

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clane** Ref: **368**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **274**
Category: **E** Date(s): **15/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	41	42
The Built Environment	50	31	31
Landscaping	50	41	42
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28	29
Litter Control	50	34	34
Tidiness	30	18	18
Waste Minimisation	20	8	9
Residential Areas	40	31	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30	30
General Impression	10	7	8
TOTAL MARK	400	269	274

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for the completed application which included excellent supplementary information by way of updated Clane Tidy Towns Plan 2012 -2014 with category progress reports, planned developments and pictorial evidence to support your entry.

The Committee has set high standards and it has succeeded very well in bringing all strands of the community together to achieve your goals, this is all the more laudable in that the Town has mushroomed so much in the last 10 years. The provision of excellent town maps made identification of relevant places a good deal easier. It has been some time since this adjudicator took time out to traverse Clane in full and indeed it has become a very busy place with large volumes of traffic, admittedly it was a Friday. The changes that have occurred in the centre and particularly in the outskirts have been quite staggering, this adjudicator was quite surprised at the number of new housing developments that have been put in place over the years, being so near Dublin has I presume been the main factor for this.

One notices that you have an excellent mix of skills on your committee as well as volunteers who donate their time and expertise when you need it. The structure of the committee is ideal as it allows you to manage and administer various tasks in an orderly fashion. Relationships with both Kildare County Council and Kildare Leader Partnership are proving fruitful.

It is good to note that some established businesses are rowing in behind your efforts in sponsoring some initiatives and allocating staff to assist in other practical activities. Being part of the Kildare Tourism Forum has given the Committee new impetus for the future.

Thank you also for your very kind comments on the TidyTowns Competition, this type of feedback allows the advisory committee to take on board suggestions and make improvements where possible. Well done to all who made the compilation and presentation of this entry possible, it's top in terms of presentation and warrants an increase of a mark under this category.

The Built Environment:

The biggest task facing Clane and for those entrusted with its further development is to make sure that it retains its essential characteristics that of being primarily a rural town in the midst of a satellite area adjacent to Dublin. It is this adjudicator's personal opinion that towns like Clane were over developed particularly on the outskirts and this to some extent took away from the charm of the original built heritage of An Claonadh (The Slanted Ford).

Nowadays Clane and a myriad of other places have to contend with the possibility of businesses closing during this unprecedented period of economic uncertainty and this can lead to unoccupied premises that can quickly fall into a state of untidiness. It is good to note that the Committee is taking steps to ensure that this will not become a problem that cannot be redressed so you are wished well with your endeavours.

There are also a small numbers of what could be termed as buildings in a bad state of repair that have unique architectural features as well as historical significance. It is hoped that these buildings will in time be re-furbished or developed in some other form that will retain the link with the original town architecture.

The number of successful mini projects outlined in the application has made a positive impact on the built environment and indeed it shows that modern designs can be effective when blended in to what already exists. The provision of dished footpaths and bollards near enough to the Clane Health Centre were noted as was the rebuilding of accessible parking area and some new footpath improvements in the town.

Unfortunately some of the road surface, like an area near the established and well maintained premises of James Manzors, was a little on the rough side not surprising given the amount of heavy traffic from the Dublin entrance.

Overall there is much good work being done in this category and the following are a number of premises and public buildings that caught the eye of the adjudicator, Jones's Bar on Main Street, Heavenly Shop Front at the junction of Ballinagappa Road, the aforementioned Manzor's Village Inn and Tom Gough and Sons Butchers on Main Street.

The newer retail units on the Prosperous Road like Quinn's Meats and Hughes Pharmacy were also presented to a high standard, Marron's Pharmacy, who are one of the sponsors of the Committee, is a very fine establishment.

Adjacent to Marrons is the impressive St Patricks and St Brigids Church, Grounds and Parish Shop and Centre, I presume that the imposing Georgian Residence is the Presbytery.

On the outskirts of Main Street the well maintained playground was being put to use by some children even though the day was not that good. Other public buildings such as both Clane Community School and National School were also well maintained and credit is due to the personnel entrusted with their upkeep. The Westgrove Hotel on the Clane Relief road is a fine establishment that serves a good cappuccino. There are a number of private residences in the core area of the town that are a credit to their owners.

The standard in this category is obviously on a par with other years but try and minimise the use of modern plastic signs on take-a- ways and the like.

Landscaping:

This is a category that you have made steady progress in over the years and judging by the level of work done since the last adjudication you intend to continue in the same vein in the years ahead. Just to get the few negative comments out of the way first, desist from planting annuals or any flowers at the base of trees – some marigolds and pansies noted the at base of tree in Main Street, this is not recommended good practice. When weeding at base of trees try not to use chemical spread like roundup, this was noticed on one of the ring roads during the walkabout. A few roundabouts are a little bare and are in need of a bit more coordinated colour. One or two shrub beds need attention particularly one at the entrance to the Tennis Court, the stone work needs to be fixed here and the existing shrubs are getting a little woody.

The half barrel tubs in Main Street are very effective and have a good mix of colour and foliage; these are complemented by excellent street furniture. There is effective use of hanging baskets without being over done and the owners of premises who have them in place have maintained them very well. The Village Green in very appealing and the grass condition referred to in last year's report seems to have improved. Good to note the early season planting on the Prosperous and Sallins Road ,both are well travelled, it is important to create good first impressions as one enters from these directions.

A lot of good work has been undertaken since last year and finally one cannot leave this category without commenting on the many splendid individual gardens small and large which were viewed on the day. There are many fine examples in both the older areas and in the newly developed estates on the outskirts of the town, space and impartially does not allow for further elaboration.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The town has a myriad of habitats for wild life in and around the centre, on the Green and on the banks of the river.

