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|   | **Maximum****Mark** | **Mark Awarded 2008** |
| **Overall Development Approach** | 50 | 47 |
| **The Built Environment** | 50 | 37 |
| **Landscaping** | 50 | 44 |
| **Wildlife & Natural Amenities** | 50 | 30 |
| **Litter Control** | 50 | 39 |
| **Waste Minimisation** | 20 | 10 |
| **Tidiness** | 30 | 22 |
| **Residential Areas** | 40 | 27 |
| **Roads, Streets, Back Areas** | 50 | 37 |
| **General Impression** | 10 | 9 |
| **Total Mark** | **400** | **302** |

**Overall Development Approach**

Thank you Birdhill Tidy Village Committee for your entry on behalf of Birdhill village to the 2008 TidyTowns Competition. Welcome to the village of Birdhill to the 2008 TidyTowns competition and congratulations on the quality of your submission.

Thanks to your Committee of twenty-one people who take the time and effort to attend your monthly meetings in Winter/Spring and your weekly work evenings during Summer, in addition to other TidyTowns events. Also thanks to the members of the six sub-committees involved in TidyTowns in Birdhill. Your Committee and Sub-Committees are doing very worthwhile work in this picturesque village and area of Birdhill of less than 200 people.

Thanks also for the newspaper clippings on TidyTowns activities, and for the very comprehensive development Plan 2004-2010 entitled Reaching for the Top, also received was the earlier version of the Development Plan for 2004-2007. Also thanks for the Rural Place Map.

Your ongoing partnership work with many organisations including, Fás, County Council, Shannon Development, and the local businesses, and all those that have supported your activities is of obvious benefit to all. This is a vital ingredient in the success of TidyTowns activities. Your use of a Website, Newsletter/circulars, to mention a few, as part of your communications strategy is very worthwhile.

The work of local people, residents, schoolchildren and others is to be praised and it’s easy to see that the Tidy Towns Competition over the years has generated involvement and pride in community.

The draft submission by Birdhill Tidy Village Committee to the North Tipperary County Council on the preparation of a Village Design Statement for Birdhill is noteworthy. The submission includes e.g. the key issues to be addressed in drawing up a Village Design Statement for Birdhill as part of the planning process. The quality of your overall TidyTowns Entry and submission deserves to be the basis for research for others.

The two projects that Birdhill choose to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of TidyTowns are innovative. The special flag with the 50th Anniversary logo, flying proudly over The Green and the use of planted flower beds with the ‘’50’’ are both excellent. All the flowers need is some sunshine!

I wish you all the best with your planned activities into the future. Keep up the exceptional work.

**The Built Environment**

Birdhill is situated on the exceptionally busy N7 road from Dublin to Limerick but nonetheless is located on a beautiful rural part of North Tipperary at the crossroads of Limerick, Tipperary and Clare. The village includes the Church and the national school though somewhat physically removed from the village are nevertheless an integral part of life of Birdhill. The sheer quality and excellence of the various buildings that are so much a part of Birdhill impressed this adjudicator. The Church looked well with its new area of landscaping in the car park.

The School was bright in colour even allowing for the ongoing renovations and extensions currently under construction. Commercial premises were in excellent condition, including Browsers, the Coopers, and Matt the Thrashers. The old Co-Op was splendid. And the railway Station alone was worth the visit. The entrance was through the traditional lawns and stone pillars. The fountains looked wonderful. The balance between the commercial and the residential houses was correct. Everything seemed in harmony-despite the rain. The Green and the landscaped areas of Birdhill seemed to give a sparkle to the Built Environment. The Community Park is magnificent. I tried to imagine this place without the never-ending traffic and next year I look forward to that experience. The sight of a pony and trap instead of a 20-ton truck going through Birdhill would be a joy.

The challenge now is to maintain the healthy balance between the ‘’old and the new’’. This is not easy and demands a watchful eye by all concerned. Future developments can enhance or damage the village.

