

Tidy Towns Competition 2011

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bagenalstown** Ref: **32**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **266**
Category: **D** Date(s): **08/07/2011**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2010	Mark Awarded 2011
Overall Development Approach	50	34	35
The Built Environment	50	39	40
Landscaping	50	42	42
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27	27
Litter Control	50	31	31
Waste Minimisation	20	8	9
Tidiness	30	14	14
Residential Areas	40	29	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31	31
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	262	266

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for your application and array of accompanying documents including map and selection of pictorial evidence which showed the work being undertaken by the committee. The map was particularly useful as this was the adjudicator's first visit in many years to Bagenalstown or as gaeilge Mhuine Beag. There was a sense of satisfaction with the level of volunteer contributions to the work that you the Committee are doing on behalf of the community as a whole. Congratulations on your Carlow Pride of Place award this was very well merited. Well done on both primary schools maintaining their green flag status, the next step is for the secondary school to do the same. There appears to be a good level of interaction with local business which can be a very beneficial factor in driving your efforts forward. The variety of festivals and River Barrow vicinity is another aspect that your committee can continue to leverage into your development plans for the years ahead. The committee has an excellent relationship with a number of agencies and independent bodies such as Waterways Ireland given that the town is on one of the main waterways in Ireland the Barrow. Your work in this category has earned you an additional mark.

The Built Environment:

Estoria is an unusual building in what appears to be an art deco format. Was this the old cinema? The Queen of the Universe school was well presented complete with Carlow and Green school flags flying on adjudication day. The large mill near the Muine Bheag lock and Draw Bridge presents huge potential as a restoration project. Is this building under the ownership of International Trailers? It would be great to see this structure renovated into some form of multipurpose use facility. It holds significant value in terms of industrial heritage obviously this would be an ambitious project requiring co-funding and involvement from a number of sources but it is something to consider for the future. Similar projects have worked in other parts of Ireland. The BEAM centre appeared bright with attractive year around landscaping at the front but the gutters need to be cleaned. Jimmy Ds and the Red Lion pubs both looked very presentable. Your derelict building survey and proposed

subsequent follow up action plan should be a core driver in the coming years. The derelict building at the corner of Pump St and the old post office stand out. Bargain City Carpets could benefit from a fresh coat of paint and Breen's Bar could also be freshened up given its central location. The Manor pub looked well with flowers providing a suitable splash of colour to the central area of the town. Other buildings that stood out for their presentation included the Carlow County Council Offices and the Fire Station. The street leading to the imposing Train Station was admired for the trees that line it on both sides. Daniel McGrath Hall and the nearby St Brigid's National School were both well presented but the bunting on Memorial Hall looked slightly worn and faded and needs to either be replaced or removed altogether. The stonewall at Hi Spec engineering blends in with the pleasant surrounds, this is an example of how industrial buildings can be presented in a very appealing manner without having to resort to garish signage or equivalent. Both Churches looked well on adjudication day and credit is due to the personnel that are responsible for their upkeep. Finally the owners of the Little Shop deserve credit for the way in which they have presented their business premises.

Landscaping:

The town possesses many fine examples of mixed landscaping arrangements and the balance achieved is quite remarkable.

There was a vibrancy of colour to be seen in the main area and at the outskirts. Good to see the standard annuals such as petunias, alyssum, begonias, impatiens and nasturtiums being used to good effect in combination with perennials and long life shrubs. To maintain this standard of presentation requires a lot of effort and resources as well as patience so well done to the local council team and the volunteers entrusted with this work. This adjudicator was impressed with the extent of floral combinations that prevailed in private planting arrangements. Trees are the most important plants in any urban landscape, yet relatively few towns and villages have enough of them but Bagenalstown has sufficient for an urban area of its size. The Town Park (Fair Green) looked superb with maintenance ongoing during adjudication day; a pretty blend of pinks was admired throughout the flower beds. This is a project Bagenalstown's residents can be justifiably proud of. Your continued plans for this area, which will be done in collaboration with BIG, CCDP, Town Council and the Local Authority, will enhance this excellent facility even more. The landscaping efforts that have gone into the Dunleckny/Leighlinbridge junction near ALDI continue to make a lasting impression and are complementary to the wonderful River Barrow across the road. The area creates a positive first impression for Bagenalstown for any first time visitor. The tree lined green area in front of De La Salle School provides an attractive approach from the Royal Oak entrance and the area across from Queen of the Universe NS was also noted for its top class planting. There are a number of outstanding mature trees on the grounds of the St Brigid's NS but some of them need to be cut back somewhat. In an overall context the standard was very good and seems to be on par with last year when you received a very high mark.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Some centres struggle with this category as they feel that they may not possess basic natural habitats from which projects could be developed but that is not the case with Bagenalstown which has one of the Island of Ireland's greatest waterways as its main amenity asset. The committee has been responsible for a large body of work that is being done in this category. Well done on removing both the submerged boat and the mound of clay as mentioned in your entry this work can only benefit the appearance of the riverside. It was good to see river cleaning/weeding taking place by Waterways Ireland on adjudication day. However there was a considerable level of litter spotted at the river banks particularly as one moves down towards the old Mill and Mhuine Bheag lock.

