

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Carrick-on-Shannon** Ref: **543**
County: **Leitrim** Mark: **293**
Category: **D** Date(s): **11/06/2009**
25/07/2009

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	48
The Built Environment	50	40
Landscaping	50	42
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28
Litter Control	50	31
Waste Minimisation	20	16
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	35
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	293

Overall Development Approach:

It was salutary to read the resounding words to the effect that this Committee would bring Carrick up to the front line in the Tidy Towns Competition! – and it seems to this adjudicator that this is no mere statement of bravado for the town, with its official and voluntary bodies, and more particularly its individual householders and business people, certainly appears to have the capacity to do so, provided a number of quite knotty but far from insuperable difficulties can be overcome. Some of these will be mentioned further down. Certainly organisational progress to date has been steady, and as an exceptionally pretty and vibrant town set in equally pretty countryside, the basic potential has always been present. Thank you for your excellent support documentation. The Development Programme is described as ‘a 3-5 Year Plan’; which is it? It can hardly be both. When filling in the Entry Form, to avoid confusion, please write the text under the appropriate headings, for example ‘Litter Picks’ should not appear under ‘The Built Environment’ but under ‘Litter Control’. The information given in the binder is exemplary; ‘What’s been completed in the past year’ is particularly useful. Your map is first class.

The Built Environment:

The various administrative and corporate buildings in the neighbourhood of St George’s Terrace, most of them superb restorations, impress as always; as do the churches – the Church of Ireland now with its Visitor Centre – the aquatic clubs and boating headquarters, the picturesque Railway Station (now with its efficient car park), the really charming Market Yard which has brought commerce back to where it should be, and the Hospital – a building of distinction and historical importance which contrives to evade a sense of gloom by its smart grounds and brilliant window-boxes. All these were present, though not all in such good condition, when this adjudicator last visited some years ago. More recent buildings impress in a different way, with a sense of time not standing still. Pre-eminent seem to be the Summerhaven commercial and residential complex on Gallows Hill; the fine Community School in its lovely grounds; new buildings at the Vobe Centre and a fine office

building in the modern mode, vacant at the time of the visit, opposite on the Drumsna road. The Bank of America makes its presence felt, as does the Department of Family and Social Affairs in its new building on the By-Pass; a new office building in a commanding position above Marina Road, not yet open, was also noted. Perhaps, the most accomplished and pleasing addition to the town is the new Courtyard Centre which manages not to distract from the traditional streetscape but rather to enhance it. A renovated building on Bridge Street which entirely respects the scale and fenestration of neighbours is the Bank of Ireland, finished in an attractive blue-grey, with entirely modern extensions at the rear. These lead to other new buildings by means of laneways which are an attractive part of the Carrick-on-Shannon tradition. It is good to see a cinema re-established. The Business Park on the Cootehall makes a surprisingly effective contribution to the building stock, as indeed does the Technology Park on the Kiltoghert Road. The individual department stores, shops and restaurants of the extensive new shopping malls are as good, if not better, than many elsewhere in their design and finish. A real mistake seems to have been made in siting the immense car parks between them and the main roads, the cars inevitably create a vast sense of clutter when, with a lot of ingenuity and thought, the shops could have been attractively placed near to the roads and the cars driven away behind. The two main approaches to Carrick-on-Shannon have been scarred unless screening is to be provided.

Landscaping:

There has been rich progress here. The new Town Park is of very imaginative design making use of old and new elements and forming a pleasant place to relax or to stroll through from St George's Terrace to Bridge Street. The two other major pieces of landscaping are just that: genuine landscaping and not simply beds of begonias with rustic seating. That on the Leitrim side is exceptionally sophisticated; the arrangement of trees, plants, paths and grasses vis-à-vis the riverine walkways is truly imaginative as well as practical. That on the Roscommon side makes use of the slope of the land from the roadway to the water with stone steps and inclines; the planting is equally carefully thought out, with greens, greys and browns predominating and evergreens to maintain interest in winter; the furniture and riverside rails are of smart modernistic design. Throughout the rest of the town there are pleasant little plantings, including tubs, baskets, window-boxes prominently displayed at roundabouts. The boulevard-type thoroughfares, with their edging of trees on and leading from the Dublin Road, should perhaps also be considered under 'Landscaping' – they certainly add considerably to the distinction of the town under some category.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

More information on your activities is needed here – in what ways, for example, do you interact with schools? Planting of young trees and surgery of mature trees requiring it, both come under this heading. In such a well supplied area of river and land life one would expect greater activity – which probably exists but we need to know about it. Congratulations to the Bush Hotel for being the first in Ireland to be awarded the EU Eco Label for exceptionally high environmental management and performance.

