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|   | **Maximum Mark** | **Mark Awarded****2010** | **Mark Awarded****2011** |
| Overall Development Approach | 5 | 46 | 46 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 37 | 38 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 43 | 43 |
| Wildlife & Natural Amenities | 50 | 33 | 34 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 38 | 38 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 13 | 14 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 21 | 21 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 27 | 27 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 37 | 37 |
| General Impression | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| **Total Mark** | **400** | **303** | **306** |

**Overall Development Approach**

Your adjudicator would like to welcome back Birdhill to the 2011 TidyTowns Competition. This was your

adjudicators first time in Birdhill on a very, very wet Sunday morning – and what a delight it was to visit your

community. It was interesting to note Birdhill’s insights into the TidyTown’s competition in that you are no

longer driving by scores but by the community benefits - this is highly commended and is so much the aim of

the programme. Congratulations on the development of your new long term plan that considers the strengths

and weaknesses of the area. Your work with many different relevant bodies eg. NRA and the TidyTowns

planning seminar with North Tipperary County Council is vital. Throughout the year you have events and

fundraisers which all build your community.Your various communication techniques were noted and contact

via e-mail, website and printed newsletter is excellent. Thank you for your very details submission and maps

showing the boundaries of the Birdhill and work carried out in 2011.

**The Built Environment**

In such a small area, the two public houses and the furniture shop all presented excellently – well painted,

excellent in-keeping signage, and with climbing plants allowed to soften the buildings whilst providing food and

shelter for wildlife. The Co-operative building 1914-1987 was admired – the churns and murals certainly

caught the eye of the passer by. The church was well maintained and it was good to see lichen on the stone

walls and crosses – not bleached off. The walls of the graveyard were being painted and looked fresh and the

gates were in excellent condition.Your adjudicator particularly liked the public notice at the graveyard, this was

one of the more gentle ones seen - not written in bright red capital letters as a warning but more as an

encouragement to visitors. There is a lovely entrance to the train station – the gate and pillars look very well

and the verge on the drive down is very well maintained also.The fencing is well screened here with trees and

planting also.

**Landscaping**

There was a very high standard of landscaping throughout the village – just everywhere which is highly

commended. Your new works were inspected and admired – The moon garden and the Coopers Shrub bed.

The floodlit Birdhill logo statue was admired. Your adjudicator was very taken with the high standards of work

throughout the community garden (see more details under waste minimization and wildlife). Your adjudicator

enjoyed your details of the hay making on the Birdhill roundabout, to overcome the NRA’s restrictions. The

‘Birdhill’ flower bed and newly installed large piece of ‘limestone(?) was noted. The use of shrubs here is

admired and is very sustainable. However, your adjudicator noticed possibly some Rhododendron ponticum

planted here. Although a beautiful colour, this is an invasive plant and much work is being carried out in other

communities to remove it as it is a major impact on our native fauna and flora. It is recommended that this be

removed before it causes problems. Further details from www.invasivespeciesireland.com. The planters and

hanging baskets, and tiered pots were admired everywhere in particular at the recycling banks, train station

and even at the church. However, do the larger planters here possibly cause on obstruction on the pavement

here?.The use of railway sleepers in the railway garden is very fitting. There was a clever use of shrubs to

shield the concrete wall across the main road opposite the church.

**Wildlife & Natural Amenities**

You have a great understanding of the wildlife and how to enhance it across your community. Your bug hotel

was inspected – it should have a four star rating! You have spent quality time to explain the benefits; what is

where; and why some areas are not to be disturbed. For example, you erected a poster on why there was a

pile of logs in the community park and that it is providing habitat for insects. The information boards explaining

the fauna and flora located in Birdhill are also to be commended. Well done on extending the Pollagh Trail.

Your adjudicator admired the outreach work across the community on wildlife. Bringing the first class pupils to

the Community park pond is an excellent idea.

**Litter Control**

The recycling centre was easily signposted and very well kept with no obvious litter in its vicinity. Who would

have thought that by spacing the banks, and placing planters and tiered floral baskets between them, that a

recycling bank could look so good? Perhaps you should consider entering the Tidy Towns National Award for

best bottle bank?. Some cigarette butts were noticed at the chapel and on the pavements by the public

houses. There was also some litter gathered and sitting on a stone wall on the slipway to the recycling centre

– it looked as if it had been gathered but forgotten to be listed.

The recycling sculpture project is a great idea – if you are using aluminium cans, you could enter the national

competition for al can sculptures – one of the special entries available.

**Tidiness**

Birdhill presented very well and tidy. Your adjudicator was pleased to note that a range of brochures were

available at the entrance to The Pollagh Trail. You should also be commended for refusing to allow election

posters and advertising hoarding to be displayed in the village. One of the non-manned train crossing gates

near the church was visited – both gates on either side of the track were not bolted closed at the time of visit.

