

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Douglas** Ref: **116**
County: **Cork(South)** Mark: **266**
Category: **G** Date(s): **13/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	40	41
The Built Environment	50	35	35
Landscaping	50	38	38
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29	29
Litter Control	50	24	24
Tidiness	30	22	21
Waste Minimisation	20	10	12
Residential Areas	40	32	32
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27	27
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	264	266

Overall Development Approach:

Céad míle fáilte roimh Douglas TidyTowns Committee to the 2012 TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your submission and for the maps. You did not submit a TidyTowns plan this year. Was this as a result of the negative comment in last year's report? Consider revisiting a plan. What is your vision for Douglas in 3 to 5 years time? What are your priority projects? You have the support of local agencies, of local businesses and a big meitheal of volunteers to see your plans through. Make a simple plan a priority for 2013. Congratulations on your website. It is bang-on up to date. The content is cheery and the photos send an encouraging message also. You acknowledge and thank all of your benefactors, businesses and workers. The text gives the impression of TidyTowns work being a fun time activity. It presents Douglas as a fun place to live in or visit. Well done. The comprehensive website means you do not have to submit a cluttered submission, a relief to this adjudicator. The submission also sends a message of your pride in your achievements over the years of your participation. On arrival in Douglas the adjudicator became very frustrated with your map. As the main arteries of Douglas are clear, that can be said now, then a hand drawn map showing the town limits would be much more useful in negotiating the town. For instance I never found the wood, I think.

The Built Environment:

Your submission mentions two worthy activities by your group during the year. The painting of that unoccupied block is much to your credit. The adjudicator loved the strong green. Then he could not decide if the window clutter was justified but when imagining what would appear if the windows were clear the adjudicator accepted that the window clutter was the better of two evils. Full marks also for your treatment of the unoccupied cottages. The railings at the Community Park bring a tidy effect to their surroundings. The same railing is evident in the park at the back of St Columba's and here also brings a finished effect to its surroundings. The adjudicator came on a shopping area in Maryborough while visiting an estate. Wonderful

experience, beautifully landscaped. It was uplifting to come on Fingerpost Cottage. The Church building, the scout hall, St Luke's School provide an attractive cluster of buildings, the unusual colouring of the Church creating interest. Is this a gate lodge for the stone cut Church? All delightful and a throw back to earlier times. The wall on the cemetery boundary, the cemetery itself combine to retain this sense of times past first experienced at the pale green Church. These last three hundred metres have been a joy. Good to retain that sense of the past with 'Deoch Ceol agus Caint'. The sign next door conflicts with this latter and grates. Ó Súilleabhán's is not to be outdone linguistically. Have a look at the guttering in the Community Park building. A positive sign of life in the Douglas community is that the Irish Countrywomens Association have their own base which is maintained in the tradition of that organisation. The adjudicator wandered innocently into what appeared to be a back area opposite Tesco. The initial reaction was that this place seemed poorly maintained. The over riding reaction is that this is an area with a story worth telling. Is it a former gaol? Was it a workhouse? Why do I not know? There should be a heritage and historical plate that would explain to me how fortunate I am to have discovered this monument to times past. The adjudicator began to overlook any signs of clutter or untidiness as these businesses give heat to the walls and run life through the veins of buildings that would otherwise crumble. The map did not lead me to this gold mine find. Mind you that pedestrian walkway round the business centre did lead me safely from one area to another.

Landscaping:

Firstly you must acknowledge that most of the attractive landscaping of Douglas has been performed naturally and with great success. But well done to all who contribute to bringing colour, texture and fragrance to the town. To those who have created a divine rose bed on some road into Douglas. The residents of the cottages near the Church who have created such wonderlands in their gardens. So many of the dwellers of Douglas have created their own Chelsea show in their homes or at the entrance to estates. Wonderful. The Fingerpost Roundabout is a delight. The topiarist should take a special bow. There is a delightful park adjacent to that roundabout which provides relief from the relentless traffic. Planting in the Community Park is also attractive. The adjudicator is especially pleased that you have a policy of continuous tree planting. Vital in the midst of the concrete mass and the traffic.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You have been busy in maintaining your Community Park and in the upkeep of Mangala Woods. These two amenities have obviously benefitted from the work done. Your aspiration to install a Slí na Sláinte route is also laudable. The adjudicator does not know if he was in Mangala Woods or not so he takes you at your word about the tree planting, most commendable. But the adjudicator found a trail through the woods across from the Park. What a joy and relief from the incessant traffic. The tinkle of the flowing stream, two bridges, foliage of the trees growing wild along the path, is that an altar in someone's back garden, the sheer drop of the land, the massive retaining wall. Douglas Tidy Towns Committee why did this path or trail not appear on the map? It was a highlight of the work of the day. There is another great walkway to the rear of St Columbas. Douglas has great opportunities to bring your Slí na Sláinte ambitions to fruition.

