

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Leighlinbridge** Ref: **41**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **307**
Category: **C** Date(s): **06/07/2012**
01/08/2012

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	47	47
The Built Environment	50	39	39
Landscaping	50	42	42
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	33	35
Litter Control	50	36	36
Tidiness	30	19	19
Waste Minimisation	20	11	12
Residential Areas	40	29	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	39	39
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	400	304	307

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Leighlinbridge to the 2012 SuperValu National TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for the comprehensively completed entry form which was very well structured and straightforward for the adjudicator to navigate. Your map proved easy to read and was a great help on adjudication day. We are delighted to hear that you have an enthusiastic core TidyTowns committee of 24 members plus a fantastic turn out from the younger members of the community with 22 on your junior committee. You have an excellent working relationship with your schools and 4 Green flags in one village is a great achievement for the schools, both pupils and staff. You have a very proactive approach to addressing issues that affect you and your fellow residents and this structure seems to be working very well for you, judging by the works on the ground and the wealth of initiatives outlined in this year's submission. It's no wonder you are all kept so busy throughout the year.

The Built Environment:

You have a wealth of antiquated buildings within the village and many have a direct link to the River Barrow and its importance as both a trading route and strategic defence. The community buildings in the town were immaculately presented with the Garda station and the Church and its grounds admired. The school on the approach to the village from the south was also looking well and we look forward to seeing the building works here progressing. As you say in the submission, the new car park here must be a welcome addition at times of peak activity for the school. We felt it looked a little bare, could perhaps a hedge be planted between it and the wall or some other landscaping used to soften the edges a little? For an example look no further than the church car park, this is a fine example of successfully using planting to improve a functional space. The Lord Bagnall Hotel is a well designed mix of a contemporary building form incorporating the traditional facades to the main street, but we felt it was let down a little by its presentation to the Carlow Road. A number of traffic cones were present at the main entrance to the car park. We hope these are only temporary and whatever

hazard they are indicating will be addressed, so they can be moved from this prominent location. The boundary planting here could also be given an overhaul to trim back some of the shrubs and remove the shoots to the base of the feature entrance lime tree. We look forward to seeing progress on the sheltered housing units which will add another generation of buildings to your village.

Landscaping:

Once again the roses were looking beautiful on adjudication day and demonstrate how planting can really create a distinctive sense of place. They really do reinforce your garden village theme. How do these beds look during the winter? Would it be possible to interplant the roses with species with some winter structure to extend the period of interest for the beds? Or do you have spring bulbs planted? Cyclamens or daffodils would fill these beds for winter and spring displays. Include photographs with next year's submission if this has already been done. If funding is difficult perhaps an alternative way of getting the work done is to have a "garden party" where all residents are encouraged to bring and donate some bulbs for the village (chosen from an agreed plant list), or perhaps set up a Leighlinbridge Gardening Group in conjunction with the Arboretum perhaps?

Ensure all tree ties are removed from trees after the first couple of growing seasons or once they become established. At the church car park all tree ties should be removed and if possible stakes cut off at ground level. The formal gardens add so much to the character of the village. The developing arboretum in the garden of remembrance, by the river with its memorial trees for past events or distinguished persons linked to the town made for a pleasant diversion while this adjudicator enjoyed their lunch at the central picnic table. We thought that perhaps more paths could be provided here to create a circuitous route and also ease of access for those less sure of foot or with buggies. Could a pedestrian path be linked to the existing gate on Milford Street to allow easier access to this lovely riverside space?

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The bird boxes in the school grounds were noted so well done to all the pupils here and all involved in the junior committee wildlife project. If planting is proposed to the new school car park or proposed building extension, perhaps a native hedge could be used with a mix of spring flowering hawthorn and holly with winter berries. Choose plants that perform either flowering or producing berries, during the school term. Summer flowering plants have limited impact within a school's ground if there are no pupils around to enjoy them! With this in mind perhaps nectar rich spring or autumn flowering perennials could be used, instead of the summer annuals, in the circular beds at the base of the trees to the school boundary. The bridge itself, which is such a magnificent element in the village, looked like a veritable hanging garden with lots of self-seeded valerian. Indeed we see that you have listed and sketched many of the species present in this location in your attached biodiversity survey of the bridge and Black Castle area. This is such a valuable record of this core village habitat and we see you are using this information to inform your management practices. Well done in using this measured approach and it has gained you additional marks here. To further enhance a better understanding of the importance of our countryside as a natural resource, have you considered hosting community wide events that celebrate and raise awareness of local species and your beautiful riverside habitat. These could be a 'dawn-chorus' bird-song count, a bat-walk, tree-planting day or a wildflower walk. Keep up the momentum in this category.

