

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Scotshouse** Ref: **1218**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **212**
Category: **A** Date(s): **06/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	26	28
The Built Environment	50	29	30
Landscaping	50	28	29
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	12	16
Litter Control	50	29	33
Tidiness	30	12	14
Waste Minimisation	20	6	7
Residential Areas	40	24	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	24	24
General Impression	10	6	6
TOTAL MARK	400	196	212

Overall Development Approach:

Scotshouse is a village well known to this adjudicator from the distant past though not in the context of the Tidy Towns. It is very encouraging to see the work that has been masterminded more recently by the Tidy Towns committee with the support of residents and business people in repairing the neglect of many years. The point you make about last year's adjudication report and the apparent paucity of marks is well understood; this year's adjudicator has no function in what has previously been said apart from reading the comments from last year which are enclosed with your entry form for this year a few days before judging begins. In the comments that follow, sites and projects that are seen to be remarkably successful are mentioned and also those where some upgrading is thought to be desirable; where no comment is made it may be assumed that the subject is eminently satisfactory. It is good to read of your association with the County Council, the Leader and Peace IV programmes and the county Tidy Towns forum. You will understand that it takes many years for a town or village to ascend the scale – for example, Tallanstown was almost a quarter-century in the running for the national award, which started from a very low base and was achieved due to imaginative planning and sheer hard slog to the superb result that we have seen. Your 3-Year Development Plan – you do not say what years it covers – will have a stimulating effect in concentrating the mind on priorities; what is missing on this document is year-by-year goals which should be set for starting and completing of each individual project. Have you recruited new residents to your committee? You might compare notes with other small or smallish communities such as Ardaghey or Scotstown that have been in the competition for many years and whose practical advice could be valuable to your highly commendable programme.

The Built Environment:

The Church of Ireland church immediately catches the eye as a structure of importance due to its landmark tower. The structure and curtilage of the Roman Catholic church is clearly looked after with much pride. The

Community Centre was seen to have been recently painted as had the brightly inviting school. You mention that the origin of Scotshouse is Hilton Park and your interesting idea of re-engaging the connection is applauded; certainly the 'big house' and the unique dovecote gateway to the yard are the most significant architectural features of the neighbourhood but as 'private property' was marked on the entrance gate from the village it was not thought appropriate to enter. You could ascertain if it would be possible to include them in the marking for next year.

Landscaping:

The same would apply to the superb Ninian Niven landscaping at Hilton Park. Of the village landscaping, the seeding of grassed spaces was favourably noted as was the hard landscaping at the village green with its attractive seating. Large flower beds on the main roads impressed. The siting of numerous containers of bedding plants provides a delightful sense of care and colour that is seasonal, especially the really sensational troughs on stands. In your future planning consider perennials and also shrubs that give year-round satisfaction. The continuing reinstatement of banks and stonework is applauded. Grass verges and paths were neat and tidy at the time of the visit. New wooden gates were noted. The cemetery is very nicely looked after.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Trees, and tree and hedge planting, are usually considered under this heading though of course extending to other categories such as Landscaping and Residential. The surroundings of the village are rich in mature timber, seen at its best at this time of year. You have done very well in the extent and selection of your tree planting. Perhaps what impressed most was the planting of so many whitethorns in order, as you state, to create a wildlife corridor through the village, a highly worthy aim. It is good to read that you have sown seeds for the wild life garden and it is particularly encouraging to read of the involvement of schoolchildren in these and related activities

Litter Control:

Littering was not prevalent on the date of the visit but, as your voluntary helpers well know, it can be very variable. It is good to know that the school is engaged with litter prevention. Have you ascertained where and when littering most often takes place and is there any way it can be stopped, so to speak, before it happens? It would be eminently desirable if concerned citizens did not have to pick litter at all.

Tidiness:

It is good to read that you have removed old posters and that you have been centrally involved in disposing of containers left by developers. Clearly there is still a lot to be done and this should be undertaken by degrees. The cleaning or disguising of vacant buildings has proved to have been a successful project to date and certainly an arduous undertaking: the results speak for themselves. Especially noteworthy is the presentation of the abandoned school. Amusingly painted "windowboxes" were noted. It will take some considerable time before all derelict sites can be improved, though they have probably all been identified. The general tidying up of unsightly "corners" is applauded.

Waste Minimisation:

Your statement that waste material at the Spring Clean has been reduced by half due to your ongoing campaign is very impressive – this is what waste minimisation is all about – as is your description of promoting the benefits of waste minimisation and recycling to residents and landowners. The bring bank was seen to be in use and also tidily maintained. The involvement of children from the national school is again applauded. Have you thought of forming a Junior Tidy Towns group?

Residential Areas:

The traditional housing stock is presented with pride. Several fine individual homes were favourably noted, among them the brick-faced Edwardian rectory. The development of cream-coloured houses with spacious well trimmed lawns that is Scotshouse Close is ripe for tree-planting when the time comes on your already heavy schedule. The estate near the school is of earlier construction and has all the signs of a mature residential area. Do impress on residents that poisoning of grass and weeds should be avoided because the dead brown foliage looks worse than the growing weeds! At Oaklands much tidying up and planting had obviously been achieved and more is clearly to come. By agreement unfinished or abandoned new housing is not at present being marked prior to a decision as to what is ultimately to become of them.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Road surfaces are reasonably good and new paving very good. An attractive feature is the stout wooden fencing at various points throughout village and on approaches. Improved kerbing was noted. The bicycle stand at the Community Centre is quite elegant.

General Impression:

The Scotshouse entry is notable for the number and extent of projects that are being undertaken all at the same time. As in all other successful villages the practical involvement and co-operation of residents, business people and school children is central to the effort. Every good wish for your long-term objectives which, it is clear, you are certainly going to achieve.