

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clones**

Ref: **710**

County: **Monaghan**

Mark: **258**

Category: **D**

Date(s): **23/06/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	44	44
The Built Environment	50	39	41
Landscaping	50	31	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	16	17
Litter Control	50	32	32
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	13	14
Tidiness	30	13	15
Residential Areas	40	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	29	30
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	251	258

Overall Development Approach:

Your adjudicator would like to welcome back Clones to the 2013 National TidyTowns Competition. Your adjudicator has never been to Clones and it was a lovely experience. You have an active community and are working across all sectors towards a whole-town long-term development of your community to the benefit of all. Thank you for your long-term plan for your community. It was dated 2012 with no time lines indicated except short/medium and long term. You should build on this and it would be easier to follow if you aligned the activities to the ten judging categories of the national TidyTowns competition. Have you compared actions to results achieved?

Your adjudicator was particularly interested in the long-term plan to read the proposal to establish a youth TidyTowns committee which would be very progressive. There was no mention of actions relating to this in the entry form for this year.

It is great that you are working with so many of the local agencies and the Environmental Awareness Officer of Monaghan County Council with regard to the provision of the cycle paths and associated facilities.

Thank you also for the precise, clear entry form and clearly marked maps and plans for the park developments which your adjudicator found very useful. Overall, you have achieved a great deal this year, and your efforts are paying off to congratulations to all concerned.

The Built Environment:

The Diamond area provides a stately central feel to your town showing off the well-maintained landscaped central area with the many period homes and commercial premises in the area. Many of the premises were very well presented and painted in stately colours as befitted the style such as the building of Monaghan's Integrated Development Company. Standing at the Church of Ireland provides a wonderful vista down the town centre and there was great three and even four-storey buildings to admire. The 1903 Post Office with its red brick is a great styled building, as is the Bank of Ireland. It is assumed that it used to occupy the whole of this building which had some nice peace III displays in situ behind the great ornate iron windows. Well done to whoever has maintained the warning sign at the gates by the Church of Ireland stating a '40 shilling fine' could be issued.

Unfortunately some of the buildings have had their windows replaced in a style not-appropriate to the buildings. Perhaps some guidance can be provided for in this regard?

Signage is an issue for some of the commercial premises. Their style and colour should be considered. Also, signs erected on the first and second stories of buildings should also be appropriate. The bright yellow shiny sign for 'Second time around' shop is not in keeping with the area – and the large first-floor signs for Roma Take Away's are too big and not appropriate. Matthews of Clones has a lovely window display and wooden shop surround. Urgent work is needed to remove the 'top petrol' signs and indeed the pumps from the Diamond area. Likewise the top floors of the building with Boyle Sports need painting. It should be reiterated that it is great to see local businesses in the shops around the Diamond such as Matthews and the solicitors opposite which will ensure the sustainable use and vibrant look of these buildings.

Cara Street development will improve this area and particular the provision of car parking for the new playground – this will be a great amenity for the whole town due to its position so close to the Diamond. Your success rate for work achieved on derelict structures is to be highly commended. You have moved forward a lot on this. Do keep up this great effort and expand the survey work to perhaps identify more buildings that could be included in this programme of action. The rear-flat roof of Leonard Arms hotel will need to be weeded soon! The front of the building looked fair but the second floor link between the two bay windows was beginning to collapse and may be an area of concern.

The courthouse looked very well but the top gutters need to have the growing vegetation removed to stop damage to this structure. Radio reports on adjudication day talked of its possible closure. This would be a pity and if so the community should strive to have a special arrangement made with the courts service to maintain the buildings if it is closed. Many Court Houses across the region have quickly fallen into disrepair once they are no longer used for hearing cases. The gates adjacent to the court house should be painted. The Abbey of St Peter & St John is a lovely oasis and the 1745 headstone to Kevin McMahon was in excellent order – this is a lovely area but please read the note in the tidiness section of this report. The Presbyterian Church building and gates looked very well though the wall-clad extension at the rear of the building was disappointing to see. The landscaping all around the Catholic Church is lovely and again adds to the established feel of the community of Clones.

The most disappointing thing in all of Clones was St Tiernach's GAA Park. Your adjudicator was simply horrified to see it and felt it appeared worse than any prison wall – the extent of metal, barbed wire and anti-climb devices on tops of wall were just horrific. Parked in the potholed, hill car park looking down at the park was a dire sight. Steel gates, doors and metal fences could so easily be painted to really enhance this area. There is no welcome sign and the vast extent of green wall could be made to look so inviting. This is so surprising especially due to the co-operation and good work of the GAA with the local committee on initiatives such as litter actions during matches. Perhaps it takes the eyes of a visitor to highlight this? Your adjudicator would strongly urge you to consider how you could work with local youth to enhance this whole area. Look just at the youth centre next door with great murals on windows and the bright, inviting colours of the area for inspiration.

In total stark contrast to the GAA pitch is the wonderful new school of St Tiernan's primary school which looked fantastic with gardens, recycled sculptures, green flags flying, COW day initiatives signs and was a bright, inviting amenity.

The new sports facility should be a very welcome amenity to the area.

Another wonderful building was the Cassandra centre with its nicely painted steel ramps, floral displays and resident chickens!

