

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Geashill** Ref: **754**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **298**
Category: **B** Date(s): **20/06/2012**
29/07/2012

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	38	38
The Built Environment	50	41	41
Landscaping	50	41	41
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28	29
Litter Control	50	38	39
Tidiness	30	20	20
Waste Minimisation	20	14	14
Residential Areas	40	28	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	37	38
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	400	294	298

Overall Development Approach:

Geashill Tidy Towns are welcome to the 2012 Tidy Towns competition. Thank you for your entry and supporting documentation. Special thanks for your laminated map which was very useful this year with all the rain. Your committee of 15-20 are working well. They attend regular meetings and engage with the County Councils heritage officer. Your membership of the Offaly Tidy Towns Federation and networking with other groups can be very supportive to your group and enables you to communicate well with the relevant bodies that are a great support for the village. Your communication methods of calling personally to the houses is admired as most people like the personal touch and it makes them feel more involved. Your other ways of communicating are also admired through texting and using the information board as this too saves on paper. A three year plan is more feasible than a five as you say and you can set more realistic goals. Well done on your first Muc fair. Will there be a second one?

The Built Environment:

The built environment is an important part of the town and its heritage. It is positive to see that your group are keeping your heritage alive by organising workshops of traditions in the area like the blacksmithing demonstration on ironwork featured in the village. Likewise to see the repainting of the old School House with lime render. It is good to keep reminding ourselves of past traditions. There will certainly be a lot of interest in your booklet of architectural evolution of Geashill the outcome of public realm workshop. Strolling through your lovely village one cannot but admire the many fine buildings. Ballydowan cottage was admired with it well maintained thatch roof. The Post Office and the fine stone house beside it are fine features of the history of Geashill. The castle wall and St Marys Church of Ireland are examples of fine architectural buildings. The stone cottages with half doors that surround the green area with the wonderful village pump are the adjudicator's favourite piece of history.

Landscaping:

The green area with its stone wall surround has mature trees and rich landscaping. On adjudication day there was a heap of grass here which distracted from this fine area. The tubs of flowers on the footpath at the green looked superb but the adjudicator felt their location on the footpath, from a safety point of view for walkers was not entirely suitable. The picnic area on the Portarlinton road has nice trees and walls. The planting of hanging baskets and window boxes looked lovely but as mentioned in last years report the overuse of hanging baskets and window boxes can distract from the beauty of fine buildings such as you have in Geashill. The list of plants submitted is very interesting and is an excellent source of reference.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Your work with Birdwatch Ireland is admired making and erecting bird boxes with the schoolchildren and the follow up with the checking of the boxes. Your work on the Glebe Walk plant species continues. This walk is a lovely amenity for the town hidden away among nice trees. On the day of adjudication it was admired and a friendly dog also joined. The green has many locations for wildlife. The mature trees and hedging all make and provide excellent food and shelter to wildlife in the area. The picnic area is also suited to wildlife with its trees and stone walls. Your list of bird species is very interesting and again another excellent reference. Have you considered developing these lists into a guide for use in your area?

Litter Control:

Your litter plan is working well as the village looked very attractive on the day of adjudicating. The entire town seem to be involved in your litter picks which is very encouraging. The patrols watching for litter and for dumping is encouraging and it is great to see a village dedicated to combating litter in the area. Well done on An Taisce clean up week. Keep up the good work in this category.

Tidiness:

The approach road signs to the village on the Tullamore road were very attractive and suited the heritage of the village. Perhaps unification of similar signs on all approach roads would look better and blend together. The street signage was clean. Traffic flowed freely on all roads which can be busy as the adjudicator noted.

Waste Minimisation:

The purpose of this category is to move beyond just collecting litter and to take steps to actually reduce the production of waste in the community. Well done to the school on their green flag, maybe more work could be done with the school to promote waste minimisation. Maybe consider carrying out a waste audit, the race against waste booklet available from the Tidy Towns unit has some helpful guidelines on carrying out such an audit. Also consider running a waste minimisation workshop with the Council. Visit the website www.foodwaste.ie for tips and suggestions in relation to food waste. Composting is another way of reducing waste and the compost can then be reused on landscaping throughout the village. You have made a good start in this area. Ensure for any new initiatives submit all relevant material with your entry form. Remember the main aim here is to move away from landfill and towards re-use and reduction.

Residential Areas:

The houses around the green form the traditional streetscape of the village and are superb. The housing estate St Oliver's is well maintained and also Ard Riada. Its new management committee is doing a superb job. It is good to see Ballindown Housing estate had a number of trees planted which is a great asset to this area. The new stone boundary wall at the parochial house was noted and admired.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach roads were generally good. The Tullamore approach road with its newly planted hedge needs the grass cut along the paling of the walking track. The roof of a shed as you enter the town on this road needs painting. The wall beside the post office also needs painting. All other areas looked well. Remember in an area that extrudes tidiness small things distract from this.

General Impression:

Geashill is a lovely rural village situated on a busy thoroughfare and was a very pleasant experience to visit and judge. It has potential to develop and progress in the competition further. You have done great work for this year's competition over all the categories. Keep up the good work and wishing you continued success in 2012.

Second Round Adjudication:

Geashill impresses by its individuality. One would like to see more of this throughout the country – less of

simply positioning hanging baskets and tubs and more of creating something different that captures the attention in an interesting way which probably stems from some element inherited from the past, interpreted to enhance the present. The village certainly retains an 'old world' look created by church, pub, schoolhouse and cottages, but some of the motifs and textures have been successfully adapted to suit the age in which we live – newish houses that replicate 'old-fashioned' porches, dormers and bargeboards on their exteriors are examples and one may be sure their interiors contain every modern convenience; ancient stone boundary walls lengthily extended or newly built along the now busy motor roads make the same statement. It is something of a disappointment that the very smart Ard Riada estate does not make special visual reference to Geashill and could in fact be anywhere; but on a more positive note it does make good use of the contours of the hill and the backing of fine old trees – rather than a layout of roads in straight lines. (Comments of this kind are incidental and do not affect the marking.) By agreement uncompleted estates are not being judged until the precise arrangements for their future have been fully worked out, but one should remark positively that it was encouraging to see that trees had already been planted throughout the Ballindownan estate before work was discontinued. Your very modern style of relationship with the school is admirable and the succession of green flags comes as no surprise. Nor do the imaginative plans for the Glebe Walk: but do remember that this is a 'natural' amenity and too much formality would spoil its objective. No doubt you are taking the recommendations of the Public Realm Study and of Birdwatch Ireland into consideration: both these reports make fascinating reading. Best wishes for the continuation of your 3-Year Development Plan – and do not be discourteous if not every project is completed within the time frame expected. One minor matter: in general it is not recommended that flower containers be placed on lawns or grass verges; containers are better suited aesthetically to paved or gravelled areas. Your work in the next year or two will be in taking up points raised in the external Reports and in continuing your own Development Plan; maintenance will also be important, both in landscaping and in housing: some gables and boundary walls in St Oliver's estate will need freshening up if Geashill is to retain its richly deserved place at the head of the County.