

Tidy Towns Competition 2010

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ennis** Ref: **68**
County: **Clare** Mark: **305**
Category: **G** Date(s): **11/06/2010**
03/08/2010

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2009 | Mark Awarded 2010 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 44 | 44 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 40 | 40 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 45 | 45 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 32 | 32 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 36 | 36 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 9 | 10 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 22 | 22 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 31 | 31 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 36 | 36 |
| General Impression | 10 | 9 | 9 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 304 | 305 |

Overall Development Approach:

Congratulations to Ennis TidyTowns committee on your continued success in the competition. You are now among the top tier of towns in the country and this makes it harder to win points as you must continue to innovate and build on what you have achieved. Your evident energy and optimism will be called on more than ever! It was noted that membership of your committee has slipped from 27 to 17. For a town your size you should endeavour to grow your numbers where possible. Congratulations on producing a three-year plan that is full of wonderful projects – good work! Entering wider contests such as the ‘Smarter Travel Award’ is a fun way of reducing your environmental footprint. The numerous maps in your submission made adjudication quite confusing. I recommend presenting one map with projects from the past 12 months clearly highlighted on it.

The Built Environment:

The financial downturn has impacted upon every community in Ireland and has forced people to deal with some ugly realities – such as vacant commercial unit and ‘ghost estates’. Your idea to turn the former into exhibition space is a wonderful example of turning adversity into opportunity. The new wheelchair accessible footbridge is a wonderful new addition to the town’s infrastructure. The heritage of Ennis is indeed rich and deep and the production of a booklet is an excellent way to communicate this to a wider audience. O’Connell Street looks great! A big hand to businesses in the town centre, there seems to be a collective pride in their appearance. The historical and heritage interpretive panels around town are well presented and very informative. The Court House building looks well although the grounds are a bit neglected. Merchant’s Square looks well but random advertising detracts from the scene. Nearby High st. looks a little down at heel. The centre piece at the roundabout on Market place is still missing.

Landscaping:

The development of the 'secret garden' sounds very exciting but sadly this adjudication arrived before its opening. Awareness raising initiatives such as that delivered by the county gardener are an excellent innovation under this category. Landscaping around the museum lacked colour and there were a number of dead shrubs that may have been victims of the harsh winter. If pedestrianising streets there is a good opportunity to include landscaping for year-round effect i.e. trees.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Well done on participating in events on Biodiversity Day although workshops on flower boxes is more appropriate to landscaping than biodiversity. What was the outcome of your 'wildlife and biodiversity' seminar? Ennis has wonderful wildlife amenities on its doorstep. For instance the river Fergus is a part of the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and so is among the most important wildlife site in the country!

To comprehensively tackle this category you should prepare a wildlife plan that starts with a survey of all areas followed by well-informed actions to benefit wildlife and people. The wildlife panel by the river is excellent.

Litter Control:

Is there a litter management plan for the town? Are there regular inspections? Are there particular black spots that need special attention? Litter control is generally very good although the river is a black spot. The main shopping thoroughfares were very clean but additional attention needs to be paid to back areas.

Waste Minimisation:

I love the 'love your mug' campaign! Why not build on this by expanding it to include re-usage of water bottles. Bottled water is environmentally disastrous and expensive! Was the waste minimisation seminar held this year? How about tackling junk mail as another way to reduce waste?

The Green schools is an excellent campaign for environmental management in schools – have you thought about expanding into Green Homes (also run by An Taisce)?

Tidiness:

The Corrovorrin graveyard restoration project is a fantastic project and touches on so many areas. Well done on delivering this amazing achievement! The part pedestrianisation of the town centre is a great initiative and would no doubt create a calm and welcoming ambience in the town centre. Some of the phone boxes are beginning to look shabby e.g. 'Smart telecom' opposite the Peter & Paul cathedral and the 'Eircom' one opposite the Court house. While litter bins are well kept in general many need simply to be washed or painted. Around the county museum some of the banners are faded and need to be replaced. The heritage signage around the town is first class! The 'Magic of the Musicals' sign beside the 'Trinity' sculpture should be taken down. O'Connell's statue was slightly littered, graffitied and weedy.

Residential Areas:

The Community Challenge, Green Areas Competition and Best Kept Garden competition are fantastic initiatives. You should give an indication of the number of estates entering these contests. Perhaps you could then target those estates that do not enter as this would maximise on the potential benefit for the whole town. The small number of estates visited all looked extremely well.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Great work on organising the clean up along the Gort road. The by-law to prevent bin storage in lanes will go a long way to improving this aspects of the town's appearance. Back lanes that were inspected were of a very high standard e.g. Shank's lane and Brewery lane were both spotless! Unfortunately the river was quite littered with cans, traffic cones etc. and while it might be hard to reach it is very visible. The old post box on Abbey street needs to be painted. Some street signage is illegible e.g. across from 'The Lifford' pub. Approach roads looked at were from Gort and Tulla and both were tidy with well maintained verges. Ensure that native hedges are retained, correctly managed and always avoid Cherry laurel as it is an alien invasive species.

General Impression:

Ennis is a wonderful town and rightly deserves its position in the vanguard of the contest. However at this level there will be greater scrutiny and attention to detail by the adjudicators. Hence, many comments in this report are suggestions for enhancement for next year. Overall though this first time visitor was very impressed with the hard work and positive outlook of the Ennis Tidy Towns committee – keep up the good work!

Second Round Adjudication:

The approach road from Limerick was very well swept and gives an excellent initial impression. The filling station on the corner here, displaying a cardboard recycling bin, underscored the community wide awareness and facilitation of waste minimisation. The schools certainly have embraced the Green Flag programme – Christ the King School was proudly displaying no less than three green flags while other schools were also displaying theirs. The attractive street signs were much admired albeit some streets did not seem to have them as yet; certainly they were difficult to spot by this adjudicator. Road markings, yellow and white lines were very worn in many locations. An imposing element of street furniture is the many eye-catching sculptures to be enjoyed. Of particular appeal, among many, was the splendid giant hands at the Church. The prevalent, four story building pattern is striking and gives a particular gravitas to many of Ennis streets and open spaces. Vacant premises, some old and tired others awaiting their first occupier, are numerous and represent a reality which will be both long term and difficult to resolve. Some are well presented but others like Western Garage are likely to prove an ongoing problem. Flood damage has clearly made a huge impact most noticeable in Abbey Street where many of the former professional offices and buildings have been vacated and were looking very unloved on the day of adjudication. Litter was encountered more than expected. A particular black spot included the main parking square and this despite the presence of no less than three litter bins clearly visible. Other black spots were the entrance area of the former Boys National School. The range, colour, extent and sheer vibrancy of ground planting, many window boxes and hanging baskets on polls and buildings enhanced greatly the presentation of Ennis. The River Fergus has been well utilized and the bridges –old and recent – which cross it have been festooned with hanging baskets on suitable brackets and many flower boxes as well. In summation, a very strong and praiseworthy presentation by a sizeable town tackling its difficulties with energy, imagination and determination.