation. Ashview Estate had well cut open areas with young trees and a very pretty bricklined rose bed at the side of the first house. Rowan View was an appealing development of detached homes with young Rowan trees on the green. Other estates which were noticed included Gort na nUll and Sycamore Close.

Some beautifully presented individual homes were also spotted on all approach roads to the town.

We applaud the hard, but very successful, work undertaken by everyone, well done.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The main approach roads to Sixmilebridge were in reasonable condition and the proposed stone re-facing of the Railway Bridge will enhance the Shannon approach. Roadside verges and pavements were generally clean and tidy during our visit. Signage was good and appropriate throughout the town.

With the considerable amount of traffic passing through the town, it was good to see that traffic calming measures were being put in place.

The new display map at the Square was very informative and the well deserved tribute to Dr Brendan O'Regan was excellent, congratulations on two very worthwhile projects. We hope that you will be successful with all the interesting projects you have planned under this category.

General Impression:

We note your concern about the closure of retail businesses but this should not develop into a major problem if the increasing population is any indicator, however, ongoing vigilance will be important. Your continuing endeavours in relation to existing derelict sites are also crucial.

We wish you well with the Kairos Production and we are sure it will encourage further support for the excellent work taking place in Sixmilebridge under the Tidy Towns umbrella.

Your progress over the coming years will be followed with interest and we look forward to viewing the fruits of your work on future visits, well done to everyone.