

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Limerick City Centre**

Ref: **2121**

County: **Limerick**

Mark: **238**

Category: **H**

Date(s): **27/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	0	35
The Built Environment	50	0	33
Landscaping	50	0	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	0	22
Litter Control	50	0	31
Tidiness	30	0	18
Waste Minimisation	20	0	11
Residential Areas	40	0	15
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	0	35
General Impression	10	0	6
TOTAL MARK	400	0	238

Overall Development Approach:

Limerick city is most welcome to the Tidy Towns contest for its first ever entry. We are delighted that you have taken this step and hope that it will only be the beginning of your activities. For many groups Tidy Towns provides the focus that can motivate the community to take action. This report is necessarily only a snapshot and is based on the information you have provided as well as a short walking tour of your area. Especially in a very built-up area like Limerick the adjudicator cannot inspect and comment upon everything. It is hoped that your committee at least considers the suggestions made here for your work programme in 2013.

Many thanks for your completed application form with additional information and map with clearly marked boundary. You refer to your application form as a three-year work programme but a three-year plan should be separate. It will contain all the plans that you have listed, under separate headings, but with defined completion dates, so that you can monitor progress. It will overlap with the city development plan but should focus on actions within your group's control or influence. See the Tidy Towns Handbook for further information on this process.

That you have made a flying start there can be no doubt! Already you have a fully functioning committee, liaisons with various agencies and schools, and an impressive range of activities and projects. The one missing piece here is representatives from those who live in the city. While the city, like any other, with have a very transient population on a daily basis, supporting long-term and family living in the city can bring a real sense of vibrancy and sustainability. Try to identify residential areas and encourage their involvement through participation in projects and at the decision-making level. You're doing great work in reaching out to local schools and for this you are commended. They are a huge asset to the city. Try to involve marginal groups such as the elderly and immigrants as they too will have much to contribute to the pulse of the city. This will be a challenge but Tidy Towns is all about putting the heart into a community. There is a great sense of energy coming out of the pages of your application form and there is no doubt that you are up to this task.

The Built Environment:

There is no doubt that Limerick has layers of history and its heritage is what makes it different to everywhere else. This category looks at how this heritage is conserved and presented to people using the city. How is the story of Limerick told? It also looks at recent and modern architecture, which is the layer of history that is laid down for future generations. What will they say about us?

Derelict premises also come under this heading and it is wonderful to read that this is being managed proactively with Limerick city council. Innovations such as the creative Limerick scheme and teaming with Dulux to paint buildings are excellent. It is noted that Limerick city council purchased the opera centre but the plans for this are not given. Projects such as this should be marked on the map.

The renovation of O'Connell's monument was underway on adjudication day and this area was looking really well. The Frank McCourt Museum is an attractive addition to the city and was extremely well presented. The circular heritage plaques were admired and they are very attractive and informative. The art gallery on Perry Square is a beautiful heritage building with modern editions, complemented by nice lamp standards. This Georgian area around O'Connell Street is superbly presented.

Well done to all the business owners who have made special efforts to enhance their facades with fresh paint, flowers and eye-catching motifs.

The tourist office is very clean and tidy but the building itself could look better. The Perspex roofing is covered with algae while paint is flaking on some of the green poles. Why is there a Tesco trolley bay in this location? The Discover Ireland computer on the external wall is not functioning. The plaza to the foreground was clean and litter free but a bin was full. This location would be good for a statue or a piece of installation art.

The pedestrianisation of this area of the city has had a wonderful effect and will hopefully make the area attractive to shoppers and visitors over 'out-of-town' destinations. The broad parts on William Street are a good halfway house. Little Catherine Street is particularly full of charm and character although vigilance is needed with the quality and quantity of advertising A-boards. The wooden base of one of the trees has been graffitied, as is the entrance to Guiney's.

Thomas Street is similarly attractive with good street furniture, street trees and good quality paving. Watch out for excessive or poor quality signage here on the street as it does create a cluttered appearance. The Still House has a wonderful facade.

O'Connell Street itself would benefit from greater emphasis on pedestrian access as it still feels car-dominated. There has been less emphasis on landscaping along this stretch. Poor quality signage, at eye level, can detract from the architectural quality of the street scene.

Landscaping:

The People's Park is a fantastic feature from the city centre and it is very well maintained. The combination of mature trees, well trimmed grass and displays of roses is excellent.

Summer planting in central reservations e.g. at the O'Connell monument and outside the gallery of art adds wonderful colour and are very effective in these locations.

Tiered displays were admired at the entrance to the park. The colour on the Galway Road roundabout and at the Henry Street junction are excellent.

