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|  | **Maximum Mark** | **Mark Awarded 2007** |
| **Overall Development Approach** | 50 | 46 |
| **The Built Environment** | 50 | 37 |
| **Landscaping** | 50 | 43 |
| **Wildlife & Natural Amenities** | 50 | 29 |
| **Litter Control** | 50 | 38 |
| **Waste Minimisation** | 20 | 10 |
| **Tidiness** | 30 | 21 |
| **Residential Areas** | 40 | 27 |
| **Roads, Streets, Back Areas** | 50 | 37 |
| **General Impression** | 10 | 9 |
| **Total Mark** | **400** | **297** |

**Overall Development Approach:**

Congratulations to Birdhill on participating in the Tidy Towns Competition for 2007. Further congratulations on your well researched, detailed, analytic development plan. Reaching for the Top is not just a hackneyed cliché but an ambitious, achievable aspiration. Your tactic of involving the whole community is paying handsome dividends for not only are the communal areas exceptional in presentation, private property owners further enhance this work. This adjudicator would have preferred if your Church and school were included in the map as such buildings are part of the institutional fabric of a village, despite their remove. More thought might be given to the submission of material relevant to the Tidy Towns Competition.

**The Built Environment:**

The Built Environment of Birdhill is focused firstly on the business on the main road and also on the railway and the church. All buildings on the N7 are beautifully presented in modern vibrant colours. Even the old shed at the corner is invited to the party and gaily painted, a building that could so easily be an eyesore is eye catching for its colour and preserve. The entrance to the station is preserved in its traditional state and the station itself retains that traditional station atmosphere. The crunchy gravel gives the village of Birdhill a stately home resonance. The murals not only decorate but inform a new generation of times just past but traditions easily forgotten. The fountain area is spectacular. Cnocán an Éin Fhinn means so much more than Birdhill and is rightly celebrated in your sculpture though the adjudicator still suffers from dizzy spells….. An uplifting experience.

**Landscaping:**

Nothing happens by accident. The present Birdhill has happened through creative design using the road, railway, river, bridge, buildings, trees, contours, ancient history, more recent enterprise. All of these influences are brought together in a symphony of colour and design to celebrate this bend on the road.

**Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

There is a wonderful contrast between the manicured areas of Birdhill and the wilderness. Both should live side by side and do so in Birdhill. Your information board is both decorative and informative. The timber signs look well also and while the message is clear it is not 'in your face'. As the curious adjudicator 'walked for health' he encountered hardier souls jogging for theirs. Meters from the N18 the drone of traffic becomes a memory. Wildlife feels welcome and, one expects, abounds. Particular attention should be drawn to the wildlife area on the steep incline adjacent to your landscaped feature, on the Limerick approach road. Lovely contrast and a practical way of featuring a difficult piece of ground.

**Litter Control:**

Birdhill presented itself as an almost litter free village. This is a great achievement. While it could be argued that your indigenous litter output is relatively small, there are busy establishments that have potential for litter creation. It is clear that your Committee know the 'black spots' and that these are being targeted in your clean ups. Your engagement with the younger generation seems to influence their behaviour because not a trace og youngster litter was to be seen.

**Waste Minimisation:**

Well done on the provision of a Bring Bank and well done also on the maintenance of the surrounding area. It is noted that no mention is made of plans for waste minimisation in your developmental plan until we arrive at the 'Involving the Community' section. Progress on composting in 2006 is a step forward. The usage of recycled containers is also praiseworthy. Combining plant propagation with recycling in the competition for the school children is a master plan. The other projects, all important, are more waste management than waste minimisation. The booklet 'Race Against waste' may help you to further define your projects.

**Tidiness:**

It is a joy to travel through a wireless village. 'Reaching for the Top' is far less perilous when not threatened by crisscrossing cables. Well done. The tell tale signs of untidiness like kerb side weeds and wispy grass verges are happily absent. The yard wall at the back of one business is stark and not so pleasing and would benefit from softening. It is an amazing feat to keep the gravel in the designated gravelled areas. The timber signage encouraging one to protect your habitats, 'Is leatsa í' may be sufficient rather than create clutter with further signage. Traffic management is a challenge. The beauty of the surroundings may have a more halting effect on the motorist than the speed limit.

**Residential Areas:**

The whole community seems to be involved in 'Reaching for the Top' for not only do the businesses present themselves well, the private residences exude pride in their colourful gardens and bedecked fronts. Responsibility is taken for one'Shrubberies property to the middle of the road. Residents present the motorist with a welcome relief from the whizzing traffic and give a refreshingly spiritual dimension to the journey, no matter how fleeting.

**Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

The approach roads to Birdhill signal a unique experience. Birdhill happens so quickly and has disappeared so quickly that the importance of these approach roads cannot be over stressed. From Limerick one is greeted with a freshly painted milestone that tells us where we are relative to various places. The Church is at a safe distance from the village for the revellers in the village centre and is beautifully decked in colour. Birdhill is proudly announced as Ireland's tidiest village for 2006, a proud announcement but also a veiled supplication to keep our village tidy. The verges, the steep inclines which are a challenge to mow are beautifully manicured and punctuated with floral colour surrounded by railway sleepers, a reminder of the importance of the railway to the village. The Nenagh approach is similar in philosophy to the Limerick approach. The Newport road is also a gem. Imagine crunchy gravel at a farmyard gate, and none of the gravel strewn on the road. And the gate recently painted. The railway bridge announces Birdhill from the Clare side. Ivy free walls. Beautiful. Crunchy gravel on the verge and not a grain spilt. The B/B sign so discrete yet visible. The road from Ballina does not share in the standard of the other approaches. The cabin at the junction must cause your Committee sleeplessness. Overall, delightful.

**General Impression:**

Were it not for the traffic Birdhill would be everybody's dream. The seat at the railway junction beckons one to come sit, rest a while, count the cars or maybe smell the roses.

**Second Round Adjudication:**

The first adjudicator has written with true admiration of Birdhill, and with reason. The second concurs. The village is fortunate in not having to contend with the problems generated by large scale housing development or industrical sites. Everything that has been done to enhance the man-made and the natural environment has been done with care, determination and goood taste. What is missing for the visitor is the possibility of standing back and taking in the pleasant scene without distraction - and that distraction is caused by the unceasing traffic, which local residents seem to have come to terms with. Traffic should become less of an issue when the motorway is open, though even then there will be a need for a controlled pedestrian crossing and traffic lights on the Newport road junction: it seems extraordinary that the Local Authority has not provided this obvious facility years ago when it has been done in other villages on the same route. Part of the Pollagh Trail was walked beneath the shade of deciduous trees with the accompanying sight of meadowsweet, vetches, montbretia and dozens of hedgeside shrubs; it was very interesting to learn the derivation of the word - allied to the 'pollock holes' of Kilkee, perhaps? - and the history of the surrouding land. Of particular interest to this adjudicator - a railway enthusiast - was the beautifully presented station, not only adorned by remarkably colourful planters but presided over by immemorial yews! (It was interesting to read the history of the railways as well.) The judicious choice of colours, and therefore of the plants themselves, in the village and alongside the roads, was perhaps the most subtle seen this year anywhere in the country. Congratulations to the people of Birdhill in reaching the top of the county and every good wish for further initiatives.