

Tidy Towns Competition 2011

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Swords** Ref: **160**
County: **Dublin(Fingal)** Mark: **259**
Category: **H** Date(s): **21/06/2011**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2010	Mark Awarded 2011
Overall Development Approach	50	36	36
The Built Environment	50	36	36
Landscaping	50	31	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28	28
Litter Control	50	31	32
Waste Minimisation	20	10	11
Tidiness	30	18	18
Residential Areas	40	27	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	32	33
General Impression	10	8	7
TOTAL MARK	400	257	259

Overall Development Approach:

Swords TidyTowns Committee is heartily welcome to the TidyTowns Competition for 2011. Thank you for your submission. There was no map included with the submission even though from the content it appears that you did intend to enclose one. Six members seems to be a small number on a committee in such an expanded town. Fortunately there is support. It might lighten your work load if you were to include representatives from Residents' Associations, for instance, on your committee. You are profuse in your acknowledgement of the support given by SuperValu. One wonders why you do not have similar support from Fingal County Council. One would like to hear how the Education Liaison Officer interacts with the schools and how this impacts on your work. Many ideas should be filtering through from the schools on waste minimisation as a result of schools achieving Green Flag Status. Your comments on the competition being more suitable for smaller units have validity in that the workload may not be as great for them but remember Ennis and Westport are big urban centres too that have won the competition in recent years. One wishes you well in your endeavours.

The Built Environment:

Swords seems to be a tale of two eras. The impression one gets is that the built environment of Swords has been transformed in the last couple of decades. One cannot guess what has been lost but a new town with ultra modern buildings and facilities has arrived. Nowadays enterprises in Swords encompass all ages groups from the thatch age in Lord Mayors pub to the Pavilions Shopping Centre or the Airside Centre. Swords Plaza would befit any modern city. The design of the Pavilions will serve Swords well for many generations. Main Street still accommodates beautiful residences from the turn of the century, maybe earlier, and the modern architectural office blocks. The beautiful two storey house dressed in white and blue brings a shine to its surroundings and stands in position defiantly. Yet the castle wall has an influence of the streetscape as if reminding folk from whence they came. Well done on the restoration work at the entrance. Railings give an air

of authenticity to site and building. The appearance of the street has not fully settled yet but if a programme of tree planting is pursued, as has been the case in the past, then old and new will begin to harmonise. M R Taylors has a beautiful façade. The Estuary public bar, the Carnegie Hotel complex, The Carnegie Free Library of 1908, the Swords Credit Union building combine to produce an exciting mix of heritage and modern. It is unusual to find the local Credit Union housed in a building with such flair in its design. Then there are the buildings that have survived beyond their purposeful usage in this area also. Are there plans for derelict or unoccupied buildings? There is little evidence of gaeilge except on the street and estate signs. The highlight is Siúlán Bhaile na Mara/Lána an tSéipéil. Bóthar na Foraoise still has meaning as many trees have survived. Great to find a skate boarding amenity in the town. It is certainly a busy amenity.

Landscaping:

The roundabouts are ablaze with summer joy. Shinnock Hill is given a few extra dashes of colour with the planting. In the surroundings the extra planting reinforces the colourful effect. The landscaping is most attractive on the way to the lights from Shinnock Hill Roundabout. Soon the trees have the dominant influence. The street is uplifted by the tree lined avenue effect but these trees will need to be shaped to suit their surroundings. Planting of summer bedding is to be found all over but especially at the entrance to estates, even on the main street. The estate may be called Paddocks. Landscaping in the environs of the enterprises on the Balheary Road, at the Pavilions and out in Airside, for instance, is outstanding.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Allowing the meadows to grow in open spaces along the rivers is advisable. You are still struggling to make progress in this wildlife section. It would be most helpful for you if you could identify someone in your community with an interest and a knowledge of wildlife habitats and biodiversity who would serve on your committee. The comments in last year's report are still relevant. A healthy biodiversity in an area that has seen such turmoil in construction in the last few years is challenging and therefore this section is of greatest relevance to your work.

Litter Control:

Your account of your activities in this section are heartening, combining both clean-ups and generating litter awareness. Many estates were visited and litter is not a major problem in these estates except in the case of Seatown Walk. The modern street containing the fine Senior Citizens Club is a litter problem in some areas. Some roundabouts seem to be litter free but the Malahide Roundabout is the exception.

Waste Minimisation:

Well done to St Colmcille's Girls National School on their three Green Flags in their upbeat modern school buildings. The adjudicator is delighted to read that all schools in the town now have achieved Green Flag Status. The Bring Centre shows that recycling is part of everyday life in Swords. One notes that you have no comments in the waste minimisation other than the developments in the schools but that you plan to engage with the Chamber of Commerce regarding waste minimisation in business. Well done. On the matter of domestic food waste you might look at www.stopfoodwaste.com and generate a new project round this area.

Tidiness:

In general Swords presents itself as a tidy and cared-for town. Weeds are a rarity and so kerbs and walls are well defined. No matter how glossy advertising hoarding looks it detracts from the natural vegetation effect nearby. Graffiti is a problem, though not out of control. A lovely estate like Pinegrove suffers somewhat. The name sign for Colmcille Crescent is badly damaged.

Residential Areas:

One is no sooner in town than one is propelled into the modern yellow sandstone effect apartments that dominate the top of the street and look most inviting. Across the way Wilton Terrace also holds its own. The Paddocks, Mooretown, Highfield are examples of the modern landscaping in estates with fine open space. Pinegrove may be older but it reflects the values of the TidyTowns Committee. Private houses on the roadside add greatly to the interest of approach roads.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The treatment of your roundabouts has been a great success. Wild planting appears to be an inexpensive way to treat those roundabouts, giving a uniform themed effect that is attractive. Are there possibilities for daffodils in Spring or is the colour confined to summer? The approach road from the Shinnock Hill Roundabout is favoured. Approach roads from other towns as Ashbourne or Balbriggan form a different vista.

Swords does not announce itself with namestones on either route but on the Ashbourne road one notices that the oncoming town is announced by the treatment of the grass verges. Older bungalows are common along this Ashbourne route and all uplift their surroundings. Many estates link off this road reminding us of how popular a dormitory base Swords has become. If one arrives to town by Bóthar na Foraoise the walls and hedging of the countryside accompany one to within a few hundred yards of the town, the beautiful estates give a hint of the modern town but the contrast with other roads to town is striking.

General Impression:

To those who have been bred, born and reared in Swords the last few years must have been traumatic as old land marks disappeared and new buildings mushroomed. These new buildings and estates have brought with them many new residents who will bring their influence to bear on society in Swords. The estates in which these people live reflect their affection for their adopted town. Are these people represented on your committee? Their integration into your plans will determine the success of the Tidy Towns movement in Swords over the next years.