

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kinnitty** Ref: **294**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **244**
Category: **B** Date(s): **28/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	30
The Built Environment	50	34
Landscaping	50	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	23
Litter Control	50	33
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	29
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	244

Overall Development Approach:

Go raibh maith agaibh go leir! Thank you to all the voluntary workers who have gone to so much trouble this year and in previous years to make Kinnitty an ever improving place in which to live, work and to enjoy. Kinnitty is a well known and beautiful village. You appear to have a good membership quota at 12-15. You meet once per month.

Thank you for your sketch map. Strangely enough, it did not show the Church of Ireland, where practically all your interpretative signage is located! It would be good if you could access a modern up-to-date map based on the O.S. sheets, which is to scale and accurate, and annotate it as you wish.

You do not mention any agencies or businesses that support you. Have you approached any of these? We are sure that you would get a good listening ear and professional advice. Have you a relationship with your Local Authority? You can call on their services, Heritage, Environmental, Engineering, Architectural Conservation, Community and Development and so forth readily and easily. This compares poorly with the ongoing help you had last year. Is it that you forgot to mention these?

You communicate through newspaper notices and your monthly meeting. You could consider local radio, shop notices, church bulletins and so on. Try to recruit a good PRO.

You say you speak to teachers, and try to involve the school with meetings, but you do not say with what success. You do not appear to have any festival, and you have no comments to make about the competition.

Your application form is blank on the Built Environment section, which should be one of your fortes, given your wonderful architectural inheritance. Neither have you any projects listed under this heading.

The Wildlife and Natural Amenities section is also blank, as is the General Impression Section. You have listed no projects planned under any heading. That does not give a good impression to the adjudicator. We cannot know about what you plan unless you tell us!

To increase your marks, it is also very important to prepare a Tidy Towns Plan. A three or five year plan is recommended. A plan need not be prepared professionally. However, you should try to get the views of the community at large when preparing the plan and take into account other plans for the area such as Local Area Plans / County Development Plans / County Heritage Plans / Agenda 21 Plans etc. prepared by the Local Authority under the Planning and Development Act 2000. Unfortunately, not having such a plan automatically loses you marks in this section of the competition, as per the adjudication guidelines issued to each adjudicator. However, we will give you some benefit of the doubt, as last year's adjudicator was obviously luckier and had in their possession an Environmental Action Plan. Such plans need to be updated and submitted annually. Your mark in this section has to reflect the absence of relevant material.

The Built Environment:

The Built Environment is one so many other villages would envy. It is much photographed and admired, and has been kept well in the main, despite deterioration in some stock. We encourage you to take this aspect of your village on board, before it is too late. Talk with the Architectural Conservation Officer in your Local Authority, and ask for guidance on how best to go about advancing a plan for the conservation of the remaining wealth of good buildings in your midst. The village Green is the focal point of the village and it has many excellent buildings on all sides. It would presumably have been planned with the main village by the Castle Bernard estate. To mention the best would include The Garda Barracks (just off the Green), the Catholic Church, Giltraps and Peavoys (despite the inappropriate dormer window replacements). Most of your building stock has retained the timber sash windows, which are traditional to these buildings. Please encourage their retention, as they have been lost in so many other places. Associated parts of these buildings such as out buildings, railings etc. are also worthy of conservation, as they form part of the units.

Field gates and old stone pillars are also beautiful parts of our built history, and there is a nice example on the hill near the Church of Ireland.

The 2 two storied, arched-windowed, grey houses with original half doors, downhill of the Church of Ireland, are wonderful examples of estate type architecture. Can you do anything to save them from further decay, and conserve them?

There is a lovely old house opposite the Community Centre, with wonderful iron gates.

The Slieve Bloom public house is very well presented with nice signage and window boxes.

The Glendine Bistro building beside the Garda station looks very well, as do the 3 properties between that and the church with their great carriage arch.

Giltraps is a beautifully presented building along the Green, with its lovely creeper covering and its gable elevation to the Birr Road retaining the lovely arched entrance, with two nice terracotta flower containers outside. Coughlans on the opposite side of the street was very freshly painted, and had floral arrangements on the footpath outside.

You have done your best to make the long, pink building, between the Green and the Slieve Bloom pub, look well, even though it is semi derelict, and you have succeeded.

