

# Tidy Towns Competition 2012

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Carlow** Ref: **36**  
County: **Carlow** Mark: **293**  
Category: **G** Date(s): **22/06/2012**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2011</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2012</b>
Overall Development Approach	50	45	45
The Built Environment	50	43	43
Landscaping	50	44	44
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28	28
Litter Control	50	30	32
Tidiness	30	16	16
Waste Minimisation	20	9	10
Residential Areas	40	30	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	37	37
General Impression	10	8	8
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>293</b>

### Overall Development Approach:

Carlow Town is very welcome to the 2012 National TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for the comprehensively completed entry form and supporting documents. Your map was very useful to help navigate the town, but perhaps next year you could indicate on it areas of particular interest which you would like to bring to the adjudicators attention or particular projects relating to the current years submission. Also perhaps indicate the location of some of the winners of your many competitions including best shop front or best residential area award for example. Well done in the continued enthusiasm of your committee and the extent of interaction you have displayed with various groups in the town. Your web site was very well laid out and easy to navigate. Websites are an increasingly effective way of interacting and keeping the town informed of your work. It could also be a forum to publish your TidyTowns Plan, results of your various competitions and a message section could be provided for resident's feedback and comments. Well done on your continued support and interaction with the local schools, some centres have set up a junior TidyTowns committee drawn from pupils of local schools. It gives the younger generation a forum to be heard and allows them influence projects and decisions which help form the town they live in. As you say in the submission, they are our future TidyTowners.

### The Built Environment:

The mix of old and new in the core town centre works well for you and the focus on the riverside in recent years has really opened up the banks of the Barrow for visitors and residents alike. The new pedestrian bridge leading to the town park is a striking design however we felt the baskets of flowers attached may have been better used elsewhere in the town. The bridge really didn't need additional ornamentation. What a pity the car park on the Barrow Track side of the river here is devoid of planting. Some tree pits retrofitted here would do much to reduce the impact of such an expanse of hard paving as seen from the bridge when leaving the lush green of the park. The staff at the Carlow County Museum were very helpful in pointing this adjudicator in

the direction of the Delta Centre and what a lovely conversion and reuse of a core town building the museum is. The stone paving and streetscape works outside the Cathedral Parish Centre were very well detailed and could form, we hope, a template for streetscape works which could be rolled out through the town as funds allow. To continue this treatment along Brown Street, as a pedestrian priority space, would create a magnificent link to the Dublin Street thoroughfare. As in so many of our towns, the issue of empty shop units and derelict buildings is a problem for you but well done in taking steps to address this and thank you for including your before and after photographs of action taken on the premises at Shamrock Square. Simple interventions, if owners consent can be obtained, can do much to improve things for the short term. The Wall R Us art installation at the gable wall at Haymarket was a lovely piece to come across on my stroll through the town. The empty unit beside the Castle Tavern here is a prime example of a premises that would be so much improved if its window boards were painted black.

### **Landscaping:**

The civic plaza at Centaur Street was admired and how unusual to see a grove of Ginkos planted. We look forward to revisiting this well used space as they mature, and create a unique grove of these magnificent and prehistoric trees. We look forward to the results of the landscape characterisation plan and see the results being implemented on the ground in the coming year's submissions. In addition to the focus you put on your magnificent annual displays it is good to see that you have an ongoing tree planting programme as this is such a great legacy for future generations. Perhaps some of the annual beds can be mixed with a core of perennials to reduce the burden and cost of replacing plants annually? Once again the gardens at the Delta centre were visited and much enjoyed. Perhaps signage for the Delta centre in the town centre could include a distance as it took some time for the adjudicator to find the complex; easy once friendly advice was obtained from the museum staff. Ensure tree ties are removed from all trees in the town park.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

