

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Swinford** Ref: **361**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **231**
Category: **C** Date(s): **27/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	0	35
The Built Environment	50	0	32
Landscaping	50	0	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	0	25
Litter Control	50	0	25
Tidiness	30	0	14
Waste Minimisation	20	0	11
Residential Areas	40	0	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	0	25
General Impression	10	0	7
TOTAL MARK	400	0	231

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome to TidyTowns 2012. Thank you for the completed entry form together with overall map and the three maps relating to separate landscaping proposals. Main Street is pleasantly broad with an agreeable vista created by the fine stone railway bridge closing the view towards the end. The trees helped to soften the overall impression. We noted and complemented the various volunteers we saw hard at work during our adjudication. In common with many towns of the same size Swinford has its share of business premises available for sale and a number of houses awaiting occupiers. Baxter's Healthcare was very well presented; we admired especially their splendid grounds. We noted three flag poles but no flags. Our Lady's Help of Christian's Church on its elevated site looked very well. The grassed areas both within and outside the church grounds were admired. The external boundary walls rendering has decayed in spots and has come apart from the wall. The iron work on top the wall would benefit from painting before next year's competition.

We noted the very fine major work in progress taking place at the Railway Station. The Garda Station was very well presented, neat and orderly. Again there was a flag pole but no flags flying.

The Built Environment:

The delightfully presented District Hospital together with the willows was admired. The Health Centre featured a splendidly colourful garden at the end of its site. The Bank of Ireland looked well as did Spain's Cards and Gift Shop opposite. The former school now occupied by the VEC was disappointingly poorly presented. Tony and Tino's shop in Main Street was very pleasantly painted, bright, fresh and featured a number of hanging baskets. The very sizable Aras Attracta facility was itself and its grounds very well presented. The Court House in Davitt Place was admired. The very pleasant Scoil Muire agus Pdraig School was diminished

somewhat by the over grown grass to the foreground.

Landscaping:

The planting along Main Street just prior to the Railway Bridge and at the junction as well was admired. The splendid monument to the Sisters of Charity looked very well. The GAA Grounds were bright, fresh and well painted as was the Golf Club along the road. On the approach to town from the Dublin Road the area inside the fine vertical timber poles offers considerable scope for the development of an eye catching grassed area or alternatively it has considerable potential as a wildlife habitat. We look forward to the implementation of the landscaping proposed for this area.

The presentation of the Park Road, already achieving high standards would benefit further when the proposals for Kilkelly Road have had an opportunity to get bedded in and mature.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The town is blessed with extensive grassed areas available in many locations. The 'Loop Walk' also provided many opportunities for contact with birds and wildlife. It is suggested that you discuss the options with a knowledgeable member of Birds Ireland or the County Environmental Officer attached to Mayo Co. Co with a view to compiling a long term birdlife programme. This necessary depends on the creation of the all important food chain initially. The grounds of the school might also be examined in this context.

Litter Control:

There was a modest improvement in the presentation of the town in respect to litter prevention. Some litter was noticed on the Dublin Road approach and also in the Brabazon Estate. Well done in your participation in the National Spring Clean, Good Friday event; clearly your bi-weekly clean-ups are also having a good effect. The introduction of a competitive element with your 'Clean Street League' is a splendid initiative as this will help to spread the load of litter management throughout the town. Competition is a very potent weapon in motivating groups and individuals.

Tidiness:

The school on Station Road was very neat and orderly. We admired the County Council Area Office for flying a number of flags; the entire area was neat and well presented. You're liaising with the GAA Club on their recent improvements certainly paid dividends. Linking with all local club with regards to the presentation of their area and amenities again is an excellent way to ensure that you are engaging with all possible groups to the overall betterment of the town.

Waste Minimisation:

In securing their two Green Flags the School on Station Road deserve the warmest congratulations. The experience in many towns is that this is a significant milestone on the way to increasing awareness of the tripartite need to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. The local charity shops have a primary role to play in insuring that worthwhile material is reused and clearly their activities together with the car boot sales are helping in this regard. The waste minimisation category programme is first about the prevention of waste. This involves the community and individual householders giving greater attention to their use of scarce resources especially water, power and energy. Worthwhile savings can be made as householders give attention to their use of these products. In effect this calls for a change of mindset in the approach to their use. An effective method to achieve these objectives is by staging an information evening at which these and relative issues can be discussed and solutions proposed. Explore this option with the Environmental Department of Mayo County Council.

Residential Areas:

The housing stock in Swinford is both extensive and varied. The new terrace on the Ballina Road was greatly admired as were individual houses on the Dublin Road. The colourful musicians in steel at Bolingbrook Drive were greatly admired; the entrance here featured splendid garden displays and pleasantly presented communal grassed areas and trees. The Orchard area looked very well, again the communal grassed areas were very suitably cut and many houses had very fine displays of flowers. The Fairways housing development was very well presented while we admired greatly the small all white houses along the narrow and interesting Church View Lane. A number of houses on Brabazon Heights would benefit from painted before next year's competition. Some weeds were noted outside the kerbs here. Larch Hill houses were well presented with some very fine individual gardens. The small River Garden development looked very well on the day of adjudication.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

We admired the landscape development at the first junction on the Dublin Road. The road was very well swept, was neat and pleasant. The Ballina Road was equally well swept but there were minor amounts of traffic spoil at the base of some garden walls. Park Road was a delight with well tended grassed verges and ample tree planting. The surface in spots along Circular Road was somewhat under par - quite apart from the recent major digging. The 80 kmp signs were somewhat obscured on the Castlebar Road.

General Impression:

Securing the services of 18 people to assist in the Tidy Towns effort is a commendable achievement in itself. Your strategy of creating a number of sub-committees to concentrate on precise issues or specific areas is one that has been found to work very well in other centres. What is equally valuable is to commit to paper a 5 year programme of activities. This should identify your priorities so that each individual programme and plan is given a weighting as an A, B or C depending on their relative impact. In devising your plan give attention also to the projected start and finish date for the various projects. In this way a sense of realism is imposed and they become a proper plan rather than a theoretical 'ideal world wish list'.

You have achieved considerable success this year and all involved in your efforts are applauded and thanked for their commitment to making Swinford a more agreeable place to live, work and visit.