

# Tidy Towns Competition 2011

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Leighlinbridge** Ref: **41**  
County: **Carlow** Mark: **304**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **06/07/2011**  
**28/07/2011**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2010</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2011</b>
Overall Development Approach	50	47	47
The Built Environment	50	39	39
Landscaping	50	42	42
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	32	33
Litter Control	50	36	36
Waste Minimisation	20	10	11
Tidiness	30	19	19
Residential Areas	40	29	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	39	39
General Impression	10	9	9
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>304</b>

### Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for the excellent application which outlines in a very comprehensive and concise manner the work undertaken over the last year and the ongoing plans which will ensure that Leighlinbridge will be a very strong performer in this year's national competition. The mark achieved last year was in the top tier of the competition and you as a committee are intent on maintaining that standing. The "welcome to adjudicators" is something that was most appreciated by this adjudicator and it seems to have been adapted by a number of centres in Carlow. One welcomes this format as it makes it easier to interpret relevant indicators of work undertaken on village or town maps. The volume of interesting information afforded to the adjudicator must have taken some considerable time to put together in such a comprehensive and straight forward manner, so credit is due to those people within the Leighlinbridge Improvement Group who were entrusted with this important task. The problem from an adjudication point of view that it is nigh impossible to comment on everything observed in the final report simply because the format does not allow for such detail. Suffice to say that each category input has been examined and taken into account in the preparation of this report. The co-operation of the greater Leighlinbridge community is very evident and it's a reflection on the direction and encouragement that you, as a working group, have given to the local population, I suppose the old adage 'success breeds success' holds true for Leighlinbridge. The formation of a Junior Tidy Towns Committee is quite a novel idea but extremely practical as it will ensure that the youth of the parish are familiar with the workings of Tidy Towns and its significance in promoting the village as an attractive place to live for locals but also a place that the visitor will feel welcome. I have counted thirteen or maybe fourteen organisations, some voluntary some statutory, that you are involved with, that only can augur well for the future of the village and its immediate surrounds. Communicating your message properly is the key to getting buy in from locals, this you have done in a very professional manner using both the traditional methods such as parish newsletters, and word of mouth coupled with a dedicated website and other forms of social networking. Good to note that you have an excellent relationship with the Board of Management of the local school, this type of mutual interaction can only be good for the future development of the village. Another

strong performance in this category from a very committed group that is active all year round as you say there is never a slack time in tidy towns, and of course it would be remiss of me not to offer congratulations on attaining gold medal status.

### **The Built Environment:**

The standard of presentation of buildings and the general appearance of the streetscape was exemplary. The village is fortunate that road surfaces and footpaths are in good order and well maintained although it can be hard to keep cobble lock surfaces weed free at all times. Overhead cables are not obtrusive, street furniture, street lighting and signs within the core of the village are in very good condition. Leighlinbridge is very fortunate that it has a stock of older buildings that reflect the history of the village and the parish which is on Ireland's second longest river the Barrow. Conserving those buildings is an onerous task and involves communicating with individual owners and public bodies and to date you have been very successful in achieving your objectives. The creation of a state of the art leisure facility is the perfect example of how the co-operative approach to projects can prove successful when approached in a professional manner. It is hoped that these excellent facilities will be used by all the community and indeed by neighbouring parishes in the locality. Again well done to all involved in this development it's a credit to the village. The use of bilingual signage on streets is something that could be replicated by other similar sized villages. The following premises appealed to this adjudicator for different reasons Harrington's Bookmakers and O Concuibair Oifig An Phoist, both have very appealing and easy on the eye shop fronts, PJ Doran's is a throwback to a different era and the retention of the old name sign is to be lauded.

The public buildings such as the excellent National School on the Bagenelstown Road and the RC Church were presented to a high standard and those responsible for their upkeep on a daily basis are to be commended. The railings on the Health Centre boundary need to be painted, in another village they might not be noticed but in Leighlinbridge any imperfection stands out. The Lord Bagenel incorporating old and new is an excellent hotel and serves a brilliant lunch one will be back for a more leisurely visit soon. The provision of fifteen sheltered housing units will be a big addition to the village and hopefully these will be completed before any further deterioration in the public finances.

### **Landscaping:**

Leighlinbridge is known as the garden village, as a result the planting arrangements in the core area and particularly at the entrances were all of a very high standard. The Committee has put great store in ensuring that existing schemes are tended to on a regular basis to give all year round effectiveness. Care has been taken not to over beautify with annuals but to have a balanced approach in terms of mixture of suitable shrubs, perennials and new saplings that complement the existing stock of mature trees

You are very fortunate that you have such gardening expertise available to you locally, Rachel Doyle is extremely well known in National Gardening circles. Like everywhere else you suffered from the harshness of the winter gone by but there seems to have been an excellent recovery. The advice to exclude any frost susceptible plants in future plans is a first-rate initiative. Once again the Millennium Park in the centre of the village was the jewel for colour amongst all the excellent arrangements closely followed by the Vivaldi Gardens based on Vivaldi's Four Seasons. This adjudicator was taken with the mixture and quality of roses to be seen in the centre and at the outskirts of the village. With Carlow making strides in the football this year I suppose it was only natural that themed colour scheme of yellow and red would take centre stage in your plans for the future. Comment was made in last year's report on the move away from a dependence of hanging baskets, this was a good idea as sometimes places can get smothered by hanging baskets and window boxes. Finally one has to comment on the top class standard of individual gardens within housing estates and in around the village.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

The village of Leighlinbridge is fortunate that it's on one of the country's greatest waterways in the Island of Ireland. There are so many habitats for the conservation and promotion of wildlife that you are spoilt for choice. The island on the Barrow north of the village is just a haven for all types of wildlife and the key is to exploit areas such as this in a sensitive manner that conforms to best practice. The survey carried out by esteemed botanist Dr Hickey and aforementioned Rachel Doyle will serve as template for any future plans in this category and far be it from me to add any further advice. One noticed that you have taken some very simple approaches such as strip mowing at Thrones Monument to allow access for nature walkers. The provision of bird boxes and insect log piles are also worthwhile mini projects that help the promotion of various species of wild life. The Junior Committee wildlife project will be complementary to what you have already done and will ensure that a future generation will embrace and appreciate the wildlife habitats that they have available to them. Excellent work being done in this category.

