

Tidy Towns Competition 2010

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Douglas** Ref: **116**
County: **Cork(South)** Mark: **261**
Category: **G** Date(s): **26/06/2010**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009	Mark Awarded 2010
Overall Development Approach	50	39	40
The Built Environment	50	34	35
Landscaping	50	35	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28	28
Litter Control	50	22	25
Waste Minimisation	20	10	10
Tidiness	30	22	22
Residential Areas	40	29	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	25	26
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	251	261

Overall Development Approach:

It is very interesting to observe how within a generation Douglas has proceeded from being a residential suburb with an old village at its core to the 'large urban centre' that we see today. Visiting from time to time throughout that period, often as an adjudicator in the Tidy Towns Competition, it has become very clear that were it not for the activities of this Committee Douglas would not be the well regulated place it is now. Your work, from major projects down to very small but hardly insignificant details of improvements and clearings-out and tidying-up, has been central to this process. Thank you for enclosing the document on the continuance of the 5-Year Plan, which is reported a success, and the documents on the Heritage Project, for which congratulations to the students of Regina Mundi College: future generations of local historians and researchers will be grateful for this work. (To admit an interest, this adjudicator stayed in Ronayne's Court shortly before it was demolished; the 16th century chimneypiece was removed to Blackrock Castle!). Next year can you please supply a clearer map photocopy, the street names were illegible on the current one.

The Built Environment:

It is good to find the original village streets still exist though inevitably they are dwarfed by the large shopping malls and office buildings. Individual shops are well presented but there is a considerable amount of commercial signage which tends to give a somewhat untidy appearance as you look down the V. The sheer size and profile of the very impressive châteauesque building containing the Ulster Bank tends now to reduce the impact of the East Village and the cool new Douglas Shopping Centre has something of the same effect. When the entire town centre is considered as one there is something of a visual ungainliness in scale – emphasised elsewhere by, for example, the long low bulk of Dunne's Stores.. What appeared to be the back entrance of Tesco is very elegant indeed; is the vast advertising signage at the front really productive, one wonders, while understanding how it is intended to be visible to the passing motorists on the highway. The Credit Union is a credit, so to speak, to its members. Serious improvements were being made to McDonald's

while managing to keep open for business. It was good to see that Ballet Theatre Ireland has a home, however temporary. Among the modern buildings which caught the attention were Kamara Interiors in the village and the Johnston & Perrott Motor Group on the Douglas road, both, in their different ways, leaders in style. The Garda Station is very well presented. The Church of St Colm is handsomely maintained; the Church of Ireland church is particularly attractive and well looked after. Several schools were seen, all in excellent condition, among them Regina Mundi College.

Landscaping:

The planting on roundabouts is of quite astonishing quality – that at Douglas Fingerpost undoubtedly is the most spectacular, but the big circle of red and white geraniums at Wood View was probably looking its best on the date of the visit in late June. The River Walk alongside the Shopping Centre is a major step forward in removing the bleakness from this precinct; the selection of trees and shrubs and their alignments shows a keen professional eye. The creepers on the elevated highway do a very good job. The Plaza nearby has also undergone much needed improvement; the type of plants chosen will probably 'look after themselves' to some extent. It was good to read that eight garden areas were created with the help of the Committee at St Luke's NS – these are the children who will grow up to continue the TidyTowns initiatives. The children's playground is a colourful and happy amenity. The Golf Course and the Cemetery should be among those mentioned as providing swathes of green right beside businesses and homes. The pleasant sweep of grass with willows and alders at Douglas Wall Lawn was admired. Planting undertaken and maintained by firms at their premises and by private individuals adds considerably to the sense of care and colour, including numerous planters, window-boxes and hanging baskets.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

No special projects were listed for this year and it is assumed that already existing projects were continuing. Do give us information particularly on activities in schools that have a nature element that brings the pupils into contact with flora and fauna. The proximity of the town to wild life habitats such as the marshes, reed beds and islands of the estuary of the Tramore River (which apparently again has trout living in it so the water quality must have been restored) makes it and the woods ideal for nature study – as indeed your plans show. Trees and tree-planting are considered under this heading; there is much fine old timber and numerous young trees were noted especially in housing areas.

Litter Control:

Your anti-litter programme must be working well – it is certainly very comprehensive. The weekly street sweeping coupled with administrative initiatives such as keeping in contact with businesses is impressive. It is very good that you have the support of so many Residents Associations. It was surprising to see a considerable amount of disposable litter in Ballincurrig. Congratulations on the eternal hard slog and on presenting a comparatively litter-free town on the date of the visit.

Waste Minimisation:

It was noted from your submission that you segregate waste in your weekly clean-ups. Waste minimisation aims to eliminate waste before it is produced and reduce its quantity and toxicity. Prevention is the objective, but recycling and treatment are important for what remains. One Bring Bank was visited and was seen to be clean and accessible and much used by the public so the message is clearly getting through.

Tidiness:

There was a surprising amount of kerbside weed in the neighbourhood of the East Village/Ulster Bank. Excessive shop signage was seen in the older part of the village. Some buildings were seen to need freshening up with paint – such as the Legion Hall (though the eye was taken from that one by the lovely bed of roses!). No fly-posting was noticed, nor were dirty or rusty street signs. A great deal of work had clearly been done in cuttings back foliage where it had been overgrown.

Residential Areas:

There is still much of the original village streetscape with terraces of cottages. These were seen to be maintained with real pride. Most of the early- and mid-20th century suburbs remain very much as they were – smart, tidy and leafy. The tree-lined boulevard-like appearance of the central section of the Endsleigh neighbourhood was particularly admired. In Reeveswood, good use of stone and brick was seen; the inner section could do with more planting – trees and shrubs – as it is visually somewhat lifeless. Calderwood, and avenues adjoining, are all trim with plenty of green spaces. Ballincurrig has a friendly-looking arrangement of large and small houses round a central green, taking their design inspiration from the homes of a century ago; tree planting is needed to soften the look. These were some of the residential neighbourhoods visited at

random.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Taking an overview of the town, it appears to be sectored by its highways, old and new. The highway cuts across it from east to west and the old Douglas road roughly from north to south. It would be wrong to say that traffic is not well regulated but certainly there is an excess of moving traffic in the shopping areas. Road surfaces are good both on main road and in suburbs, and paving in places very good. The planting in Willow Park probably helps to deaden the sound of the highway; this neighbourhood has first class sports grounds, and several other well-appointed sports fields were seen. Street furniture such as seating, bollards and lamp standards, in the centre of the town and also in leisure areas, was seen to be of a high quality

General Impression:

It was really interesting to have the opportunity to revisit Douglas and to see the developments that are taking place so quickly one after another. The town centre has every mark of prosperity and is enhanced by judicious planting. Above all, the tireless work of this committee must be acknowledged. Every good wish in your many future endeavours.