

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Cloughjordan** Ref: **164**
County: **Tipperary(North)** Mark: **274**
Category: **B** Date(s): **25/06/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	34	35
The Built Environment	50	30	34
Landscaping	50	35	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	32	32
Litter Control	50	34	34
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	13	15
Tidiness	30	18	19
Residential Areas	40	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	35	35
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	264	274

Overall Development Approach:

You are very welcome Cloughjordan to the Super Valu 2013 National Tidy Towns competition.

Your entry under this category in the entry form is extensive, organised and detailed. It shows imagination, administrative skills, and dedicated work.

It is a good idea to have your interesting website mentioned on your village name sign. The display of local events and awards in the Centra building was noted. The map displayed in the window was probably the same map you meant to submit with your entry, annotated as per section 3 of your entry form. You mentioned nine new work projects numbered 1 to 9 in your section 3 of the entry form. The adjudicator did not receive any map, but managed quite well because of the village plan seen and photographed in the Centra window. Please ensure that the map is included in 2014. It is a very clear map but somewhat obscured by the sports jersey model.

We were delighted to see four Green Flags flying proudly at the local school on the Station Road. This is a magnificent achievement on behalf of the pupils and teachers.

Last year's adjudicator strongly recommended that you draw up a 3 or 5 year Tidy Towns plan. Unfortunately we do not have seem to have received such this year. A three or five-year plan will focus your mind on the important issues facing you, and it will help you to prioritise your work. A plan need not be prepared professionally, but you should consult widely locally in preparing such a plan. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to the Cloughjordan area in drawing up your work programme. Please do refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a three or five-year plan. It is essential to progress in the competition and to gain extra marks under this particular category that you submit such a plan in 2014

The Built Environment:

Cloughjordan is a very fine village with a lovely Irish vernacular feel to its Main Street . We particularly liked the sense of enclosure in the wider area as one arrives in the Main Street from the Toomevara and from the Birr Road.

Well done on the newest aspect of your built environment - the Thomas McDonagh Centre which includes your

local library. Reading your website before our visit we read that you were receiving the Pride of Place judges at the centre earlier on our adjudication day. We are sure you are very proud of your new venue. 25th June 2013 was a busy day for Cloughjordan! And all this just before your Festival! However you had the town looking its best for all events. We are delighted that you retained the traditional simplicity of the existing two-storey house and were brave enough to provide a brief for a modern contrasting building adjacent. This is good architectural conservation practice – firstly to adapt an old building for a new use and then not too ‘ape’ the old in the extension for your needs – but to respect its scale and materials. We liked the gravelled surface, although this may prove somewhat difficult for wheelchair users or buggies. However, we assume that entrance for the vast majority will be from the front of the building. We wish you luck with the further efforts to conserve and reopen the actual home house at number 50.

The railway station complex, although outside the town proper, is an interesting aspect of your built environment. It is a pity that the building is not in more constant use. Are there any alternative uses which could be dovetailed with the uses required by the infrequent rail service which might guarantee its future? It is presented well, and in particular the adjudicator admired the lovely stone railway bridge, the beautiful original entrance gates and pillars, the stile, the good stone walls, the small-scale platform buildings and the lovely mature trees surrounding the car parking area, and the general cleanliness and maintenance of the platform area. Well done to all those involved. The fire station – a bungalow – is neatly presented.

We particularly admired the cream-coloured two-storey elongated four bay house with archway gate located on the road approaching Centra from the railway station direction. This is very good example of vernacular Irish architecture and we commend the owners for the retention of the beautiful wooden sash windows. We also admired the very recently newly renovated two-storey dormer traditional type house on the opposite side of the street to the Catholic Church. Again we commend the owners in this case for their great care in retaining the traditional window types associated with the house. On the Centra side of this road two three-storey houses were well presented.

The Catholic Church is a very fine imposing building set in well maintained grounds, fronted by a low stone wall with a terrific length of railings which would benefit from some cleaning due to lichen/moss growth.

Centra was well presented although we would have preferred that the large advertising signs facing the visitor as one approaches the interesting curve into the Main Street (approaching from Station Road) could be relocated or presented in a more artistic fashion. The beautiful milestone at the corner of the Centra building is almost lost in its current location, and we would be concerned about its ongoing future without protection. The dirty drainpipe beside the milestone detracts from its setting.

The well presented Railway Bar and the adjacent lovely nameless red shop front were admired. Perhaps something could be done before next year about the partly roofless derelict property in the Main Street. A particularly badly attended-to building was a single-storey building seen as one enters the town from the Birr side. This had the appearance of an old bank, and it detracted hugely from the lovely pristine white two-storey building adjacent. The building to the left of the said single-storey building would also benefit from some painting. It would appear that both these premises are for sale. We hope they find a new owner in the near future, as they are located in a very strategic part of your town. Conversely the double white fronted two-storey restaurant at the other end of the Main Street is also for sale, but is meanwhile presented in a most agreeable fashion. Brackets hanging from ‘The Village’ offices contain no hanging baskets. We do not have a problem with the lack of hanging baskets, as your Main Street speaks for itself, and embellishment with hanging baskets could actually detract from its architectural qualities. But we would ask you to carefully remove – in this case and in other cases – any unused brackets.

