

# Tidy Towns Competition 2008

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballymore Eustace** Ref: **357**  
County: **Kildare** Mark: **262**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **07/07/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	33
The Built Environment	50	35
Landscaping	50	38
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	34
Litter Control	50	32
Waste Minimisation	20	5
Tidiness	30	16
Residential Areas	40	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31
General Impression	10	8
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>262</b>

### Overall Development Approach:

NOTE : You were in Category C last year. You have applied for Category B this year. This is correct, as your population is within the B Category threshold as per Census 2006

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

Ballymore Eustace is a small village with a good number of people involved on your committee. Your submission has been put together in a very professional format. It is most interesting, and informative, clear and extensive. You have drawn on the resources of many bodies, agencies and local businesses, including your local authority. You list these for us in your submission. Obviously they hold your group in high regard. You have an extensive media coverage organised. Thank you for letting us have copies of relevant media coverage. We hope that you communicate with all churches attended by any of your residents. Well done on your website. Thank you for submitting your five year plan. It is a pity that you did not detail the consultation process involved in drawing up your Plan. We assume that you held public meetings in this regard, but this is not clear from your submission, nor is it clear from the plan itself. We assume that you have launched your plan. We hope that it was well received. You appear to have listed specific projects for 2008 and 2009 only, with the rest included as "ongoing", presumably 2008-2013. Your school is a great resource for you. Thank you for enclosing the happy photograph of all your great helpers at Scoil Mhuire! We note your concern with the paperwork. We think that you have done "overtime" in this area! As you are starting out with a new plan, and as you are therefore engaging in a lot of paperwork now, the load should lessen. We hasten to say that it is appreciated and has helped us as adjudicators get to know the village well. The fact that it has all been submitted in A4 format has made it easier to use, and the fact that it is so well presented is also to your credit. So you can tell your members that it has been worth the effort! Your festivals are diverse, and you appear to have the edge on other places in Kildare when it comes to attracting in visitors with the festivals you can

access. Thank you for submitting a clear map in your plan. However individual projects might be highlighted on a larger scaled map.

### **The Built Environment:**

Ballymore Eustace is a truly lovely village with a very special character of its own. A lot of the character comes from its hillside setting and its lovely stepped rows of houses. It has an old village structure to it, not evident in villages of similar population which have expanded primarily as residential centres. It has public buildings and services in proportion to its population, and this is also partly due to its busy equine centred hinterland also. The built environment has, in the main, been conserved. This aspect of the village is worth looking after in perpetuity, as it is what most confers unique status on Ballymore Eustace. The Local Area Plan recognises the main buildings of note in its plan, but there are other groups of buildings and individual buildings which also contribute to the totality of the village structure, such as the pleasant two storey house on the left hand side of the Blessington approach road in the area of the Church of Ireland. Your built heritage in the area is very interesting, and is a source of educational, amenity, and educational potential. This heritage is situated in its natural surrounds and has not been encroached upon. We know that you appreciate this aspect of your built heritage well. The Liffey bridge on the Southern approach is a lovely old arched stone bridge. The Church of Ireland is a landmark building on the Eastern approach with a good entrance area. There are good views across to the church and associated graveyard from Bishopshill Road. The Catholic church is a fine building in the centre of the village, and is presented well, having been worked on in the 1990s as you tell us. The church gates and railings, as well as the building look well. The grounds are a lovely setting and are well maintained. The Health Centre looks well with its stone walls and projecting stone wall. The Band Hall is clean, but it needs some planting to soften its outlines as seen in views from the approach road close to the Church of Ireland.

Barrack Street has rows of lovely artisan cottages which are a delight in their maintenance and care. This care appears to extend to their rear curtilages also, as good views to lovely rear courtyards were observed. The Garda Barracks is a very attractive building on Barrack Street, has retained its fine sash windows; but they are in need of maintenance. Hopefully this can be encouraged. Almost opposite the Barracks is an old stone cottage, with a planning notice. This is also an uninhabited cottage which is being well presented in the interim, with black plywood inserts into the openings. Further along this street is a very charming old long cottage, also uninhabited with very clean off white walls. Lovely green plywood inserts have been placed here. Another row of artisan cottages were very much admired in Chapel Street stepping down towards the Liffey Bridge. Almost at the bridge on the same side as the gate, is a lovely cottage with its sash windows retained and paned windows are retained in the equally attractive cottage opposite.

