

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Leighlinbridge** Ref: **41**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **310**
Category: **C** Date(s): **22/06/2013**
21/07/2013

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	47	47
The Built Environment	50	39	40
Landscaping	50	42	42
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	35	36
Litter Control	50	36	36
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	12	13
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	307	310

Overall Development Approach:

Not having been in Leighlinbridge for several years your suggested walking route was followed with much interest. The village has expanded and improved considerably. It is difficult to credit that a generation ago Dublin-to-Waterford traffic negotiated the narrow Main Street and the bridge; what is so encouraging in the context of the world moving on is the fact that the village is now much better looked after by its people. It is very good to read that you now have a Junior Tidy Towns, and equally encouraging to learn that the National School is central to so many of your activities. The interaction between your members and other groups as described on the entry form is exceptionally positive. Your Development Plan – will it be for 3 or 5 years? It can hardly be for both! – will be looked forward to next year; be sure to set targets for each year rather than simply drawing up a wish-list; and do not be disconcerted if some projects take longer than forecast, especially projects based on natural resources: nature takes her own time.

The Built Environment:

The most remarkable buildings in Leighlinbridge are the Norman fortifications and the 19th century mills and warehouses. The painting of the window openings of the mill on Millford Street, and the painting of the façade of the building (mill owner's house?) next door, have given a real lift to the appearance of this section of the village. As a sage remarked, 'You can hardly have a tidy ruin!' so the most that can be done is to see that castles do not fall into further disrepair and that their picturesque quality is enhanced by planting; this has been done with reasonable success. The small circular outpost tower in the grounds of Garrison Homes would be a comparatively easy restoration project should funds become available and would create much interest. The church with its unique door-case and unusual belfry is a wonderfully plain building set in its pleasant gardens. The school has clearly undergone substantial extension and is now outstandingly brightly painted. The sheltered housing project will be looked forward to. It is extraordinary that a run of new shops should have been built without proper research into whether they were needed: your persistence with the developers into gaining permission to paint them and use the windows for community purposes has worked out well. The restoration of the fire-damaged shop on Main Street is exemplary, and the nearby exposure of the old mill gable by the management of the Lord Bagenal Inn is another important step.

Landscaping:

The extent of planting and the maintenance of so many existing beds and shrubberies becomes plain when

walking from the Thrones into the village. The three shades of wild valerian on the stone wall are, in this adjudicator's view, a visual enhancement, though wall-repairers would not agree. The flourishing beds of roses here and elsewhere immediately proved the opposite that we were told from some entrants that nothing would survive the recent winter! The Four Seasons garden was coming into its own within its trim boxwood hedges – poppies, iris, aquilegia and catmint doing well. Clusters of well planted containers were favourably noted. The Fáilte sign in box caught the attention as it should. The fine displays of geraniums, especially in the Garden of Remembrance, were hugely admired. Stupendous floral displays on the bridge! The blue – is it lobelia? – in hanging bags make a most subtle statement. The riverside sculpture park was well tended and the spacious playground was also very favourably noted. It is good to read that you have planted bulbs and corms for showing in the grey months of the year.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The Barrow Way and the Slí na Sláinte are well signposted. The high bank on the Old Leighlin entrance to the village seems an ideal location for your proposed wildflower area. It is good to note that you are taking advice from the Wildlife Ranger about suitable (and unsuitable) locations for bat boxes. The results of your study of flora and fauna on the island Nature Reserve make interesting reading; you make a very quotable observation, 'Conservation can only flourish when there is an appreciation of the things to be conserved'. The results of this survey will prove very useful to be kept in mind during your future projects.

Litter Control:

There was very little disposable litter on adjudication day. It is salutary to learn that up to six members of your committee, as well as a group from your junior committee, are on patrol every day. One would wish it otherwise – that there was no litter to be collected and so your members could engage in more creative enterprises. Education is the key word here: with all these young people involved, is a generation growing up that will not drop litter, as is the case in the Netherlands, for example? Probably not, for it is always 'outsiders' or 'tourists' or 'motorists' who drop litter; so for the meantime congratulations to all your dedicated civically-minded people for picking up after their less responsible citizens – but there is a very encouraging note to the effect that you feel you can now remove half the number of litter-bins. Well done!

