

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballinasloe**

Ref: **576**

County: **Galway**

Mark: **227**

Category: **E**

Date: **11/08/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	39	37
The Built Environment	40	32	32
Landscaping	40	37	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	23	23
Litter Control	40	22	18
Tidiness	20	10	11
Residential Areas	30	27	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	29	29
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	300	227	222

Overall Developmental Approach:

Your documentation is impressive. One really gets the impression that Ballinasloe is on the brink of entering into the higher grade of towns in this competition. In recent years some of the larger towns have been doing very well, and this may be a hopeful trend. Perhaps there is still a gap between developmental ideas and such ideas being put into action in a significant way. You are already doing extremely well under Buildings, Landscaping and Residential Areas. Perhaps it is time to concentrate on bringing up the marking under other headings.

The Built Environment:

This refers to public buildings and business premisses. The Leisure Centre is a fine addition to the town with its clean and inviting lines. St Brigid's Hospital and the Railway Station are still the most architecturally distinguished buildings and they continue to be well maintained. The church at the intersection near the hospital is well presented except for the roof which was in need of roof cleaning at the date of adjudication and the Presbyterian church was also in need of attention. St Michael's and St John's churches are the most commanding buildings in the town - the former is well presented but unfortunately the area round the latter has become run-down. The boulevard-like St Michael's Square is now by far the most attractive central street, even though the Eircom HQ and the Post Office do nothing to enhance it. By comparison, the other central streets have become quite shoddy, with premisses such as Diva, An Tain, Salmon's and Fair & Murtagh's among the few frontages that are smart and well designed. It is extraordinary that the Tesco frontage was given

planning permission in such a handsome street.

Landscaping:

The Famine Remembrance Park is an attractively planted amenity - a pity that at the time of adjudication some of the paths remained unweeded. The Marina, with its useful signboards, attractive heron sculpture, neat jettys and trim lawns, was looking very well indeed: this is an important scenic site where most motorists get the best impression of the town. The wide mown spaces of the Fair Green is a link with history and means 'Ballinasloe' to so many people. The children's playground at the Leisure Centre was lively and colourful at the date of adjudication and is obviously much enjoyed. Small areas of planting, such as at the foot of Church Hill, tubs, windowboxes and new areas where planting was currently being developed all combined to enhance the townscape. Clearly this is going to be even better in the coming years.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The Pollboy bog walk along the canal tow-path is a splendid project and its development will be eagerly looked forward to. Particular attractive was the old bridge in its sylvan surroundings south of the town; presumably this area will be tidied up, old trees maintained and new planted. The area at the town end of the canal will need a great deal of upgrading - ultimately it should match the nearby marina. Tree planting properly comes under the Wild Life heading (though it overlaps with Landscaping) - your record here is most impressive. Please continue to give information in your documentation concerning the increase in bird, insect and other wild life, and about angling activities, etc, as these are important to the subject and are not necessarily obvious to the visiting adjudicator.

Litter Control:

The extensive recycling centre was seen to be clean. Litter was seen here and there, mainly in side streets off Society and Dunlo streets and Sarsfield road. It was not obtrusive, and certainly a big improvement on last year, but clearly the problem has not yet been adequately solved.

Tidiness:

Wirescapes, poles, protruding mass-produced signs, all contributed to a cluttered visual effect in Dunlo Street and Main Street, both of which now have a scruffy appearance in spite of several very well presented houses and business premisses. It would not be out of place to suggest a visit to towns such as Clonakilty or Abbeyleix, where these problems have been dealt with in a comprehensive way; the Main Street of Portlaoise is another to which a fair comparison might be made. However, what has been started in St Michael's Square is a good beginning. Notices and advertising signs in the neighbourhood of Bridge Street and Sli na hAbhann gave a poor impression. Hoardings at the rear of Duggan Park spoiled the outlook from Mount Pleasant Avenue. These are only some bad examples - by and large the town could be said to have been reasonably tidy. It is worth noting that the entrance to the landfill site outside the town was well kept, and therefore a cause for congratulation.

Residential Areas:

Mount Pleasant Place - in fact most pleasant, but nonetheless some boundary walls needed attention. Other old residential terraces in the town centre are mainly now given over to business, and some are well kept: they are full of character and it was disappointing to find advertising and signage blemishes as mentioned above. The house opposite St John's church looked as if it was in the process of an interesting rehabilitation. A lovely blue house in Church (or perhaps Bridge) street had been disfigured by passing traffic. Kilgarvan court and its neighbouring roads enjoyed a high standard of suburban presentation. Of the mid-to late-20th century estates, St Michael's Place was well maintained though there was some kerbside weed and a few boundary walls that needed

painting - this was also the case in some other estates built around the same time. In the Beechlawn area the mix of mature suburbia and occasional rural housing was well blended. A new development near Tesco looks most promising.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach road from Athlone, with its verges, markings and stone walls, was excellent. A new junction at Creagh looked as if it would solve some traffic congestion when completed - presumably the concrete block walls will be clad in stone matching the walls of the neighbourhood. The Galbally entrance, with its fine pillars and railings, was admired. Parking bays at Sli na hAbhann were clean and neat. Some urban areas adjacent to St Michael's Square, such as Davitt Place, badly needed upgrading. Paving at the foot of Church Hill was excellent, but the higher area round St John's church which could be a fine urban space, was much dishevelled. Traffic control in the town centre was very poor indeed. The bilingual street signs are first class.

General Impression:

As suggested above, Ballinasloe seems to be on the verge of a very promising period. It will be most heartening if the developments signalled in your documentation come to fruition as expected.

Second Round Adjudication:

There is a fine level of heritage within the town and its environs and this should be utilised to its best advantage. The paving along the main streets of the town is somewhat inconsistent in appearance and is, presumably, in the process of being upgraded? This will have an immense impact on the overall impression created by Ballinasloe. The standard of litter control on the day was not to the highest of standards, in particular along the main streets of the town, leading up to the Church of Ireland and in the magnificent Fair Green area that is so synonymous with Ballinasloe! Weed control was also a problem on the day - at raised kerbs on Dunloe Street, along approach roads and leading up to the Church of Ireland. The directional signage at the Dublin side of the bypass was damaged and should be repaired. The new sculpture at the Market Square was admired for its appropriateness. The marvellous new modern Leisure Centre and Health Centre buildings were noted and admired. The forecourt area to Famine Memorial Park was still weedy, unfortunately. The attractive housing at St Joseph's Place was as well maintained as ever. Advertising Hoardings and Flyposting are practises, which should be discouraged, as should plastic projecting signage. Landscaped areas such as the Fair Green, Riverside Park and geranium planting at junctions all created a good impression in this category of the competition. Perhaps a campaign of tree planting along streets should be considered? This adjudicator was in full agreement with the comments made by the First Adjudicator in relation to visiting towns of a similar size that have performed well in the competition in recent years - such as Clonakilty, Kenmare, Ennis, and Westport.