

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Castleconnell** Ref: **1045**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **266**
Category: **C** Date(s): **21/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	34	37
The Built Environment	50	31	35
Landscaping	50	33	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	16	17
Litter Control	50	34	33
Tidiness	30	23	23
Waste Minimisation	20	8	8
Residential Areas	40	31	34
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33	35
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	250	266

Overall Development Approach:

Castleconnell is most welcome to the 2012 Tidy Towns competition. Many thanks for your entry form, three-year plan, additional information and map. Your map was particularly useful in the way it presented little photos of landmarks and your project areas.

Congratulations on increasing the size of your committee to 15 from 10, this is a great achievement and will no doubt give you an injection of energy and enthusiasm. Success in Tidy Towns lies in getting the community behind you and Castleconnell is showing tremendous evidence of this. You submitted two completed entry forms and this may cause confusion. Clearly you have more to say than there is room in the traditional form so it is sufficient to stick to the electronic version. You use photos to very good effect in this form and this makes the adjudicator's job all the easier. In particular the before and after photos are striking and invaluable since the adjudicator may not have visited your town before.

Good communication is at the heart of maintaining community support and in this regard you are commended for adding a Facebook page to your list of tools. This has been used very successfully in other towns as it can reach a wide audience, especially younger people. Use it to full effect by posting photos, promoting events and attracting voluntary support.

You appointed a school liaison officer this year and this is an excellent development. How many schools are there in Castleconnell? Do they participate in the green flag program?

The Built Environment:

You had three projects this year under this heading and you are commended for taking on this level of work.

The parish community Hall looks very well and is well utilised. The new garden next door is a fantastic achievement for your group and is perfectly complemented by the mature sycamore and the old school. You certainly have created the perfect oasis in the heart of your town. Its grounds were immaculate on adjudication day.

The presentation of the disused commercial buildings is much improved since this adjudicator's last visit in 2010. Hopefully in time occupants will be found.

The role of buildings with the Village Gate Antiques and Community Centre is very well presented. The Kingfisher is a colourful and striking feature in the town and was admired for its colourful display of flowers.

The disused Stradbally national school is a wonderful heritage building and it is a shame to see it locked up. It is complemented by shrubs etc but litter has accumulated behind the wall

Landscaping:

This is a very strong area for you and the long list of your projects attests to the level of dedication here. The impact of works on Castle Street upper is evident from your photos.

Planted pots were admired in front of the community centre. Planters on attractive green lamp standards contain flowers that are too small to have any real impact. The planters at the church entrance are small but very effective here. Well done to the Green Cross pharmacy for their simple but effective display of flowers. Neighbouring Supervalu is looking very well and it too has an attractive landscaping display at the entrance. Their car park was very tidy on adjudication day, cleanly swept, no litter, and colourful pots of flowers.

Flowers on the traffic island are attractive in this location and from this angle one can see how the town benefits in landscaping terms from the abundance of tall trees.

Generally it was found that there was a good balance achieved in Castleconnell between flowers and year-round greenery and this has resulted in a very attractive effect, well done.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Well done on adding to your bird box collection. The location that was chosen for the bird box on the school wall may not be ideal from a bird's point of view and this may be why it remained unoccupied. It seems quite exposed to the elements and this can be a problem if it is in direct sunlight (too warm) or wind (too cold). Birds are quite selective in choosing nesting sites as they have many different things to consider. The ideal location would be partly sheltered, not accessible by cats or crows and close to dense vegetation where small birds hunt insects with which to feed their young. See if such locations are available within the school grounds and try again next year.

Well done on getting the wildlife panels up. This adjudicator fears that planting wildflowers is a contradiction in terms and has little place in conservation. It is really gardening and there are many cultivated plants that can look well and attract bees and butterflies.

Cherry laurel is a threat to your woodland along the small river. A fantastic project would be to remove this (see www.invasivespeciesireland.com).

Litter Control:

Your photos of the litter picking days, showing an impressive turnout and bags of rubbish, were admired. It is noted that you are preparing for a river cleanup and this is excellent. Is there a local angling club to help you out here? Do note that Inland Fisheries Ireland should always be consulted prior to doing works on the river. As a special area of conservation the river here is sensitive (as you are aware) so it is best to always get advice in advance.

Does the school get involved in litter control in anyway?

Litter control in the centre of the town was good. Older litter was noticed over the wall at the small river while the entrance to the post office also had some litter items. Dog fouling was a noticeable problem.

Tidiness:

It is recommended that you keep litter control and tidiness as separate issues as they are scored separately.

Your competition to award the best shop front is excellent and hopefully it will maintain the high standards of presentation in Castleconnell.

Last year's adjudicator's report made a number of suggestions under this heading, were these taken into consideration when planning your work programme for this year?

The town is generally very tidy and you have no major issues to contend with. The bare poles on the credit union would be enlivened with flags; an empty pole across from the playground should be removed; the traffic cones and tape outside Whisp's hair studio should be taken away if works are complete.

Generally however the town was found to be very tidy in appearance.

Waste Minimisation:

Your efforts to date have concentrated on acquiring a bring bank. Recycling is important in keeping waste from landfill but it is only fourth under the waste pyramid after prevention, minimisation, and re-use. To address this category in a meaningful way it is essential that the focus be shifted towards the pinnacle of the pyramid.

You mentioned that some of your members attended a composting workshops. What was the outcome of this? Has there been uptake of composting in Castleconnell as a result of that? It was noted at the back of your school report that Castleconnell national school is on its fourth green flag. This should be front page news! Well done on this achievement. The group could learn much from the school as many other projects are applicable across the community. Some projects may include – distributing 'no junk mail' stickers or promoting freetradeireland.ie where people can find new owners for unwanted items.

Residential Areas:

Well done to the winners of the best kept green area, most litter free estate and best floral display. No doubt this will provide encouragement and friendly competition! Your projects to replant the cherry trees at St. Flannan's Terrace was admired and this keeps a small piece of your heritage alive for the next generation.

Scanlon Park is a beautiful tree-lined entrance with an attractive name plaque. The wire fence here does detract somewhat and would be greatly enhanced by planting a hawthorn hedge.

Meadowbrook is a lovely little estate with lots of greenery. The estate behind Supervalu has no name. It has beautiful houses and a dramatic, tree-lined entrance but poor boundary fencing and an appearance of dereliction on the way in let it down. Planting cherry laurel here was a poor choice as it is an alien invasive species and will become difficult to maintain.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Your new 'welcome to Castleconnell' sign at Daly's Crossroads was admired. This area was looking very well on adjudication day and creates a wonderful first impression of your town.

The old stone walls that interlaced through the town add great character. The restoration of the wall around the shops was a nice addition. Flower planting on the top of these walls has little effect however and a natural accumulation of mosses and ferns should be allowed to occur. The playground is an excellent amenity and is in good working order. On adjudication day however it was strewn with small pieces of polystyrene foam.

General Impression:

Castleconnell is making admirable strides in this contest and this is apparent from the town's appearance. Perhaps an extra effort is needed in litter control to achieve the high standard expected in the contest but this is well within your capabilities. Best of luck!