

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Drumshanbo** Ref: **712**
County: **Leitrim** Mark: **241**
Category: **B** Date(s): **10/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	32
The Built Environment	50	35
Landscaping	50	33
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20
Litter Control	50	33
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	241

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome to the 2009 Tidy Towns Competition. Do not be disappointed with whatever mark you are awarded as this your first year of re-entry. The only really effective way of assessing the marking is against what has been achieved in the previous year when the improvements, which you have made in the meantime, are seen - and your last appearance was under a different marking system. What is being done here is an attempt to mark you in each category by comparison with other centres of similar size, but this can never be entirely satisfactory because each centre has highly individualistic traits, as indeed have you. Your title 'Pride in Drumshanbo' is applauded, as is your pithy mission statement. Your 5-Year Development plan is impressive (and is responsible for your comparatively high initial mark under the above heading); development is seen to be phased – perhaps there should be a little more emphasis on the timetable for starting/continuing/completing projects: there is nothing like deadlines to activate enthusiasm. Thank you for your first class map.

The Built Environment:

This is also a comparatively high mark because buildings are fairly easily assessed by observation. This heading covers mainly public buildings and business premises, but inevitably there is some overlap with Residential Areas. The three churches, all in the same native stone but of wildly varying design, are well maintained. The Fire Station and the Health Centre are bright and clean. It is not usual to praise a premises that has mass-produced plastic signage, but in the case of the Gala Superstore that effect is small in comparison to the way in which this shop brightens up a dull sector. Just a pity that a very handsome building, that contains the Centra, was marred by an advertising banner and Christmas lights. Nomination for Regional and National awards for shop fronts, whether in Irish or English, is only given when the entire structure is well presented from the chimney stacks to street level. On traditional street, buildings' wooden sash frames should

be retained. The LCC building is very handsome, possibly the best of its kind in the town as wood has been replaced by PVC. Lia's Hairdressing Salon was admired where a modern fascia is so designed as to blend into the façade of a fine old building, but there is PVC here also. These points are made since you are new to the competition. The Community Centre is well looked after. The Enterprise Centre on Hill Road was well presented, the furthest-in buildings being the most promising. In Carraig Breach Business Park all the units and their curtilages looked well: the view from here is superb! The Ramada is a fine structure, though part of the approach to it needs upgrading.

Landscaping:

The grounds in the immediate vicinity of the Ramada are superbly designed and maintained. An attractive shrubbery and pavilion were seen opposite the schools on the Ballinamore road. The roadside and grounds of the swimming facility, and marina at Acres Lake needed just a little more attention to make them first class. A lovely little piece of road-centre planting was seen at Baker's Hill. Floral decorations on walls, lamp standards and house fronts at High Street really make the most of this unique precinct. An immense amount of voluntary work clearly goes into the making and maintaining of floral pyramids and hanging baskets – this is real community effort.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Trees come under this heading, including the planting of young trees. The manner in which mature timber is to be seen at in all quarters, even in quite small gardens, is a delight. Two examples on the Leitrim road: a vast copper beech and an ornamental monkey-puzzle opposite. The marshy ground in the vicinity of the Ramada Hotel was aglow with yellow iris on the date of the visit; it was good to see this land retained in its natural state. Acres Lake and the Canal Walk form a splendid facility for boaters, hikers and nature watchers; the circular route is not too long for groups of schoolchildren. The 12 km route proposed via Battlebridge should attract keen walkers and other specialists. It is good to read that you will be seeking a conservation order on Rockwell mill race. Do give annual mention of the progress of such projects and of the involvement of children in nature study pursuits, eg. making inventories of flora and fauna seen, placing bird boxes, introducing ducks etc: such activities are pretty well invisible to the judges so reports are welcomed. In this way, a reasonably fair marking system has evolved.

Litter Control:

There was very little disposable litter at the time of the visit. This must be due to your 'Litter Busting' events and perhaps, one hopes, to the natural neatness of the people of Drumshanbo. We'll hope for the same and better next year.

Waste Minimisation:

The Recycling Point is clearly signed, accessible, well kept and mercifully unobtrusive. Most Tidy Towns Committees now give instruction in recycling of materials and in the minimisation of waste, usually with the guidance of the Local Authority. (You have made provision for this in Phase 1 of your Plan.) 'Miminisation' is the key word – the intention is to bring less to the central point rather than more. This can be done simply and effectively by householders retaining all vegetable waste to create compost, whether in small amount for flower pots or in large amount for gardens. You do not say if any of the schools have been awarded a Green Flag and the adjudicator neglected to look – this would be a big step forward as the green flag process instils an immediate understanding throughout the community.

Tidiness:

A pity there is such a clutter of signage of all kinds: traffic, official, advertising and most predominantly mass-produced plastic shop and pub signs. Some vacant houses contribute adversely under this heading. An untidy site off Acres Cove is clearly temporary – but how temporary? The fine information board at the Square had taken a knock. The New Line/Mart Road needs to be considered a special case for it is undoubtedly unsightly, yet a way has to be found to contain or screen the mart. The internal car park at Acres Lake is not entirely weed free. These are a few instances of where some improvements should be sought within what is ultimately quite a tidy town.

Residential Areas:

It is the 19th and early 20th century street houses, more than anything else, that give Drumshanbo its special flavour. The raised portion of High Street is especially attractive. Accretions and signs, except of an essentially minimalist type, would not be allowed on a similar terrace in a heritage-conscious country such as Germany or England. A very pleasing example of mature street houses is the painted terrace rising up Hill Street. Seven bright new town houses give a real lift to a formerly unattractive corner at Dowra road. Among the more recent suburban areas, Acres Cove has a pleasing disposition of dwellings arranged in curves and an attractive design deriving from the traditional with gables and dormers; and native hedges and trees. The

roadway was unfinished at the date of the visit and manhole-covers appeared quite dangerous. Gleann Alainne is an opulent estate, very well presented, with excellent tree planting and a nice use of stone boundaries. Corryard is promising; the retention of ancient timber was noted; grass cuttings should be removed immediately after mowing. Cnoc an Luir is also promising; the stepped arrangement of the housing was admired.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Much work was in progress and a greatly improved approach from Carrick-on-Shannon will be seen next year. Other roadworks were continuing in the town centre. A new roundabout was seen on the Sligo road. Generally, the surfaces and verges of approach roads are excellent. New footpaths, and footpaths under construction, were seen. Paving of the raised portion of High Street is most appropriate and there is an attractive street furniture as well. The car parks at the Square and at the RC church were clean and tidy.

General Impression:

The overall impression is of a remarkably well preserved old town, surrounded by superb natural amenities. It is clearly the intention to improve the infrastructure and remove blemishes. What happens over the next five years will very largely determine the future of the town, but within the next year it will be much easier to assess progress and it is confidently hoped that there will be a commensurate increase in marking.