

# Tidy Towns Competition 2011

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Mullingar** Ref: **206**  
County: **Westmeath** Mark: **245**  
Category: **E** Date(s): **06/06/2011**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2010</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2011</b>
Overall Development Approach	50	33	34
The Built Environment	50	36	37
Landscaping	50	34	35
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20	20
Litter Control	50	30	28
Waste Minimisation	20	8	8
Tidiness	30	16	16
Residential Areas	40	30	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30	30
General Impression	10	7	7
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>245</b>

### Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator welcomes Mullingar to the 2011 TidyTowns competition and thank you for your well detailed submission. You seem to enjoy a fruitful partnership with the Local Authority and various agencies and bodies in the town. In particular you seem to be successful in liaising with the 33 active residents groups in the town. This is great to see and gives you and the competition a real link to the town's residents both for support and to advertise your projects. We hope you are successful in getting members of the residents groups to attend your groups meetings.

### The Built Environment:

The two new sculptures were gleaming in the sun and together with the 'chatting' Friars at the junction of McCurtain Street and the Joe Dolan stature you have a much enlivened streetscape. While the lower street level facades of many of your buildings are well maintained make sure the upper floors are not neglected. For instance Cons pub has a lovely and well kept street level frontage with colourful hanging baskets but is let down by the peeling paint at upper floors. On adjudication day John Daly's pub was getting a new coat of paint both on the frontage to Oliver Plunkett Street but also importantly, to the gable wall on Martins Lane. Gable walls are often neglected and can be a prominent element when viewed from a main street. Other prominent premises admired were Swarbriggs and the muted paint colours of Ilia gourmet and the New to You shop front. The grounds of the Annebrook Hotel were smartly presented as was the successful merging of old and new buildings here. The modern addition to the Garda station was successfully done at College Street and the roses to the front of St Mary's College were in full bloom. We look forward to seeing the results of the building work at the Loreto College in future visits to the town. The new County Council buildings are very impressive and how nice to be able to see the books in the library from the adjoining footpaths. The Arts Centre is a lovely addition to the town and we look forward to progress on the railings and frontage of the Courthouse building. Well done in the progress in addressing the derelict sites in the town.

### **Landscaping:**

The town park is such a lovely asset for your town and well done to all involved in its development. As the holly hedge matures it will improve the approach from the Millmount Road. Some of the trees were showing signs of damage with bark stripped off their trunks. New trees in areas of high activity could have their trunks protected with bamboo mats if this continues to be a problem.

Perhaps one or two more specimen trees could be planted? The setting of the park will in time be enhanced as the trees mature. It would be nice to see some herbaceous planting used here. Using herbaceous perennials rather than annuals is to be encouraged as it provides a more sustainable burst of summer color and is less expensive to install. The hanging baskets on the main street provided a colourful addition to the streetscape and it is great to see their use extended this year to further up Pearse Street to the entrance to the Town Park. We look forward to seeing progress in your plans for the Tranquility Park.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

You correctly note that the canal is a particularly valuable amenity for you and we look forward to seeing more progress in your proposed projects here. However as you are aware there are many other habitat types present in Mullingar which a general survey would identify for you. You say that as a first step you will progress a survey along the Royal Canal, good luck with this. It should also be possible to do an extensive desk study of the towns habitats; aerial photos are a great aid to this. This can help highlight habitat types even in broad categories e.g. –parkland, lawn grass, road verges, hedgerows, waterway, scrub, woodlands etc. This survey should be a basis for you to preserve the identified habitats in your area, and investigate the possibility of developing new ones. We hope to see progress in this category so that you can add to your points here.