The yellow and turquoise houses beside the Late Shop are lovely, architecturally pleasing buildings also and looked very well cared for.

The contained stone sided stream within the Green area is a lovely feature adding interest. The seating, with a backdrop stone wall at the Cadanstown end of the green, looked well. The Fleadh Cheoil sign was admired

The old weighbridge metal in the Green is also an interesting feature, and is in very good repair – a H. Poole and Son of Glasgow and Liverpool origin.

The Church of Ireland, St Finian's on the hill is another wonderful building. It would be nice, if at least the porch was open, so that visitors might see the Kinnitty. Stone referred to in the signage outside, especially at the famous Kinnitty High Cross, is a distance away. The adjudicator's visit was at a weekend in the afternoon in high season.

Ardmore Guest House is a lovely, stone and brick building on the edge of the village, with an excellent iron gate and lovely, stone pillars. The Post Office building is very clean and tidy.

The pump on this side of the village painted in the Offaly colours was charming.

The community hall extension to the front is architecturally not adding anything to the village, but its stonework looks well (walls and boundary).

Landscaping:

Kinnitty is blessed with a mature planned planted landscape, culminating in the planned Green area.

Both churches are to be complemented on their landscaping in different styles, but are equally effective. They are excellent. The Catholic Church is in a more prominent position with regard to the village Green, and takes up the theme of planting in the Green very well. It is the focal point one sees, as one approaches downhill from the Church of Ireland. If there was a Landscaped Church competition, this adjudicator thinks that Kinnitty would win it!

The pump on the Green is surrounded by a sea of 2 lovely colours, bright yellow and blue flowers. This is very effective and the stone surrounds are shown off to full effect. It is a model of good presentation and maintenance.

There is really no need for flower pot placement in areas of mature, classical tree planting, such as in the area of the car park on the hill near the church. Save them for more needy areas! The same is true of the flower bed there. It would be far better just to plant the green grass margin with natural shrubbery, such as is abundant in the Church of Ireland grounds across the way.

Planting, no matter how nice, must be trimmed when it interferes with another amenity. At the Church of Ireland none of the interesting signage was readable without brushing aside the lovely fuscias etc. They just needed a little trim!

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Your landscaping and planting automatically provides wildlife habitat – especially all the indigenous cover and stocking.

You have given no examples of what you have done or propose to do under this heading, and yet the area is ripe for resourcing all you have on your doorstep in the wildlife and wildflower arena. Your Local Authority Heritage Officer will be an excellent contact for you - to help you to start utilising your resources. You make no mention of the wood project which last year's adjudicator referred to. Has this commenced? And where is the wood? Your marks remain at last year's level here, as there is no justification to add any.

Your school may well be interested in helping you in this area.

Do you have a young person studying Environmental Science in a 3rd level institution from the area who might require a thesis topic? The provision of a wildlife survey and management plan contributes to the marks in this section. Remember to endeavour to do this for 2010! Findings can subsequently be made public on information panels. This more detailed information would add to the enjoyment of your village for local and visitors alike, and would serve good educational purposes. In relation to this, please be sure to put design research into the proposed notice boards themselves. With such a good record architecturally in the town, be consistent in having such new street furniture designed in an innovative and appropriate fashion. And you should also ensure that the Irish names for all species are included.

Litter Control:

Unfortunately, there was a small amount of litter in the stream, running through the Green, on adjudication day. This consisted of cardboard and some papers under the bridge at Giltrap end of the stream, and a plastic bottle at the other end. There was a drink can on the Green itself, near the signposts.

There was a disappointing amount of litter and broken glass, both at the recycling area itself and in the grounds around it on adjudication day.

There was some litter in the green area in the Local Authority housing estate, off the Cadamstown Road.

Waste Minimisation:

The school is involved in the Green Flag Programme. And local businesses clean up their own precincts. However, waste minimisation is about more than cleaning up in one's own site. It involves the prevention of waste accumulation in the first case. It is really what it says – to minimise on waste production before we, as a community, private or public create it in the first case. You can refer to the Race Against Waste booklet available from the Tidy Towns Unit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government. You will find your Local Authority very knowledgeable in this area.

