

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Leighlinbridge** Ref: **41**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **298**
Category: **C** Date(s): **30/06/2008**
23/07/2008

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	47
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	41
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	31
Litter Control	50	37
Waste Minimisation	20	9
Tidiness	30	19
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	39
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	298

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for your suggested judging route which was followed on foot – the traffic can be quite alarming on the by-pass! - with a couple of diversions. It was good to do this, for although this adjudicator has become familiar with Loughlinbridge from visiting every three or four years (thus noting the palpable improvements) it gave a real sense of order and purpose to the itinerary. Among the items of interesting and useful information on your entry-form were a reminder that you have a Junior Tidy Towns committee – this seems an utterly admirable move, and one that is so obviously innovative it is a wonder it has not been thought of elsewhere (as far as this adjudicator knows).

The Built Environment:

The Roman Catholic church is superbly presented, with clean stonework and dashing; the belfry and the simple front door-case are of particularly interesting design since the building is predominantly of Gothic inspiration – there may be vestiges of an earlier church incorporated? It is sad to see the remains of the Church of Ireland church – this adjudicator remembers when it was intact and the landmark tower had four striking pinnacles. The school and its grounds were looking very well indeed on the date of the first visit. The Lord Bagenal Hotel is set back far enough from the older building line not to detract from the traditional townscape; it and its surroundings are exceptionally well kept and it was good to see its side entrance respecting the old street. The row of newish small shops off St Lazerian's street looked very neat indeed; perhaps in time the owners might consider painting the upper storeys in more interesting colours. Meaney's and the Rainbow set off their street corners supremely well. Other small business premises throughout the town have a similar effect. The Maxol-Centra premises was well presented, as indeed was the filling station on the other side of the river. It is of course the old stone warehouses, maltings the Norman tower-house and the magnificent stone bridge that give Loughlinbridge its special character; it has been previously remarked and can be remarked again that it is exemplary the way in which these large structures have given inspiration to

the scale, mass and profile of very recent residential building – more mention of that later. (One was a bit anxious for the condition of the very large mill building on the quay to the immediate north-west of the bridge because of weed growth on the highest storey and signs of what may be structural deterioration.)

Landscaping:

The design of the planting round the church car-park – fuschias and other low-growing plants creating colour and interest to what would otherwise be a bleak space, and pretty well concealing the cars - seems to be one of the key factors in the planning of Loughlinbridge's landscaping policy: in other words, you go much further than just decoration and prettification – though these elements have their place too. The playground and green nearby and the plantings at the adjacent housing estates merge this whole area into one of a pleasurable visual experience. At the Millennium Garden close by the lawns were being mown by two motor mowers at the same time! On the date of the first visit – the lawns, planting, seating, sculpture, paths, lamps etc etc are organised in such a way as to make optimum use of the steep incline. The Garden of Remembrance is a fascinating concept – but high-minded concepts are not much use unless carried through to the ultimate and assiduously maintained, which is the case here. Nearby, the roadway is flanked formally by geraniums on one side and begonias on the other, an interesting variation from the other examples of landscaping; and the Vivaldi garden with its box hedges and statuary across the river is yet another – contrasting with the lovely tree-planted green opposite. Shrubs alongside the wall of the tennis courts, and indeed at a number of locations such as the entrance to the Arboretum garden centre, all contribute in their particular and appropriate ways.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Ducks greeted the adjudicator while walking along the banks of the Barrow. The island is clearly an undisturbed nesting place for this and other species. It is good to read that the marsh to the south is 'carefully monitored by a group of students' – time was when an area such as this would simply have been dismissed as wasteland. It is also good to read – and to see in many places – where hedgerows have been left in the natural state and that you have enlisted the co-operation of landowners so that they remain uncut till later in the year. Congratulations to the pupils and staff of the national school on their Green Flag status. Your information boards are well sited and informative. The signposted walks are a tremendous asset.

Litter Control:

There was very little disposable litter on the date of the first visit. You may be right in stating that you have been under-marked in this category, and so the marks of other towns and villages have been looked at in response to your comment, which is well taken. The marking is comparative in regard to the top entries nationally. In fact, Leighlinbridge does receive a very high mark comparatively, and deservedly so, thanks to the efforts of the volunteers, including the school-children. Congratulations on this achievement.