We would encourage you to undertake an Urban Ecology study which would be a great baseline for you to better understand the complexities of town habitats and the steps that can be taken to enhance the urban and suburban landscape for the benefit of flora and fauna. For example a well thought out grass management strategy based on its results could be a starting point to improve the quality of this expansive potential habitat in the town. Another major habitat to consider is garden areas. It is estimated that up to 25% of a towns open spaces are in private gardens. With the close links you have with residents committees and local gardening advice, consider producing a leaflet to show how the careful selection of plants can increase the biodiversity of gardens with an emphasis on plants with berries and flowers. Have you done a follow up survey with your schools on the success of the bird box installations? Have they been successful in attracting nests in any of these? At the Delta Centre we were pleased to be told that we should view the bug hotel at a safe distance as it had become home to a nest of wasps.....how great to see a high occupancy rate in this particular hotel.

### **Litter Control:**

For a town the size of Carlow there was very little litter in evidence in the town centre so very well done in all your efforts here. We note your proactive approach to the treatment of graffiti which can downgrade the appearance of an area, but a few instances were still noted on some gable walls on side streets. The litter bins on our stroll were generally clean and emptied so well done on your hard work here. The waste separation bins at the College street project were also a neat way to address the provision of recycling bins. There was some litter noted to the bridge abutment wall at Graiguecullen Bridge at the junction with Maryborough Street, a difficult spot to reach. But the litter was quite visible from the bridge path especially as it seems the overhanging vegetation had recently been cut back.

### **Tidiness:**

We note your commitment to reduce the amount of street clutter and signage however we felt on some of the approaches to the town the provision of signage could be reviewed with the aim of rationalising signs here. For example on the old Dublin road where there were a number of Carlow Town and separate tidy towns signs. How have the Bee visible signs worked out for you. Have you managed to remove any signs as a result of putting these new one up? The issues of excessive signage especially in the tight town centre streets can cause visual clutter especially at upper levels. Try to get old signs at upper levels removed where possible. Some of the older seats around the town could do with an update or new coat of paint or varnish, with some seats, such as at the Post Office on Kennedy Avenue needing attention.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

We see that you have increased the number of schools in the Green Schools Scheme bringing the total to 18. The works you have done to encourage this scheme are commended as it has proved to be such an effective way of focussing pupil's attention on this issue and bring the message back to their homes and indeed the wider community. The Green Carlow initiative seems to have been a successful way to address issues arising

out of festivals and could stand as a valuable template for other centres. Building on this and your involvement in the Green Hospitality Programme, have you considered targeting food producers and retailers in the town to see how they deal with food and brown waste? Also the issue of promoting biodegradable food packaging, especially in fast food outlets should be addressed.

#### **Residential Areas:**

The fact that the town council gives grants to over 43 residents association shows us the level of active participation by residents in caring for and improving their immediate environment. The pride of place competition is well supported. Perhaps next year you could include pictures of some of your winners with the submission or a map highlighting the location of winning estates. The tree planting and open spaces at Barrow vale were maturing nicely but again remove all tree ties here. The mature trees to the open spaces at Braganza were admired but perhaps some of the riverside vegetation here could be selectively thinned to allow views out to the river?

#### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

When erecting new signs always consider if they will compete with existing signs and if older signs may need to be removed to avoid visual clutter on approaches to the town? As mentioned in previous sections the parking areas facing the river would benefit from some planting tubs to brighten them up or new trees if room allows. Ensure all the road markings at pedestrian crossing, especially in the town centre, are kept painted and legible as some are looking worn and may not indicate pedestrian priority as they become less visible to drivers. You have really embraced the concept of smarter travel and the emphasis you place on encouraging bike parking, given the high youth population in the town, is applauded. Would some of the town centre car parks consider giving over a few car parking spaces to allow for dedicated secure and covered town centre bike parking?

#### **General Impression:**

Thank you for your submission and the adjudicator enjoyed their visit to the town. We thank all involved with this year's submission for their hard work and congratulate all the volunteers who have come forward during the year to aid you. We wish you luck in recruiting new members for your committee in the year ahead, to help progress work in all the competition categories. Best of luck for 2013.