

Tidy Towns Competition 2011

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Hacketstown** Ref: **39**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **237**
Category: **C** Date(s): **08/07/2011**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2010	Mark Awarded 2011
Overall Development Approach	50	35	35
The Built Environment	50	26	27
Landscaping	50	31	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20	20
Litter Control	50	29	29
Waste Minimisation	20	10	9
Tidiness	30	18	18
Residential Areas	40	27	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33	33
General Impression	10	6	7
TOTAL MARK	400	235	237

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for the detailed application, pictorial records of ongoing tidy works plus both maps of the town and its surrounds which were very helpful to the adjudicator as his only other visit to Hacketstown was a very fleeting one many years ago. It is noted that you intend to put together a comprehensive plan in time for next year's competition and that this will be based on what you see as the main requirements and needs of the town are. I would suggest that you seek input from both the planning and landscaping departments of Carlow County Council as the town would benefit long term from a town renewal plan, it might be rather fanciful to think that this might happen in the current economic climate but if an approach isn't made then it will never happen. The Committee seem to have a quite good relationship with Carlow County Council and now is the time to build on that, I would also suggest that you make contact with Carlow Partnership who would offer complement expertise to both you the Committee and the Local Authority. The committee of 10 is gaining more support from members of the local community and hopefully this trend will continue into the future as a concerted effort from all sections is required to make sure that the town realises its maximum potential. Communication with the local community is very good and again you should involve all local organisations prior to finalising your development plan. Following on from last year it has to be mentioned that links with the local schools can be a very beneficial element to building upon tidy towns initiatives. The committee should appoint one of its members to liaise with the local schools to build better links and suggest that they become involved in the Green Flag programme if they are not already. <http://www.greenschoolsireland.org/>

The Built Environment:

Dereliction is a problem for many towns and it's hard to control when it gets out of hand and any committee can only do its best to encourage owners of such properties to try and bring them into some form acceptable condition. Hacketstown has some dereliction and I would suggest that the committee engage with the owners of these premises to see what can be done to improve them.

You mention that all grubby boundary walls in the town are listed to be painted, any possibility that large employers like Kepak could be prevailed upon to subsidise such a project. I would go further and invite a representative from businesses such as Kepak to consult with you as a committee with the objective of supporting your tidy town's effort by way of sponsorship. Too much plastic signage was visible in the town and this is something that you need to address in your proposed plan – how can owners be incentivised to replace these signs with more appropriate ones. The volume of traffic passing through the town is pretty heavy and as a result it throws up a lot of dust and splashing and many premises, most notably those on Penny Hill, suffer as a result. On the positive side the following public and commercial properties appealed to this adjudicator for a variety of reasons; The Corner Bar was in neat condition even if the colour scheme was not this adjudicator likes but everyone to their own, Boland's Bar was also admired with its tasteful old style signage and colourful array of hanging baskets. Arthur Kennedys Chemist, a large building in the centre of Main Street, was presented to a very good standard; The Gem on Water Lane was also admired for its bright and airy appearance.

Both Schools Colaiste Eoin and the National School on Fairgreen were in good condition nicely presented with outside areas tidy and well maintained. St Brigids RC Church and grounds were tidy and the surface of the car park was in top class condition, unfortunately the very derelict old style bungalow beside it is an eyesore and it's unfortunate that such a property that has potential for restoration has been left to fall into such a state. The consistency of the street signage throughout the town is a positive move and is one of the improvements that have been made in the last year that earned you an increase of one mark.

Landscaping:

Quite a lot of work has been done in this category over the last few and in an overall context the standard and quality of planting arrangements was quite good. A new landscaping sub plan should be one of the key components of the proposed 3 year town plan.

