

Tidy Towns Competition 2011

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Dromahair** Ref: **673**
County: **Leitrim** Mark: **261**
Category: **B** Date(s): **01/07/2011**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2010	Mark Awarded 2011
Overall Development Approach	50	37	37
The Built Environment	50	34	34
Landscaping	50	38	38
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20	20
Litter Control	50	37	36
Waste Minimisation	20	12	12
Tidiness	30	17	16
Residential Areas	40	28	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31	32
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	261	261

Overall Development Approach:

Dromahair has 20 members involved on the TidyTowns committee. You hold meetings monthly and clean ups happen monthly also. You are assisted by Leitrim County Council and Leitrim Development Company. There are many other agencies/bodies that would be happy to assist you, we are sure. You will find some suggestions in the TidyTowns Handbook. You hold public meetings, submit notes to local papers, and publish notices in the parish bulletin. We hope that you submit these notices to all denominational churches in your area. Would you consider using e-mail or texting or indeed Facebook? These newer methods will attract younger members and also save on paper. You engage well with the schools. You consider the lack of a town centre amenity area to be a deterrent for people stopping in the village. You indicated that you have a Festival in June but you do not tell us anything about what the Festival is about. We "Googled" this and read about your Demons' Festival on Facebook. Well done on your Certificate of Achievement in the Leitrim County Council Civic Responsibility week. Thank you for the photographs - all of these - will be returned you safely. We understand that you have had a difficult year. We note that you have not submitted a TidyTowns Plan. This was also mentioned in the 2010 adjudicator's report. To substantially increase your marks under this section it is important that you submit a plan for TidyTowns in Dromahair. We would recommend that you refer to the TidyTowns Handbook in relation to how to approach this. Such a plan does not have to be prepared professionally. Normally a three-year plan or a five-year plan is recommended. In drawing up this plan it is important to have reference to other plans such as any local area plan for Dromahair drawn up by the local authority, and any other plans - statutory or non statutory - impinging on the town. We note that you hope to get assistance from Leitrim Development Co. in commissioning a village plan. You should take this into account also in drawing up your TidyTowns plan - if it is available before next year. It is important that you engage with the community at large in drawing up your TidyTowns Plan, so that it is inclusive and takes account of all interests. We also - in carrying out some background reading - discovered that your village had a Village Urban Framework Plan carried published in 2006. What is the update on this? It is a very informative document in many ways. Thank you for the map. For future reference it would be helpful to the adjudicator if

you named each approach road and each housing estate. Your adjudicator will not be familiar with your village, and may even be visiting it for the first time. It also makes your adjudication report easier for you to read, as you will have accurate descriptions of where all comments relate to - if you supply accurate village plans. As the village has expanded the map should also include all development that is considered to be part of the village, and perhaps you would mark the boundary of the village as you see it on next year's map. We received a copy of your email about 2 environmental projects, which you wanted to complete prior to judging, which have been held up. Your local engineer has plans for work in both areas in the next few months and wanted you to wait until his site work is completed first. The two projects are at Drumlease corner on the Manorhamilton approach road and also at the sewage treatment plant on Parke's castle approach road. This makes sense to you as resources are tight and you do not want to have to redo work later. We are quite happy with this, and we will look forward to seeing them well completed for 2012 adjudication. It is important to work in co-operation with your Local Authority. Your local area engineer is an important person in your work programme.

The Built Environment:

Some fine houses were admired in the vicinity of the Catholic Church. One of these on the Millbank approach was beautifully set in mature landscaped grounds with excellent stone walling and hedging. It also retained its lovely original timber sash windows.

