

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bagenalstown** Ref: **32**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **273**
Category: **D** Date(s): **23/06/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	35	35
The Built Environment	50	41	42
Landscaping	50	42	43
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27	27
Litter Control	50	32	32
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	9	10
Tidiness	30	15	14
Residential Areas	40	31	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31	32
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	270	273

Overall Development Approach:

Congratulations on your award in Co-Operation Ireland's Pride of Place. It is good to read on your entry form how well you are supported by a variety of official and voluntary bodies. Your entry form is a model of concise information – would that all other centre did the same! – but there was no map: please do not assume that the visitor has the amount of local knowledge that you have! In fact the map and additional information did arrive, though after the inspection had been completed, and these were helpful in writing the report but it is clear that some areas were missed and this is regretted. Omission of salient timely information also gives an (erroneous) advance impression of a committee not being altogether at one with its work.

The Built Environment:

Though the general streetscape of Bagenalstown is disappointing, the town is possessed of an unusual stock of fine individual buildings, old and new, dominated by the superb mills and warehouses. The vast malt-house by the Quay has been very decently maintained with its window openings picked out in brilliant yellow. (Another further downstream is a sad sight and one wonders about its safety.) The Library, housed in its classical temple, has been wonderfully well renovated and extended since this adjudicator's last visit. The Railway Station is one of the most architecturally distinguished in the country. The Roman Catholic church is a very fine example of the Irish Gothic revival while St Mary's is a model of a particular style of tower-dominated Church of Ireland building many of which have vanished. All this is well known, but what unites them all is how well they are maintained by their various custodians. New to (or forgotten by) this adjudicator are the Doric pavilion (school?) next to St Mary's, the gate-lodge at the foot of The Parade, and the cool modern design of the nearby supermarket. The BEAM care centre was well presented. All the schools noticed were also well presented, perhaps the most impressive being the Presentation-De La Salle College and St Brigid's School, both enhanced by planting and in the latter case by its lime trees. A number of quite smart business premises were noticed, those listed in your submission recently painted or upgraded; a majority, unfortunately, are not so well tended.

Landscaping:

Lengthy rose-beds and white fencing alongside the main road at Muinebheag Business Park make an attractive introduction to the town on the Kilkenny side. The planting below the Library gives a sense of thoughtfulness and well-being. Riverside landscaping is perhaps the most eye-catching and successful – the spacious well trimmed lawns, the sculpture, the picnic-tables, the extensive beds of geraniums. Young trees were seen doing

well. A thought occurred that in the event of finance being available a splendid boulevard could be created by planting trees of a single native variety on either side of The Parade (a neglected thoroughfare) leading up to the R.C. church. The Town Park (is this aka the Fair Green?) was not looking its best on the date of the visit; it seemed that some of the beds were not thriving – perhaps something as simple as lack of manuring or watering. The playground was colourful and clean; did children participate in the Disneyesque design and execution of the cartoon-type mural? The fine mosaic of which you sent a late photograph was not seen. It is good to read that you plant bulbs for colour in the off-season and that you sourced plants from Wheatfield prison.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

When submitting your next entry form, do give information on, for example, the Habitat Survey undertaken by students from Presentation-De La Salle College, the take-up by birds of the boxes made by FAS workers, and the linkage between Bagenalstown Improvement Group and Waterways Ireland and what it entails; it could be that you are denying yourselves additional marks by failure to communicate the nature of successes. The Wild Life sanctuary on the Barrow was not seen – thank you for your photograph which gives a good idea of it. Bagenalstown is encompassed by such a variety of habitats – riverine, woodland, meadow – that activities and interests are probably endless.

Litter Control:

Very little disposable litter was seen at the time of adjudication – some in the neighbourhood of the Railway Station and some in the neighbourhood of the Long Hill – and this is undoubtedly due to the twice-daily picking by your FAS representatives helped, as your submission shows, by the Scouts. Well done to both. It is interesting to read that the Civil Defence clear the locks – not an easy task one would imagine, well done to them too. This adjudicator constantly enquires if there is any way of stopping littering before it happens: are sources known, and if so can there be well publicised prosecutions? Your anti-dog fouling notices were seen and appreciated.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

At least two green flags were seen, and your submission lists five altogether: a high number for a town of this population. It is salutary to note the themes undertaken by the schools involved – water, energy and travel. The Cooking with Leftovers demonstration took place in a number of Tidy Towns, yours being one. Most impressive under this heading was surely your Better Energy Communities Pilot Project where you evidently provided sustainable heating in two schools, the community hall, the BEAM centre and five homes! and according to your notes the swimming pool is now heated by a geo-thermal system. More information on the outcome of these projects will be welcomed.

Tidiness:

As well as the very obvious dereliction there are a number of unsightly or neglected areas which even a short walk discloses. The precinct on the right facing the station is extremely untidy (and the gates to the station yard do nothing to enhance what was once a dignified space). The unique town core on the Roman street system is marred by many premises that are simply not up to any standard and the poles and overhead wires give a run-down appearance reminiscent of the 1940s. This was, and could be, a very fine town centre; the business premises that are so well presented, listed in your notes, are out-flanked, so to speak, by others not so well intentioned. Some neglected sites in the industrial estate near Royal Oak are all too visible; why is it that the dead-ends of such estates are invariably so unkempt? The diminution in marking under this heading will be balanced by an increase in 'Roads, Streets and Back Areas' (below).

Residential Areas:

A few of the original houses in the older part of the town are maintained with real pride. Off-street houses separated by trees along Royal Oak road are an example of good residential planning. Extensive roads of mid-20th century homes in the neighbourhood of the Vocational School have kept up their appearance remarkably well; crescent-shaped Páirc Muire is good piece of planning from that time; the choice of colours is imaginative. Some boundary walls here need freshening up with paint to match the facades. The floral urns at Chestnut Court give a touch of class! but where are the chestnuts? Ash trees were seen in Ashfield - a pity the electric transformer station is so prominent on the spacious green. Beechwood Close is a credit to its residents in every respect.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Quaysides, slipways, moorings and plantings along the river were much admired. Main roads are well surfaced and paving is almost always of a high standard though some side roads could do with attention. The unique Carlow style granite stone fencing on the railway bridges must be preserved; examples should be carefully surveyed and attended to where necessary. Your success in keeping down kerbside weed growth and removing graffiti throughout the town is favourably noted. A number of industrial premises in the Business Parks are very well presented indeed, some managements taking great trouble to ensure that their precincts are neat and inviting. Some streets and some housing areas do not have visible name signs and this is a hindrance to the visitor.

General Impression:

Bagenalstown is a pleasure to visit in spite of disappointment in finding neglect in some parts of the old town. There is a real sense of pride and purpose around the quays, the schools and in the suburban areas. Do report on the progress of wild-life and resource-management projects that are not obvious to the adjudicator. The next few years should show good results as a number of innovative projects come on stream. Every good wish for your increasing success.