The park beside the tourist office is tidy and has lots of trees. The monument is pretty imposing and ugly (at least to this adjudicator's taste) and is surrounded by acres of hard surfacing. What should be an amazing view across the Shannon to St John's Castle is obscured by the giant containers and metal fencing. This is a key location for the city and something more is required. Drinking alcohol here should also be controlled as it is a major deterrent to other users, especially families. It was noted that there are no playground facilities in the park and this could be a good spot for one.

Planters at the north end of O'Connell Street are effective not only in appearance but in calming traffic volumes.

The Singer from Quimper is a nice point of focus on Quimper Street and is complemented by the lovely birch tree and abundant hanging baskets.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Not many cities the size of Limerick have an internationally important area for conservation on their doorstep! The lower Shannon is extraordinary for its biodiversity and it was great to read in your application form that you are fully cognisant of this. Your biodiversity walk in May was a great idea and shows how conservation can be passive as well as active. Did many turnout for this? Will it be a regular feature on your calendar? Are there any wildlife groups in Limerick that would participate in Tidy Towns?

The Shannon is clearly a highlight but habitats of value can be found elsewhere e.g. wetlands, parks, gardens etc. The fact that Limerick City Council is launching a biodiversity plan gives you a real boost here. Are there specific actions in this plan that the Tidy Towns group could champion?

Litter Control:

For many people this is the single most important factor in for a tidy town. It is certainly the most obvious, as you recognise, and it defines the perception of the city for visitors and residents alike. How does Limerick rank in the IBAL league? You are aided greatly here by continuous monitoring and cleansing by Limerick city council personnel. Are all streets in your area given this level of attention? Your involvement in the 'city centre cleanup' (your newspaper cuttings were admired) is excellent, well done on this huge effort. Other projects focusing on dog foul and cigarette ends were noted and demonstrate how litter can be a quite complex problem to approach.

Litter is a problem in basements and it is noted that you have a plan to address this.

Overall however the level of litter control and adjudication day was excellent and street sweepers and litter pickers were observed going about their business. This is an excellent performance, well done.

Tidiness:

Generally the city is very tidy. Some issues however could be addressed: an effort should be made to have overhead wire clutter put underground e.g. around Hartstongue Street; graffiti is an issue on a wall at Catherine Street and Mallow Street; phone boxes have probably had their day and should be removed e.g. the Smart Telecom box on lower Mallow Street; graffiti was also noticed on theatre Lane; bollards on Cruises Street are graffitied and need to be washed; the visitor information panel on Quimper square needs attention.

These are just some points that were observed during the walkaround and is not meant to be a comprehensive audit. They may indeed have been picked up in your own audit. Broadly speaking however the city was found to be very tidy and clean in appearance

Waste Minimisation:

You have a lot of schools and it is fantastic to read about the level of participation in the green flag program. How can the rest be encouraged to take part? Would you consider appointing a schools liaison officer (you may need more than one!).

Waste is a big issue for cities. To change how we address this issue we need to start viewing waste as a resource and not something to be disposed of as quickly and as far away as possible. Business groups and tidy towns can help by advertising their waste as it may be of use to someone else. A bit like freetradeireland.ie. This model of waste 'symbiosis' has been explored elsewhere (Google 'National industrial symbiosis programme').

You are engaged in a range of projects and these are all great, particularly the composting demonstration sites. Do you know how much waste is generated by the city? Where does it go? What is it composed of? Answering these questions will provide you with data upon which you can set targeted actions. Essentially you would be bringing together all the things you are currently doing into a coherent waste strategy.

Residential Areas:

This is perhaps your weakest area. The population of Limerick city is declining and the abundance of peripheral retail outlets is drawing people away from the centre. Has there been an analysis of how more people can be encouraged to live in the city? City life has its attractions with abundant amenities and low transport costs. How can the city be made more family friendly? These are big questions and in some ways beyond just the tidy towns group. However, by bringing existing residents into your group you will learn from

their experience. By helping to improve residential areas you can enhance the quality of life and make them more attractive for newcomers.

You are encouraged to list the residential areas in the city and go door-to-door if needs be to drum up support. Help them establish residents associations and links to official bodies. The elderly and immigrants can be isolated and feel powerless to make changes around them but your group can help to address this.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The continued pedestrianisation of Limerick is excellent and complements the growth of cycle lanes and bypass roads in making the city slowdown. This brings a more human dimension to city streets and hopefully makes them more attractive places for trading etc.

Roads are generally in good shape, with good surfacing. Footpaths are of lower quality however with many cracked and poorly surfaced.

Name plates throughout the city are attractive and generally in good order. The one on Quimper square and Chapel Street needs to be painted however.

General Impression:

This has been a tremendous first entry by Limerick city and you are heartily commended for all the hard work you have put in. We are already looking forward to a return visit in 2013 to see how progress is going. Well done and best of luck! Do note that your mark is a high entry-level score so do not compare yourselves directly with other centres that have been in the contest for some time.