Litter Control:

This was in fact very commendable due, no doubt, to your litter-picks and to your efforts directed at encouraging businesses to keep their premises litter-free. Unfortunately, there was a bad patch along Marine Road on the date of the visit. However, it is encouraging to read of the new type of litter bins.

Waste Minimisation:

Congratulations to the pupils of St Mary's Boys School for their green flag and Marist Girls School for two green flags! - and also to their teachers and parents. The Breffni Community Development company's composting project sounds absolutely perfect for you and we hope it will succeed.

Tidiness:

Two important elements detract seriously from the potential tidiness of the town. The ugly poles and overhead wires on Bridge Street are not something that could be countenanced at the absolute top of the competition; they give a demoralising look of the 1950s. To duct the wires and erect handsome modern lamp standards is very expensive work, as you would know from experience, higher up the town. The other, which could probably be dealt with very quickly, is the mass of signage of all kinds and in many inappropriate places; official signs, directional signs, posters, advertisements, placards all crying for attention – bill-posters for entertainments were even seen hung on traffic bollards. The worst rashes of these, at the date of adjudication, were in the vicinity of the Shopping Mall on the Dublin road and on the Boyle road; almost all may be described as 'temporary'; others are where least expected – for example on the blue wooden hoarding on the By-Pass, and there were seven notices/placards/menus etc against the railings of the beautiful new park.

Residential Areas:

Many of the older street houses are superbly kept; along with the business premises of the town centre, these are what give the core of Carrick-on-Shannon its true flavour. The long-established or 'inner' suburbs appeared to be very well looked after – around what was the Convent is a maze of attractive avenues and gardens, in a picturesque tangle, not all that unlike the lanes and courts between Main Street and the river. Several recently completed and uncompleted newer estates in the Cootehall road and Lisnagat road vicinities were very promising; what needs to be watched is that sometimes an undeveloped tract is left where one estate finishes and another begins, and this can (and does) lead to scruffiness. You could use your influence to ensure that contractors clear all debris after work is completed. St Patrick's Park is an old-established estate where the homes are kept with pride and there is a sense of community. At Liscara there are some exceptionally well groomed enclaves but others do not quite match up. Are there Residents' Associations, and do they engage in competitions?

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach roads are generally well surfaced with trimmed verges; the road from Leitrim across the marshy land is flanked by most attractive wooden fencing. The splendid tree-lined boulevards have already been mentioned. Paving is generally good too. Roundabouts and intersections are well managed. A ramp and rail to assist the disabled or partially disabled was very favourably noted at the Post Office. Surely 'By-Pass' is a dull name for an important – in fact a beautifully maintained – road? Should it not be named after, for instance, a figure or an event from history? Car parks at commercial outlets and in the town centre were neat and clean. It is good to see new stone walls, and stone faced walls, being built to match the old.

General Impression:

Carrick-on-Shannon possesses every potential that should lead it towards the highest achievements. Some of the less than complimentary comments above are intended to identify areas where improvements could be made – some of them without much difficulty – to assist in achieving that aim. It has been a wonderful experience after several years away to see the progress that has been made in all categories, due to the vision and sheer hard work of the Committee. Every good wish for the town's continuing success.

Second Round Adjudication:

Your 2nd Round adjudicator has known Carrick-On-Shannon for a number of years and on each visit the town seems to have made further progress in environmental terms. This was indeed true of this visit for adjudication purposes. The roundabouts that have been so excellently landscaped were much admired especially those on the Dublin road approach. The fine mature trees here create a stately approach to the town. Carrick-On-Shannon is most successful in the use of strong colours in the built environment and this approach is highly commended. This adjudicator totally agrees with the comments of the 1st Round adjudicator in respect of wirescape in Bridge Street. This situation was examined and the impression that it creates is indeed rather poor. At the top of Bridge Street the Market Yard Centre demonstrates so clearly how old buildings can be put to a new use without compromising their architectural integrity. However the three advertising signs at the entrance reduces the initial visual impact. Hanging baskets and window boxes have been used most successfully to add additional colour to the streetscape in various areas. The new Park is an excellent development, well designed and maintained. The creative use of timber here was greatly admired. The waterside Marina areas are presented to a high standard and were extremely busy on the day of the adjudication visit. The tall grasses planted between the roadway and the pathways are esthetically pleasing and important from a wildlife point of view. Indeed the whole area between the road and the waterside is a great haven for many aspects of wildlife. Some wildlife information panels along here might be considered as a future project. A key characteristic of Carrick-On-Shannon is how successfully the river has been integrated into the commercial and amenity life of the town. This adjudicator would like to congratulate you on the clarity of your bound TidyTowns Entry document.