### **Litter Control:**

Well done on your Clean Up Mullingar Morning carried out in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce which seems to have been a success for you. These kinds of high profile events together with your innovative paving stones are a great way to get the anti litter message across. As mentioned earlier in the report, the town park is such a lovely asset for your town. However the adjudication visit took place on a Sunday afternoon and the amount of litter there, left from the previous Saturday night activities, was dreadful. Children were playing amongst takeaway wrappers, drinks cans and bottles. The park is obviously used as a gathering place at night and this must be a problem for you but litter collections must be undertaken on weekend mornings as the play area in particular was litter strewn. Children should not have to play in such conditions especially since the quality of the play areas and equipment is so high. Some of the sums you mention that have been collected from litter fines should be diverted to additional litter collections here. While the streets and paths were generally tidy some black spots were noticed. The canal bank at the rear of the Market Point development was untidy again with drinks cans and signs of anti social behaviour. Along the main street the bins were looking dirty and a general clean would improve their appearance.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

Your schools competition seems to have been a great success and well done to the Mullingar Educate together in all their efforts. Perhaps in next year's submission you might indicate the location of the school garden on the map and it could be visited by next year's adjudicator? The Green School programme has also been a great success for you. Have you had any thoughts about joining the Green Homes programme also run by An Taisce. This could be promoted through your excellent network of residents committees and this would be a great way to progress the success of green ideals in the town. Maybe look into this for next year's submission? The bring centres visited at the town centre offices and the new retail developments were well looked after.

### **Tidiness:**

For a town the size of Mullingar you have been successful in presenting a generally tidy impression to the visitor. We look forward to seeing progress on your anti graffiti murals as this seems to be a problem for you in the town. The block wall opposite the Annebrook Hotel just inside the Town Park had some graffiti and would seem to be vulnerable to future damage. Perhaps climbers or wall shrubs planted to the grass strip here would avoid this problem in the future and also help screen the adjoining property. There was also some graffiti noted at the wall at the canal basin. Best practice is to ensure that graffiti is removed as soon as practicable. When graffiti is allowed to remain, it invites yet more graffiti and may lead to an increase in vandalism and other criminal activity. The entrance to the Colaiste Muire sports ground was also in need of some attention and the edges should be kept strimmed here.

### **Residential Areas:**

Well done to all the resident associations on the hard work they carry out over the year and we wish them every success in the annual tidy estates competition. Perhaps next year you could include some press

clippings of this event as this type of competition is a great way to keep the momentum going, healthy competition is always a good way to get residents motivated! The newer residential areas were maturing well and the planting at the Market Point development is a real asset although some of the mulch mats were evident through the gravel areas and some more gravel may need to be spread to hide this. The open space to the entrance to the Willowbrook estate was neat and tidy so well done to all the residents here, keep up the good work. Check tree ties and stakes on trees planted as part of previous year's projects. Ties should be loosened or removed as a tree grows as a scar from a tight or rubbing tree tie leaves a tree susceptible to disease. Ties can usually be removed after 2-3 years or once a tree is stable.

The grass verges adjoining Patrick Street at Valley Bungalows was immaculately kept and the beds were being prepared for planting. This gives a very neat approach to the town from the Ballymahon Road and the mature trees here are a lovely way to mark a gateway to the town centre. Also admired was the unusual planter at the Radharc an Chuain development. Ensure this is kept watered.

### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

The Mullingar sign in box hedging at the Marlinstown Roundabout was admired although be aware of the number of temporary signs on approach roads which can look untidy. The Midland Gateway sign somewhat dwarfed the welcome to Mullingar sign and when erecting new signs always consider if they will compete with existing signs and if older signs may need to be removed to avoid visual clutter on approaches to the town. The fingerpost signage on the Grange South roundabout spoiled the effect somewhat and perhaps should be moved off the central roundabout? Some planters could be installed at the new roundabout at Talltainn Court to add some colour here. The planting at the Lynn Road roundabout was maturing nicely. The parking areas to the rear of Mount Street would benefit from some planting tubs to brighten them up although Meeting House Lane linking them to the town centre was neat and free of litter. Ensure all the road markings at pedestrian crossing, especially in the town centre, are kept painted and legible as some are looking worn and may not indicate pedestrian priority as they become less visible to drivers.

### **General Impression:**

As a large centre you have a number of initiatives evolved to address issues relevant to your town. An ongoing task for you will be to maintain the towns amenities, especially those developed during the past decade. Thank you to all involved in this years submission and good luck in 2012.