Landscaping:

It is great that you have so many volunteers to help with grass strimming and landscaping. You could get them involved in appropriate tree planting and management and ensure strimmers do not damage newly planted trees. Also mulch is needed at the base of trees such as those in the Diamond. The soil here looked very brown so it is hoped you do not use peat products but use possibly home-made compost. Overall the landscaping through Clones appeared very well. Unfortunately it appeared that weed killer had been used around the edges of roads and the base of trees on Cara Street.

The lack of facilities (seating/picnic benches/ activities/notices) at the Barry McGuigan Park and the famine / workhouse graveyard were noted but you have great plans for the former which will be a great amenity for the community.

The fountain in the Diamond was not working on adjudication day and this was disappointing as it was quite a modern design and turned off, did not add to the area.

The Town council building had some nice hanging baskets and looked well.

The leap frog statue and Creighton's hotel looked very well and provided a lovely entrance to this great shopping street.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You have highlighted in your entry form that Clones is close to a Special Conservation Area – Killroosky Lough. Do you organise any walks or events to highlight the international importance of this habitat? Clones benefits

from the many mature trees in and around the town centre such as the copper beech trees by the Catholic Church and sycamore in the Abbey. There are many native hedges on approach roads into the town. You have said that this will form a key part of the park and canal developments which will be critical in providing shelter and food and wildlife corridors for wildlife.

The Cherry park wildlife area was disappointing. The notice board did not name any of the featured wildlife in neither English or Irish. Are barn owls seen here – if so these would be rare and special sightings? Do you organise wildlife walks/activity days etc? You are lucky in that a lot of wildlife can be seen in the town. Numerous swallows and house martins were noticed on adjudication day by the Ulster Canal shop. Provision of activities to build on these will help you gain more marks here. Do ensure that the proposed bird boxes and bat boxes being erected are designed using a template eg. www.BirdwatchIreland.ie as so often entrance holes are far too big and they are poorly positioned.

The bee-hive willow sculpture as part of a Monaghan County Trail will be beneficial.

Litter Control:

The street bins were clean and in use which was good to see. Some older litter was noticed by the Ulster Canal area and some fresh litter along the Diamond, including circus promotion flyers and a small number of confectionary wrappers. Your dog-waste posters seem to be working as only one such item was noticed!

There was a lot of litter in Cherry Park. On a Sunday afternoon the bring banks were practically litter free – well done. It was surprising to see here a cardboard and paper bin, and this was overflowing and had some general rubbish dumped here. But your litter patrols are doing well and little road-side rubbish was noted.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

It was great to read that you have established a cycling club for Clones. The BER energy rating carried out on 91 of its properties is also a good action to help gain marks in this category of the competition. Are the local WEEE days well supported?

The Cassandra Hand Centre brought a smile to your adjudicator with the nice mosaics and these were the first chickens noticed at a town centre community facility!

Tidiness:

Your adjudicator felt that the no-drinking signs and byelaws on the gates at the Abbey and McGuigan Park were very intrusive and did not provide a nice welcome to the visitor. Could the bye-law signs at least be placed in a more discreet position in the area?

Disabled parking bays were freshly painted blue and all looked well. The SuperValu container at the junction/traffic lights is beginning to show signs of wear and tear.

Bring bank signs and Primary Health Centre signs were turned the wrong way at the main car park.

There is a little graffiti on the block-building at the back car park – but it was actually very tasteful. Perhaps the youth committee could be approached to try and extend this formally to the extent of wall in this car park which would make it more attractive or at the old textile factory nearby?

Residential Areas:

There are many homes on streets in and around Clones – not just in separate estates which is good to see.

There were lovely homes with well-kept front gardens opposite the new sports facilities.

Black and white home on Mac Curtain Street with the carriage arch and good attention to paint work near the old fire station looked very well. This street will benefit from the new development here. It should be stressed however, that you adjudicator was delighted to note the number of homes and above-shop apartments in use in and around the Diamond.

Your adjudicator liked the number of bi-lingual street signs but got very frustrated with the lack of names for private housing estates such as the two roads and estates further on the road by the now closed Gael scoil on Ard Culvain

Two tin-roofed sheds by the old creamery are in a poor state, and despite being fenced off need to be addressed. Further out the road there is another estate with no name – wit red-brick pillars at its entrance. There is a large communal area here that is simply mowed. The addition of trees and shrubs here or even partial mowing could add a fun element to the local children here and help with enhancing the biodiversity here. Several of the homes here have planted trees and shrubs in their own gardens which has improved these area.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The proposed works at the Monaghan cross-roads will make a big different to the area.

Your adjudicator was amazed not to see any 'welcome to clones' signs on the Belturbet road, nor the Scothouse Road.

There were no 'height' warnings at the very low barrier at the Ulster Canal shop which is needed. Nice to see the iron railings as graveyard fencing on the Scotshouse road.

Commercial tyre premises on Mac Curtain Street desperately need the iron gates treated and painted. The yard here is kept relatively tidy and these efforts are not noticed due to the poor condition of the entry gates. The top stones on the boundary walls here could also be removed.

Whilst the scale and size of the ABP factory seemed surprising, the presentation of these premises was very good. The building on Cara Street that was revamped with newly decorated boards on the windows helped to enhance this area.

Perhaps there could be more ivy planted to screen off the area by Clones Tractors on O'Duffy Street?

General Impression:

Clones is town of great heritage – the Diamond shows off some great built heritage, the canals and community gardens highlight the natural heritage on your doorstep and of course between boxing and GAA there is great sporting heritage in the community. The community has taken the lead to revitalise the town and are working on many great projects. Keep up the good work.