

Tidy Towns Competition 2010

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Callan** Ref: **987**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **216**
Category: **C** Date(s): **24/06/2010**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009	Mark Awarded 2010
Overall Development Approach	50	20	27
The Built Environment	50	29	30
Landscaping	50	27	28
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	10	14
Litter Control	50	29	30
Waste Minimisation	20	5	6
Tidiness	30	13	14
Residential Areas	40	25	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33	34
General Impression	10	6	6
TOTAL MARK	400	197	216

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome Callan, to the 2010 TidyTowns competition and it is great to see that you are working hard to improve on your positive performance in 2009. You can be confident that your town is improving from year to year and a very large part of this improvement is down to the hard work of the Committee members. The level of participation in the TidyTowns competition appears to be relatively good with 11 members. While this is a very good level of participation, why not go on a recruitment drive? One of the big advantages of a larger town is that there are normally local clubs and societies that are willing to get involved. Why not try and boost numbers further by approaching local sports clubs? It is also an excellent idea to involve the local Chamber of Commerce and local social groups such as the Active Retirement Association and we are sure that this approach will pay dividends. Another source of members could be residents associations from the residential areas in Callan.

It is also noted that full use is being made of Kilkenny County Council. This is tremendously important for tackling projects across a range of areas. Perhaps some contact should also be made with the local LEADER Group and Fas to draw some additional support? It is heartening to see that communication has now been made with the 3 schools and it is hoped that this will lead to additional involvement from schoolchildren who can be a valuable resource in this competition.

The adjudicator would like to thank the Committee for submitting the detailed plan and documentation with their entry form – this was very helpful during the site visit. Well done on preparing an action plan and we have no doubt that this will be of tremendous assistance to you. One modification is suggested however, which is to set out all projects proposed under each of the TidyTowns headings. This will ensure that projects for each category are identified and scheduled, and ultimately increase your marks in each category with the completion of projects each year.

The Built Environment:

Callan is dominated by Green Street which lies in the southern section of the town. In the view of the adjudicator, the visit to the town was a most interesting and pleasing experience due to the quality of the built environment and the number and diversity of historical structures and sites. The Abbey Meadow is an excellent example of this, where Callan Abbey was admired along with the other historical sites here, such as the Friary building. It is a shame that the access road is in such poor condition. Bridge Street and Green Street are most impressive streetscapes and it is a major strength of the town is that much of its original streetscape appears largely intact. This streetscape also helps to give Callan a distinctive and original character which is reinforced by a number of high quality historical buildings such as Hackets, Hourigans, Keoghs Model Bakery and Grogans on Bridge Street, and the Church of Ireland, the Catholic Church, Halla an Baile and the Bank of Ireland on Green Street. A number of attractive commercial buildings such as McDowells Pharmacy, Kerwicks and the AIB were observed.

The Friary building on Mill Street is also very attractive and it is good to see it in productive reuse. A highlight is also the Council buildings which are stunning, while the Fair Green is a lovely amenity. The lovely modern building (with Costcutter on the ground floor) in the neighbourhood centre adjacent to Friary Walk was observed and it was considered that this contemporary design offered a variation on the traditional design which tended to dominate in the rest of the town.

We note your projects for 2010 which included closing off the derelict pound at Haggard Lane and completing the paving on Green Street. The paving project was ongoing during adjudication and while it looked well on the day, we look forward to seeing it complete in 2011. It was observed during adjudication that there are a number of derelict sites in Callan and it is recommended that a strategy to deal with vacant / derelict properties is included in your Action Plan. Possible actions include; contacting the County Council and having the properties placed on the Derelict Sites Register and contacting the owners of such properties and requesting that the properties be cleaned up (e.g. boarding up the windows and painting them) in order to improve their appearance. The derelict properties in very prominent locations (such as Clarkes Bridge House) should take priority.