**Waste Minimisation**

You have done an incredible amount to score points in this category of the competition. The ICA composting

workshop is a great idea and your adjudicator loved the recycling planter competition – who would have

thought that a 7 up bottle, a little tots car and a doll’s bike carrier could make such attractive plant pots?. The

recycling fashion show is a great idea – well done to all the pupils involved. Your rainwater butt in the

community garden was also noted here.Your communication by e-mail is another way in which you have

gained points in this category as this reduces the amount of paper you use. The work with the University of

Limerick to survey your community's ecological footprint did make for some interesting findings - how do you

plan to use this data?

**Residential Areas**

All the homes appeared very well presented.

**Roads, Streets & Back Areas**

Arriving on all the roads to Birdhill, you were met with clean signs and a bright, welcome bed or planter of

flowers. Farm gates within the limits were painted and song birds were clearly heard. Black, wrought iron

traditional gates were admired at a field entrance on the Ballnahinch Road. The cross roads further out this

road looked very well with more planters. Congratulations on the installation of the carved commemorative

stone bench. The different street benches were admired, as was the town pump looking very good in black.

There is often a tendency to paint these several colours, but one strong colour works very well. A nice mowing

regime has been adopted on the approach roads, where you have left a narrow margin uncut.

**General Impression**

Birdhill may be small in size but it greatly impressed your adjudicator.It is an excellent example of how a small

community can work together to enhance and bring a great focus and energy to an area. Every aspect of the

Tidy Towns competition was embraced and delivered very well. If your adjudicator could so enjoy Birdhill on a

wet Sunday morning, your efforts should ensure many a passer-by stops to also enjoy your village.

**Second Round Adjudication**

This was the first time that the second round adjudicator had the pleasure of visiting Birdhill and it was a

thoroughly enjoyable and memorable experience. We concur fully with the comments of the first adjudicator

with respect to your overall development approach, which appears to include all the key ingredients for an

effective and comprehensive approach with an excellent level of public participation, continuous and

successful engagement with external support agencies and bodies, close links and joint projects with the

school and a very large number of festivals and events each year. The inclusion of representatives from

different hinterlands on the tidy towns group and the formation of focus groups to generate ideas for projects

are particularly commendable as it allows the residents (the real experts) to have a direct input into what

projects are pursued. One small point relates to the performance targets included in the Birdhill Action Plan

which appear to be very ambitious for this level of the competition. The Committee should be aware that

merely retaining high marks from year to year can be challenging and that achieving continuous and

significant increases in marks each and every year is an exceptionally difficult task.

The presentation of the village during the second round adjudication reached a very high standard with

commercial properties and private dwellings all looking exceptionally well on the day. The adjudicator

particularly liked the new bench and its surrounding gravel landscaped bed while the Dovecote and Moon

Garden is an excellent means of transforming the shaded area beside the bus stop. The seating areas and

landscaping at the pump, at the Birdhill sign and at the water feature all provide attractive and distinctive

public amenity areas and focal points in the village. The Village Park is also a lovely amenity that is presented

to a high standard. The adjudicator was most impressed with the number of very high quality landscaping

projects with very colourful and eye catching examples noted at the water feature, opposite the Co-op Building

(with lovely yellow and red flowers) and at Newport Cross. The Haystacks on the roundabout were also

observed and we concur with the first round adjudicator that this is an imaginative means of providing an

entrance feature to the town that is amenable to the Authorities. The range and diversity of plants used in your

landscaping schemes was also noteworthy and it would be interesting to see a schedule in your action plan

explaining their contribution to local wildlife. It is clear that the wildlife category has been given close attention

by the Tidy Village Committee and you are commended on the extension achieved of the Pollagh Trail to

provide 2 loop walks in the village. Has a survey been completed of these? This would provide an excellent

basis for monitoring and auditing wildlife and habitats in Birdhill. The provision of information panels also adds

interest and enjoyment to these amenities. The small wildlife area at the railway station was also observed.

The standard of litter control observed was very high with almost all parts of the village litter free. An exception

was the natural stone wall adjacent to the attractively presented bottle bank with litter was observed on top of

the stone wall and behind it. Close attention was paid to tidiness and it is clear that the Committee have been

busy trimming verges, weeding road sides and power washing signs as the village appeared neat and tidy on

the day – an impressive feat given the high volumes of traffic experienced until recently. As always, some

small improvements are possible. The field gates adjacent to the Kaukaura Lodge B&B and the railings

outside the Coopers would benefit from some new paint, while at the railway station, the preserved area sign

was a little untidy looking and some of the landscaped beds in the railway station garden area were a little

weedy. Has a screened area been considered for the large bins in the railway station? Under waste

minimisation, the project to assess the ecological footprint of the Community with the University of Limerick is

a most interesting initiative and we would encourage you to undertake projects that are based on its findings.

For example, could allotments or a community garden be considered to boost the amount of food grown

locally? The approach roads were also presented to a high standard with landscaping and high quality

signage providing a lovely first impression for the visitor. There is no doubt that the standards being achieved

in your village in virtually all categories are very very high and this is an excellent reflection on the Tidy Village

Committee and the residents of Birdhill. Congratulations on a really excellent performance and we wish you

every success in the competition