

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kells** Ref: **579**
County: **Meath** Mark: **244**
Category: **E** Date(s): **12/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	0	37
The Built Environment	50	0	35
Landscaping	50	0	35
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	0	15
Litter Control	50	0	31
Tidiness	30	0	15
Waste Minimisation	20	0	10
Residential Areas	40	0	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	0	28
General Impression	10	0	7
TOTAL MARK	400	0	244

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome back to the National Tidy Towns Competition 2012. Your committee of ten members are to be commended on your efforts particularly this year because of the wet spring and summer. It is good that you receive support from the local authorities, business interests and your community. Thank you for your application. However we do advise that you fully complete the forms for your next entry. Also a map of your area would help adjudicators locate places that you want them to visit. We recommend that you prepare a three year plan to guide your work priorities for future years.

The Built Environment:

The Fairgreen and the adjacent shopping centre looked well and is well maintained. Considering the busy shopping area we were pleased to note the absence of litter and we admired the established trees. The Corn Dolly served very good coffee. The yard at the side of Abbey House was untidy. The People's Park with its spire was a pleasant feature with facilities for childrens play, picnicking and walks. We noted the Kieran Flanagan Way stone sign and the heritage information sign both of which looked well. The trees here were good and we explored the old Famine Graveyard which was well maintained. The entire area was very clean and is a wonderful asset for Kells. The only item that needs attention is the pole holding the tourist information sign; it needs painting. There is an unfinished house opposite the entrance. Throughout the town the new Heritage and directional signs were of good quality and very informative. We noted the entrance to St. Colmcille's Well between houses. The good quality signs promoting free weekend parking were noted. This is a good idea to encourage people to shop local. The attractive old style cottages are a feature of Carrick Street. Unfortunately some derelict houses detract from the scene there as do the ones on Carlanstown Road. In John Street paving works were on going. The Hotel looked fine but the floral displays looked a little sad for want of attention. The well-appointed Church and surrounds were adorned with hanging baskets. We admired the impressive Credit Union building. The Town Hall and the nearby ivy clad private

houses were well maintained and the new paving enhanced this area of the town. The Heritage Centre is a landmark building with mature trees. Since the Celtic Cross was moved to this location it is much easier to see and admire. The grass was well maintained at the school and the entire complex looked very well. We were impressed by the information on the location of graves at St. John's Cemetery. Some dead trees should be removed here and the ivy and elderberry are invasive on the yew trees. The golf course on the old Headfort estate is a valuable amenity in your community. At the Catherine McCauley Centre, the gates need cleaning and a general tidy up of the area is needed. The large beech tree inside the boundary impressed. Some potholes outside the entrance need attention. Kenlis Place has derelict buildings. Farrell Street is clean and tidy with colourful hanging baskets. However, the colour scheme of some buildings does not enhance the streetscape. At the junction of Bective Street and Farrell Street the trees and planting is good. Outside of John Lynch's we took a rest at the civic space with sculptures, seating, paving and plants. The bronze St. Colmcille's Oak was impressive and we admired the bust of Maureen O'Hara. The small memorial to An Tostal was also noted. Weeds and litter were absent. We could make a long list of buildings which were well presented, but we will name just a few; Christian Brothers School, Scoil na gCeard, the Presbyterian Church, McKeon Motors, and the Railway Bar. Pairc Colmcille has impressive planting against the concrete block wall and the sponsorship signs need cleaning. Consider planting a hedge to reduce the impact at Clarke Machinery. Bective Street houses were all clean and tidy and the street was decorated with hanging baskets. A derelict house there was well disguised. In Cannon Street the historic Round Tower and Church are major landmarks in the town as is St. Colmcille's House which was built to last! The cottages nearby are well painted. The masts and mobile sensors at the Garda Station on a higher level contrast sharply with these ancient buildings.