The diamond pattern paved footpath, although somewhat unusual in an Irish village context, was clean and weed free in this area. It also gives a sense of unity to your linear village. You have referred to the issue of dereliction, and an example of this was noted facing the diamond shaped footpath on the approach from the church to the main village. The boundary wall and access pillars were particularly dirty and presented a poor image to the visitor. At another point in the village a lovely cottage with green timber framed windows is also in a state of abandonment and for sale. Have you been with in contact with all the owners of these derelict properties as well as with the Local Authority? It would be wonderful if you could obtain permission to have these properties - some of which are in prominent locations - at least painted, and possibly have the windows, where they are broken, fitted with marine plywood. In this vicinity also a very beautiful old milestone was observed. But this was in a neglected state. Perhaps you could discuss the conservation prospects for the cottage and for the milestone with the County Architectural Conservation Officer. Do not power wash it as this will damage it. Another lovely milestone in the area of the Health Centre requires some conservation and care. Both the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland were well presented. The gate at the latter was particularly admired and was nicely painted in white. We would respectfully suggest that the stone wall at the said church does not need planter embellishments, as it is a wonderful wall, and the planters detract the eye from its unity and quality. They would be better used where you want to hide something or to screen an unattractive corner. The stile was admired at the same wall. Is a pity that the local hotel, which is an interesting and characterful building, is now closed. We hope that this is a temporary cessation of business and that it will be reopened and come back to life. It is a strategic part of the built fabric of the village on a commanding site. The hostel adjacent is still very poorly presented with dirty walls and a shed with boarded-up window (see 2010 adjudication report.) The builders fencing in this area added nothing to the visual aspect presented. We assume that this was on your list discussed with the County Council.

McGoldrick's shop and off-licence was well painted to the Main Street. An elongated single-storey stone building set back from the stone wall road boundary was admired. This building has good red doors and red window frames together with a very attractive slated roof. However, most of the windows are broken. Once again we would suggest that you contact your County Architectural Conservation Officer in relation to such buildings. Are the owners aware of the conservation grants that may be available to them? Another very attractive two-storey stone house was noted, setback behind stone walls, in a lovely simple lawned field. The single-storey library building looked well and its location was indicated by a traditionally painted yellow and black road sign. This was nice, as most road signs now have uprights made of raw metal without paint. The library site is nicely landscaped behind - again - a lovely stone wall.

Dromahair is fortunate in having a significant National Monument in its midst. What relationship do you have with the OPW? Creevelea Friary is a wonderful and interesting site. Many villages do not have any such nationally recognised resources and cared for by the State resources - especially ones central to the village. The number monuments listed on the National Monuments' site in a small area in Dromahair is quite amazing! The Castle and the Old Mill and other buildings of historic/architectural and archaeological interest are also in your midst. The planned nature of the village provides a nice layout and good stone walls and stone buildings, which are attractive features of Dromahair, and provide unity throughout the village. The wonderful arched stone bridge is another very wonderful feature. The old railway station is yet another example of a resource. We would like you to tell us what your plans are in association with the relevant agencies, with regard to the overall conservation of these structures and how you can work together. The Architectural Conservation Officer of Leitrim County Council will be of immense help in this regard as will the Heritage Officer.

Some Town Trail signs were noted. It would be good if you could in future enclose a copy of the associated booklet/brochure with your application. The sculpture "O'Rourke's Seat is interesting, as it conjures up the history of the clan and their sway in the area. It is starkly simple and effective. It is at a pivotal location in the village. The GR post-box is a good piece of historic street furniture. It is beginning to rust a little. It looked very well in the stone wall with shrubbery just above. The new development including the Pharmacy looked well. The lack of gaudy signage on the pharmacy itself is commended. Dropping down from this point into the

village the properties were well presented. The changes in level add interest to the streetscape. Stanford's public house is a delightful building and is beautifully landscaped. It is a standard to be aspired to by other premises. Drumlease National School is nicely landscaped and has a Green Flag. The front wall needs paint, and it would be nice if the raw metal railings could also be painted. Dromahair Primary Care centre was well presented. The District Engineers office was neatly presented. The simple and quirky little grotto enclosed in the stone wall is a nice small scale feature of the built environment. The Post Office was neat, although a boarded up window beside it, detracts from it in views along the street. You have been in contact with the Local Authority about derelict sites in the village. This appears to have been your main project during the last 12 months in relation to the built environment. In your planned projects you hope to relocate the Bring Centre. We agree with this plan.

