

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Portumna** Ref: **320**
County: **Galway** Mark: **268**
Category: **C** Date(s): **23/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	36
The Built Environment	50	33
Landscaping	50	41
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28
Litter Control	50	33
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	16
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	34
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	268

Overall Development Approach:

It was a great pleasure to adjudicate Portumna. It is one of the towns which because of its inherent attractiveness, energetic committee and community resources can reach the very highest level in the competition. Thank you for the completed entry form, the forward plans and the photographs of your success and indeed the challenges remaining. We read with interest the various press cuttings you provided and especially the Architectural Walking Tour brochure. The very fine street names signs caught the eye. Complements on their readability and presentation. The perfusion of strong, well presented stone walls is a delight. The presentation of the Green Isle Food Factory was a joy. The flying of flags, the manner in which the plant itself was presented was exemplary. The car parking facility near the Church is very well laid out with trees to the foreground. The little lodge like building on the Lake bridge itself is somewhat below par and because of its high visibility setting warrants work done to renew the windows and doors. The new pavement from the playground to the corner on Castle Avenue is admired but do please sweep between the wall, pavement and road for best effect. The County Council Offices themselves were very well presented. However the finger-post sign on the opposite side of the street needs attention.

The Built Environment:

Very many substantial, well presented buildings, civil, ecclesiastical and commercial are to be found in Portumna. The Church was most imposing and the planting within and outside the walls added colour to this sight. The Community College was neat and orderly while An Gairdin, Organic and Ecology Centre caught the eye. Please reposition the displaced kerbstones and improve or remove the small white iron railings. The former Convent next door has enormous potential. The Court House was well set off by planting outside. The ground floor windows were gleaming but the windows upstairs need attention. The Post Office and Credit Union buildings were outstanding in their presentation. The former Hibernian Bank and nearby Antique Shop looked very fine. The Garda Station on its small corner site was flying three flags. T J Clossick's and Sons

dating from 1886 was well presented. The Fire Station premises and area was neat and orderly, the hanging baskets on An Caislean were colourful. The Public Works building project is wished well and we note the discrete sign commemorating the Poor Law Union burial place. St. Brendan's National School was colourful and bright but no use was being made of the flag poles. The flying of flags is one of the least expensive enhancements one can recommend, bringing colour and movement to the scene in an instance

Landscaping:

The landscaping of Portumna is a joy to experience. From the shrubs and gardens opposite Al Hayes Motors to the excellent Lough Derg Recreational Park and the adjoining forest trail were just some of the very many highlights. The Castle Gardens are a delight while in the Castle Park work continues on the very fine wall at the Ancient Abbey. There is a very spectacular entrance to the Portumna Golf Club while the park play area is also a joy. The Cemetery looked well although some cap stones were loose. The gates to the old, now it seems abandoned church and cemetery are superb examples of 19th Century wrought iron work. They richly deserve restoration. The Graveyard and Church is a major undertaking but perhaps a committee of enthusiast could be formed to tackle this specific project over a number of years. A well worthwhile task. The sports area on the Shannon Road was most agreeably presented.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

There are very many locations throughout Portumna which are suitable for use as nature habitats. The very extensive Castle grounds area and Portumna House offer excellent potential. The existing explanatory signage at Lough Derg Recreation Park is significant and beneficial. There may be a tendency to rely too greatly on chemical weed killers which can have detrimental on unintended side effects on the wildlife and especially bird life population. It is suggested that you discuss the options with a local wildlife/bird life enthusiast and seek advice from the Wildlife Ranger attached to the Office of Public Works.

Litter Control:

Availability of suitably designed and appropriately located litter bins was a feature throughout Portumna. Sadly the bins at the Lough Derg Recreation Park were ignored by mindless people who have badly disfigured this charming area with litter. Similarly the Shannon Road leading to it was quite a litter black spot. Litter generally apart from these locations was of a minor intrusiveness. Your efforts in respect of a weekly clean-up and sending anti-litter material to each household is benefiting somewhat. We applaud the range of awareness raising techniques you list in your application form which will, over time, yield improved results.

Waste Minimisation:

The practical demonstration of the totally organic garden being run by An Gairdin community of nuns is a wonderful resource. The distribution of the recyclable shopping bags in conjunction with Galway County Council is again a positive awareness raising exercise. The Recycling Centre was well presented and clearly being extensively used. The Bottle Bank and Clothing Recycle Unit at Emerald Star were being well maintained and utilised. This section of the competition is as much about encouraging a change of mind-set in respect of waste minimisation as it is about dealing with material recycling as such. Literature is available from Galway County Council and elsewhere to help individual households and the community at large to firstly reduce usage of scarce and expensive energy, encouraging the reusing of items where appropriate and recycling materials wherever possible so that the final amount of waste carried to landfill is minimised.

Tidiness:

In general Portumna presents a very caring and orderly face to the passing visitor. Car parking and traffic control itself might benefit from some rationalisation. There is a tendency to permit shale and spoil generally on either side of the roads especially on the Kilmore Road. In the field opposite the Cemetery a scrapped car has appeared. This tendency should be stamped on firmly before it becomes an unofficial dump. At the other end of the size spectrum the sign on the Social Welfare Office need to be replaced as it is currently unreadable. The Eircom gates and timbers need to be re-varnished before next year's competition.

Residential Areas:

Many of the housing areas we visited were neat, orderly and inviting. Cedars Avenue was pleasant as was Cris na hAbhann. However St. Bridget's Road seemed to have a number of houses empty and neglected. The splendid new development Cnoc na Sí featured a delightful entrance and well developed houses. It is hoped that the stone facing to the entrance wall can be carried through in time. Marion Park on the Shannon Road was colourful while the residential development at Castle Court was a delight. Oakwood View was freshly and suitable painted while Dunkellin Terrace featured a pleasant row of well painted town houses. The retirement village was a delight and maintained to an exemplary level.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Killmor Road need a little thought as to how to create a clear-cut divide point between Portumna and the surrounding, rural countryside. The village name plate and the Lions Club sign are suggested as a possible start point and the verges from here on both sides could be suitable treated. The speed limit signs on St. Bridget's Road were neat and orderly while the over arching trees formed a delightful canopy on the Shannon Road. This road particular would benefit from sweeping the road and pavement. One might question the seemly excessive number of signs at the Scarriff Road junction. The very fine stone sign on Tynagh Road certainly caught the eye. As a general comment many of the signs, even commercial signs do need to be washed at least and in some cases repainted. Surfaces generally were adequate but there is a materially below par surface on Bridge Road.

General Impression:

The potential of Portumna in the TidyTowns competition is limitless. You have the "hardware" necessary to secure success but it will require sustained work over a number of years to achieve this objective. Please begin by establishing a series of items for priority attention, identifying the agencies with which you will work, establishing the start date and anticipated conclusion date. Few centres have been endowed with the same range of attractive facilities and attitudes. Thank you for the manner in which they were presented. It was a real joy to adjudicate Portumna.

All involved with this entry are applauded for their efforts and encouraged to continue over the next number of years.