

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballybofey-Stranorlar** Ref: **640**
County: **Donegal** Mark: **240**
Category: **D** Date(s): **17/06/2006**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	38
The Built Environment	50	30
Landscaping	50	27
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	24
Litter Control	50	30
Waste Minimisation	20	16
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	240

Overall Development Approach:

The rate of development in industry, business, housing and education has been quite unprecedented in very recent years in Ballybofey-Stranorlar, as in many other centres, and it is fortunate that there is a committee such as yours to keep a watch on over-eagerness to transform the built and natural environment in inappropriate ways, to encourage good developments and to maintain connections with other bodies, whether official or voluntary. Your Development Plan has not been seen by this adjudicator - a copy was not enclosed with the other material - and so it was unclear as to what stage you have now reached in it; last year's adjudicator suggested that it was 'important to review' it in the light of pressing issues. You may indeed be doing this. Your photographs were helpful and also your map. It is very encouraging to read of the Green Flag status of one of your schools, and that teachers and children in the schools are involved in your work.

The Built Environment:

Your mark under this heading is quite high. No important building projects have been completed over the last year (at least none are mentioned on the entry form) so it is with existing buildings that the following treats. Except for the very large shopping centre in Ballybofey, the churches are the most prominent buildings; all are beautifully kept, a credit to their congregations, from the cathedral-like Roman Catholic church by the bridge to the handsome Church of Ireland building (where the thought crossed one's mind that a lower boundary wall would allow the beautiful graveyard to be appreciated by passers-by). The Presbyterian church dominates its street with an easy grace and the Reformed Presbyterian church is perfectly pristine. As to the dominant shopping centre, its dignified frontage enhances the street - as does the Villa Rose Hotel opposite; but its flank as you look from the bridge goes a long way towards destroying the visual coherence of the town; clearly nothing can be done, but it should serve as a reminder when other essential developments are planned that there should be a proper place for everything. Both the National Irish and the Bank of Ireland looked well; McKelvey's Bar was cared for and welcoming, while the pub with the expertly-painted Heineken frontage is so

outrageous it is almost a work of art! Kee's has a charming frontage recalling its small-town hotel origins, while Jackson's Hotel suitably commands its off-street setting. Problems with successful major development in this confined area may have resulted in the dereliction seen in Back Road, a place that could be transformed by sensitive rehabilitation for small shops or boutiques. All the schools seen were well looked after though it was clear that space is at a premium with planning notices up for temporary classrooms. Halla Srath an Urlar was a credit to its community. The large Commercial Centre under construction at the junction of the Lifford and Letterkenny roads looked promising and will be commented upon next year.

Landscaping:

The neat verges and planting on the Lifford Road were seen to be a courtesy of the Villa Rose Hotel - a significant sponsorship; there may be others. It was good to see so many tubs and other containers flourishing at several points. Pleasant raised beds of shrubs and young trees were favourably noted on the Sligo road.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You do not provide information on your activities under this heading, save a mention of the Drumboe Forest Park Walk. This is an amenity of real distinction, introducing the urban public to the pleasures of the natural environment. Illustrated interpretative signage has been provided in such places elsewhere and more of this would be welcomed. You are probably engaging in nature projects in the schools; if so, this is commendable. Tree planting in a number of areas in the town and on the outskirts was seen. The Tidy Towns booklet may give you some ideas which you might follow up in this category.

Litter Control:

Litter control was good on the date of the visit, a credit to the FAS team and to those who took part in the annual clean-up. There was very little disposable litter in the streets, and in only one place, Drumboe Avenue, was there any quantity; this was probably an isolated case.

Waste Minimisation:

This is a much higher mark than the average awarded so far in this new category - a category that will assume a greater importance as time goes on. The bring bank is popular and tidily maintained, but the recycling area is a first class facility and few towns yet have one. Your efforts to have it created are warmly applauded.

Tidiness:

On the Sligo road there are several commercial developments and entrances, not all of them untidy but between them they give a somewhat haphazard and inconsistent introduction to Ballybofey; unscreened container parking on the Glenties road (outside the town area so not affecting the marks) has the same effect. Such sites shout "You need not expect a tidy town ahead!" which is quite unfair. Rather nearer into Stranorlar from Letterkenny, on the left, a run of unsightly commercial outlets with a weedy frontage has a similar effect, only worse. Back Road has already been mentioned, and there are some unfortunate properties on Navenny Street. It must be emphasised that these are all relatively minor in relation to the general tidiness of the town, though they do produce the negative effect described.

Residential Areas:

Most of the older traditional street homes are what give Ballybofey-Stranorlar its special quality - for example, the lovely terrace facing the end of Chapel Street. Several well kept estates were seen; among them The Cedars was typically well presented, while Blue Cedars park already had a mature feeling about it. Two further estates on the Sligo road - their names have not been noted, but perhaps they were not displayed - were very neat indeed, one of them well supplied with flourishing young trees. Ard MacCarran, an older estate with a fine grassed frontage to the main road, was admired (one house appeared to be boarded up). Cement block boundary walls at the entrance to another mature estate (this one in Stranorlar) gave a poor initial impression, though the houses themselves were well looked after. (It would be helpful if you were to name the estates on your map.)

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Substantial road repairs were under way on the Letterkenny road. Improvements at the bridge were very favourably noted. Most of the road surfaces and footpaths were of good to fair standard. New stone walls here and there improved the quality of their particular locations tremendously, such as at the rear of the Irish National Bank. The elegant newer lamp standards were admired and could be continued to other streets to advantage, clearly at enormous expense.

General Impression:

What your committee is doing so successfully is taking advice from a number of interested bodies and adding

it to your own skills, creating a better environment for the residents of both towns. Your concern is admirable. (If you find adjudicators' comments unhelpful or incorrect, please write immediately to the Tidy Towns Unit because if you only make your point on the following year's entry- form it will only be read by the next adjudicator and not disseminated throughout the entire system.) Every good wish for the continued success of your work.