Litter Control:

On adjudication day the village core was free of litter although there was some recent litter within the stone folly feature at the riverside gardens. This however looked like recent windblown material and we are sure would have been picked up by the next patrol. Bins in the town were generally clean and emptied. As you are aware this category is not just about the lack of litter but rather the approaches taken to address the ongoing control of litter and the development of a strategy to deal with problem areas.

Tidiness:

Once again you presented a very tidy village and well done to all involved in the works this year. Like many villages around the county empty premises are an issue for you. Could the bare window boards in the empty homes on Poes Hill be painted black or a muted tone to improve their appearance? The works to the fire damaged shop front damaged on Saint Lazerian's Street was yet to be commenced so good luck with your proposed works here.

Waste Minimisation:

With the enthusiasm of your junior committee behind you this category is one where you have developed many practical responses to this issue. It's great to see that the communal garden plots are being well received and thriving. Could the school be persuaded to take a plot which could then be used to help contribute fare for an end of school year picnic perhaps? It is good to see focus turning to local business with your waste minimisation in business audit and we look forward to seeing progress on this for next years

submission. Could you promote a shop local week and encourage proprietors to stock some locally produced items with a 'Carlow Produce Corner' in the local shop or hotel gift shop perhaps? As to your planned projects, we especially liked the proposal to compile a list of 'Grannies' Cleaning tips. Please include this in next year's submission so we can all learn some new tricks!

Residential Areas:

There are a range of residential types in town and once again they were presented to a high standard on adjudication day. We admired the neat terrace of houses running down to the river on Muine Bheag Road. The front garden of a house for sale here needed attention. Other centres have addressed this issue by having an 'adopt a front garden' scheme where neighbouring residents agree to the basic upkeep of an empty units garden area, where it may be empty for a period of time. Perhaps this is something that could be considered. The impressive entrance to Barrow Lough with its granite wall was admired. Could some of the open spaces here be used as a mini wildlife areas? Close cut lawns have great value for kids to play but the value of the grass lands could be enhanced by letting some areas grow longer during the summer- saves on mowing too. Alternatively as part of national tree week could perhaps a corner of the triangular open space at the piered entrance to the second phase of development be planted as a community orchard, using native Irish heritage fruit tree varieties? Contact the Irish Seed Savers Association for advice.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The individual interpretative panels provided a wealth of knowledge for individual features such as the castle and really enriched the adjudicators walk around the town. Have you considered taking this on to another level and providing a QR code to link back to your website and information on a suggested walking route as provided in this year's application? Could the information on the sign at the four season's garden be duplicated on the back of the sign as it was difficult for this adjudicator to read the information without standing in the flower bed! Generally signage throughout the town was clean and easy to read and the heritage finger posts made finding features in the town effortless. There is a large sign frame at the corner of the arboretum car park which if no longer in use should be removed to improve the view of this corner from the old N10. The old Litir post office box at the entrance to Rathvindin House is a lovely roadside relic and should be cleaned and given a new coat of paint.

General Impression:

Leighlinbridge is a charming village with such an impressive range of building types which tell the story of the villages' connection with the river. Well done to all involved in this year's application and thank you for your hard work and commitment. We wish you all the best for all your planned work in 2013.

Second Round Adjudication:

Leighlinbridge looked well despite a rainy adjudication day. The many landscaped areas were as well maintained as ever. Both public and commercial premises were well presented, of note being the Lord Bagenal Inn and the Garrison, the latter freshly painted in yellow. Meaney's was also quite fresh as was the Rainbow bar. Some out buildings opposite Kellys were looking a little neglected. A building near the bridge sported staining below a metal bracket on its wall. There is a profusion of finger post signs (perhaps too many?) indicating the features of the village and although these were generally fresh, a few were in need of attention. The floral displays at the bridge looked very cheerful. The stone nameplates with their colourful displays of geraniums created a cheerful welcome from the main road, and approach roads were generally well cared for. The tin roof of a cottage beyond the Garda Station should be painted before next year's competition, the Garda Station itself being very fresh. Although the hand painted signage to Murphys was admired, it is looking somewhat flaky and should be re painted (or removed -if no longer required). Its tin roof was also in need of attention. The landscaping to the Barrow Lock housing development will mature well in time. The old mill buildings are a strong feature in the village. Don't forget gable walls when considering overall presentation, some near the Millenium Garden were in need of attention on the day.