

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Athy**

Ref: **354**

County: **Kildare**

Mark: **264**

Category: **E**

Date(s): **11/07/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	39	39
The Built Environment	50	38	38
Landscaping	50	37	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28	28
Litter Control	50	31	30
Tidiness	30	17	17
Waste Minimisation	20	11	11
Residential Areas	40	29	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27	29
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	264	264

Overall Development Approach:

Céad míle fáilte roimh to the 2012 TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your submission, your map, the 5 Year Plan, the photos and for all of the other supplementary material included. This 5 Year Plan finishes in 2013 so next year's submission might include a resumé on the successes and failures of the present Plan. It is great to read that you have talks in train already for the next Plan. You seem to have a wide representation on your committee of 18. You engage with the agencies that influence the quality of living in the town. Your interaction with the schools campus is a most significant feature of TidyTowns work and objectives. The adjudicator advises that you examine the material you enclose with the entry and attempt to reduce it dramatically. One example of your interaction with the Press is sufficient to establish that the link exists. The Brand Project sounds like an exciting initiative. How has it impacted on the TidyTowns movement in Athy?

The Built Environment:

Athy accurately describes itself as a heritage town. The oldest date for the construction of a building noticed by the adjudicator was 1417. The oldest happening plaque was 1257 when the Dominicans arrived. The town is speckled with buildings that reflect the various eras of Athy living as in for instance the arrival of the Dominicans or the Workhouse of 1844. That many of these buildings are now put to good use to-day as in the Quaker Meeting Centre now beautifully presented as the Athy Youth Café or the Corn Exchange as the Courthouse or Scoil Náisiúnta Cailíní as the Resource Centre is a tribute to the generations who have given priority to the conservation of their heritage buildings. That they are marked now with well presented metal information plaques is a tribute to the present generation. Agus as Gaeilge freisin! Gaeilge on your street names also excites. A lovely vestige of older times is the harp on the wall of the Post Office. The information affords easy access to your proud past. But preservation of heritage buildings is a constant challenge as evidenced by the condition of the dormer windows in the building housing 123.ie. In 2012 the presentation of main street is the responsibility of the present generation. Many premises present attractively. Mama Mia,

Sunderland, An Sean Chistin are fresh looking and vibrant. That little street with Nail and Beauty and the Gillen premises is an example of what Athy can achieve. A similar street is the one with the Credit Union building. This is a standard of presentation to which to aspire. Your 'Clean Your Face' shop front is a worthwhile venture but, disappointingly, just a proposal for the moment. Such a proposal is timely but urgent. But Athy is not just a town of previous generations of built achievement. The design of the leisure club at the Carlton or the design of the Town Council Offices and that of the Church propel Athy into the middle of the 21st century. A lady on a wheelchair has no difficulty crossing from one footpath to another and got into town before me. Well done to you on wheelchair access. The walks help one to appreciate the bridges of Athy, a major feature in themselves. The favourite is Horse Bridge closely followed by the bridge area at Lennons Bridge on the Stradbally road.

The car park in which the adjudicator parked could be seen as a cruel barometer of the town in many ways. It is badly littered. There are great opportunities for new landscaping but there are existing landscaped areas neglected. The high stone walls signal the heritage riches of the town, the parked cars a healthy sign of commerce. The stone with Butlers Lane shows what can be done to give an area an identity.

Landscaping:

