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|   | **Maximum Mark** | **Mark Awarded****2009** | **Mark Awarded****2010** |
| Overall Development Approach | 5 | 47 | 46 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 37 | 37 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 44 | 43 |
| Wildlife & Natural Amenities | 50 | 30 | 33 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 38 | 38 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 12 | 13 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 21 | 21 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 27 | 27 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 37 | 37 |
| General Impression | 10 | 9 | 8 |
| **Total Mark** | **400** | **302** | **303** |

**Overall Development Approach**

Céad fáilte roimh Birdhill Tidy Village Committee to the 2010 TidyTowns Competition. Your submission

illustrates that you are an ambitious group striving for the best results for your village. The size of your

committee in such a small community means that almost every household must be represented. Democracy

at work. The meetings are well documented in the main body of your submission, the work days not only

mean work is done but that bonding between members of the community is achieved. Bag packing in Dunnes

seems to be an ideal way not only to raise funds but to deepen the bonds between people in the village and

raise the profile of your committee in the community. Contact with local authority bodies and other

organisations in the community is designed to attain maximum benefit for the progression of your plans. Your

frustrations in this regard scream at the reader from the pages of the submission. Your influence in the local

school can be read on the windows where a love for the wildlife is imprinted onto the window panes.

TidyTowns feels that the competition is worthwhile when it 'generates pride in the community', your

experience in the competition. Well done on your developmental plans down the years. A further well done

on your latest plans for the promotion of Birdhill. But the adjudicator did have some reservations about the

content of the submission, most especially the comments on the work of the adjudicator of 2009. While

sympathising with your frustrations, this year's adjudicator felt that the 2010 submission is not the appropriate

form for the expression of such disappointment. Your committee might examine your current practice with

regard to the TidyTowns entry form and submission.

**The Built Environment**

Birdhill could be a run down twist on the road were it not for the imagination, the energy and the diligence of

the present generation of inhabitants. On the main road there are now four buildings of note. Some years

ago the buildings now painted yellow were important buildings of the farming community. The co-op is

honoured with suitable murals. The cow sheds are given a coat of paint which does keep up appearances.

The farming community have retreated to the fields behind the gates and the shelter bed of mature trees.

Their farm gates for the most part play their part in the pretty presentation of the village. Now the three main

buildings of the central village portray the essence of Birdhill life. Those buildings are maintained attractively to

a high standard; are inviting to the passer-by and compliment their modern surroundings. Further afield the

Church, in its muted sandstone finish, portrays a reverence and solitude that beckons the never ending traffic

on the road to calm down. The cemetery is maintained with reverence, the floral arrangements reminding the

residents how the village centre looks at present. Both Church and cemetery are beautifully presented. So

also is the school with its floral displays in its window boxes and its panes of glass illuminated with refreshing

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also is the school with its floral displays in its window boxes and its panes of glass illuminated with refreshing

artwork. The community centre lacks the panache of the other buildings. This is the 150th celebration of the

arrival of the railway. All is well down there too, the stone work on the bridge a tribute to the masons of

famine times, the work area nicely screened from view. Back up at the village centre the information board

displaying the highlights of the Birdhill experience is a welcoming gesture bidding the visitor to share the

village experience with the resident. In fact the many information boards are a generous courtesy to the

person trying to enjoy Birdhill.

**Landscaping**

Landscaping has to be the coup de grace of this committee. Descriptions of the various elements of the

landscaping would be pointless. Until the submission was read the adjudicator felt that the tram of hay in the

roundabout was some sort of landscaping ploy by the committee to show reverence to the proud farming

tradition of Birdhill. The two new beds commemorating the 150 years of the Birdhill railway are a suitable

memorial. The sleeper kerbing on so many raised beds continue the railway theme. Sometimes there is a

wildness in the tidiness of the landscaping as with the roses at Browsers and at Matt the Thrashers that are

given free rein to express themselves. The various displays of hard landscaping and sculpture add substance

to the built environment of the village as well as adorning the softer landscaping. Even the boulders on the

open areas have been carefully chosen.

**Wildlife & Natural Amenities**

The wildlife elements of Birdhill are varied and frequent. Tree planting has been by natural propagation for

many years thus creating a wilderness as a backdrop to the village. The planned tree planting along the road

is a profusion of texture and colour. The overhanging Newport Road provides beautiful views of this verdant

mixture and also of the Shannon which provides a border for the far reaches of the village. Steep inclines on

the roadsides are utilised not only for landscaping but for the promotion of wildlife. One area of this steep

incline is home to an attractive wild flower bed. But hidden behind this steep incline is a landscaping and

wildlife haven, the community park. An educational tour for the adjudicator who took copious notes not to

relay them back in a report but to inform himself. During the time it took to wander through the community

park the drone of the traffic seemed to evaporate. But the community park has to vie with the railway park as

another wildlife haven. Then there is the nature trail, enjoyed much more because the submission had not

been read and the adjudicator did not have the guided tour. The information boards are magnificent in

content and presentation. Now armed with your explanatory leaflet, the Pollagh Trail, the adjudicator intends

to return shortly and enjoy another wildlife educational tour. The pronunciation in the Irish form, Powllach,

would surely sound more polite than the local pronunciation, Pollox! Mo cheol an té a spreagann úsáid na

Gaeilge ar chomharthaí go mórmhór i gcás an dúlra agus i gcás an fhiashaoil. Plans to develop a walk on the

Newport Road area are exciting. At present much of the Birdhill experience is tunnelled into a confined area

on the mainroad and the Newport walk would open up panoramic views of the surrounding area.

