

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballitore** Ref: **840**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **209**
Category: **B** Date(s): **21/06/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	33
The Built Environment	50	30
Landscaping	50	33
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	18
Litter Control	50	22
Waste Minimisation	20	0
Tidiness	30	11
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	6
TOTAL MARK	400	209

Overall Development Approach:

Go raibh maith agaibh go leir! Thank you to Ballitore TidyTowns and to the community you represent for having given selflessly of your time in working towards entering Ballitore in this 50th anniversary year of the TidyTowns Competition!

Ballitore is a small village with a TidyTowns committee membership of eight.

Perhaps you may be able to increase your membership somewhat. Apart from sharing workloads, new members bring their own creativity and individual strengths and insights to any organisation. You have the support of your local employer Glanbia. That is very good. Do you have any contact with your local authority or any agencies that could help your work?

You mention "public meetings" as a way of communicating. However you do not indicate how often you would hold such a meeting. You also say that you try to involve your local schools as much as possible. It would be interesting and informative if you could elaborate on this involvement for us as it is difficult to assess its strengths from the information supplied. Is the local school working towards a Green Flag?

The map submitted is very good as a baseline map. Thank you for submitting a clear O.S. copy. However more could be added to it by way of notation, and you might also extend its boundaries to include the new housing area.

Your application form could be completed more comprehensively. You can do yourself more justice by thinking through each category as you complete the form

But especially we note that you do not appear to have submitted a Tidy Towns action plan. To make substantial progress in the competition a plan is required. A three or five year plan is recommended. A plan need not be prepared professionally. However, you should try to get the views of the community at large when preparing the plan and take into account other plans for the area such as Local Area Plans / County Development Plans prepared by the Local Authority under the Planning and Development Act 2000

The Built Environment:

Ballitore is a remarkable village as it has such a unique history, and because so much of its older fabric is still in existence. We realise that you have had a lot of problems with derelict and unattended buildings. However, this might in the long run turn into a situation to your advantage, because these buildings can be conserved and brought back to life, just like the Market House. It is really only since the Planning Act of 2000 that Conservation has been on the agenda, and now there are professional conservation officers employed by local authorities and grants available for conservation. Had these works been carried out prior to this period they may not have been carried out to the same standard, and you would have lost the character of the village, or had the buildings been demolished you would have lost them forever. The architectural integrity of the village still exists in the main. The Market House restoration will give a good focus to the village again, as it was difficult when it obviously created a central problem visually.

The Leadbeater house/museum is very attractive, and the adjacent library is a good use of an old building. However it was a pity that the museum was temporarily closed for two weeks in late June, at the height of the tourist season. The good stone signage for the house was admired.

The Shaker Store and tea rooms was in pristine condition, and is a very attractive focal point in the Square.

The 7 up sign on the food store looked strident and inappropriate in this location, as did the signage for H.P. and Lotto signs at the Post Office, and the beer signage on the pub. It is a pity that you have not been able to achieve success with the removal/appropriate replacement of these signs, as they were also commented upon last year by your 2007 adjudicator. The security addition to the top of the gate is inappropriate to its surrounds.

The gates at the Quaker graveyard are not in a good condition.

The bridge is an attractive feature at the immediate entrance to the village. Across the bridge (approaching from the Carlow Dublin road) there is a relatively new very large extension to the rear of the terrace of new properties on the south side of the street which is out of scale and not sympathetic to the architecture of the village. If at all possible, judicious planting should be considered to screen this in views as one approaches the village.

Try to resist PVC window insertions in the village, as they are out of character with your architectural heritage. There is a row of houses on the village side of the bridge to the north of the street, (East of Leadbeater house), which retain sash windows and are a great asset to the immediate entrance to the village. Butterfield signage is good, but the PVC windows detract.

The red roof at the rear of the P.O. is an inappropriate intrusion visually, but there is little you can do here. The security gate at the same location is also inappropriate to this lovely village square. A delightful gate was noted on the East side of Mill Lane.

We noted a planning notice for a sizeable development at the corner opposite the Market House in the village. We trust that the design proposed is in keeping with the village, and it will be good to see this renewal also.

We look forward to seeing more bilingual signage.

Landscaping:

Ballitore has a distinct natural advantage in the fact that it is a village located in a little valley in lovely rolling countryside. Despite its proximity to the main road the village has a really rural feel to it, and much of this is because of its setting in a mature landscape. As one descends to the village from the East one is aware of the very treed setting with natural hedgerows and the small river valley.

The Burial ground is a feature of interest, and it is located in a nice natural setting of trees and shrubs. The trees forming a backdrop to the Square are also an important part of the village amenity.

The deciduous trees planted on the village approach from the main road were admired greatly. These add to the sense of a green and fertile valley location. You say that you hope to landscape the approach from the west, once construction works are complete on the new housing development on that side of the village. We look forward to seeing this in future years, and that eventually all three approaches will be landscaped well.

The new hedge planting opposite Glanbia is good.