Litter Control:

You open your submission on litter by saying that a lot of your activities are litter based. What a shame that such a talented, enthusiastic group of people spend their time cleaning up after others. The adjudicator commends your efforts, your concern for the cleanliness of your surroundings but by now more time needs to be spent on creating litter awareness programmes than on cleaning. Your main strategies in litter management are clean ups and the provision of litter bins. Now the adjudicator acknowledges the need for bins for example in the Community Park. You must pursue a policy of 'Do Not Drop It' and so eliminate the need for the bin, or the clean up. I feel only one sign for 'Keep Douglas Clean' was spotted. What the adjudicator found worrying was the schools success with the Green Flag programmes. Yet most of the litter belonged to young people, some to revellers and very little to the older generation. On a positive note the adjudicator found no evidence whatever of dumping and the Bring Centre is immaculate. Examine how you can influence people not to drop it.

Tidiness:

This is a category in which one would expect Douglas to thrive. The sweeping roads into town with their manicured verges create a tidy aspect. This is a settled community and there is very little disruption to the face of the village centre and its environs. Your mark in previous years is very high. You as a committee have done wonders in camouflaging buildings that are now under pressure either by painting or art work. But there is one gnawing problem. Kerbside weeds. Watch the kerbside weeds. Discuss with Cork County Council. Those weeds belittle their surroundings. They are to be found in the most attractive estates. Well done in your efforts to maintain the road signage. Clean signs are not noticed but dirty ones create an impression you do not want. One very bad 'Slow' sign was encountered on the main street. Last year's report mentioned the

graffiti problem. Well done on your efforts. One is certain that you are succeeding but the war goes on. Because of the weeds and the graffiti this adjudicator cannot justify the mark of last year.

Waste Minimisation:

Your website is most helpful in describing the projects you have undertaken in order to encourage the reduction of both private and business related waste. Calling time on waste should create a consciousness of reducing valuable energy usage. The practical steps and suggestions in the Smart Garage Guide should also be encouraging to people involved in garage work. One expects that in time you will make private users aware of the means of reducing energy usage and aware of minimising their waste. Your plans to engage with the schools also augur well for a greater understanding of good practice in this area of waste minimisation. You mentioned under Overall Development Approach that one of your members engages with the schools with regard to attaining Green Flag Status. And the outcome has been very successful as green flags wafted in the summer breeze at St Lukes and St Columbas? It is a great sign of a healthy attitude to waste minimisation when one finds a poly tunnel at the rear of the school.

Residential Areas:

Douglas has been a dormitory town for the city for many years. Perched on height with panoramic views it is no wonder that this should be the case. The quality of the estates reflects this demand. Many of the estate entrances are regal in appearance as at Paddock or Maryborough Woods. The Tiger years have left their mark mainly as one descends towards the centre of town. Town housing developments have sprung up. This housing stock is also of high quality. Then there are the older cottages, some no longer occupied, some have become business premises but many still have the curtains in the window thus adding a charm to the housing stock of Douglas. I must admit to being disappointed that your submission referred to litter picks and graffiti removal as your main focus in this section. Read your submission and you will understand that the adjudicator could have felt that Douglas is a litter lout haven. What about accentuating the positives. What about inter estate competitions, or garden competitions to promote aesthetic values among the dwellers of beautiful Douglas?

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

When arriving into an urban village it is difficult to get one's bearings. Where does it start and finish? From what the adjudicator could decipher there are no 'Welcome to Douglas' signs. There are no town beginnings or ends. So the adjudicator must make decisions. Your map could help. But one would prefer welcome signs or plain Douglas signs. On the R610 the Lions Club welcomed us to Douglas, this was followed by a sign bidding us to 'Keep Douglas Tidy'. These signs would be welcome on all approaches. An endearing feature of the Douglas experience is the way in which the roads sweep down from on high into the centre. Front walls, the trees and footpaths, the houses all seem to benefit from this descent to town. Watch the kerbside weeds. Discuss this problem with Cork County Council. This is not just a cut and paste. Wispy grass, as on the approach from the Golf Club, spoils the grassed banks and open spaces and creates an air of neglect.

General Impression:

It came as a surprise to the adjudicator that a district with such modern housing as Douglas would have a village centre many elements of which have survived into the post Tiger era. This was a most pleasant surprise. You have a leg firmly set in two millennia. The rest of the Douglas experience is set in this millennium. How do you see yourselves? Do you see a value in those cottages? You need all of the help you can muster to present Douglas to its undoubted potential but you will have to be creative in gaining support. Well done on your achievements to date.