**Landscaping**

Well done to all involved in the various locations for exceptional landscaping in the individual elements that gel to make Birdhill such a joy. The Church and its new landscaped area of hanging baskets and the Silver Birch trees look well. Closer to the village the whole floral display unfolds. Sloping green areas of formal and informal grassed areas look great. Water features add sparkle. The flowerbeds at the entrances to the village are attractive. The ongoing involvement of the children in TidyTowns initiatives is to be applauded. The Community Park – Pairc an Ein Fhinn is a wonderful gift to this and future generations. It’s there to appreciate nature and the wonderful display of trees. Sixty-six names of children of the area are listed in Gairdin na bPaisti for their individual trees. A further forty-eight trees are planted in the names of Faiche an Phobail. The new Pond is magnificent. This Park is a wonderful amenity and beautiful restful facility within the village. The Green is set off with sculptures to honour the history and traditional folklore of Birdhill. The Ean Fionn sculpture is a wonderful piece of work. The gravelled area and its large boulders looked like a river flowing down to the village pump. The bed of mainly blue lavender at the Newport Road caught the eye. Hanging baskets on the various locations all add to the peaceful scene, traffic, what traffic? Attention to detail is wonderful.

The display of Roses on the Station platform is a tribute to those involved in the maintenance of the area. As indeed are all the flower displays around the rail station. The gardens of the individual houses add so much to the village. As mentioned above, the special flag with the 50th Anniversary logo, flying proudly over The Green and the use of planted flower beds with the ‘’50’’ are both excellent.

Overall, the work on this area over recent years has paid rich dividends.

**Wildlife and Natural Amenities**

The work of the sub-committee on Wildlife and Natural Amenities is noted. The new developments in the Community Park are exceptional. These include: The wonderful construction and development of the natural pond; The herb garden; and The wildflower area, all beautiful features which further enhance Pairc an Ein Fhinn. The Bird boxes, the Log Pile habitat, the stone habitat, are examples of the perfect habitat for wildlife.

The Community Park is a magic place. The wonderful description by twelve year old Emma O’Dwyer of the building of the new pond is a lovely story. Well done. The new Pond is worthy of special mention. Congratulations to all involved.

Birdhill is also blessed with the development of the Pollagh Trail on the O’BriensBridge road. Great for the walker, jogger and those that appreciates peace and quiet and just five minutes away from the N7. Every attempt should be made to take further advantage of this location, a haven for wildlife and which could be developed further. Your long-term aim, as reported, is to create a lake in the Pollaghs, a wonderful objective. The involvement of the schoolchildren in appropriate projects such as your Pairc an Ein Fhinn project is so very worthwhile.

**Litter Control**

Birdhill Village was almost 100% litter free on the day of my visit and obviously the work of TidyTowns Committee is paying dividends. The roads and the commercial premises areas were clean and litter free. The wonderful rail station was like something from a film of days gone by. The Station was spotless. I almost expected actor Barry Fitzgerald to step out on the platform like a scene from the Quiet Man. Instead a 21st Century train stopped and went by. No litter was evident throughout Birdhill.

**Waste Minimisation**

The purpose of this category is to encourage TidyTowns Committees and the local community to get involved in projects that will reduce waste and encourage recycling. Projects could include community guidance on methods of reducing waste such as segregating litter during clean-up events,

The establishment of a specific Birdhill sub-committee to deal with Waste Minimisation is indicative of how highly you rate this category. Well done.

The involvement of the National School in the Green Schools Programme is good and your objective to achieve The Green Flag award for the School is very worthwhile progressing. The Spring Clean up involving the children and the collection by them of old mobile phones and old clothes, both for charity, is to be praised.

The separate compost unit built by you for grass cuttings in the Community Park is noted, as indeed is the childproof rainwater collection system from the shed in the Park.

The recycling of containers in the planting competition in the Park by the schoolchildren is excellent. The recycle bins at the rear of Coopers is noted.

**Tidiness**

The infrastructural demands of a new motorway with a new roundabout under construction just outside the village makes life more difficult for Birdhill. On the day of my visit the rain poured down and with construction traffic and normal Friday N7 traffic, life for Birdhill was not made any easier. However the village was tidy and clean. The efforts to keep the village tidy were illustrated by the patient work of a gentleman from Pallasgreen, and now living in Borrisokane, who with spade and wheelbarrow was keeping the grass verges and flower beds neat and tidy despite the rain and traffic.