The offshoot of the river that flows into the mill section appears to be acting almost as a sieve for river rubbish and it is becoming an unfortunate eyesore in this area. It has to be noted that the River Barrow forms a large part of Bagenalstown and it is no doubt difficult to police all areas but the river continues to be a real area of potential in this category for the future. The park area at the entrance to the old Bagenalstown House appears to be quite overgrown and the soccer pitches forgotten about. Could this be tidied up with a view to developing a wildlife area or as part of a wildlife trail that would link with the river? The proposed information panel which will depict and explain the wildlife and fish life of the Barrow will be very welcome particularly for those who use the Barrow for leisure. If you have not done so already do consult with the County Council wildlife specialist and ensure that you involve the schools in any project that you intend to undertake.

Litter Control:

On adjudication day litter control was of a satisfactory standard and the efforts that you as a committee are making to inform the community of the importance of litter control and its contribution to a better local environment are paying off. Continued participation in the Carlow Anti Litter League is important as it allows you to share ideas with other centres. Could a river clean up become an annual event or is this arrangement in place already? As already mentioned the litter in and around the Mhuine Bheag and old mill area is unfortunate. There was a small scattering of litter around the entrance to the park near the Bagenalstown House. The removal of the seats at BEAM had a twofold benefit in that it got rid of a possible litter black spot and also addressed the problem of anti-social behaviour in that part of the town.

Waste Minimisation:

The committee has embraced the concept Waste Minimisation judging by the cross section of projects that you have become involved in. Good to note that the primary schools have achieved and retained Green flag status and the secondary school is working towards achieving this objective also. School children are very innovative and enthusiastic when given encouragement and praise and make meaningful contributions to schemes like this. The Race against Waste booklet and relevant websites have many other idea generators under selected headings and a Committee member should be assigned to filter this information back to the main group. This category should very much become an integral part of your 5 year strategy for the years ahead as it has important environmental and economic functions as well as the possibility of gaining additional marks over a two to three year period.

Keep up the excellent work which is reflected in an increase in marks from last year.

Tidiness:

Some over usage of plastic signage on the High St and Main St junction was noted. Graffiti was noted in one prominent location, the gable end of the Health Centre facing onto the Town Park. Some curious graffiti was also identified again at the entrance to Bagenalstown House Park. Who is Aidan Hume? A less obvious location containing graffiti is the wall facing onto the Mhuine Beag Lock and bridge. The fencing at the green field before the turn in for Conway Park could do with some tidying. This piece of land is possibly in private ownership and a planning notice suggests that it is earmarked for development of some sort, when this will happen is another matter. Nonetheless it would be helpful if it could be improved upon as it is a very public area. Could the vernacular bridge barriers just before the Vocational School be revitalised somewhat with some form of planting arrangement as they are not exploited to the full at present. It was interesting to read that this unique style of stonework is native to Co Carlow. The town has benefited greatly from having cables put underground as it makes the streetscape more attractive, good that this was completed just before the financial restrictions that prevail at present. Overall the standard of tidiness was good but areas of concern should be monitored and addressed as soon as resources allow you.

Residential Areas:

The town has a large number of residential estates some well established and some that mushroomed during the boom years.

This short section of the overall report does not allow me to comment on all of them and the following is just a resume of what took the adjudicators eye. The houses in front of De La Salle School have been well maintained and the green area with mature trees was admired for the quality of presentation. On adjudication day it looked as if a bag of rubbish was sitting against one tree presumably this was subsequently removed during the organised litter picks. The rose arrangement and name stone at Maple Drive provide a nice contrast and enhance this area very much. Well done to the residents of this estate for presenting their homesteads in a very professional manner. Eastwood Drive was also visited and it looked quite well on adjudication day which was tribute to its residents who had their properties and surrounding areas and gardens in very good condition these were complemented by a few well maintained shrubberies. Both Fr Conway and Fr Cummings Park similar type town estates were also in very good condition with properties for the most part very well looked after. Ashfield is a comparatively new estate that is maturing nicely and Station Road residences are also well looked after.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Some approach roads were in better condition than others. Leighlinbridge approach road is enhanced by mature trees and of course the River Barrow. The Royal Oak approach has potential but the badly maintained industrial units to the right create a slightly poor impression. On the Fenagh approach road, The Muine Bheag/Bagenalstown Sign and No Litter sign were quite obscured by an overgrown verge. Hedges in general were maintained in accordance with the regulatory guidelines and verges with the exception of a few were trimmed back nicely.

General Impression:

It was this adjudicator's first visit to the town for many years and many changes have occurred in the interim. The town has potential to do very well in the competition and the committee is working hard to see exploit this potential to the maximum.

You are wished well in the years ahead.