You could increase your marks considerably in this section. Perhaps, you might prepare a flyer/newsletter on this subject? As a local community, you could look at some innovative and simple ideas such as organising a "Bring and Take Day". This would involve using a local hall / Community Centre for instance for a day - where everybody brings items they have no further use for, but which other people might want (and which under normal circumstances they might get rid of as waste), and puts them on display. The corollary is that somebody else needs these items. No monies change hands. Website versions of this idea have been set up in places also. Another group collected all broken crockery, and made a mosaic in a local park (Not the Green!). You can gain marks by doing something like this for 2010.

Tidiness:

There is a piece of machinery parked on the road margin, opposite the Garda Barracks, which takes a little from this pristine area of the village.

The Tullamore and Mountmellick fingerpost sign at the Green is in need of renewal.

Paving on the Birr Road requires weeding in many places. A gate along this stretch outwards from Giltrap's is also in need of painting. On the opposite side of the road, weeding is required along the white wall and splay entrance gates. The wood on the seating on the Birr Road needs renewal, and the general area could be weeded. The fencing behind the seat also needs painting/treatment. The rubbish bin nearby could be washed down, as a spillage had marked it temporarily.

The Late Shop had too much (slanting also) signage/advertising in its window and door, which gives an untidy effect. Peavoy's shop could do with cheering up externally. The long yellow building on the hill at right angles to the Green could do with a little resurfacing along its edges, and the paint will probably need redoing after the winter. It looked rather sad with its closed curtains and flowerpots with some dead plants.

Paving/footpath repair is necessary outside the Church of Ireland., and it would be helpful to at least renew (or preferably underground) the ugly pole, which takes from the frontage of the church.

The dereliction of the buildings already referred to at the bottom of this hill is sad for such fine examples of estate architecture. But do keep trying to make sure that they are secured, as they are.

The signage at Lismooney Court, together with wooden materials left in the access corner behind the sign and visible to incoming traffic, look poorly.

Other untidiness on approach roads is referred to in the relevant section.

Residential Areas:

Individual houses in the village were almost invariably well presented.

Lismooney Court is secluded and looks green. However, the large signage at the entrance is out of scale with the village.

The new development on the road past the Garda Station on the approach to the village looked good.

The local authority estate on the Birr road has nice deciduous trees in the open space and elsewhere in the estate. One seat is in need of renewal. A light was tilting at an angle. A little weeding is required in the cul-de-sac.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

It would be useful if you identified these on your map with relevant names.

On the Birr approach road, the paths were in general trim. There was one neglected cottage. The graveyard looked well.

The buildings on the Birr approach on the right hand side are mixed in their presentation. The comments made above under "Tidiness" also apply here. The house for sale, hopefully, will find a new owner who will cheer up its painting before next year.

The street furniture is well presented and is all cast iron black. It is a little known fact that black is the most difficult colour for the visually impaired to see, so try to remember this if you are adding more street furniture in future.

The large signage at Kinnitty Castle entrance gates detracts from the village approaches from Cadamstown, although well outside the speed limits.

On the approach towards the Garda Barracks, there are some nice trees. The grass is cut well on the left hand approach, and a house edging needs surfacing. On the right, the new footpath has not been surfaced and needs weeding.

The timber yard on the Church of Ireland approach road could do with screening. The "Welcome to Kinnitty" sign is broken and rusting.

Weeding and grass cutting is required on the side road up by the school. The "Slan agus Beannacht" sign is very poor.

The "Welcome to Kinnitty/ No Litter Please" is rusting.

On the Cadamstown side of the village, (exiting direction) in the Castlecourt Road / Conway Court area, the wall is cracked at the pumping station, and the "Welcome to Kinnitty" sign is truly in awful condition. Grass needs trimming. Weeding is required along the new footpath. The central gravel triangle looks well with flowers, and the trees on the green opposite are nice. A seat is vandalised in the same green space. New seating and litter bins are required here. The Clonaslee sign needs renewal on the pole at the junction.

The GAA frontage is tidy and has an impressive gate. There is a lovely interesting building which catches the eye in a field near Aaron Lodge.

General Impression:

The general impression of Kinnitty is one of a village which has been blessed with natural and built heritage, but which very much needs to look for assistance and direction in making this work into the future. There is obviously a pride in place, but that pride needs to equip itself with modern "tools of the trade", which primarily are community skills, research skills, skills in knowing who to approach and who to ask for assistance. You

really keep your village well, but there is yet more to do.