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

Congratulations to pupils, teachers and parents of the Naional School for their green flag. The Arboretum garden centre is also clearly a central force in several of your activities. Taking advice from them on composting green materials, on baling cardboard for recycling, on sourcing restaurant products locally to avoid transport costs – these and other practices will have an enormous effect when they become accepted by the general public as you are intent upon recommending. It is very good to read that you are using your own compost for trees and bedding around the village. The proposed poly-tunnel, bought with the proceeds of the ICA bring-and-buy sale, will open up new planting vistas. That you plan 'a lot more events to highlight the importance of Sustainable Waste and Resource Management' will redound to you in the future because this category will be given more and more importance in the marking as time goes on.

Tidiness:

There was a remarkable absence of kerbside weed throughout the village. No graffiti or illegal dumping were seen. The monuments and sculpture were very clean in all the locations visited. You have done a good job on disguising derelict buildings, though of course this is not the ultimate answer. Railings, posts and street furniture were either painted or kept clean. The gravelled area behind railings that interrupts the run of the houses on the north side of Main Street is not untidy, though it is ugly, but what is it? Something to do with electronic communications? This does not seem to be an appropriate place for such an installation. A rusty corrugated iron shed was seen, visible from the street.

Residential Areas:

Well-kept small terrace houses of the kind traditionally found in village streets were greatly admired. Streetside homes of a design favoured during the mid-20th century, especially on and near High Street, were without exception well presented, with well-tended front gardens. An impressive conversion of a very substantial 19th century warehouse caught the attention, as did waterside apartments that were in scale with the older buildings. Several very handsome, mainly Georgian, country houses were seen in close proximity to the village – one, in fact, right behind the main street. Garrison Waterside Homes are nicely laid out but the expanse of tarmac before some of them is rather bleak. Barrow Lough is also well set out – it is good that there is some variety in house colour here; additional tree and shrub planting would enhance it further. Marks are not taken off for unfinished estates at present as local residents and Local Authorities are given a chance to address the issues, but no town could gain a major award if there is unfinished or abandoned housing. Individual bungalows between the church and the filling station are very well looked after.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Environmentally speaking the mid-20th century by-pass has been a boon to the town. Its surfacing and the maintenance of its grass verges are of a high standard, though it probably means that surfacing of the internal roads are not given the same attention. The historical, cultural and natural-history signs are immensely interesting and well-researched. Internal signposting, cobbles, railings, lamp standards, are all of good quality. It

was noted that you were successful in having cables undergrounded some time ago and attractive lighting installed: do not give up your representations to have this extended. The car park at the church is particularly well kept and surrounded by attractive planting. The Lord Bagenal car park is also well presented, and its quayside is one of the most attractive and active sections of the village.

General Impression:

The Leighlinbridge Improvement Group is a truly appropriate name for your committee, as the results of your work so ably demonstrate. Ancient values still prevail while an ethos of keeping up with the times predominates. An enormous amount of thought and of sheer hard physical work has gone into the improvement and maintenance of the village: congratulations to the Group for its leadership and to the householders and business people of the village, and especially to the younger people who are making their presence felt, as everyone can see.

Second Round Adjudication:

Grassed verges backed by neat hedgerow on the 'Bagenalstown' entrance to Leighlinbridge are an excellent introduction to the village. The tattered remains of the banner attached to the wire mesh perimeter fencing of the tennis courts on the Tullow road should be removed as a matter of urgency and enclosure to the private open spaces to the rear of dwellings on the entrance to the village centre from this road is poor and detracts significantly from this section of the village. The majority of residential properties in Leighlinbridge are presented to a high standard with very few in need of improvement to their private open space and roadside boundaries. A small amount of litter was noted in verges along the Tullow approach road just before the speed limit signs. The roadside boundary wall of the hotel needs to be replanted along its top to achieve better ground cover and the kerbed strip of 'soft ground' at the base of the castle wall forming an entrance to the river walk could be improved with ground cover planting or an attractive hard surface. Cultural signage and interpretive panels together with other street furniture were favourably noted and the boundary wall / railings of St Lazerians church looked especially well; the car park here enjoys an excellent presentation. Some stretches of footpath could be resurfaced.