**Litter Control**

It is difficult to find litter in Birdhill but the adjudicator can boast that such a mission was accomplished, sadly.

Yet your efforts deserve enthusiastic praise, especially in creating anti-litter awareness. The man with the

brush ensures that cigarette butts do not appear in the vicinity of the bars. One wonders why there are no

bins on the nature trail. Is this by design? One also notes that there are no anti-litter signs to be seen in the

village.

**Waste Minimisation**

The neatest example of ‘reuse’ to a worthwhile effect is the toy corner in the Community Park where plastic

childrens’ toy tractors and wheel barrows are used as summer bedding containers. A practical, visible

example of waste minimisation. Communication through your Birdhill website is another fine example. Your

Bring Bank is discretely sited, with no sign of the dreaded dumping. Another waste minimisation ploy that

caught the eye was giving prizes for competitions which are eco-friendly such as compost bins and

rechargeable batteries.

**Tidiness**

The roadsides that are regularly trimmed; the kerbing of the flower beds that is regularly strimmed; the clear

skyline that is free of cables; the clean road signs that are regularly washed; the gravel free footpath and

road verges that are regularly swept; the bus stop that is regularly maintained all contribute to the tidiness of

Birdhill. The hectic, ceaseless traffic, so often heedless of its responsibilities towards the local community,

causes unease though the clear road markings and the lane warning signs are helpful. One feels that the

roundabout also has a calming effect on the traffic flow. The gravelled surfaces in the vicinity of the two bars

and at the farm gate must be incredibly labour intensive to maintain tidy.

**Residential Areas**

One noted from your submission that there has been a question about your Birdhill village boundaries in

recent years. The school, Community Centre and Church are within your ambit so what of the residential

housing stock. If the village if defined as being along the stretch of the N7 and its immediate environs, as

taken by this adjudicator, then that housing stock is limited to about a dozen occupied houses and one

unoccupied house. The houses are typical of village ribbon development with maybe one or two farm houses

and all contributing to the ideals of TidyTowns with fresh paint, landscaped gardens and colourful fronts. One

felt that the tubs in front of some of the houses were imposed and artificial, distracting from the expression of

the personality of the residence the tubs were meant to enhance. Allow the home owners to make their

contribution.

**Roads, Streets and Back Areas**

The confusion regarding village limits is noticeable in this section because attractive work is being done along

the back roads that lead to the school and Community Centre. One notes that verges and hedges are not cut

back to the same extent as on the main road so the rustic appearance of the approach roads is maintained

and this is surely in accordance with good practice. Yet junctions are brightened with barrels of summer

colour. The back of Browsers is a delightful experience. Birdhill wants to present a tidy image but it is not

possible to hide or to landscape all of its waste and one senses the quandary of the proprietors of Coopers

Pub who store their used bottles and beer barrels, unsightly by nature but neatly stored, in their car park.

This same premises kindly provides the site for the village Bring Bank in the same car park.

**General Impression**

From the tram of hay in the new roundabout to the images on the school window, from the toy tractors filled

with summer joy to the newly sanded path on the nature trail, Birdhill is a joy. What a privilege to come on a

stretch of road that distracts from the monotony of the routine. One is surrounded for those few moments by

colour ‘splashed on green’, awakening the senses and inspiring the poetic juices. And this colour is not an

accident of nature. Every shade has been planned, every shape designed. The result…a delight. Face your

perceived challenges with the joie de vivre that you have created in Birdhill over the past twenty years and a

weight will be lifted off your shoulders.

**Second Round Adjudication**

I arrived at the village from the Newport entrance and was immediately impressed by the presentation of the

school. It was evident on this approach that the committee are endeavouring to spread their enhancement

effort out from the village core. The Community Park is a magnificent centrepiece and the name tags here on

individual trees has a good educational value for the visitor. The Park had a number of visitors on the day of

adjudication and they were certainly enjoying their visit. The Pollagh Trail is a total contrast to the manicured

village landscaping and has a pleasing wild quality. The walk is animated by a series of well designed

informative information boards ranging from birdlife to fish life. The village centre has a nice range of well

presented buildings, the iconic Matt the Trasher’s being a highlight. I visited the exhibition of interesting

railway artefacts on display in the pub in honour of the 150th anniversary of the railways and was particularly

impressed by the contribution of the schoolchildren here. The committee was in the process of hosting an

impressive programme of events on the two-day of celebrations and these events embraced all sections of the

community. This year's adjudicator comprehensively reported on each category of your submission and I fully

concur with this report. Your committee is planning well for the future and the new bypass, when open, will

offer a great opportunity to further develop and enhance the village, especially relating to a reduction in the

volume of traffic currently being catered for in the vilage. Well done to the hard-working committee on a

splendid overall presentation.