

Tidy Towns Competition 2011

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Carlow** Ref: **36**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **290**
Category: **G** Date(s): **08/07/2011**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2010	Mark Awarded 2011
Overall Development Approach	50	46	45
The Built Environment	50	43	43
Landscaping	50	44	44
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28	28
Litter Control	50	29	30
Waste Minimisation	20	8	9
Tidiness	30	16	16
Residential Areas	40	30	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	37	37
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	289	290

Overall Development Approach:

Carlow Town is welcome to the TidyTowns Competition for 2011. One wishes you the continued success of recent years. The adjudicator loved the lay-out format of your submission. Information is easily accessed. An image of your town and work is created through the photos. There appeared to be a few pages missing from your submission, though. Your committee seems to be a representative cross section of the town. Of special interest is the inclusion in your committee of secondary school students at one end of the age profile and the 'youthful' retirees on the other. Goodwill towards your committee and towards your ideals is undoubtedly created as a result of the high profile you maintain in the community and as a result of your interaction with schools, residents associations, the GAA, for instance. Yours is a very hands-on relationship with individuals from your local authority. The adjudicator finds it difficult to apprehend that the members of this 'progressive organisation' are 'computer illiterate' and that this unfortunate situation has stopped you from creating your own website. Be market leaders. Many Carlow Town people would enjoy your website from Carlow to Kabul to Camden Town. The 'Óige' would visit that website and would embrace your affection for the town. Your reaction to being involved in the competition reflects on the conundrum for many towns: you wish to promote business in the town; you wish to attract people who will spend in the town; someone has to clean up the mess.

The Built Environment:

The area around the junction at Pollerton Road and Staplestown Road, Green Lane and Barrack Street represents the appearance of the built environment of Carlow today. On one side stands an ultra modern building with modern landscaping design and a delightful piece of street sculpture. At the junction the buildings stand naked and vulnerable in their dilapidated state awaiting their fate. Round the corner a most delightful stone building still maintains a meaningful purpose and honours the memory of Padraig Mac Ghamhna. In the distance the shops of the old town struggle to survive and keep pace with the whirlwind of

progress that surrounds them. Buildings on the streets are speckled with information plates, all honouring people with connections to Carlow. George Bernard Shaw is among those who deserve their honourable mention for their service to the town. Carlow is a traditional town with modern influence. The heritage buildings are delightful and generally well presented. Sometimes a modern add-on or annex to a heritage building creates greater flexibility in the use of the building. This works very well with the modern wing of the library. The adjudicator did not have the same reaction to the add-on at the museum. The street furniture in Tullow Street creates a modern, funky feel and is suitable for a town like Carlow that has developed such modern designs in recent years and that has a vibrant young population. The paving adds to this atmosphere. Many of the shopfronts on Dublin Street represent the traditional style and are most attractive as at Sothorn, Courthouse Hotel, Hennessy's 'where real food is served', Redsetter Guesthouse, The Wine Tavern at 59 to mention a few. The wishes of George Bernard Shaw are honoured in the retention of the ornate façade of that building. A similar style at the Capuchin Friary is retained but is in need of a freshening. Other streets do not meet this standard and one wonders if the local Council have a policy with regard to shopfront signage. The front of a fine period building on Dublin Street is cheapened by the auctioneer's signage. Then Paul White Pharmacy manages to create a charming front in a modern building. Morrisseys Medical Hall and Reddys, Racy Dunnes and Raths make a stand for traditional frontage where all else seems to crumble. In another part of town Nancy Whiskeys evoked memories of fair days and jollification. There are charming coach yard entrances to be found in various parts of the streetscape. Inevitably some business premises will have closed down. Maintaining appearances can be a major challenge. One admires the murals but some buildings are in need of help as at Crotty's Mastercraft Bakers. The boarding up in some instances is very poor. On the other hand the camouflaging on Brown Street helps that street to retain its original character. The Gaelige is to be found in many places. Nuachtánaí, Lána Mhac an Choiligh, Gáirdíní na gCéadfaí are beautiful examples. The adjudicators decided this year to mention grammatical mistakes in the Gaelige. An Siopa Bearbóra and Margadh na bPrátaí would be better if these signs are being renewed. The use of the Gaelige is heartening. The blocks of buildings from 1991 and 1994, including the block across the road that houses the Banc Uladh, are a throw back to the traditional design of the town but the shop signage in this area screams at the building design. While the original streets are well catered for with street signage, the modern blocks are left as unnamed orphans. There are elements of the Carlow Shopping Centre that are most attractive for example the design of the covered walkway. The built environment of Carlow is of a town coming to terms with the regeneration of recent years but of a town that has managed to retain its valuable built gems as at the Carlow Collage site.