The streetscape of the main road is wirefree, great not to see the overhead wires. One note of disappointment is to see weeds growing in the school playground around the wire barrier. It’s appreciated that the national school is currently undergoing a major extension to its existing premises.

**Residential Areas**

The older houses help retain the village character and charm of Birdhill and these are maintained to the best possible standards. Each home is distinct from the other and a credit to their owners with beautifully maintained houses and excellent gardens, both formal and informal.

Congratulations to all concerned on the upkeep of their residential areas.

**Roads, Streets and Back Areas**

The access roads vary from the N7 to the narrow but well maintained roads from Newport and O’Briens Bridge. The entrance from Ballina/Killaloe is now a work in progress with the major construction underway of a motorway roundabout. The village is coping well with the construction of the new M7 motorway and the ongoing traffic of heavy vehicles that transit Birdhill on a daily basis. Each roadway has a different character. All the landscaped areas at each of the village entrances helped to make the visitor feel welcome and inclined to stop and spend some leisure time in Birdhill. Landscaped areas including sloping greens on the various road can only be appreciated when ones walks and spends some worthwhile time to appreciate the area. The efforts to blend the landscape with the built environment are first class. Bilingual signs informing the visitor are much in evidence. The location of the village vis-à-vis the County and the region are displayed. Signs to inform that this is a Preserved Area of hedgerow-Do Not Disturb-Is leatsai. Signs of the Birdhill Wildlife are on display in the Park. Little pockets of seated areas with stepped railway sleepers surrounding a restful haven are to be appreciated.

The efforts of TidyTowns in Birdhill in bringing this project to fruition is an example of what can be achieved in a small community if all positive energies are harnessed. Future projects can learn from such a development.

Well done to all concerned.

**General Impression**

Even with the traffic Birdhill is an oasis in the middle of the N7. It is simply a lovely village in which to live, work and spend leisure time. Congratulations to all involved in maintaining its natural and built beauty. The ongoing co-operation between the public,and others, and the TidyTowns Committee is evident in the progress made by Birdhill in the competition.

Congratulations on your 2008 entry to TidyTowns Competition and good luck for the future. I look forward to further visits to your village. In particular I look forward to a traffic-free Birdhill when the motorway opens in 2009.

As a poem displayed in Pairc an Ein Fhinn says to the visitor:

You who walk

With troubled thoughts

Come enter here and rest

And may the sweet serenity

Of growing things

And the heavenly peace

Be mirrored in thy soul

Welcome to Birdhill

**Second Round Adjudication**

The 2nd Round adjudicator was delighted to have the opportunity of examining the beautiful village of Birdhill in some detail having passed through many times in the past. Congratulations on winning the Gold Medal in Entente Florale 2007; this was a really well deserved international recognition for your work over many years.

Your work over the past few years has obviously been complicated by the additional heavy traffic generated

by the bye-pass and new route development together with the normal very heavy traffic that seems to thunder through Birdhill on a continuous basis. Your TidyTowns Plan ‘Reaching for the Top’ is an impressive straight forward concise document that shows clearly where you have come from in TidyTowns terms over the past few years and demonstrates your future vision. The many landscaped areas in Birdhill and on the immediate approaches were highly impressive and the colour combinations were most attractive visually. The 50th Anniversary planted area really catches the eye. The Park area is really most attractive and despite the nearby road traffic still manages to bring a feeling of calm. The new work here impressed and the new Pond was admired. The small Herb Garden and the many labeled trees adds much interest to this peaceful area. This area has a high educational value both for children and adults. At Twiss’s Corner (?) the black plastic liner needed to be concealed and a bag of stones was lying nearby. The Green is one of your major success areas and the tall steel sculpture here was much admired. As elsewhere in Birdhill the quality of the grass presentation here was really excellent. The Fountain at the Bus Stop is a most attractive feature. Near here some rough grass was noted on the approach to Cooper’s car park area. Congratulations on your level of litter control, no easy task with the volume of daily through traffic. The approach roads were generally excellently presented despite the problems of construction traffic though roadside damage was noted on the Newport approach road.