The Forge doors need a little paint. Scoil Mhuire is very well presented, as befits a Green Flag school. The Ballymore Inn is attractive, as is the cottage uphill with its lovely planting and nice railings. Opposite, The Anvil premises needs painting and weeding, and a long off white two storey house with wooden gates in archway access to rear is also very good. Main Street looks well. At the bottom of Plunkett Road is an uninhabited house which is well presented with its clean walls and black plywood sheeting. Well done on taking advice on how to deal with such buildings. Also well done to your local engineer for the good signage maintenance throughout the village, including one just in front of this house with its traditional black and white stripes. It is in a strategic location, and looks well. A stone building on Plunkett Road, (Southern side) looks well with its climbing roses. Two derelict sites uphill of this house did not look well. Again uphill of these derelict sites were two very good cottages. On Main St./The Square area, Gallery Gifts is a lovely and well cared for building retaining its sash windows. The property uphill of this was well presented, but unfortunately has PVC inserts. Reconstruction was taking place at the top of the Square at the same side (Corner Shop). Across the Main Street, Headon's business premises, with its tall brick chimneys, brick window surrounds, and creeper covered shed is well presented. Murphy's looked very fresh and clean; the only draw back again - from a built heritage point-of-view - being the PVC inserts. In front of Murphy's an ugly pole detracts from the frontage. This is a village wide problem. Wirescape and poles dominate the views of your lovely streets in many places. Undergrounding them is a very expensive project, but one we hope that you will achieve in time. Your excellent built environment deserves this, and you have recognised this in your plan. At the bottom of this "Square section" of Main Street, Murray's pub forms a "stop". It is also well presented, as is "The Thatch" across the road. A negative intrusion in this vista is the Quick Pick shop / petrol pumps. Outside were observed, several goods for sale cluttering the path. These included 2 litter bins, bales of compost on a stand, a coal bunker, and car oil etc. on a stand, briquettes, and other items for sale including flowers. There is a free standing post-box close to the two petrol pumps. The signage is also excessive and includes advertising for garden goods (very large). There is also a large Bluegas sign on the gable facing downhill. There is also a canopy and a fabric screen attached to the shop front, and on the path. It is clear that the premises provides a much needed service to the village and surrounds. However, most people know what it sells, and do not need all these reminders. Perhaps you can come to some compromise with the owners/occupiers with regard to rationalisation. It is also makes the footpath at this area very unfriendly for people with mobility issues. And the clutter in a very small space jars with the overall clean lines of the Square. Further down the Square and just around the corner from the Pharmacy is a building under reconstruction. The materials, fenestration, and door type being provided are inappropriate to the vernacular design of all other buildings in the Square. This is a pity, as the site is strategic in visual terms.

The spotlights protruding from Costcutters look out of place in this vernacular village street. Could strip downlighting be recessed into shopfront? Posters in shop windows can cause a cluttered look. The gates at the bottom of Chapel Street on the left hand approach to the bridge are good iron gates, and should be conserved. They need painting and some repair, and the pillar is cracked. At the outer edge of the village the property Country Kitchens was admired, both in its new use and in its maintenance and presentation. Be careful with the type of street and road signs proposed. It would be good if you could commission a purpose made sign appropriate to the area – perhaps in stone. And we are glad that they will be bilingual. You obviously have residents who have an interest in Irish. We hope that they will contribute to your moving forward in this area also. Some local authorities have Irish Officers. We do not know if your local authority has such. Throughout the village you are using black street furniture with a “heritage” theme. It is suggested that this style is more reminiscent of English towns and villages than of Irish heritage towns, so if you are considering further lights, bear this in mind. With regard to the colour, black is the most difficult colour for somebody with visual impairment to see, so we would suggest that you reconsider using a brighter colour. Perhaps Ballymore has a team colour you could adopt? The Millennium Garden is an interesting feature at the top of Main Street. You are very lucky to have such an eminent sculptor as Imogen Stewart to work amongst you. Well Done! The juxtaposition of water, stone, and greenery is very effective, and the local connotation of the head of the Liffey is a great example of how heritage, public art and renewal can work well together. We are not particularly impressed with the chequered paving being applied to the footpaths. We consider that, in its fussiness, it detracts from your excellent building stock, and its classical simplicity. We have written a lot under this heading as we feel your greatest strength is in your built environment, which so few villages still hold intact. Do take care of it! We laud your ideas of “How to develop a village with intelligence” on your web site.

