

Tidy Towns Competition 2010

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Leighlinbridge** Ref: **41**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **302**
Category: **C** Date(s): **18/06/2010**
27/07/2010

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009	Mark Awarded 2010
Overall Development Approach	50	47	47
The Built Environment	50	38	39
Landscaping	50	42	42
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	31	32
Litter Control	50	37	36
Waste Minimisation	20	9	10
Tidiness	30	19	19
Residential Areas	40	29	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	39	39
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	400	300	302

Overall Development Approach:

In the view of the adjudicator, Leighlinbridge provides a model for how to consistently improve in the Tidy Towns Competition. The Committee has produced strong performances in the competition for the last number of years and this is reflected both in the marks obtained and in the appearance of the town. This constant improvement is the result of your hard work and the effective approach you are following in the getting both the Community and the Local Authority and agencies involved. You are also to be commended on your high membership levels. According to your entry form, with 24 members (and a further 22 on your junior committee!), this is clearly a reflection of the enthusiasm, commitment and determination of Leighlinbridge to continue to succeed in this competition.

The adjudicator is also impressed with the number of agencies and bodies that provide help and support with Leighlinbridge Tidy Towns. Aside from Carlow County Council and Fas (who both clearly play a very important role), it is noted that a wide range of organisations including the ESB, Carlow and South East Tourism, Waterways Ireland, Carlow County Development Partnership and Eircom have lent their support. This ensures that the town can continue to improve across all of the tidy towns categories. A tremendously important role is also played by the voluntary sector and local businesses and this is a good reflection of the respect that your efforts generate at a local level. It was observed that no reference is made to local sports or social clubs in your entry form - are any involved? Local sports or social clubs can be very important for providing members and for fund raising activities. The involvement of the local National school is to be applauded and you are to be congratulated on maintaining a close working relationship with the Board of Management and staff. There is no better way of raising both environmental awareness and the profile of the Tidy Towns Competition than by involving people (particularly children) in your everyday work. In this regard, your work with the Scouts, Cubs and Beavers is strongly encouraged. We are delighted to see that you have embraced a range of communication methods. The new website is an excellent initiative and while the newer means of communication (such as email) should not completely replace the traditional means of newspapers, newsletters, etc, they could complement them, particularly if you would like to continue to attract younger

members. The range of event and festivals held in Leighlinbridge was also read with great interest. Thank you for your entry submission, which was of the usual high standard. The provision of a suggested adjudication route is an ingenious idea to ensure that all the projects you have worked hard are viewed on the day. Thank you also for the map and the photos, which were a great help to the adjudicator. Thank you also for the Guide to Carlow 2010 and the Carlow Garden trail booklet.

The Built Environment:

Leighlinbridge is incredibly fortunate to have such an interesting built environment which is very well maintained and presented. The quality and presentation of the majority of buildings was of the highest standard and this is most impressive achievement given the issues with flooding over the past year. A number of buildings were admired during adjudication and they included the Catholic Church with its impressive bell tower and immaculately presented grounds. The car park was also quite impressive with its natural stone walls and attractive landscaping. The town centre was one of the highlights for the adjudicator. It has a lovely mix of buildings from old mills, and historic structures like the Valerian Bridge and the Castle, to traditional and contemporary style buildings, all of which were exceptionally well presented on the day. Buildings which drew the attention of the adjudicator include the Old Mill – and it is heartening to see it restored and in productive use, the Garrison (on High Street) and the new contemporary addition to the Lord Bagenal Inn. Many other buildings observed were immaculately presented such as the Health Centre and the School on the Bagenalstown Road. Some other features that are considered to be excellent include the pump close to Leighlin Pharmacy and the turnpike stone is a most unique feature to possess. Your approach to limiting the negative impact of derelict sites was also considered effective – with the examples of the Mill on Milford Street and the derelict site on the Kilkenny Road illustrating that derelict buildings do not have to significantly detract from their surroundings.

Landscaping:

The Committee have excelled in the landscaping projects undertaken for this years competition and there was an abundance of high quality landscaping projects on display – this was despite the best efforts of the long cold winter and its impact on your planted beds! Well done on your hard work and it is encouraging to note that you have availed of professional advice on this occasion. The best landscaping displays were undoubtedly in the parks of Leighlinbridge, with the Millennium Park providing an explosion of colour at the entrance to the town centre. The sculpture garden with commemorations to Tyndall, Moran & Kehoe beside the corn store was also very impressive. The memorial garden was the favourite of the adjudicator, as the combination of lovely planting, seating, information boards and of course the river side setting (with a bird's eye view of the island nature reserve) make this a wonderful amenity for the town. The Vivaldi garden was also very impressive and a delight to visit. The approach roads were particularly attractive and a nice planted area, with a very diverse range of plant types was observed close to the N9 and adjacent to the residential area of the Tyndall and Conicare estates. It is noted that the previous years adjudicator referred to the move away from hanging baskets and flower boxes and this appears to be the case on the ground, with the vast majority of landscaping in beds.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Leighlinbridge makes the most of its considerable natural assets under this category. The Wildlife habitat at the N9 was observed (the thrones) and was considered to be most impressive, due to its diversity of planting and its size. We also read the updated survey included with your entry form with interest. It is encouraging to know that that you plan a walk around it and we recommend that you consider installing markers on plants or trees for interpretative purposes. It may also be a good idea to involve a local school in this project as this would allow them to foster a sense of pride and ownership of it. The bird boxes erected by the Committee are also noted. The Sli na Slainte was also observed, have this been considered as a project for the wildlife category? A final point relates to native biodiversity. Remember, when you are sourcing new plants and shrubs, please consider the contribution that the planting scheme will make to native flora and fauna. A number of ideas on this matter can be found in the tidy towns handbook.

