

Tidy Towns Competition 2010

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Portumna** Ref: **320**
County: **Galway** Mark: **275**
Category: **C** Date(s): **30/06/2010**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2009 | Mark Awarded 2010 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 36 | 37 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 33 | 34 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 41 | 41 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 28 | 28 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 33 | 34 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 10 | 12 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 16 | 17 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 29 | 30 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 34 | 34 |
| General Impression | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 268 | 275 |

Overall Development Approach:

Many thanks to Portumna TidyTowns for its well laid out application form, folder of photos and beautifully hand-drawn map of the town. It is evident from this that you are highly organised in your approach and are motivated to make Portumna a better town – well done! You mention that you have a three-year plan but this was not included in the application form. This should form a part of your submission and on which you should clearly mark your progress from year to year. It is great that you have attracted additional volunteers – the more the merrier – as this goes to the heart of the TidyTowns ethos. Have you considered using electronic media for communicating with volunteers and the wider community? E-mail, text messaging, Facebook and Twitter can all be used to great effect, reducing paper waste and highlighting your activities among a new audience.

The Built Environment:

The idea to develop the court house is a great one – please give an update in next year's application. Well done on painting the Town Hall while the renovation of the old Boys National School is highly impressive! St. Brendan's church looks fantastic while the associated green areas and car parks are well maintained. The demolished building on Main st. has yet to be boarded up and so it a bit of an eye-sore. Enda Hayes has a great shop front. It would be great to see a restoration project undertaken on the ruin on St. Brigid's road although clearly someone is mowing the grass in the graveyard. An Gáirdín looks really well although some attention needs to be paid to the unkempt grassy area towards the road.

Portumna community school looks a little neglected – a fresh coat of paint and some attention to landscaping would be of great benefit. T.J. Clossick & Son has a lovely shop front although it would have been nice to see some flowers hanging on the hooks. There are a number of derelict buildings on Abbey st. that need to be addressed with Galway county council.

Landscaping:

It is great that you are maintaining the landscaping in so many places, including outlying areas. Landscaping between the convent and church had lost some colour (especially in the boat) while there was some litter on a nearby park bench. Have you considered some landscaping for year-round impact on Main st.? i.e. Trees such as birch, which greatly soften the sometimes hard appearance of buildings. There was a distinct lack of flowers on Main st. which sets it in contrast with most towns at this time of year. The brackets for flower baskets added to clutter in the absence of any baskets. Well done to the Post Office who has bucked this trend. The planted rockery by the Court house is lovely while landscaping at the Shannon Oaks needs attention.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Your application form did not mention Portumna Forest Park – a rich habitat and fantastic amenity for your town! It fringes Lough Derg, a Special Protection Area and so one of the most important site for bird conservation in Ireland. To develop a coherent approach under this category you should consider working on a wildlife action plan. This would start with a survey to identify habitats and species in the town. It would then suggest actions under headings such as awareness raising and enhancing resources for flora and fauna. What was the outcome of your meeting with the NPWS ranger? Your work on education the children in this area is commendable but don't forget the grown ups! The kitchen and willow gardens are fantastic while the plan to restore the native hedgerow is most worthwhile.

Litter Control:

You have a range of measures under this category and that is great to see. Keeping the levels of awareness high is essential to maintain high standards in this category. Your proposal to assign responsibility for sections of the town to different committee members is excellent. Litter control in the town is excellent. Some bins were very full (although thankfully not overflowing).

Waste Minimisation:

Congratulations – you are one of the few towns that really seems to have come to grips with the concept of this category! The reuse of the milk tank is a wonderfully innovative idea and shows what you can do when you put your thinking cap on! The proposed composting workshop is worthwhile as a significant proportion of what goes to landfill is organic in nature. Do all your schools have a Green Flag? This is a most important factor under this heading so full details should be given here. How about joining the Green Homes initiative? Remember that the overarching goal is to reduce landfill waste to zero. In nature waste doesn't exist so we must learn to emulate this approach more. Well done on your achievements to date.

Tidiness:

It is great that you have taken on board suggestions from last year's report including removing the old car. Hopefully the undergrounding of wires will be completed in time for next year's adjudication. With this exception the Main st. has a very tidy appearance overall. While road surfacing is mostly good the condition of footpaths is poor in some locations e.g. in front of GA Claffey. The old petrol pumps here need to be removed. Fly-posting is a minor problem with the Killimor road junction being a particular black spot.

Residential Areas:

How can you reach out to estates that have yet to form residents associations? How can representatives be more integrated in Tidy Towns decision making? Many of the categories in the contest can be applied in microcosm to estates – e.g. creating biodiversity areas or waste minimisation projects. Private homes and estates that were viewed on adjudication day were presented to a very high standard. The lovely town house development on Abbey st. has no name plate and the kerbing needs to be weeded. Nearby Castle Court looks fantastic!

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

It is very good that you try to stay on top of fly-posting and opportunistic advertising. Your 'welcome' signs should be used to mark the start point of your town so as to define it against the surrounding countryside. On the Killimor approach this sign seemed very far out. It would be nice to see the tumble down stone all on the Birr road repaired. St. Patrick's st. looks very well and cobble-lock paving is very effective. Dereliction on Shannon road is unsightly but could be addressed simply by weeding and painting the wooded doors. The 'Shannon Scenic Town' sign is clean but perhaps a little dated. The Bring Centre had minor litter and one dumped bag but overall the area looked tidy as did the adjacent park and playground. The photo montage is an excellent attraction to an otherwise plain wall.

General Impression:

The overall approach of Portumna is very impressive – carry on like this and you will soon be entering ‘prize’ territory! It is suggested that you take a second look at landscaping throughout the town, develop a coherent wildlife approach and tackle some of the harder problems (e.g. path surfacing & derelict buildings) so that you can achieve ‘top tier’ status. Best of luck!