### **Landscaping:**

Ballymore Eustace has a distinct natural advantage in the fact that it is a village located in unspoilt area in the East Kildare uplands on the river Liffey in its rural upland way. Despite its proximity to the more urbanised parts of the county, the village has really retained its rural ambience largely through the maintenance of its lovely landscaped approaches, stone walls and hedgerows, together with its waterside amenities, as well as through the maintenance of its village built fabric, curtilage size and old plantings. The vegetation is native and unspoilt. The tree cover is of mainly native deciduous species. Maybe a Sli na Slainte route could be developed in the environs of Ballymore Eustace.

Your own landscaping of the village area, especially in the Square and in the area of the church grounds, is very appropriate to the village. We are particularly impressed that you are not overusing the more urban landscape forms of baskets and tubs. You do not need these in such a natural setting. An excellent and restrained example of hanging baskets was observed in a simple pair of hanging baskets near the Garda Barracks, on a very well maintained cottage already referred to under “Built Environment”. The window boxes, simple and classical containing a splash of red were also very much admired in the cottage in a row near the bridge (again referred to above) Well Done! We are less sure about the baskets on the “heritage” lights, which tend to clutter the skyline.

The planting at the Millennium Garden is simple and appropriate, and breaks up visually a large expanse of road surface. All your planted spaces were well maintained on adjudication day. Thank you for telling us about your spring plantings, both at the Millennium Garden and elsewhere.

The trees in the vicinity of the Church of Ireland are a great asset to the visual amenities of the higher part of the village.

We note your plans to plant the Kilcullen Road. The River Walk is a fantastic amenity, and we can see how difficult it would be for you to maintain any extension, but given your enthusiasm for work it is hard to see you saying “no”. Do remember to include any new residents in “plantathons” or such like – even if they do not want to get involved as members.

Well done on the native tree planting undertaken this year, and on the bulb planting on the approach roads. What is nicer than a Spring daffodil welcome to a village or town!

The planting at the entry to the village in the stone bed, and in the river boat is very attractive. The approaches to the village all have either stone or natural hedging boundaries. These are excellent.

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

You have achieved what you set out to do in 2007, and produced an excellent Ecological Assessment of your village. KELT (your local LEADER company) is to be congratulated for their assistance. The authors regretted

not being able to access private lands. However, if you achieve the conservation of the ten sites in the foreseeable future, you will have achieved a lot. The adjudicator was sorry not to be able to take the pocket guides out and walk the sites in detail! As expected, the Church of Ireland churchyard was found to be one of the outstanding wildlife habitats. Your riverside location is a birdwatcher's Paradise.

We are delighted to hear that you are planning a nature/biodiversity trail around the village. Take advice with regard to interpretation in its signage aspects, as it would be a shame to destroy the visual aspects through inappropriate signage. Do not rush this process, and perhaps you might be able to engage some talented local artists again to advise you in this area. Take advice also from your area engineer with regard to maintenance etc.

The river enhancement programme is a good example of how different agencies can work together towards a common good. We look forward to the bird and bat boxes in the future, and to the new wildflower areas.

### **Litter Control:**

Litter control on adjudication day was excellent. We are delighted that you have your Green School and Junior G.A.A. to help you out in this. We note that you have approached your local authority for assistance in dealing with litter issues. They will be a source of help and advice. Perhaps you could organise a Litter Seminar with the Litter Warden of your local authority. We also note your plan to publicise your work in this area.