Landscaping:

The Headfort estate had a reputation for training gardeners in years past and there are fine specimen mature trees in the estate and at locations around the town. A large lime tree at the entrance to Headfort Park looks impressive as did the shrub planting and we admired the beech tree in the Catherine McCauley Centre. It is important that these trees are conserved and that replacement planting is undertaken to pass on our environment to future generations. We note your proposals to upgrade the approaches to the town and we advise that in regard to tree planting choose one species on each road for uniformity as was done on the Oldcastle Road with lime trees. There is space within the town for more street tree planting. This would enhance the streetscape and assist in traffic calming. One such area is the hard surface opposite the Fairgreen and Carrick House where plant containers are placed. Trees would make better long term impact than the containers and be less time consuming. We noted the recently planted triangular flower beds near Costcutters and opposite Carrick House. At the next opportunity it is suggested the you add more soil to raise the central area and perhaps also include taller plants such as shrubs in the middle. The guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible such as on paved areas. At the junction of Cannon and Suffolk Street the plant containers should either be planted or removed. Remember to control the growth of ivy on trees where they are likely to take over.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Appreciating your local wildlife resources is vital in order to achieve under this category. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. Biodiversity is under threat globally and sadly Ireland is a part of this trend. Learn why this is important and discover if there are areas designated for conservation close to you at www.npws.ie or www.noticenature.ie. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. Some or all of these are likely to be present in your town and they should be mapped. Learn how their quality can be enhanced through careful management. Try to list the plants and animals to be found there and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). This information can be fun to gather and can involve the schools or other interested parties. Raise awareness through holding events such as hedgerow walks or bat walks. Contact the Irish Wildlife Trust for more information. We note your plans to extend the Blackwater Walk into a looped walk around the town.

Litter Control:

Your efforts at litter control and awareness in the schools are working as we found very little litter in the Kells vicinity. The Scouts, Girl Guides and No Name Club members assist in several projects in clearing rubbish from sites. This is a good involvement of youth and hopefully it will carry through to adulthood. Litter picking was in action during our visit. Did you partake in the National Spring Clean and have you calculated the amount of litter collected?

Tidiness:

The removal of the NRA signs and billboards is a very positive move. The placing of overhead cables underground makes a huge difference to the streetscape. The benches and bins look well after being painted.

Cable ties were noted on some poles, especially on the Virginia Road.

Waste Minimisation:

This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a global and a local problem. To save the Earth we need to move quickly to a zero waste society. Your town can play its part by first looking at the volume of waste that is generated. Contact your waste contractors who can help with this. Try to find out what is being thrown away and armed with this information you can start to think about how waste can be reduced. Examine the waste pyramid and note the recycling is only the fourth most preferred option after avoidance, reducing and re-using. One third of our waste is organic in nature. We note that your recycling centre is two miles outside of Kells. Bring Centres closer to the town would encourage more recycling of cans, paper and plastic. We see from your application that local schools are already involved in this. Other waste minimisation projects might include working with retailers to cut down on packaging, reminding people to re-use shopping bags, discouraging junk mail, encouraging the re-use of water bottles and coffee mugs at school and at work. Do schools in Kells participate in the green flag program? This is a most important achievement under this heading is they can act as incubators for initiatives to benefit the whole community.

Residential Areas:

Tobair Bán and the Cloisters estates looked well and had good trees planted. New Rath View estate had very impressive trees, some dead specimens need removal as well as supporting stakes which are no longer required. At Taylor Hall estate the shrubs need pruning and there were weeds. At Bridge Water, some tree stakes need removal and we admired the well clipped Pyracantha Hedge in flower. Magdalene Court, Maudlin Court and Stonebridge estates looked very well. Some graffiti was seen on signs and walls outside Magdalene Court and there was a derelict house opposite. We admired the cherry trees in the aptly named Cherry Hill estate. More trees would benefit this estate. Weeds were at the stone walls in the Grand priory estate. Termon Hall, Beech Lawn and Park Lodge estates are all well maintained.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

In general the approaches to Kells are very pleasant. A number of derelict buildings detracted from the view on the Oldcastle Road. The Slí na Sláinte sign was concealed by a hedge. The Door Depot building was fine, its entrance piers need cleaning. The Virginia Road looked well and the new roundabout there and on the Navan Road are opportunities to provide a display marking the town entrance. Perhaps you could get Sponsorship for such a feature. Weeds at a derelict house on the Moynalty Road marred the view. Some potholes were on the Headfort Road. The approach from the Mullingar Road was fine.

General Impression:

Kells is a very historic town and is known worldwide because of the famous "Book of Kells". Your improvement work has made a considerable difference in enhancing the town. There is a problem of some dereliction but perhaps the empty premises in the town could be used for display purposes.