

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Askeaton** Ref: **442**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **273**
Category: **A** Date(s): **28/07/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	41	39
The Built Environment	50	38	38
Landscaping	50	41	41
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29	29
Litter Control	50	32	32
Tidiness	30	14	14
Waste Minimisation	20	9	9
Residential Areas	40	30	32
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	32	32
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	273	273

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome to the SuperValu National TidyTowns Competition 2012. Your entry was received very late, however in order to show support for the efforts of your seven member committee it was decided to adjudicate. The first round of the competition commenced in early June and was completed in early July. Because your submission was received late in the past also, your mark on this occasion for this section reflects the late entry and we encourage you to ensure that it is submitted on time next year.

We note that you have support from the local authority, FAS, business interest and the local community. Thank you for your Action Plan 2010 to 2012 and we note that you have achieved success with many of the planned projects. Many thanks for attaching a map of the area with areas marked for visiting by the adjudicators and for the photos in the action plan and the entry.

The Built Environment:

Askeaton has a wonderful heritage of buildings including Desmond Castle, the Franciscan Friary, Knights Templar building and the former mill. These buildings are important features of your community and are deserving of better promotion. Buildings which looked particularly well included Top of the Town, Kennedy's Bar, The Pharmacy, the Library, the Bank of Ireland and the Tourist Information Office. We also admired the Credit Union, Shanahans, Ranahans, the impressive St. Mary's Church of Ireland and the more modern Colaiste Mhuire. The Funeral Home which is almost completed will add to the streetscape. The Leisure Centre with its car park, small park and playground were well maintained. The mature birch trees along the bank of the River Deel made very good impact. Centra was well kept and fronted with an attractive stone wall. The grotto with its natural rock outcrop was well presented. The gates were well painted and the boundary wall well-constructed. However, just around the corner there were weeds, litter and a vacant overgrown site. The Community Hall is an imposing building with a mural to the side and plant containers to the front. The car park was clean but the concrete block wall at the medical centre side would benefit from softening with

Cotoneaster. It is good to see the enlarged Twohigs SuperValu complex doing good business. The prefabricated buildings at the school while well-kept spoil the view of the school building. The Health Centre is well painted but weeds inside and outside the boundary wall take from its appearance. A number of derelict buildings were in evidence throughout Askeaton, particularly in Main Street. The former mill presents a major challenge to find a viable new use for your community that would entail its conservation/restoration. A small derelict building on the corner opposite the entrance to Friary Court is in need of attention and weeding. Opposite the Agri Business premises a large derelict premises looked neglected. The cemetery at the Friary is well maintained as is the one at St. Mary's Church of Ireland which features a map of the layout.

Landscaping:

The structural landscape of Askeaton is strong with a number of established trees at the approach roads, along the river bank at the Sports Centre and at the Quay. Established trees also make an impact at the Membrane Technology complex and at the entrance to Church View estate. Within residential estates there is scope for additional tree planting. However, in situations where trees have established it is important to remove old tree stakes to prevent them from causing friction damage to tree stems. The use of plant containers should be restricted to areas where planting directly into the ground is not possible. In that regard there is no need to use containers at the entrance to St. Mary's Terrace. Consider replacing the four plant containers there with one bed with plants placed directly into the ground for ease of maintenance and greater impact. The hanging baskets on the bridge were to a very good standard and highlight this important structure. Stone walls are attractive features of Askeaton. Where concrete block walls exist such as the boundary of the GAA pitch climbing plants such as ivy or Cotoneaster would help to soften its appearance.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Well done on the habitats map and on increasing awareness of this section. The inclusion of plants to attract bees, insects and birdlife in your planting scheme is to be commended. Your town is surrounded by a wealth of flora and fauna and it is good to see you taking action in promoting awareness through guided walks. From the Quay there was a lovely view of the river and a Heron having caught a fish.

Litter Control:

We note the litter patrols undertaken by your committee and the Community Employment workers on weekdays and the support of the local authority in disposing of the collected material. Litter control is an ongoing issue and some material was present in a number of locations around the town, often associated with weed growth.

Tidiness:

Askeaton is challenged in regard to tidiness because of the number of derelict buildings and empty sites which are not being maintained. It is apparent that the current recessionary period has affected you as it has done in other communities throughout the country. A number of sites within the community are derelict and impact significantly on your community. The incomplete building complex and the adjacent site opposite St. Mary's Terrace are empty and in danger of becoming derelict. We note your success in controlling graffiti and did not see any on this visit. No doubt the reduction in funding for CE schemes has also impacted on your community as we noted weed growth in many locations. There were weeds and litter in the car park to the side of the church which marred somewhat the view of the well maintained stone church building and boundary walls. A number of untidy areas exist in Askeaton, including the side of the Community Hall and the rusty hay shed near the Bank of Ireland. An undeveloped site opposite Centra was overgrown. A small yard behind the Bookmakers building was being used for storage of beer barrels amongst weeds. The Membrane Technology complex has old rusty containers, the walls of the buildings need painting, the storage compound is untidy and there is a general air of neglect with weeds and rubbish. The established trees at the front looked well and serve to screen this area from public view. The entire Kingspan complex needs a facelift and the adjacent water tower would benefit from more ivy being encouraged to grow up its structure.

Waste Minimisation:

We note the segregation of collected litter in your community. The reduction of garden waste by shredding and composting and the use of shredded prunings for mulching are all appropriate activities for this section. The use of self-watering containers should save you labour as well as water. We noted the water butts at the Community Hall, the placing of litre plastic bottles in toilet cisterns, the greater use of electronic media and the energy saving initiatives being undertaken. The bring banks in the car park at Twohigs were clean and tidy.

Residential Areas:

In Plunkett Road all the houses were well maintained, many had flowers in the gardens and hanging baskets. The addition of small trees in the front gardens would enhance the streets. There is an overgrown site at the Ballycullen Road end of the estate and weeds at the road kerb. Houses in Deel Manor estate looked well and

there is scope for more trees on the green and in front gardens. Some tree stakes should be removed from established trees before they cause damage to the tree stems. Friary Court is a pleasant low rise housing estate; it could benefit from the addition of some trees. We noted the impressive shrub planting on the embankment at Abbot Close estate. New terraced housing on the Quay could be improved by attending to some weeds at the kerb edge. Houses at Church View and Lismakeera estate were well painted and maintained. St. Francis Avenue was brightly coloured and had a well-maintained grotto at the entrance.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

On the approach from Foynes, the established birch trees look very well and the signage here is clean. However, the effect was spoiled by weeds and litter in the vicinity of the chevrons and the larger of the two round planters. The smaller round bed was incomplete and many weeds were present across the road at the 50kph signs and frequently from there to the town centre.

The approach from Limerick was well planted, the grass was well-maintained and the birch trees were impressive. On Station Road near the junction with Ballycullen Road there is a narrow footpath which is almost concealed with weeds. We noted the small planted feature at this junction and closer to the town at West Square junction. At the Community Hall, the Askeaton sign needs to be replaced and the adjacent picnic site is overgrown while the one opposite on the river bank has nice lime trees and is well maintained. The L6162 approach is impressive with its established ash trees. The Square in the town centre with the background of Desmond Castle is a tranquil place. There were a number of good quality bilingual signs throughout the town.

General Impression:

Askeaton has many positive features which you have identified and have made efforts to conserve and enhance. Your main task is how to build on your heritage and manage the number of derelict buildings and vacant sites which are impacting on your community. We look forward to receiving your entry in 2013.