You have worked well towards litter control. Well done on providing recycling location advice. We hope that Autumn 2008 will provide you with your own facilities as you state.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

You are promoting recycling where possible. Thank you for enclosing the data you published in the Ballymore Bugle re facilities. Do you know what percentages are recycled in the village? What arrangements are made for people who do not have transport? We hope that you will get your recycling area. Well done on the composting initiatives near the cemetery. We are glad you have home recycling bins. Well done to your local shop for helping to recycle clothes.

Waste minimisation is about more than not having litter in your street or indeed recycling. 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 Tidy Towns 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.

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 area. You can gain marks by doing some of these things for 2009.

### **Tidiness:**

In general the village and its surroundings were very tidy.

A large temporary sign at the Millennium Garden was not an addition. The rash of signs erected on the business premises already referred to are not adding to the beauty of the Square.

The road traffic signs are excellent and a credit to your local authority.

Footpaths and verges as well as stone walls and hedgerows were in general well cared for, and the public buildings - church and school were very good. The paving works and building works in the village took from the overall tidiness, but you are not penalised for these ongoing and necessary works, and as such they were kept in a tidy condition.

There was no graffiti in evidence in the centre of the village. This is good. The river walk, particularly at the bridge area needs considerable tidying. There was some broken fencing at the village end of the Naas Road

The remarks about untidiness in the built environment above are relevant here also. The paths and verges throughout the village were generally well weeded.

The old factory/business building at the Blessington entrance is probably the worst example of untidiness in the village, and this at an important entrance. The windows have been poorly boarded, and the wall is dirty. The boundary fencing is broken in places, and the site itself is scrubby and weedy, as is the perimeter boundary area. The triangle in front has too many signs and looks disorderly. However due to roadworks this may in time be rationalised. Remarks re tidiness and untidiness in the Roads etc. Section are also to be considered here.

### **Residential Areas:**

The residences of the village are very well maintained in general, both those in the streets, those on the approaches, and those in the few estates. We have already referred to some of the well presented private dwellings throughout the village. Hillcrest was admired with its nice plantings to the front of the estate. The pump in this general area is well maintained. St. John's Park off, Chapel Street is beautifully landscaped, and there are lovely plants on the church wall facing the houses. A particular house (2nd house ) with trees and a great garden was admired. Well done on your tree planting programme with Liffey Heights estate.

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

The approach from Blessington is mixed with the wonderful church and the poor factory site as already described.

There are lovely views across to the church from the Bishophill Road. A farm gate here in the foreground of views could be improved. A good farm building forms a road edge along this road at one point closer to the village with good black railings and gate opposite.

There is a very good "Welcome to Ballymore Eustace" sign on this approach. There is good planting at the cottage at the junction near Barrack Street entrance.

The Coughlanstown Road approach is a little untidy.

The Naas Road approach looks well, and the splayed planted access to KTL site is lovely. Pudding Lane has some lovely private garden embankments with shrubbery and well maintained grass banks. The village sign needs improvement at this entrance.

The Kilcullen approach is trimmed and tidy. The old joinery needs repainting and screening. The bridge area is very attractive, and generally well cared for.

Whereas comment has been made re choice of colour/design for paving, you are probably glad to be now in a position to have new footpaths.

### **General Impression:**

Ballymore Eustace has a great natural advantage of location and heritage. We know that you are aware of this richness. The Plan is your blueprint. However a lot of what is proposed is as yet aspirational, as the plan only starts in 2008. Good luck with all your ventures! You are approaching the tasks ahead in an organised manner. We also feel that there is a good community spirit to build upon, and a lot of what makes for success is on-the-ground work. You are shown by the current condition of the village to be hard workers, ever before you put your thoughts on paper! We would encourage you to continue 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. You will also have the new residents to help you and to bring new ideas and manpower to your ranks. We appreciate the problems you have to face for the common good especially with regard to water and sewerage works, but you are not complainers, and you work with gusto!