

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ardclough** Ref: **353**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **246**
Category: **B** Date(s): **19/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	32
The Built Environment	50	33
Landscaping	50	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	25
Litter Control	50	25
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	18
Residential Areas	40	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	246

Overall Development Approach:

Ardclough is welcome to the 2009 Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for your submission including your map which was very helpful on adjudication day. You seem to have established a well thought out community structure in your area. The Community Council with its sub groups is well supported with 16 members on the committee. This is a large number for a relatively small community and shows a real commitment on the part of your residents to ensure Ardclough remains a pleasant community to live and work in. Well done on the obvious work put into running a Community Council such as this. As part of next years submission could you include a copy of the Village Newsletter, as this gives us an idea of the level of community involvement in your area over the course of the year. Unfortunately the Town Plan was not included with the submission so we couldn't see how you were progressing with the tasks as set out in this plan. As part of next year's submission, we would suggest a review of your 2008-2013 plan. You could do a review of the projects planned and those completed. You can then reassess your goals as set out in the plan and see where you may need to concentrate your efforts for the coming years. The review of the plan will need to take into account the contents of the Village Design Statement, March 2009, which was prepared by Kildare County Council. This was obviously done through a consultation process with the village. This is a valuable document for your village to use as a basis for the areas future development and enhancement. We look forward to seeing your village evolve over the coming years, guided by the well thought out principles.

The Built Environment:

Ardclough is a lovely village located near the Grand Canal. It benefits from not being located on a main national route and the light traffic on the roads running through the village gives it a quiet peaceful air. The school was beautifully presented, with colourful planted containers of seasonal colour and a freshly trimmed boundary hedge, albeit a non native hedge. Even the temporary school buildings were well presented with colourful painted windows. We wish you luck with the proposed new school building. We hope that whatever

is planned for the old school site will be carefully considered as it is such a key site in the centre of the village.

The modern Church of Saint Ann was being painted on adjudication day and the grounds were clean and tidy. The two flag poles to the boundary were looking a little worn and we hope they were to be painted as part of the current works.

The canal area is such a lovely resource for your area but the lack of a connecting footpath to the canal towpath from the village is a real issue. This linkage should be a priority in order to provide a safe route from the village. Once again a barge was on the canal and certainly added to the atmosphere. The pipes attached to the bridge are an eyesore and should be removed or relocated if possible.

The GAA clubhouse and grounds were once again well presented.

The village at the Lyons Estate is a great asset for your area both visually and culturally. It's a pity that the 'to let' signs are so prominent at the entrance to the Estate. They may be a necessity in the current times but they certainly detract from the entrance and should be reconsidered.

The proposed school and housing along the Ardclough-Straffen road will have a big impact on your community and we hope all proposed developments will adhere to the guidelines as set out in your Village Design Statement.

Landscaping:

The recently planted trees to the triangular open space to the centre of the village were doing well. Perhaps a native hedge could be established to the edge of the parking area. This would screen the view of parked cars and create enclosure for this open space area. The open space areas to the Wheatfield Estate were neat and tidy, congratulations to the residents here. Perhaps they could be encouraged to also cut the grass to the small triangle of land on the opposite side of the road from their open space, on the bend in the road. Verge cutting was variable throughout the village with some areas, such as the approach to the bridge on the canal looking a little wild while the approach from Wheatfield Upper was very neat. Hedges here had recently been cut and the verges outside the houses along the approach road were kept beautifully. Good luck with your execution of the landscape projects as outlined in your TidyTown Plan and we look forward to seeing progress on these in the coming years.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You say in the submission that a wildlife habitat survey is to be carried out this year. Good luck with this. You could use the landscape character maps, prepared as part of the Village Design Statement, as the basis for a habitat study of the village. This can be a clear inventory of the various habitat types present around your village: - pond/river side habitats, native and planted woodlands, rubble walls, domestic gardens etc. This simple study can inform how habitats can be enhanced with appropriate planting and management regimes and will be a useful baseline study to have. As you improve areas through planting etc. you can assess how the habitats in your village are fairing and how successful your measures at protection and enhancement are. The 'feed and breed' programme seems to be progressing well. Try to ensure any new planting in the village contains a mix of berry and seed bearing species. Each plant in itself may not attract birds/butterflies but collectively the village will develop into a mosaic of plants that should eventually increase biodiversity.

Litter Control:

We are glad to see that so many members of the community became involved in the National Spring Clean event. We hope this continues to be a successful annual event. The core of the village was litter free but some litter was evident at the canal bridge. This looked recent and was obviously left by fishermen, as fish feed bags were left on the ground along with drinks cans. Ensure this area is covered as part of your litter picking programme. The litter bin at the centre of the village, at the school boundary, is in very poor condition. The timber slats are disintegrating and, as the bin was half full, the interior litter was clearly visible. Perhaps a local business could be approached to sponsor a bin here. The design of the bin would need to fit within an overall street furniture theme, as part of the Village Design Statement.

Waste Minimisation:

Congratulations to your school on their green flag. We wish them luck obtaining their second flag. The segregation of waste being carried out by households is good to see. Have you progressed with any further ideas to promote the aims of waste minimisation? The aim of this is to move beyond just collecting litter and to take steps to actually reduce the production of waste in your community. As part of your fund raising events you could organise a bring sale. This is a very effective way to give items that may have been thrown away by one household, a new lease of life in another household. Your bi-annual newsletter can be used to highlight waste minimisation objectives. For example you could include details of how to obtain composting bins from

Kildare County Council to encourage composting. Keep copies of all newsletter and press mentions of your waste minimisation plans so that these can be submitted as part of next years submission to increase your marks in this area.

Tidiness:

Unfortunately an election poster was still evident on a post in the village centre on adjudication day, June 19th. You should be aware that according to recent legislation, all election posters must be taken down by June 12th. Your committee should let your local authority know if any posters are still in your village after this date as they are responsible for implementing the relevant laws in this area. This was also an issue in last years adjudication report.

Generally the village was very tidy and no graffiti was seen. The public areas at the shop, Church, School and GAA grounds were all very well presented.

Residential Areas:

The pride of local residents in their communal areas is clear. Open spaces associated with the villages residential areas were beautifully maintained. The only jarring note was a dead tree along the boundary with the wall to the road, at Wheatfield. This should be replaced as part of next year's works. We couldn't get access to the open space at Lishandra Manor as the gate to the estate was closed. The neatly kept verge area and garden to the house beside the Wheatfield estate was also admired. Keep up your high standards in this category.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The low entrance signs to the village seemed to be missing. Are these to be replaced? We note as part of the VDS that a bus shelter/ village notice board structure is proposed as part of the village green proposals. We hope this can be progressed as it could be a useful addition and focal point to the green. Ensure all village speed limit signs are kept clean as those on the approach to the village from the Celbridge Road were in need of a wash. We note that local residents are planning to plant the area by the County Council yard to improve the presentation of this area. Please ensure appropriate planning is used here. Avoid too many ornamental species; native plants such as holly, whitethorn or dog rose should be used, to complement the adjoining hedgerow.

General Impression:

The real pride in your community is very evident in your submission. We are glad that the participation in the Tidy Towns Competition has fed into this sense of community. The competition can be viewed as rather less of a competition and more as a structure under which you can achieve and document plans and projects for your area. Your plan together with the Village Design Statement are a great basis for your community to move forward in a way that will only enhance the village and the lives of its residents. Well done to all involved in your achievements to date and good luck for 2010.