

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Knocklong** Ref: **461**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **265**
Category: **B** Date(s): **12/06/2012**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2011 | Mark Awarded 2012 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 39 | 39 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 33 | 33 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 40 | 41 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 19 | 19 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 35 | 36 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 14 | 15 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 8 | 8 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 29 | 29 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 37 | 38 |
| General Impression | 10 | 7 | 7 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 261 | 265 |

Overall Development Approach:

Knocklong is most welcome to the 2012 Tidy Towns competition. Many thanks for your completed entry form, three-year plan and additional information. It is noted that you plan to carry over unfinished actions however it would be beneficial to point out to the adjudicator what these actions are. How did you find implementing your 09 – 11 plan? Were there lessons learnt and do you hope to produce a follow-up plan? It is difficult when you are relying on a small pool of volunteers for everything, have you tried a recruitment drive in the town? Do you wear high vis-vests with your logo when doing work? This can be very effective in letting people know what you are up to and may encourage new volunteers.

You are encouraged to use photographs in your application. These are very useful in showing the adjudicator problem areas or before and after images where work has been done. Since you plan to avail of the electronic version of the entry form next year it will be easy to slot in some photos.

Be sure to clearly distinguish in your form between those actions that have been completed since the last judging and those you hope to complete in the future. These should also be marked on your map so that the adjudicator knows exactly where to go to inspect them. This is where points will be awarded. Your map, by the way, is very clear so will not necessarily be improved by something from the Internet.

The Built Environment:

You list a number of disused derelict buildings throughout your application form. It is possible to tackle these in a holistic way by in the first instance making an inventory. Identify problem buildings and see if you can work with proprietors to resolve these issues. Where this cannot be done Limerick county council has particular powers so it will be worthwhile meeting with them.

The Knocklong heritage panel was admired. The rose display beside this could benefit from some pruning. Dereliction is indeed a major challenge facing Knocklong but since many of these buildings have heritage value there is opportunity here too. The railway mural is a colourful feature.

The church is looking extremely well and is complemented by a variety of maturing trees and a clean tricolour. The nearby school is also looking well and we look forward to seeing its green flag flying in the future.

Landscaping:

Your projects in this heading are acknowledged. Do note, as per the previous report, that the aims of landscaping and wildlife habitat creation can overlap and should be exploited where possible. In particular the use of native trees is promoted as these are most likely to be of benefit to our wildlife. In this regard, beech, being non-native, is of little value to wildlife as a hedging plants. Hawthorn, with its flowers and berries is preferable.

Landscaping could be enhanced at the first junction coming from Limerick as it is a large space, dominated by hard surfaces. The tidy, but underutilised bed in front of Topaz could be used to better effect. Flowers at the credit union were admired.

Tall trees and shrubs along the railway crossing are wonderful features for year-round effect. A similar pattern can be seen along the road to the GAA grounds where greenery effectively screens a metal fence.

The grotto is a lovely piece of hard landscaping that is clearly loved and meticulously maintained. The newly planted heathers would no doubt grow and blossom in time.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

This category is about promoting awareness of your natural heritage. The tidy towns Handbook has many useful tips to progress in this area. A good start is always to identify the habitat features that you have eg tall trees, hedges, railway sidings and streams as these provide resources for plants and animals. Even older buildings can be roosts for bats! As suggested last year see if there is someone in your area that has some expertise they could help you in this. The Limerick county council heritage officer would be a very useful contact as would your local NPWS Ranger. Why not hold a heritage walk? Your Slí na Sláinte route would come in handy here.

The little stream running by the ESB substation is good example of a local habitat. The gorgeous hedges along the Slí na Sláinte are a real wildlife asset.

Litter Control:

You are fortunate not to have major litter issues to contend with. You mentioned elsewhere that you segregate waste recycling. Do you participate in the national spring clean?

Your cleanup of the Dyke is noted, photos here would have been welcome to show the adjudicator the scale of what was involved and who turned up?

Litter was indeed not in evidence on adjudication day. The bring bank in particular was very clean and tidy.

Tidiness:

Disused buildings aside the village is very tidy in appearance and thankfully the issue of fly posting that you mention is not too serious. Overhead wires do add clutter to the skyline and it may be worthwhile writing to the ESB to see if anything can be done about this. Surfaces are of moderate quality and could be enhanced by sweeping away loose stones and gravel. Where weeds have been sprayed on kerbing the dead vegetation should then be removed. There is a pole over the credit union that is bent and should be taken down. However these are relatively minor matters.

Waste Minimisation:

Do not confuse this issue with litter control or tidiness although recycling is an element. Your efforts to promote recycling are noted however do note that waste minimisation is about not generating the waste in the first place. Ireland produces more waste per person than any other European country. What are kind of things

that you feel are thrown out most? Information like this can help you target areas for action, for example holding a composting workshop or talk on reducing food waste would be very beneficial. Limerick county council may have an environmental education officer that could help you out here.

Finally you mentioned that your school plans to apply for a green flag. This is a vital component of this category and would win additional points. Schools in Ireland are at the vanguard in addressing environmental issues and much of what they have learnt can be applied to the wider community.

Residential Areas:

The small cluster of houses near the railway crossing are beautifully kept and particularly benefit from effective landscaping. The smaller estate on the other side of the crossing looks well, but as was pointed out last year, it lacks a name. In general residential homes that were reviewed on adjudication day were presented to a very high standard and a number of attractive gardens were admired.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Your numerous projects under this heading are acknowledged. The approach from Hospital is clear and attractive.

As you are already aware the greatest challenge with Knocklong is its disparate nature although the Slí na Sláinte does serve to join these elements in a human centred way (as opposed to the car centred way that is all too common). It would be wonderful to build on this by working with Limerick county council to develop cycle lanes and more footpaths, particularly linking the school.

General Impression:

Knocklong has some big challenges but your Slí na Sláinte shows that these can be overcome. Your town has some wonderful assets, not least your tidy towns committee! Best of luck.