The Committee has produced a very workable wild life programme to enhance all these habitats. Work undertaken last year has been significant and for one who has a personal strong interest in wildlife conservation it would have been nice to have been able to spend more leisure time in the Clane Liffeside

Nature Park and explore the trails. Many other fine projects have been put in place since last year including guided nature walks and surveys in conjunction with the likes of Birdwatch Ireland and the Debaunton Bat Society.

The unique wildlife signage, which included a major input from local children, will be a legacy for future generations to come.

Practical work such as the provision of nest boxes for recording purposes is often taken for granted and it is good to note that the volunteer effort that was commented upon in a previous category was very much to the forefront in this endeavour so well done to all involved. The proposed wildlife survey will also be a valuable resource when fully complete so you are to be complimented on organising this.

Litter Control:

A good number of new initiatives and actions have been put in place to promote the message of good litter management.

The Committee is to be congratulated for its work in making the community aware of the importance of keeping the town and its environs litter free. Kildare County Council has played its part in the provision of a Litter Warden and other measures to combat the problem. Most important of all is the involvement of the local community in all areas of the town and it is a priority for the Committee to get more volunteers involved in litter picks and other litter control related projects over the coming year.

Good to note that you are very much involved with both schools as the youth of today will be the adults of tomorrow and hopefully most will be around to contribute and take up the mantle when others retire.

The town has expanded so much in the last few years that it is inevitable that litter problems will arise, there are obvious black spots and of course any town that has a river running through is even more at risk. There are a number of places that too much litter was seen but the committee is aware of these and there is no need for further comment. All in all a good performance as the town is up to a very acceptable standard in the control of litter – do keep up the very good work.

Tidiness:

There are a few premises that are either uninhabited or shoddy a fact has been alluded to in an earlier section. It is incumbent that the Committee keep on top of this issue by identifying them and getting in touch with the owners to see if any remedial work can be undertaken.

Shop signs were a little mixed in around Main Street some were very attractive and some were of the plastic variety and not in keeping with the street scape. In fairness there is very little that a Committee can do except to encourage business people to have a more traditional approach to signage if they are making improvements to premises in the future.

Clane is very busy place traffic wise and can get quite congested especially during peak periods, there are sufficient parking arrangements for a town of its size but unfortunately getting in and out of them is the problem.

Weed growth was minimal on the day except for a few pockets here and there in the outlying estates but do consider alternatives to heavy chemical spraying when treating weed growth, a little chat with Kildare Council Area engineer wouldn't go amiss.

Back areas and lane ways in general were well maintained. Some broken down fencing and general untidiness near Tesco Metro area contrast this with well maintained car park in Aldi. Well done on the "Committed to Clane Up" good title and nice play on words let's hope it has the desired effect. Overall the standard was very acceptable.

Waste Minimisation:

The Committee has identified a number of projects that are additional to what was put in place last year and that fall within the concept of better waste minimisation. Your suggestion to Kildare County Council for discounting of development levies in the event of proposals including water harvesting systems was very innovative.

Involving the schools in a programme such as waste minimisation is key as it will instil the concept of reduce, reuse, and recycle firmly in the mindset and this will remain with them into adulthood. Visit

www.greenschoolsireland.org

The encouragement of business is paramount to the success of this programme and there are many ways that businesses can contribute in a practical manner. See www.greenhome.ie for ideas for householders or groups of households for energy saving which in effect contributes to waste minimisation. Also the Race against Waste booklet is still available from the Department for additional project ideas.

Residential Areas:

As stated in the introduction Clane has mushroomed over the last ten years because of its close proximity to

Dublin the result is that you have a myriad of new estates on the outskirts of the town. The proximity of many of these housing estates to the town is a good thing as communities don't feel isolated and forgotten about and the residential estates competition instils the competitive spirit that helps in the long run to improve standards.

The Town has a varied mixture of old and new estates and the Adjudicator visited the majority of these such as the Oaks, The Cloisters, Abbey Park and also the more established ones like St Bridget's Terrace, Hillview, Capadoo Millicent, An Crochan and Otomy.

The vast majority were very well maintained with communal green areas quite attractive, grass cut, young trees well preserved and protected and some very nice planting arrangements at entrances and within the core of these estates. Credit must go to the owners of individual homesteads who have maintained their respective properties and surrounding areas to a very good standard.

Some nice stone name signs were also observed and some very well presented individual gardens were noted on the College and the Prosperous Roads the latter name being very appropriate.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The major entrances to the town were acceptable except for unevenness on verges encountered here and there. The Dublin entrance up to the Junction of College Road and Ballinagappa Road is extremely busy and it gets congested especially at Manzors. The other main entrance from Sallins /Naas as one comes in over the narrow bridge on to An Croghan roundabout was very acceptable and has safe access with a comparatively new footpath in place.

Main signs for the most part were visible and clean but in some places there were too many signs located at one spot which can be confusing.

The internal road structure within the town, with a few exceptions, was good considering the pounding that it takes from heavy traffic.

Improved footpaths have made it easier to traverse the town but crossing the main street is difficult at times because of the traffic.

Overall for such a busy place roads, streets and back areas were quite acceptable.

General Impression:

Clane is a pleasant place to visit and there are a few nice establishments that one can relax in. The Committee is to be commended for its efforts to date. It has succeeded in getting the support of both council and the business community to make what are in effect very positive improvements to the town.

The local residential associations have also helped by trying to project good images of their respective areas and the Tidy Estates competition will prove to be very successful and let me say very competitive. All this good work has made Clane a very pleasing town with very obliging and friendly business people. Hopefully some of the heavy trucks will stop using the town as a kind of alternative route to other places. We wish you well in the future.