Landscaping:

There are some areas where incredible landscaping has been done. The area around the bridge at the end of Burren Street is delightful. The pink hydrangea reflect the summer sunshine. One loved the lanterns on the bridge. The railings along the bridge are another lovely feature and graced with their hanging baskets. The river area at Carlow Rowing Club lights up the heart. There is a buzz about the design whether it's the steps or the pedestrian bridge or the sweeping curved walls or the boardwalk or the unique design of the street lighting or the prospect of the town park with its layered levels. Hanging baskets brighten up their surroundings in various places. In the vicinity of Banc Uladh fine raised-bed islands have been built but in almost all cases there is need for renewal to maintain the attraction. One notices that four trees have been planted in one and they do look lonely. The adjudicator loved the street furniture cum landscaping plan near the bronze. Carlow presents itself as a landscaping entity, the approach roads and the entrances to estates contributing to the delightful experience. An area a little removed from the action of the centre of town is the delightful area of the Askea Parish Community Centre. The landscaped presentation of this area has to get special mention.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

In discussing this section one is conscious of the heartache that flooding causes to members of your community. In tackling your flooding problems compromises may have to be reached in relation to your wildlife aspirations. Many of your plans in this section relate to the potential of the river as a threat and as a resource. The adjudicator regrets not having been in town for the May Dawn Chorus. This is a wonderful example of a community enjoying the bird life in their midst. It is also a strategic wildlife awareness exercise. Your submission shows an awareness of the varied habitats dotted around the town and illustrates your care for those habitats. The adjudicator is pleased to notice a mention of keeping waterways free of dumping and littering as this is an obvious problem at the bridge. The adjudicator spent an enchanted half an hour down at the Delta Sensory Garden. Take a bow everybody involved. It is a good sign of the ecology of the town to find ducks contented in one area and swans happy at the Rowing Club area of the river.

Litter Control:

The pages related to litter control seem to be missing from your submission. Or is litter control seen as an element of the Tidiness section? Nonetheless one can glean from the submission that you are proactive in the matter of litter control and litter awareness. Your interaction and plan of action with the GAA regarding litter at big matches in Dr Cullen Park seems very

impressive.

Regrettably there are a number of litter blackspots around. The area of the ATM at the Bank of Ireland is a case in point. The river at the bridge is a veritable shopping trolley cemetery. Much of the rubbish dumped at this focal point is of a long standing nature.

Waste Minimisation:

The survey conducted by the transition year students is a commendable exercise raising awareness of waste minimisation practice in the community and among the students. The adjudicator was alarmed by some of the results. The high percentage of 'don't knows' to what appeared like simple questions is mystifying. And this survey was limited to the recycling aspect of waste minimisation. Where are these town dwellers in relation to reusing and reducing procedures and practices? Therefore this survey was a really worthwhile exercise. No comment on the percentage who do not use waste collectors! Lack of good practice in this section has consequences in the litter control and tidiness sections, one suspects in the wildlife section of the competition and for the presentation and wellbeing of the town. Much of the content of that survey related to wonderful management rather than to waste minimisation.

Tidiness:

For a town with so many traditional streets Carlow has managed to clear its skyline of many of the cables giving room for chimneys and tree tops to express themselves. Graffiti is an issue. Well done on your mural initiative in dealing with the graffiti problem. Maintaining quality street surfaces must be a major headache for local authorities and there are challenges in the town. Window clutter is noticeable in some areas. In a town experiencing a building transition, as is the case with Carlow, unoccupied buildings are inevitable and hence dereliction is the consequence. Such buildings have a negative impact on their surroundings from a tidiness standpoint.

Residential Areas:

It is as if all tastes in residential are catered for in Carlow. The Tiger has left an imprint on the development of estates and apartment blocks throughout. One's reaction is that the arrival of these new estates and duplex buildings must have brightened up their neighbourhoods. The arrival of the new dwellers must have invigorated town living. The adjudicator was not around to see the sites prior to development but one imagines that site clearing and the development of modern buildings have improved the surroundings greatly. Inevitably some older dwellings have suffered, some beautiful treasures among them as at the unoccupied cottages on Stapleton Road. Pre Tiger estates all over town still present themselves with dignity as on O'Brien's Road. While many of the residential areas of the town centre are no longer used as dwellings one loves the renewal programme that created islets of housing in small estates right in the middle of town. Examples are at the museum site and another alongside this site. The landscaping in the second site here, the brick houses, is deteriorating. Ashley Court is another example of the attractive small development near town.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The road network surrounding Carlow makes the town readily accessible from all directions. The treatment of the roundabouts has enhanced the sense of expectation of the visitor. Treatments vary but dwarf roses, heathers or sculptures all combine with grass or hard landscaping to create a welcome. A broken wall on the Athy approach road creates a sense of unease. Traffic, though heavy, moves freely on the outskirts and into town. The entrances to estates and the private residences bring colour and personality to their surroundings. One loves the street network. The old town and the new seem to weave into one another and negotiating town by foot is made easy and enjoyable. The adjudicator loved wandering from Brown Street to Centaur Street to Charlotte St to wherever. These streets are voyages of discovery. Suddenly one spies a delightful gem from the Carlow past, an upper storey window with a cut stone surround or the stone wall of St Mullins Marys.

General Impression:

The adjudicator regretted never having visited Carlow twenty years ago. There is the danger, of course, that Carlow might not have been a memorable experience then. One would love to see the video of that old Carlow so one could compare. Becoming a dormitory town for Dublin certainly brought development and developments. Have those developments had a positive effect on the town? That is for the old natives to answer. It must be a wonderful experience to live in a town that accommodates so many terraces of traditional houses and modern duplexes on the same street or that has created such a wonderful town centre park experience or that provides ultra modern street furniture along a street that retains much of the charm of a village street.