

Tidy Towns Competition 2011

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Rathanna** Ref: **44**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **270**
Category: **A** Date(s): **08/07/2011**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2010	Mark Awarded 2011
Overall Development Approach	50	34	35
The Built Environment	50	36	36
Landscaping	50	36	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27	27
Litter Control	50	40	41
Waste Minimisation	20	7	7
Tidiness	30	18	19
Residential Areas	40	30	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30	30
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	266	270

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome to the TidyTowns Competition 2011 and thank you for the application form with map showing specific points of note. This was especially welcome as it was the adjudicator's first visit to this picturesque village near the Blackstairs Mountains. The inclusion of a straight forward 3 year action plan on foot of recommendations from last year's adjudicator indicates a strong commitment to making progress in the competition in the years ahead. Having 15 members on board is a very good for a village of Rathanna's size and the fact that you also have good volunteer support from other sections of the community helps your cause no end. Keeping the local population informed is one of the key components of any good community relationship and this you have done by means of parish newsletter, parish notes in the local Carlow papers and of course though the medium of local radio. The Committee should also consider the use of various forms of social media as they can be very useful for groups such as TidyTowns committees. In addition to this the number of county and national agencies that are used to assist your TidyTowns efforts shows great organisation and motivation. The variety of festivals and events that the village plays host to will ensure that Rathanna is always in the local limelight for the right reasons. This adjudicator intends to come back to this idyllic region in the autumn to do some walking around the Mount Leinster area. Thanks for the very positive comments on the competition itself, these are very much appreciated and shows how the TidyTowns Competition helps communities to build the spirit of togetherness. Overall a high degree of enthusiasm, motivation and organisation is evident from your application.

The Built Environment:

Rathanna is a very pretty rural village that has a peaceful untouched quality about it. St Fortchern's Catholic Church provides a fine focal point for the village and was standing proud complete with Carlow flag flying on adjudication day. The Bell Tower is a unique structure that has been maintained very well. Your positive reaction to the adjudicator's comments on the removal of plaster from the Community Hall building was duly

noted. The advice of the architect reiterates the concerns that the said adjudicator had about its removal and its negative effect on the building. Mountain View House was presented to a very good standard with plenty of flower boxes providing colour. At the car park, the red brick used to mark out car parking spaces is a nice touch and an alternative to those usual white lines. Small touches such as the mini statues located around the car park also add character to the village. T Osborne's shop front, complete with old Irish language signage, has a character of its own but the outhouses adjacent to shop were a little out of sync with the remainder of the village and could be improved upon. The efforts to brighten up the old fuel pump with flower basket were recognised but could this pump be restored in some way to become a feature of the village. Coady's Pub, another building with a rural character, was very welcoming on adjudication day. The working Fountain provides a very a tranquil centre piece for the village as well as having a very practical use. The double headed lamp post in the village centre was admired, is it feasible that another similar lamp could be commissioned and placed at a suitable location. Overall the standard of presentation and maintenance of the majority of buildings within Rathanna was very high.

Landscaping:

Landscaping throughout the village is subtle and effective in keeping with the village's rural calmness. The basic maintenance of trees shrubs and other planting arrangements is of a high standard with tubs and beds having been re-planted with new stock.

Rathanna like every other part of the country has suffered as a result of the harsh winter and it was noted that you replaced the damaged hedge from the car park and planted new mature hedging in its place. At the car park, copper beech trees provide a pleasant contrast to the planting arrangements at both the Church Grounds and at old National School, the new rose beds in the Church grounds add that little extra vibrancy. Flowers at the base wall brighten up the car park area. The shrubbery near the street lamp was admired and flowers around the fountain provide a pleasant contrast to the greenery. Flowers on the wall on the Old Forge road further enhance this approach to the village centre. Your efforts to promote the planting of native hedging are to be commended.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The village is rich in wildlife habitats and the steps that you have taken to encourage the proper promotion of wild life are laudable.