Litter Control:

A very high standard of litter control was achieved this year and it is clear that your approach, including daily litter patrols and involvement of the School children, is proving very effective. We note from the last years report that litter was noticed by the Church car park and by the yellow pump and we were pleased to observe that no problems were identified at this areas this time around. Aside from a very small amount of litter on the centre of the forecourt at the Centra Garage, the town was virtually litter free.

Waste Minimisation:

It is noted that a number of initiatives were undertaken under this category this year. The completion of a survey of local businesses is an excellent initiative - please include the result of this survey in 2011. The results of the household survey were read with interest, but some more detail would be helpful. What

percentage of people are recycling on a regular basis? What actions are necessary to increase this level? Is the tonnage of recycled waste in Leighlinbridge available from the waste service operator? We note your attempts to provide communal gardens also. Can land that is currently not been used (e.g. such as vacant land zoned for development but not used for agriculture) be considered for this purpose? Also, your proposed future actions under this category should be based on the findings on the survey that you have carried out – if a need for an action is clearly demonstrated in the survey, then the chances of the actions succeeding are much better.

Tidiness:

It was clear during the adjudication that the Committee have worked very hard on this category and the town was very neat and tidy on the day of adjudication. The work undertaken to rid the streets and paths of kerb weed was most impressive as virtually everywhere the adjudicator visited, was weed free. The signage cleaning programme is also working very well as the almost all signs appeared very clean. We note the comments of the previous years adjudicator (in relation to graffiti by the sculpture garden, rusty litter bin by the river bank, cigarette butts in the stone water feature and evidence of dog fouling) and we were pleased to note that all of these issues appear to be have resolved. As always, a small number of improvements are possible. The ugly rusty wire fencing at the top of the wall was observed behind the playground at the Church - is this really necessary? The name plate at Tyndall Avenue was defaced, which is most unfortunate. On the approach from the N9 past Dinn Righ, an untidy old soil vent (in need of paint) was observed while a field gate immediately opposite the soil vent was also very untidy and in need of paint. In the town centre, the yard adjoining PJ Doran's contained weeds giving a rather untidy appearance, while kerb weed was noted on the road leading past the Convent. This small number of points however, should not take detract from what was otherwise an excellent performance under this category.

Residential Areas:

The quality and presentation of both residential estates and vast majority of private dwellings and gardens observed during adjudication was of a very high standard. This strong performance is no doubt influenced by the support for tidy towns locally and your initiative to form an umbrella group for residents associations. Estate of note included Seskin Road and Inis gardens, while Tyndall Avenue and Conicare were also very attractive. St Lazarians Terrace was also nice and quite well maintained, but some elements detracted - such as crumbling paths in some areas, a faded yield sign whose black and white pole needed paint.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

All approaches to Leighlinbridge were of a very high standard. It was noted that there are 3 separate approaches to Leighlinbridge from the N9. The approach to the town via the Centra garage is good with nice landscaping observed. The second approach (close to the road to Old Leighlin) was even more impressive with its attractive Monument, colourful landscaping and the raised bank teeming with buttercups. It is considered that the high banks of wildflowers on the approach road is an excellent initiative as it is an action that could quite feasibly be considered under a range of categories in the tidy towns competition (which are landscaping, wildlife and of course roads, streets and back areas). The final approach from the N9 was also of a high standard (past Dinn Righ), with its name stone, simple planting, well maintained verges and attractive boundary walls. The entrance from Carlow is also very impressive with lovely seating landscaping on view.

General Impression:

The performance of the Committee in Leighlinbridge is to be admired and congratulations on once again securing an increase in your overall marks in the competition. Please remember that at this level, it is quite an achievement to maintain high marks, so to increase your marks even by a small amount is exceptionally difficult. Therefore, a further increase this year is a fantastic achievement (notwithstanding the difficulties created by flooding) and given the hard work of the Committee, it is fully justified.

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a pleasure for this adjudicator to visit your beautiful village for the first time. You have many lovely village approaches that are well defined and inviting to the visitor. Landscaping and tree planting efforts were admired – in particular the Memorial Garden and various entrances to the village from the by-pass. You have some lovely traditional shop fronts, which add to the character of the village.

Unfortunately on the day, there was quite a bit of litter, which at this level in the competition, isn't to be expected. The main black spot was the seating area across from Cullen's butchers. Other areas where there was minor littering included Cornicare Estate, Seskin Road and at the bottle bank. The playground was litter free, however the timber fence behind this area needs treatment. Bins in general were well maintained though the one opposite Cullen's butchers was overflowing.

The Lord Bagnel's Inn is well presented though would benefit from some soft landscaping in the large car park area. The school has some lovely landscaping, however the building next door looks untidy with gas bottles

and abandoned goal post out front. Otherwise all approaches, streets and residential areas were presented to a high standard. Well done on your efforts in the Wildlife and Waste Minimisation categories.
Well done on an excellent presentation. We wish you success in the competition and in all future projects.