### **Litter Control:**

The standard of litter control was very good and your application outlines the measures that you have taken to encourage people to be litter conscious and how harmful it can be to their village and the local environment.

Having the schools involved in litter picks will instil a greater awareness amongst the younger generation and they will be able to influence their peers in a positive way. Being a top performer in the Carlow Litter League coupled with the provision of dog fouling signs and regular litter patrols all help in the work of keeping Leighlinbridge as litter free as possible. I have to report that despite all this excellent work some pockets of litter were observed along the bank of the Barrow near the bridge, at the Garrison Gate and at Conicare Estate. Keep up the good work being done to promote the Anti Litter message.

#### **Waste Minimisation:**

A large volume of work has been done under this category and this reflected in the supplementary material supplied with your application. This is a section that additional marks can be gained if some proactive approaches are taken to embrace the whole concept of waste minimisation. The completion of the business survey alluded to in last year's report has been a major undertaking and it is good to note that five individual businesses are now working with the Carlow County Council environmental officer in carrying out a waste usage audit. The segregation of litter as part of the weekly litter picks is something that could be taken on board by other villages and towns so well done on taking this approach. The recycling centre with the additional used clothes bank was in good condition, well maintained and accessible to the public. You mentioned in your application that recycling has improved immensely in the village and this is a very positive development and some that you as a group can take credit for.

#### **Tidiness:**

The basics of tidiness such as the control of weed growth at kerbsides, absence of excessive fly posting in windows on walls and on poles were very much adhered to. You have put in place a series of very straight forward measures to achieve this and they have proved to be very successful. All road, traffic and directional signs, with the exception of one Geill Sli at St Laserians estate, were in top class condition. Foot paths were in good condition and even the cobble lock was weed free which is an achievement in its own right. Only one piece of graffiti was evident during the adjudicator's walk about and a few back areas mentioned in last year's report were improved upon. Undergrounding of the remaining overhead cables might have to be put on the long finger because of limited funding but they are not particularly obtrusive at present. The standard in this category was very good.

#### **Residential Areas:**

All estates and housing developments in the village were visited and the following is the observations of the adjudicator. In an overall context the basic principles such as maintenance of boundary walls, treatment and maintenance of communal green areas and links to the village core were adhered to. Conicare Estate was mixed, some home owners had properties in top class condition but one or two had slightly tatty boundary walls and could do with pebble dash. A little bit graffiti on a boundary wall needs to be removed. Green area was in good condition but might benefit from additional planting arrangement. Tyndall Estate was well presented sheltered by mature tree with nice green area. St Laserian's Estate, on an elevated site, was very well maintained as was Seskin Road with some beautiful individual gardens to be seen.

#### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

All the entrances into the village were in very good condition. The second entrance off the N9 was top class complete with a lovely rose bed, tidy raised verge area, and fine stone name sign giving for a very inviting introduction to Leighlinbridge. The Tullow entrance was good but a few back areas and boundary wall nearer the village were not of the high standard that was observed at the other entrances. The Carlow entrance was also very well presented and once again makes you feel that you are entering a very pleasant place which of course Leighlinbridge is.

#### **General Impression:**

The Leighlinbridge Improvement Group deserves immense credit for the manner which it has got all the community to buy into the concept of TidyTowns and how involvement in the competition will benefit the overall development of the village. This is not an easy job as it takes a lot of hard work in terms of communication and converting ideas into actual action. No doubt your successes to date help but to sustain a consistent high standard is a major achievement. You are wished well in your quest for further honours in the competition.

#### **Second Round Adjudication:**

It was some years since your adjudicator had last had the opportunity to visit Leighlinbridge and was delighted to become acquainted with this most interesting village of character. The first appealing quality of Leighlinbridge is a sense of order in TidyTowns terms; the sense of history and heritage is everywhere. It was encouraging to see that you have placed such a strong emphasis on the involvement of youth in your work. The strong focus on the Green Schools Programme is welcomed. The Heritage Trail was visited by your 2nd

Round adjudicator and greatly enjoyed. All sites visited were well presented and interpreted. Leighlinbridge has many interesting buildings together with the old mills that echo earlier times in village history. On Milford Street near the Gardens some gable walls would be improved if repainted. Landscaping is one of the real strengths of your work for Tidy Towns in Leighlinbridge and there is a great sense of colour everywhere. The level of planting and landscaping carried out is appropriate and this does not dominate the village to the detriment of the built environment. This balance is often difficult to achieve. At the river bridge at the hard landscaped area the membrane is showing through and this needs early attention. The Vivaldi garden was especially enjoyed and what a wonderful theme for this area. By the River the Millennium Garden was greatly enjoyed and the standard of presentation here was quite high. Along the Seskin Road excellent landscaping at private gardens caught the eye and this is not the only example noted of great private effort in landscaping terms. The bins for glass, cans and bottles were noted in several areas. These units are neat and tidy and effective. The Bring Centre was well presented and the green bins here looked so much better than the usual grey dull units seen in so many towns and villages in Ireland. The presentation on the main approach roads was of a high standard and created high expectations of Leighlinbridge. These expectations were met in full for this adjudicator. Good luck in your work in the year ahead.