On the Nenagh Road the great three-storey row of buildings facing the Village Green opposite the Church of Ireland is a very fine aspect of your built heritage. The Church of Ireland itself is a magnificent building, set off as it is by the wonderful classical and simple Village Green. A white house with lovely blue window frames and doorway was admired at the Thomas McDonagh Centre end of the village. On the Borrisokane road we admired the lovely white cottage and the Georgian style older houses. The schools in the village were well presented.

We were impressed by the way the eco-village is accessible to and from the Main Street in a discreet manner. This access area – although recently improved it seems – generally requires some finishing off, including the upgrading of the building on one side of the entrance to the Main Street, and the arrangement of the information posters in a more limited and permanent form. However this access/exit is a good example of connectivity within a town. In relation to the eco-village itself, the extremely varying style of house design and layout will hopefully mellow when the scheme is complete. Meanwhile there are some good buildings architecturally within the development.

You have dealt well with the reroofed unoccupied property on Main Street, and it was presented in a very acceptable agreeable fashion. Finally we admired the small scale sculpture new the GAA pitch. The lovely hooped traditional farm gate nearby is badly rusting. Good luck with your public art program! It is great to see that the school is extending rather than contracting in a rural village.

We would like to have heard a lot more about the LEADER funded village enhancement scheme which you just list in relation to Overall Development. You do mention it incidentally throughout the entry form – in relation to

e.g. signage. However perhaps next year you will let us have a separate program plan explaining and detailing all that is involved. We hope that this enhancement is being professionally architecturally/landscape architecturally designed.

Landscaping:

Firstly congratulations on winning the Tree Project Award in 2012!

The beautiful semi mature trees along the Main Street looked very well. In particular we commend you for the simplicity of the Village Green. We are very impressed by the fact that you have not tried to interfere with its simplicity and classical nature. It is a 'jewel in the crown' of Cloughjordan, with its magnificently elegant tall trees and its well mown grass, together with its surrounding stone walls.

The delightfully sheltered garden behind the Thomas McDonagh Centre is a lovely feature of the new development. The built-in seating and raised beds looked very attractive on a sunny evening. Whereas normally we would not be encouraging you to provide on-footpath pots or planters in general – preferring a more sustainable and less fussy landscaping programme – we did admire these planters, and commend their uniformity and in-scale properties. They are architecturally pleasing in relation to the buildings. We note that these have been funded by the village enhancement scheme.

We are delighted that you have moved over to perennial planting. Well done on the new planting at the eco-village around the – what appears to mostly vacant – enterprise centre, as well as the new work on the community farm. The labyrinth construction at the eco-village is a lovely and imaginative idea.

We noticed evidence of chemical weeding in the town and in particular the remains of such treatment in paved areas. We would encourage you to use manual or chemical-free methods of weed control. Your County Heritage Officer would be a good source of advice in this regard.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

We are glad that you are involved in various activities in relation to such things as the raised bog restoration project, the National trails day, and the Knocknacree community wood lands. We look forward to seeing the North Tipperary Biodiversity Action Plan and in particular seeing how you will dovetail into this new plan in the village itself. You have been informing yourselves on this topic in general in a detailed fashion. Now is the time for action on the ground in the village with the benefit of a well studied background. We would like to see evidence of more 'concrete' on-the-ground projects within the village confines itself happening during the next 12 months. We appreciate the fact that a lot of your time has been spent on research and preparation. The planting of buddleia was noted. We imagine that the three local primary schools involvement will help you along this path. Perhaps you can also let us have details of any new projects under this category heading which are being/will be undertaken in the eco-village. This adjudicator considers that your existing marks under this section are exceedingly high in relation to other centres visited without the evidence in the village itself in particular of very notable new projects. Therefore your marks remain the same. Surveys and analysis of wildlife within the village confines can lead to publications/leaflets made available to the general public on the various trails. Signboards, artistically designed, can inform the local the passing visitor alike. Ensure the use of Irish terminology in any information publication.

Litter Control:

The Clean Street team have been busy. The April spring clean can be undertaken next year, and we understand the reasons why you were not able to get involved this year, but well done to the Scouts on their alternative event. You made a concentrated effort at the railway station and this shows.

The bring banks on the Nenagh road were acceptably presented. However, they would benefit from some planting or landscaping, as indeed would the GAA wall itself near where they are located. This suggestion was also made by last year's adjudicator. Perhaps you can act on this before 2014.

Little litter was noted in the town on adjudication day apart from some small amount of paper on the footpath in two places.