Landscaping:

Your greatest landscaping resource is your inherited planted deciduous landscape. In not such a very long time many of these trees will live out their natural life and will need replacement. Have you considered a phased planned scheme of on-going renewal?

You planted new troughs and you carried out other planting works in the village. Well done on this. We have already referred to your message re the postponement of works at the Drumlease corner/Manorhanilton approach.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Your concentration on Creevlea Abbey area in relation to this category is noticed. You do not appear to have any other planned projects under this category. You have a wonderful resource in the riparian habitats of the Bonnet River in general. Much help is available from national agencies and the Local Authority to interpret and advance the environmental conservation of such areas. You can increase your marks in this category very easily by investigating and using these resources and applying them to your own situation, interpreted in an easy access public-friendly manner. We visited another village this year which had organised a visit from the Dromahair Organic Centre to give advice about wildlife and natural amenities. Would this be possible for you? Perhaps you might engage with the County Heritage Officer in exploring ways in which to further your knowledge and interpretation in this area? Do you have a young person studying Environmental Science in a 3rd level institution from the area who might require a thesis topic? The provision of a wildlife survey and management plan contributes to the marks in this section. Remember to endeavour to commence this process for 2012! Findings can subsequently be made public on information panels. This more detailed information would add to the enjoyment of your town for locals and visitors alike, and would serve good educational purposes. In relation to this please be sure to put design research into the proposed notice boards themselves. It is important to have such signage designed in an innovative and appropriate fashion. And you should also ensure that the Irish names for all species are included. Remember too that with street furniture, black is the most difficult colour for the visually impaired to see.

Litter Control:

The Recycle Centre was quite untidy on adjudication day with litter including a tin, cardboard box, and a large milk carton inter alia left on the ground. Moreover, the area in which the bring banks are located, is at the end of the series of sheds which are extremely dirty on their street elevation. The juxtaposition of both these situations is not helpful to you or to the village, and does not encourage respect for the recycling area. There was some paper on the footpath at the O' Rourke seat and also further along the footpath. A plastic bottle lay on the wall close to the Village Café. There was also some litter in a very overgrown laneway off the Main Street. You have been carrying out clean-ups of approach roads and the village since March. You plan to continue these cleanups on a three weekly basis. We might suggest that the regularity of these clean-ups might need to increase during the summer months. However we note that your walkers help on a more regular basis. In this assessment category you also need to tell us about how you propose to plan for a continuing anti-litter campaign for the future. This should relate to your general plan. What plans have you to work with the Environment Section of the Local Authority?

Waste Minimisation:

We note your attention to recycling and your attention to the lead that the adults can give to the children. Waste minimisation is really about not creating waste in the first case. Admirable as recycling and segregation is it does not of its nature reduce the amount of waste being produced. You might consider conducting an audit of the amount of waste being produced in the village by private and commercial users. This could give you a baseline from which you could make plans to reduce waste further. Simple ideas such as involving the schools in reducing lunch packaging, or indeed individually in reducing the amount of wrapped goods you purchase, could contribute in no small way to moving forward in this area. Again we would refer you to the National Tidy Towns Handbook for further help.

Tidiness:

All tourist information signage opposite the village cafe set against a nice stone wall is faded and dirty. This creates a very poor impression and may be a discouragement to people who might otherwise linger in the village. At the Tourist Information Boards there is a certain amount of clutter in relation to signage etc. Perhaps this could be rationalised? The signage at the entrance to the holiday cottages was particularly in need of reduction. The views into the cottages sheds facing the main gate looked somewhat untidy. The planters yet again - as already mentioned detract from the good stone wall. You have other areas crying out for them! Fly posting (which was falling off) was noted on a pole near the holiday cottage entrance. A "Wild Rose" sign on a fingerpost tourist-focussed signage pole on which were also included a Humbert Tour and Waterbus sign was in need of renewal. The two latter mentioned signs were in good order. The large surfaced area at the Woodview Inn car park might be broken up by some planting. Town Trail sign number 7 was partially obscured by vegetation. The Trail sign at the Church of Ireland was almost obliterated. The Church of Ireland notice board requires renewal at this point also. Along the Back Line, on a storage site, the rear curtilage of the shop would benefit from screening, as the low stonewall fails to screen the storage area. Graffiti was also noted on the rear of the stop sign at approximately this location. Also along the Back Line broken fencing was noted atop an orange coloured wall. An old container was noted here in a site curtilage in the vicinity of the recycling banks. A number of vehicles were parked in this area where a sign said "private car park." We notice your attention to the weed problem and you have achieved well on this issue. We wondered what the metal object attached to the bridge was, and was it really necessary to have it here? At the bridge area we also noted a red corrugated barn which would benefit from repainting. The Leitrim Centre Hotel has some lettering missing and an unused signage frame and unused hanging baskets holders. This entire premises is in serious need of a repaint. A single storey house with a grey and white access which needs repainting (with a "no parking" sign) has a good gate. A very overgrown laneway off the Main Street, between two run-down walls needs attention.

Residential Areas:

Is the auctioneering sign really necessary on The Acres at this stage? The corner area with the open entrance requires tidying. In an estate which is not named on the ground or on your map, there is a broken ESB substation. Some weeding on the road frontage verge here is also required. Nice fencing and hedging was admired. There is also a nice gravel area planted at the entrance. Drumlease Estate needs a bit of weeding on the Forest Park approach. There is a nicely planted bed facing the fenced/ stone walled open area, but the wall to the back of this requires painting. Forest Parks sign - in the planting at the bed along the stone wall - was admired, but the sign is partly covered by vegetation. There is also a large dirty auctioneering sign here. There is nice fencing on the approach to Forest Park. Speer's Green is nicely landscaped. Woodgreen open space needs cutting. The grass/daisies are growing high around the trees. Some boundary walls in this estate need painting. The picnic tables and the wooden chair need treatment. Forest Grove has nice planting in gravel, but the gravel has spread into the adjacent footpath which needs sweeping. A leaning power pole was noted here. The unfinished Stone Bridge estate has timber fencing which is broken in places at the entrance. Some fly posting was noticed here. The large auctioneering sign on the timber fencing might be removed if possible. The conifers at the entrance (not the best for Wildlife) were lost in a sea of grass growth. The Abbeyvale stone sign looked well, and it was noted that this estate was a winner in the Best Estates category some years ago. The estate is well "settled in" with some nice landscaping. The meetings for residents groups which you have held over the last year are a good start in this area. You are correct in striving to welcome new residents. You will need their co-operation in the expanded village. They will also bring new ideas and creativity - as well as - we hope - a willingness to "get their hands dirty".

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

At entrances to the village the bilingual blue Dromamair sign looks well in simple surroundings as it is a strong sign, and does not need adornment. Beyond Speer's Green there is an 80 km per hour speed sign but no road! Some road signage needs renewal. For instance at a junction onto the L8161 a yield sign from the minor road is bent and faded. Some flyposting was noted near the Manorhamilton/Sligo junction. This was for Manorhamilton Show. The simple metal village sign for the village at the approach by the bridge is classically simple and appropriate. Is it necessary to add a "Welcome to Dromahair" sign also? A nice white gate close to the metal sign is worth conserving as it looks a little rusty. Good luck with the works on Drumlease Road. You are also hoping to be successful in gaining approval for lighting on footpaths to the Community Park.

General Impression:

Dromahair has the potential to succeed well in the TidyTowns competition. You are enthusiastic and realistic. There are some areas where basic remedial action is required. However the village has lots of character in its buildings and interesting heritage. These are great assets to build upon. We wish you every success. Go n-eirí libh!

