

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Abbeylara** Ref: **472**
County: **Longford** Mark: **238**
Category: **B** Date(s): **06/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	43	43
The Built Environment	50	28	30
Landscaping	50	32	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	22	22
Litter Control	50	28	28
Tidiness	30	17	17
Waste Minimisation	20	8	8
Residential Areas	40	23	23
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	28	28
General Impression	10	8	7
TOTAL MARK	400	237	238

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator welcomes Abbeylara to the 2012 National TidyTowns competition. We are pleased to note that your committee of nine and the other local volunteers involved in your work meet on a regular basis throughout the year. You are supported by a large number of agencies and we are pleased that the local shops and pubs also give you support. You are communicating well with the local community; using parish notes, newsletter, texts and the local newspaper for your communications but why not explore online social networks such as Facebook or Twitter, as this could expose you to a new audience. Use it to advertise your good work with photos, promotional material, and of course details of your planned work nights. It may be a way to attract new volunteers. We are delighted to hear that team work and social interaction are important aspects of your TidyTowns work and you are to be congratulated for continuing to contribute positively to the social, environmental and economic improvement of Abbeylara – well done. Consider the preparation of a 3 to 5 year TidyTowns plan – as no plan was submitted with your application the adjudicator is unsure if one exists or not.

The Built Environment:

The ruin of the Cistercian monastery is a prominent feature in your village which adds interest. The contrasting St. Bernard's Roman Catholic Church and its belltower also occupy a prominent position. The new parish centre beside the chapel will be a great community resource once completed and the grounds landscaped. Furthermore there are other built heritage interests including the handball alley and the well on the laneway from graveyard to Farrells. Perhaps you could make a feature of the well and erect signage detailing its significance. A heritage trail around the village could be very successful. The new play park is a great facility for young families in the village and it was good to see it being utilised on adjudication day. Congratulations to all involved in its development. We visited the Abbeylara GAA grounds and liked the murals on the painted boundary walls which add interest and character. The mural effect is much more

successful and appealing on the painted white block wall rather than directly onto the block wall. We also noted that the school was well presented on adjudication day.

Landscaping:

A number of colourful planting schemes were noted particularly in the vicinity of the GAA club and the chapel grounds. The landscaped area out the Coole Rd could be improved with some weeding. At the top entrance gate there appeared to be some dumped stones and blocks which gives a poor first impression of the park. The provision of picnic tables is good here as well as along the stream in the village. A number of houses in the village centre had attractive hanging baskets and window boxes in place.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

We visited Derragh Lake and drove past the parking area and over the River; however, we did not see the picnic benches and planters mentioned in your application. We noted the presence of one bin at the parking area. Please bear in mind that you can fill out the electronic version of the application form which gives you much more space to write about each category and give the adjudicator clear details on your work programme. Although centres are to be judged within the 50km speed limits, generally however, adjudicators have no issue reviewing projects outside the adjudication area so long as they are considered integral to the village/town. The adjudicator wonders if this is the case here? Directional signage to the lake was poor and there appears to be nothing linking it to your village or evidence that the area is widely used by the villagers. As the lake is just over 4km via car to the village: you should consider ways to associate it to your village. We also note that you are currently working on a forest walk with the County Council and Coillte, we wish you well with this. You have great scope for wildlife projects in and around the village. Consider conducting a biodiversity study or ecology study of the village, or as suggested by the adjudicator last year, engage with the school and carry out a wildlife study in conjunction with the 5th and 6th class pupils. You may find the Department's Notice Nature website of interest, (www.noticenature.ie) in particular the section on Take Action – At a Community Level. The publication entitled 'Conserving and Enhancing Wildlife in Towns and Villages' – A Guide for Local Community Groups published by the Heritage Council could also be of assistance. For next year it would be great to see a wildlife project from you. Perhaps the two committee members who attended the biodiversity workshops have ideas that you can progress with. The landscaped area out the Coole Road would be a good starting point for a wildlife project.

Litter Control:

Unfortunately some small bits of litter were noted (Coke can, Choc-Ice wrapper) on the verges on the approach from Granard. What looked like a section of bale wrap was noted on the verge also in this vicinity. The Bring Banks were well presented. Continue to work with the Environment Officer and the students in this category.

Tidiness:

A number of points noted by the adjudicator under this category, these are given below for your consideration. When mowing grass in some areas in the village, for example around the stone Abbeylara signs, the adjudicator thought that these could be better presented if the cut grass was removed. The adjudicator does not think it appropriate to have the star Christmas decoration in place at Farrells in June. The litter bin at the handball alley/bring bank vicinity is dirty and requires washing or painting. There is a lot of materials dumped near the graveyard, including bushes bricks etc, this would have been tidier if placed into a skip for disposal. Please ensure that this area is cleared away properly. The gate across from Farrells would benefit from painting.

Waste Minimisation:

We are pleased to note that the local community is recycling well at the Bring Banks. You now need to concentrate your efforts further up the waste management hierarchy towards reuse, minimisation and prevention. This category is about waste minimisation and as detailed in your adjudication report last year this is about the volumes of waste generated in your village. The adjudicators like to see one or two waste minimisation projects each year. Consider some of the following suggestions:

- Running a waste minimisation workshop in partnership with the local authority as part of a public TidyTowns meeting.
- Organising an activity aimed at promoting better consumption habits such as on shopping trolley comparisons (for example, more or less packaging, use by-sell by dates etc.)
- Organising regular second hand/swap markets.
- Promotion of home composting.
- Joining the Green-Home programme as a TidyTowns Group.

Residential Areas:

Unfortunately in the village centre many houses appear vacant. We noted many good individual houses on the road past the chapel but also seen the unfinished housing estate on this road. Continue to encourage the community to take pride in their own residence and enhance and maintain their properties paying particular attention to weeding along boundary walls. There is no name sign on the housing estate on the Caslepollard Road, liaise with the developer or Council in relation to this.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

White and black name signs were clean with colourful bedding plants in the stone planters below. This adjudicator admired your stone Abbeylara signs on the approaches these are unusual and attractive.

General Impression:

You are doing well in this competition and we enjoyed our adjudication visit. You have much scope for improvement in a number of categories, most notably, waste minimisation. Hopefully you will find some of the suggestions contained in this report useful, they may help give you focus in your work programmes in the year ahead and assist you in increasing your marks in the coming years. You are a very capable and enthusiastic group and we wish you well for the year ahead.