Waste Minimisation:

Your mark under this heading is well above the national average and as far as can be ascertained at the time of writing is only exceeded by one centre in the county. Well done on this. You are one of the few centres where the nature of waste minimisation is completely understood. It was heartening to see the ISPCA clothing bank and to read of the 'Sally Forth' initiative. The trouble taken by your volunteers in segregating the waste material arising from clean-ups is exemplary.

Tidiness:

Again, additional marks at the top of the scale are hard to come by, and are awarded in comparison with other centres. The entry form is the correct conduit for expressing dissatisfaction, and your points have been carefully considered. It is probably correct to say that signage on the by-pass is effectively outside the judging area, and if so then the untidy signage of all kinds – directional, commercial, houses for sale – should be disregarded in this report, so this has been done. All the same, this kind of haphazard signage does not give any indication that there is a beautifully kept village only a very few yards away behind the grassy banks.

A site, which may be for a new house near the Arboretum, was seen to be unavoidably untidy; but some scruffy 'corners' and sites along this road need thoughtful attention.

Residential Areas:

The traditional street houses, many of them also serving as businesses, give the centre of the town real character. A number of these disappeared in the past, but some of the more recent housing schemes have succeeded, not by trying to reproduce that particular type of housing stock, but by reaching out for inspiration to the larger buildings of the past, to this adjudicator's mind quite successfully in regard to apartment blocks in the neighbourhood of the river. Because of the old mills and warehouses they do not seem a bit out of scale, as they would in a town with no such mills in such close proximity. Stone dressings and pitched roofs are a

great help. The waterside location of these new blocks is hugely advantageous to the residents. The small Garrison development, with its pleasant recreational area – perhaps too much ground given over to tarmacadam – is rather the reverse of what has just been described, yet it fits in well behind the small scale street houses and the picturesque remains of the circular tower. The mid-20th century council houses are very well presented indeed, and, with their bright colours, certainly enhance, for instance, the prospect of the hill that is the Bagenalstown road. Friars Hill and Barrow Lough are examples of further developments kept with real pride.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Road maintenance was good, notably the recently surfaced streets. The public quayside was well kept. First-class street furniture was seen, including the elegant lamp standards. Stone walls – old, new and restored – impressed greatly. The church car park has already been mentioned; the Lord Bagenal car park was spic and span, and the seating areas adjacent to the hotel and the marina really well presented.

General Impression:

This is not only one of the best kept centres in the county but one of the best in the country. Congratulations to the Loughlinbridge Improvement Group – the title tells everything – to the huge number of volunteers and to the householders and business people who keep their properties so well. Every good wish in your future initiatives.

Second Round Adjudication:

The approach roads into Leighlinbridge were maintained to the highest of standards (and, indeed, appeared to be some of the best that this adjudicator had seen in the competition this year) with well cut grass verges and trees coming along nicely! The entrance to the village off the N9 makes a strong contribution to the landscaping category of the competition. Some poles were spotted on the Carlow approach-are these for signage? If so, is it future signage or signage in the process of removal? The extension to the Lord Bagenal had been completed since this adjudicator's last visit to the village. Floral displays throughout looked well and struck just the right note, in being balanced and not being too overpowering. P.J. Doran's is an attractive traditional shopfront and was admired, as was Braonain's. The Rainbow Bar was very fresh in yellow. Don't neglect outbuildings when considering overall presentation - a tin roof to a large shed near Kelly's should be repainted before next year. There were one or two papers evident on the day, but not many. Unfortunately even a small amount of litter is all the more evident in a village of Leighlinbridge's size. Do ensure that grass is removed once green areas have been cut. A marvelous display of lavender was spotted at the very fresh Garda Station. There are a number of new houses being built in Leighlinbridge - try to ensure that these are finished to the highest of standards in terms of landscaping and use materials that are appropriate to the character of the village. The recycling area was neatly presented. The grassy area opposite the Four Seasons Garden looked very well. The Green Flag was proudly flying at the school in this location. Leighlinbridge is always a pleasure to visit – its residents show a high level of pride in the village and this is reflected in its presentation.