To improve your markings in this category continue with the good work, but also include a litter management plan in your overall Tidy Towns plan. You can dovetail this plan with the County Litter Management plan. Your County Environmental Awareness Officer will be able to advise you in this regard.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

Well done on your participation in the Energy Neighbourhoods together with the Tipperary Energy Agency. The carbon miles issue in relation to local farming is a good project, as is the bakery project. Your list of free cycling projects is impressive. Well done on your success again in the national award for the most green community. We noted the solar panels on the school at station road. We also noticed solar panels within the Main Street on three-storey building. You have an advantage in relation to progressing in this category because of the presence of the eco-village and the ethos it brings to the village of Cloughjordan.

Tidiness:

In general Cloughjordan is a tidy village. Approaching the turn into the town on Station Road beyond the fire station, we noted two advertising signs located between the community alert sign and a road arrow sign. One of the signs referred to the festival which was about to begin. The other was a business advertising sign. Whereas we understand the desire to publicise your Festival, we would question as to whether erecting roadside signs is visually friendly. By contrast we admired the beautiful hanging banners throughout the town which also advertised your Festival. We also admired the Thomas McDonagh banner. At the same location as these two signs, we would suggest that you encourage the owner of the corrugated roofed shed to repaint before next year. Some cabling was noted around a broken paved area at the base of a power pole on the road near the Catholic church. But more importantly the complex opposite the Catholic church referred to by last year's adjudicator (complex looks like an old fire station/garage) does not seem to have been upgraded despite encouragement by last year's adjudicator to so do. In particular the container placed on the forecourt looks particularly ugly. The walls and red gates require painting urgently. If there is a particular problem in advancing with this, perhaps you might explain it to us. Outside the church railings there was a single concrete pot with a very poor display of planting. We would suggest that you leave the path free of clutter here, as the church and its grounds can stand alone without embellishment.

The entrance to the GAA pitch from the Main Street is untidy because of lack of surfacing, and the remains of chemically weeded and also would benefit from gate painting.

We are sure that you are well aware of the need to upgrade the area to one side of the new Thomas McDonagh Centre, as the rundown corrugated shed and broken stone wall etc. Do nothing to improve views from the side access to the building. Please let us know how you hope to deal with this next year. By contrast the other side elevation of the centre is marked by new bedding and gable planting and a very clean blue gate access to the premises beyond. On-footpath car parking here as elsewhere should be discouraged. Well done on the painting at Banaghans.

In the centre of the village the roadside sign between Centra and the cafe had a very dirty black and white striped upright pole, and one of the directional signs (Moneygall) was very dirty. A headless sign was noticed just at the approach to the McDonagh Centre from the Church of Ireland on the same side of the road. The sign should be re erected or the pole removed. Downhill of the Bothar Mhuire junction a petrol pump and clothes bank need painting.

Residential Areas:

Generally both the residential properties within the Main Street and on all approach is to the village were presented in a most acceptable fashion, both buildings and gardens where relevant.

The entrance to the estate off the Main Street could be improved by painting of the left-hand side wall on the corner as one enters the estate. Naming of the estate would also be of benefit. Lios Muilinn boundary wall facing the houses would benefit from washing or boundary wall planting We admired the nice name sign at Townfields and noted good semi mature trees planted in the estate are well staked.

McDonagh Avenue and Bothar Mhuire were well presented estates.
The eco-village is as you say still unfinished but it is continuing with planting in open areas.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The planted out-shots within the town provided for organised parking, and the semi mature trees, which are well protected, looked well and screened and divided up the parking lots. The bicycle racks in front of the cycleway road sign are useful for cyclists, but are rather clumsy in relation to other viewers of the map. However, this is a countywide problem and not a specific Cloughjordan problem.

On the Station Road approach the area surrounding the town name sign requires surfacing. There appears to have been some mix up in relation to the reversal of the speed limit signs on the Birr road as the 80/60 seem to be reversed. Attention to field gates in general on approach roads – which in some cases are falling and mostly unpainted is recommended. Set back areas in front of front boundaries of houses would benefit from surfacing and tidying. The dry stone walls are very attractive, and it is a pity that not all set-back house boundaries have continued the tradition of stone walling. The stone wall along the station road approach frames views to very unspoiled countryside beyond. The new footpath on the opposite side of the road is an asset and looks very tidy. In front of the unfinished house near the school on the same road the 50 kph speed limit is surrounded by weeds. Some stone rubble was noted along the Borrisokane approach inside a boundary wall, as was a commercial advertising sign. On the Nenagh approach the treed recessed area was very much admired.

General Impression:

Cloughjordan is a lovely Irish vernacular village, and it also has the benefit of a modern development of a unique

nature in the presence of the eco-village. Cloughjordan is a vibrant community by all accounts – one in which many people are busy promoting the advancement of quality of life for themselves and their visitors. The access to environmentally friendly practices, both through the eco-village scheme and associated learning talks and lectures is a unique resource. We are impressed generally with your enthusiasm and progressive nature, and we expect to hear more about you all in this competition in the future. We wish you every success. Go n-eírí libh!