Landscaping:

The Committee have clearly been working hard on their landscaping projects for 2010 and a number of the planted beds and landscaping projects observed were of a high standard. The projects that caught the attention of the adjudicator included the landscaping at the Grotto, which was an explosion of colour that really brightened up this entrance to the town – well done to the volunteer who is responsible for this. The planting bed at the Flaggy Lane project was also observed and admired and the pump also caught the attention of the adjudicator. The grounds of both the Junior School and the National School (St. Brigids) were observed and both were nicely landscaped and maintained and considered to be a credit to all involved.

The mature trees on the Kilkenny approach road were also admired, as were the new trees on Green Street. The roundabouts around the town could be considered an opportunity for low maintenance perennial landscaping for 2011 – would it be possible to get sponsorship to undertake planting here? If the roundabout at the Grotto was landscaped, it would further improve this approach to the town.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The adjudicator was most impressed with the Abbey Meadow and we would encourage you to continue to restore the Heritage Walk project. The quality of the historical sites and the natural amenity of the river (it is noted that it contains rare Cray Fish!) make this a fantastic amenity. It also appears that a lot of the work has been done as high quality information panels are in place. It is a shame however that some of the wicker sculptures are in poor condition. You are also commended on the partnership approach you are taking with the Friends of the Abbey Meadow and Callan Friary Trust. Other ideas you should consider under this category is incorporating bird and insect friendly native species in your landscaping schemes and avoiding the use of harmful fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides.

Litter Control:

A good standard of litter control was observed on the day of adjudication. The Committee are congratulated on their efforts in this regard as it cannot be easy to maintain a town that is the size of Callan to the standard that was observed. The town centre deserves special mention. It was very clean and tidy during the inspection, with little or no litter evident. Even the areas dominated by derelict buildings and vacant sites were clean, indicating that you have worked exceptionally hard in this category. Litter was noted however, in some isolated areas such as the verge of the Kilkenny Road opposite Friary Walk – it is recommended that this area is included in your next Spring Clean Project. The verge immediately opposite the grotto was also in need of attention as litter was observed here.

Waste Minimisation:

This is an area that continues to grow in importance in the TidyTowns Competition. We note and commend your initiative in organising workshops on sustainable energy and thank you for your bring centre year on year tonnage information. However, the Committee is encouraged to explore additional actions that would help to minimise waste. They include; composting for your landscaping projects, using mulch mowers to cut grass, identifying future potential sites for bottle banks, running awareness campaigns of reducing, reusing and recycling at a local level and investigating the provision of composters to individual houses. More ideas can be found in the TidyTowns hand book.

Tidiness:

The hard work of the Committee has been observed in this category and the standard of tidiness was generally good. Improvements are possible however. A number of signs were very dirty and in need of cleaning (and sign poles needed paint) – examples being the signage at the St Brigids roundabout, while the access road to the Abbey Meadow is in very poor condition with derelict properties and graffiti noted. The Abbey Meadow is also in need of attention as some of the information boards are in poor condition and some of the seating is overgrown.

Residential Areas:

A number of residential areas were visited in Callan during adjudication and for the most part, they were in good condition and looked well. Laurel Court was among the most impressive, while Bolton Green was also good. Mellows Park did not quite reach the standards set by Laurel Court and Bolton Green. Bealach na Braithre (Friary Walk) off the Kilkenny Road was quite nice, as it had good entrance signage and landscaping, but it was let down somewhat by kerb weed which gave parts of the estate an untidy appearance. Westgate Demesne was neat and tidy, but very little landscaping observed. It was also observed that a large number of individual properties and gardens in the town were presented to a high standard.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach roads to the town were reasonable for the most part, but some were in need of better maintenance. The approach from the Kilkenny Road was very good, with trimmed verges and clean and tidy signage. The footpath on this approach was also presented to a good standard. The approach from the ring road leading to Flaggy Lane was also of a good standard with clearly visible signage and trimmed verges. The Dunnamaggan approach road could be improved by a welcome sign and trimmed verges.

General Impression:

Well done on your very good performance in 2010 which has given you a significant increase in marks across a range of categories. The adjudicator has no doubts that you will continue to progress and we look forward to seeing Callan in the competition in 2011.