This adjudicator took some time out to do a short walk to the outskirts and view the Blackstairs and will no doubt be tempted back again when time allows. The plan for a Blackstairs Eco trails is to be commended and this area of development will be eagerly anticipated. Is it possible to get the local school children more involved in this practical project which will give them a greater appreciation of what the Tidy Towns Committee are trying to achieve under this category? There was excellent detail on the Slí na Slainte sign showing the various points of interest. Additionally the wildlife information board provides a good format for information on local flora and fauna. Is there scope for a designated wildlife area within the village? When you are planning your series of wildlife talks in the autumn to promote the proper understanding of bio diversity maybe you should give thought the setting up of such a dedicated wildlife area within the village or its surrounds. With such an attractive setting at the foot of the Blackstairs Mountains, Rathanna has definite potential to continue its good progress in this category. You are wished well with any future projects that you undertake and do involve the local school in your plans.

Litter Control:

There was little or no litter evident on adjudication day, well done on the measures you have taken to promote the message of anti litter amongst the local residents as it certainly is paying off. The Spring Clean set the ball rolling and to have over 50 people partaking in this is some achievement. Continue to communicate with the local community regarding litter control and without over labouring the point do ensure that you involve the school in any future anti litter initiatives that you are going to do. It is important that the younger generation of the village are well versed on the benefits of anti-litter and its contribution to a cleaner environment. Rathanna continues to reach a high standard in this category. Well done.

Waste Minimisation:

Some excellent work is being done by the committee to promote the whole ethos and culture of best practice waste management and minimisation although the adjudicator was unsure as to which enclosed document constituted a waste minimisation plan?

However your plans for a composter at the graveyard and a request for plastic recycling would be excellent steps in this increasingly important category. The enclosed leaflet on food reuse, to be distributed to local householders, seems to be part of a programme that has been adopted within the county as a number of centres had included such documentation with applications. Do continue to consult with Carlow County Council Environmental section as well as referring to the Race Against Waste booklet plus www.raceagainstwaste.ie for further ideas on new projects within the category.

Tidiness:

In general a very acceptable level of tidiness was observed throughout the village the basics were well adhered to with entrances and the main streetscape free from clutter, being small does help but that said it does take effort to keep a place tidy. The walls and kerbsides throughout the village were clear of weeds and looked well with flower baskets on top. The painted railings (across from Coadys) also gave a fresh appearance. It's important to regularly monitor kerbsides for weed growth or residue from farm related activity since this is the peak part of the hay and silage making season. Individual property owners deserve credit for making sure that their premises and surrounding areas are kept tidy and clean. Your request to Carlow County Council to repaint signage has been noted and it is hoped that they accede to this request as soon as deemed possible. The application of a consistent colour scheme for all field gates is a simple yet very effective way of contributing to a neat and tidy nature of the village.

Residential Areas:

The Committee is to be commended for promoting, where possible, the use of native species when it comes to planting of plants or saplings and it is good to note that the residents of the village have bought into this. The majority of residences were of a high standard of upkeep in keeping with the tidy nature of the village proper. The Mountain View building and old national school looked very well and particular mention must also go to the owners of the white house across from the fountain for the manner it was presented. You are awarded an extra mark for your efforts particularly in encouraging the use of native species in future planting programmes.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

On adjudication day, approach roads into the village were in trim condition with tidy verges. The plans to enhance the granite bridges will enhance the village even more and you are wished well with these plans and one hopes that you get the required funding to undertake the project in full. Each approach road offers a nice setting with the more open approach from Coady's in contrast to the narrower tree lined approach from the Avonash River. The issue of non existent speed signs referred in last year's report has been addressed and signs have been upgraded in the intervening period.

General Impression:

Rathanna sits peacefully at the foot of the Blackstairs Mountains and it was a genuine pleasure to adjudicate and spend time walking through the village. The committee's enthusiasm and efforts come through in the application and most importantly as tangible evidence in the village itself. Rathanna has potential to build upon these scores in the years ahead. Well done and keep up the good work.