Given the professional expertise that you have at your disposal the task of putting it together should not be that difficult but implementing it will be a different issue given the cutbacks that prevail at the moment. A number of trees have been planted at the lower end of Main Street and they are at varying stages of development and will soften that particular area of the town when more mature. There were some very good examples of positive landscaping namely at the Church area. The area adjacent to Colaiste Eoin was admired for the spread of shrubbery on show and the planting arrangement at the Fire Station was in very neat condition with good colour contrasts. Individual premises throughout the main area of the town have made efforts to brighten up their frontages by displaying hanging baskets. Congratulations to those homestead owners who had some excellent gardens with some very imaginative arrangements within. One extra mark is being awarded for the effort you as committee have made to make improvements in this category.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Your application contains very little additional information on possible ideas or projects that you intend to undertake under wildlife and natural amenities. The proposed Sli Na Slainte route is noted but there are a myriad of different options that could be done that could gain you additional marks with the added bonus of providing sustainable wildlife amenities for the local community and indeed for visitors. Involving the schools would be very worthwhile for a number of reasons not least that it would get school children involved and interested in the workings of TidyTowns. If you have a local wildlife enthusiast amongst you it would also be sensible to have him or her on board.

Litter Control:

The standard of litter control was acceptable with a few black spot areas identified during the walk about. There is very little information in your application on any proposed projects that you intend to get involved in which a little is disappointing. Litter control is very important to any town or village and to attain a good standard it is necessary to make the local population aware by means of information sessions or through interaction with residents association and other community organisations. The environmental section of Carlow County Council will be able to assist in very practical ways such as facilitating information sessions and help to put together a litter plan for the town.

Waste Minimisation:

This is a category that has caused difficulty for some centres which is more the pity as there is an abundance of information and support for suitable projects that contribute to the reduction and management of waste. There was a reference in last year's report that the committee had initiated a composting and mulching programme that would lead to the production of compost for use in communal planting arrangements and by individual homeowners. There is no mention of this in the present application. Joining the green home programme is a positive move and there is plenty of information on ideas in Race Against Waste publication that is available from the Dept of Environment. I would also contact the environmental officer of Carlow County Council to help kick start projects that would be suitable for the town's business community as well as its private residents.

Tidiness:

Hopefully the committee can get co-operation from the owners of now derelict buildings where possible, these have been mentioned in the built environment section. There is a steady level of industrial trucks passing through the town and given the tight nature of some of the junctions this has had a negative effect on the state of some of the buildings. The core area around Market Square and Main Street is in general terms tidy with the majority of both commercial and private residences surrounding areas in good condition. Road and directional signs are acceptable with a few exceptions and kerbsides were relatively free of weed growth and other debris or rubbish.

Residential Areas:

The overall standard in this category was quite good as most residents of housing developments in the town are doing their level best to present their individual properties in an acceptable fashion. Mountain View Terrace had some very nice residences with colourful gardens and boundary walls clean and freshly dashed. There were a number of houses that did not quite match up to this standard and owners of these should be encouraged to at least paint the boundary walls. The green areas were a little bare and grass cutting were strewn at some kerbsides, footpaths were in good condition and some seemed to have been resurfaced. Marian Terrace was in very good condition with the single story bungalow type residences maintained very well and boundary walls and hedging looked after. As in any area there were one or two gardens that were a little overgrown. The main green area looked a little bare and in need of some planting arrangements and young native trees to soften the look. The town houses on Bridge Street were admired for the quality of presentation and credit to the owners for keeping them in good condition.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The Kiltegan entrance rising into the village has potential and some planters along the bridge would make it more inviting, the brown fencing near the River Derreen could do with some basic repairs. The Tinahealy entrance was satisfactory with verges cut back in accordance with recommended guidelines. Some potholes and poor surfacing were noted across from the Garda Station. Name signs were clean and visible which is the basic requirement for same.

General Impression:

The committee's comments regarding a lack of co-operation in getting some movement derelict sites has been noted and one hopes that advancement can be made soon. Hacketstown still has some challenges but progress has been made in a number of areas. The proposed 3 year working document will be of help to guide your actions and plans. Categories such as Waste minimisation and Wildlife and Nature should be given priority consideration in this document. Well done on your efforts for 2011 and continue the good work into 2012.