The Mill Celtic football grounds are in a rural type setting along Mill Lane with natural hedgerow boundaries.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Ballitore, with its deciduous tree cover, stream world and remoteness from polluting atmospheres and human disturbance is a wildlife Paradise. You must build on this and maximise your efforts in order to progress in this area.

A logical place to start would be to carry out a very basic survey of wild flora and fauna in the area. Perhaps your local school could help you with this? Do you have a young person studying Environmental Science in a 3rd level institution from the area who might require a thesis topic? The provision of a survey and management plan contributes to the marks in this section. In last year's adjudication it was also recommended that you might consider conducting a wildlife survey, so do remember to endeavour to do this for 2009!

Findings can subsequently be made public on information panels. This information would add to the enjoyment of your village for local and visitors alike, and would serve good educational purposes. You simply mention the riverbank as a project undertaken this year, and that a planned project is to make the riverbank more accessible, but you do not provide any more details.

Litter Control:

Litter was not in evidence on adjudication day. Whereas you planned to get the children involved in litter control as a project for this year, you do not say whether or not you have achieved this. Perhaps it is going to happen during the school holidays. We wish you well in your work with the children, and look forward to hearing about this in 2009. As last years adjudicator suggested, you might consider segregation of litter after clean ups. Perhaps you could organise a litter seminar day with the local authority litter warden, and draw up a litter plan for the village. And perhaps with the increase in population occurring, you might discuss the possibility of acquiring a small recycling centre. The litter bins were very full on adjudication date.

Waste Minimisation:

Waste minimisation is about more than not having litter in your street. It involves the prevention of litter accumulation in the first case. It is really what it says – to minimise on waste production before we, as a community, private or public create it in the first case. You might refer to the Race Against Waste booklet available from the TidyTowns Unit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government. Consider organising or attending a Waste Minimisation Workshop with your local authority. In your local school there will be opportunities to involve the students in an effort to work towards this end. You could increase your marks considerably in this section by so doing. Perhaps you might prepare a flyer/newsletter on this subject? As a local community you could look at some innovative and simple ideas such as organising a "Bring and Take Day". This would involve using a local hall / community centre for instance for a day - where everybody brings items they have no further use for, but which other people might want (and which under normal circumstances they might get rid of as waste) and puts them on display. The corollary is that somebody else needs these items. No monies change hands. Website versions of this idea have been set up in places also. Another group collected all broken crockery, and made a mosaic in their local park. You can gain marks by doing some of these things for 2009

Tidiness:

As one approaches the village one gets the first impression of Ballitore.

The footpaths and planting give a gentle linear effect to the approach. Although power lines are also linear. The roadside boundary walls of the Garda Barracks need painting, and the building itself needs a little maintenance. Its gutters are well maintained and painted. The sign upright at the Burial Ground needs replacing.

On the river bank a rusty bicycle was evident. It was not clear if it had been dumped there or if it had been part of a river cleanup which had taken a break! There was also a small amount of litter there also. The seating at the river needs refurbishment . An unusual sight of a mop swinging out of power lines was visible at the bridge on adjudication date also! The ESB substation had high wire fencing surrounds on adjudication day and is generally not tidy with the gate needing straightening. However the planting in the site is mature.

There was no graffiti in evidence. This is good.

You are hoping that the overhead wires will be removed. This would contribute greatly to the streetscape. However it is expensive to get this done, even in a small area. But continue with your efforts in this area.

The Glanbia site and entrance splays were tidy. This is important, given its strategic location at the immediate access to the village.

A derelict house on the village side of the bridge had peeling paint . A planting tub outside on the footpath was both in very poor condition and also needed replanting. A high wall also had peeling paint, and an old shop front needs resuscitation. The yard beyond looked untidy with an open gate. The Health Centre looked a little grubby, and needs painting. The gate opposite the Quaker old school building needs painting. A very torn planning notice attached to the pole near the museum required removal or renewal, and looked poorly in this good area.

Gas and briquettes outside two premises looked untidy. Is there any way this can be stored off path?

Residential Areas:

The individual inhabited houses in the village and especially the terrace on the western approach are generally well maintained and landscaped. The new Abbeyfields Housing estate is beginning to settle in, with some houses occupied. It has a nice green area with a curved path. The estate is in need of a major landscaping programme, but we assume that that is about to take place, as it will most probably have been part of the planning proposals. We also note that you are hoping that the boundary restoration and replacement treatments will be good.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

We note that you are understandably looking forward to having the Square around the Market House clean and tidy again in the future.

You do not indicate any projects which you intend to undertake this year under this heading.

The approach from the main road is in need of weeding along the verges and footpaths. This is important, as it is the first impression people get of maintenance issues in the village. The general appearance of the barbed wire fence and gate in need of attention at the Burial ground is untidy.

General Impression:

Ballitore is a village which is beginning to come back to itself, and has had its fair share of problems with abandonment and dereliction. We would encourage you to seek the excellent advice which is available to you from your local authority on many issues –be it Conservation, Heritage, Environmental issues and others. Ask for help from other relevant agencies also. You will also have the new residents to help you and to bring new ideas and manpower to your ranks. You can see things changing, and you say that you feel you are coming to grips with the problems.