

# Tidy Towns Competition 2003

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballymote**

Ref: **419**

County: **Sligo**

Mark: **192**

Category: **C**

Date: **10/06/2003**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2003	Mark Awarded 2002
Overall Developmental Approach	50	34	30
The Built Environment	40	27	25
Landscaping	40	30	26
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	22	18
Litter Control	40	24	24
Tidiness	20	11	11
Residential Areas	30	21	21
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	17	18
General Impression	10	6	6
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>179</b>

### Overall Developmental Approach:

This adjudicator had not been in Ballymote for about 15 years, and then only as a private visitor: the changes for the better are manifest everywhere, and enormous credit goes to Community Enterprise Ltd, the residents, business people of the town and to the associated official bodies. Regarding your Development Plan - it is mentioned a '3 to 5 Year Plan', but which is it? - and what year in its progress are you now at? Please say on your 2004 entry form; and also please identify on your map all the sites which should be seen - for example, you do not show the new housing schemes, nor do you name the streets. It is unlikely that anything will be missed, but one needs to be sure.

### The Built Environment:

The principle buildings were favourably mentioned by last year's adjudicator, and these continue to be well maintained. The RC Church is beautifully presented in its spacious grounds. The Church of Ireland church with its elegant steeple is an attractive landmark for miles around. The Castle is as well preserved a ruin as one could possibly wish for. Largely because of the improvements to the whole area, the handsome Railway Station has come into its own as an important architectural feature which perhaps was not so noticeable in the past. Of the business premises, the Post Office, Doddy's, Cryan's and the Coach House Hotel favourably caught the attention. (Incidentally the Ulster Bank should not be described as an Irish Language Shopfront.) The building which most caught this adjudicator's attention was the late 19th or early 20th century building now housing the Enterprise

Centre - a sensitive restoration that gives a real lift to this, otherwise, rather undistinguished street. The cinema, unfortunately, remains as a disfigurement, and progress on plans to restore it as a library are eagerly awaited.

### **Landscaping:**

There is a fine array of shrubs fronting what is probably the old market house. Occasional spots of colour in tubs and windowboxes throughout the town add visual interest. The landscaping of the railway bridge embankments is a real success, as is the planting in this general area, not forgetting the station platform with its hanging baskets and flowerbeds. This neighbourhood should be ripe for a major award in future provided builders' debris is removed from behind low walls and plastic sheeting in flowerbeds is either removed or concealed. Landscaping on the Collooney road did not seem to be quite complete, probably because of the ongoing housing development. The open landscaping in the private grounds of the convent opposite the castle is a real gift to passers-by.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

The exceptionally large Town Park - which embraces some of the elements mentioned above - is very impressive indeed, linking three main roads and providing a wonderful amenity for quiet recreation. It was good to see old trees preserved - such as the two fine copper beeches near the castle and three more next the RC church. Much planting of young hardwoods was observed. (Surely the millennium oak has not a great chance of survival planted as it is under a mature beech and chestnut?) nesting boxes were not seen - presumably they are in suitably concealed areas.

### **Litter Control:**

More bins are obviously needed. There was considerable litter on adjudication day near Mooney Motors, around the recycling facility, and in 'corners' in some streets on the eastern side of the town.

### **Tidiness:**

Visible plastic sheeting in flowerbeds and builders' debris in the neighbourhood of the station has been mentioned above. Some untenanted houses in the town centre give an inevitably dissolute air; there is a particularly shabby building as you turn off the main street towards Boyle, and some low buildings at the south end of the main street that need attention. The graveyard near the station was surprisingly unkempt on adjudication day. A weedy car park almost opposite the Coach House, and a neglected space further out on this road, need tidying up - lanes and entries at this side of the town in general give a less than favourable impression. The statue of Michael Duffy could have done with a wash, and the attractive metal seat at the castle entrance needed painting.

### **Residential Areas:**

Many street homes are admirably spruce; it is these houses and the shops which go with them that make up the town centre and are the real core of character in Ballymote. New apartments in Lord Edward Street are a distinct asset. Most of the uncompleted housing is promising; the idea of awards for best kept gardens and indeed best kept estate is an excellent one. It is hoped that extensive tree planting will take place at Keenaghan and other new estates in the open spaces and along roadways. The houses on the outer part of Hillview Drive seemed better looked after than those on the inner side.

### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

At the time of adjudication there was extensive ongoing work on pavements in progress. Naturally this has had a temporarily adverse effect on the appearance of the town. Apart from the sections being renewed, some of the road surfaces in the urban area where the worst seen this year! It is

assumed that the Local Authority has improvements in view. It is hoped that by next year it will be possible to increase marking in this category. There has been an appreciable improvement in the townscape where new lighting standards have been erected and overhead wires removed - a pity this has not been continued to the foot of the main street. Fine new stone walls and stout timber fencing, especially in the railway station area, are first class.

### **General Impression:**

It has been a real pleasure to comment upon Ballymote, partly because of the excellence of the renewal and environmental work undertaken to date, and partly because the discrepancies noted are all of manageable proportions, and where improvements are needed these are already signalled in your plans. Congratulations to the Tidy Towns section of Community Enterprise Ltd. on the leadership given.