There are many examples of wonderful landscaping throughout such as the formal beds at the Carlton or the landscaping throughout the Town Park Industrial Estate. The Resource Centre and the Hospital all present with delightful landscaping. The wood sculpture at the hospital adds an abstract dimension to the landscaping, as does the sculpture at Bóthar Buí. Emily Square is a central buzz with the buildings, the fountain, the sundial, the seats, the lanterns, the finger sign posting, the tubs of flowers. Tubs of nasturtiums help screen a derelict site. A lovely shrubbery at Marina Court. The Peoples' Park is another great experience serving all ages of the community. Maintaining shrubberies and beds, the brain children of previous groups, is a challenge as on a lane leading from the Resource centre or what could be a fine shrubbery along a wall into SuperValu. That neglected appearance is unfortunate. So more attention needs to be given to the maintenance of older beds.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The adjudicator went on two most enjoyable walks, both pathways giving easy access to the walker to the river or canal. The area around the walks is given diverse presentations, the Riverside Walk with its manicured surroundings is a relaxing chill area while the Canal Walk from the market is wild and raucous and rural. Both compliment each other. At the Horse Bridge there is a little dumping that is not justifiable. The survey work you describe with the cooperation of the schools is the kind of awareness awakening that is important in this category. You mention areas being a 'showcase for fauna and flora'. Of greater importance is that these areas be of aid to the wildlife of the areas, that the needs of the wildlife are the priority.

Litter Control:

There are many initiatives listed in your Litter Control section. All are worthwhile. But there is no mention of regular voluntary litter patrols. These initiatives listed seem at arms length from the TidyTowns committee. This is a pity and may account for the amount of litter encountered all over the town. Regrettably this litter was of all ages and illustrates that litter control is not effective as it is undertaken at present. What is the TidyTowns direct involvement in litter control at present? It is clear from the photos that the Spring Clean Up was a huge success. But the day to day clean ups are necessary. It appears from experiences in other similar sized towns that there is no alternative to regular, frequent litter picks by volunteers and Fás workers in high vis vests with the TidyTowns name emblazoned on it. Your list is also thin on litter awareness programmes which effect peoples' behaviour.

Tidiness:

The traffic in town is jammed. The heavy traffic is not helped by the faded appearance of many road markings. Graffiti needs to be tackled as at a sign for the Tourist Office. Kerbside weeds are frequent enough. A sign telling us that Athy is a litter free zone is dirty, an immediate worry ever before we park. These are worrying symptoms of whatever that is not good. But there are also ingredients that create tidiness. Well maintained verges help. The definition created by front walls and hedging also help. The preservation of the many older buildings creates a sense of care. A survey of what might be done to improve the tidiness of Athy could be helpful.

Waste Minimisation:

It is always a good sign of the priority given to the environment to find the Green Flag flying outside a school. Well done to all involved. But remember in the activities with which you become involved that the emphasis is on the minimisation of waste and the improved use of our energy resources. While recycling is an important

element of this it is only one element in reducing the waste mountain. For the coming year concentrate on how household waste can be reduced.

Residential Areas:

Your interaction with the many residents groups is welcomed. The big blocks of apartments spell hope for the business community of the town and the viability of schools and clubs. Their painted appearance will be a challenge for the future. Older rows of houses are given personality when their name plate is obvious as at St Josephs Terrace or when given a year of construction as in 1926 on a row of cottages or Páirc Bhride 1950. Planting at the entrance to estates creates delightful colour as at Tonligree Lawns. The enclave of housing at Bother Buí with the formal gardens and the lanterns, could be called the Manse, is breathtaking. The residential stock of present day Athy contributes handsomely to the experience of a visit to the town.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Approach roads to the town fill the traveller with great expectations. This is not just a heritage town but the home of two Roses of Tralee. Pride. There are good footpaths. A lovely row of cottages adds interest. Also many of the more modern houses bring colour to their surroundings. Fortbarrington Road has estates on both sides of the road, bringing their individual personalities to bear on the appearance. The shrubbery on Black Parks adds another layer of interest to a busy approach road.

The back areas and lanes of the town reinforce the heritage nature of the street network of Athy. The name, the Meeting Lane, suggests that the Quaker Community had an influence in this town in the 18th century. Its presentation today affords great improvement possibilities for your committee.

General Impression:

It is ironic that in your general impression you put litter picking into a context that seems to devalue it as a maintenance role of a TidyTown group for involvement in other more creative areas. This would be fine if the litter control were not a major issue. Continue to engage in the projects and initiatives but do not neglect the basic household duties as a result. The adjudicator had a great day in your town and wishes you well in your work.