

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballymore Eustace** Ref: **357**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **274**
Category: **B** Date(s): **18/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	36
The Built Environment	50	36
Landscaping	50	39
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	35
Litter Control	50	34
Waste Minimisation	20	7
Tidiness	30	16
Residential Areas	40	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	32
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	274

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for your entry to the 2009 TidyTowns Competition, Ballymore Eustace. As expected, you continue to go from strength to strength! It is noted from your entry form that your overall development approach is good, with 9 committed members and a good action plan to implement. However, some additional support may be useful for major projects such as the river walk so have you considered a recruitment drive? You are encouraged to take advantage of the groundswell of support locally and enlist some new members. It is good to see that you are enjoying very strong support from a wide range of diverse Councils (Kildare, Dublin City), agencies (KELT, Fas) and other organisations and local businesses. This illustrates your good organisation and the high levels of confidence that local people and business have in you. In the adjudicators view, this is an acknowledgement of your hard work and your success in this competition. Well done. The participation of the School is also noted and one hopes that their involvement will continue.

Thank you for your very detailed entry form, which was a great help. The adjudicator notes that an improvement is possible on giving clear timeframes for each project. Whilst you have referred to each project, when each project will be started and completed is less clear. Remember that it is acceptable (and indeed encouraged) to approach major projects in separate phases, so don't be afraid to do this. Given the likely scarcity of resources in future years, it will be increasingly important for Committees to set practical and achievable priorities in their work programmes. Therefore, it is recommended that a table (of 2 – 3 pages in length) is included in your Plan, which sets out clearly and concisely what projects are proposed over the next 3 – 5 years under the TidyTowns Headings. Projected start and completion dates should be included.

Two final compliments are necessary. Firstly, the means of communication adopted by the Committee is first class – your approach to and embrace of new technology has no doubt had a positive influence on the numbers of people participating at a local level. Secondly, your map was of the highest standard and was a great help to the adjudicator on the day of assessment.

The Built Environment:

The Built Environment of Ballymore Eustace is a major asset to the village. In the view of the adjudicator, the strength of Ballymore Eustace is a combination of factors which taken together give a very distinctive and one of the most attractive villages in the county. Firstly, the number of high quality buildings on view mean that the streetscapes are original and distinctive – of particular note are Headons Bar, the Ballymore Inn, the Art Gallery and Paddy Murphys. Secondly, the fact that so many historical buildings have been retained means that the terraces of buildings are intact. This is a rarity in modern Ireland, particularly in the Greater Dublin Area and one hopes that the buildings can continue to be preserved. In view of the number of Protected Structures identified in the village, it is recommended that the option of establishing an Architectural Conservation Area in Ballymore Eustace should be explored with Kildare County Council.

Of course, retaining the original streetscapes provides a series of challenges. The most visible of which is vacant and derelict properties. It was observed during the site inspection that there are a noticeable number of derelict and vacant properties and your efforts to undertake remedial work and painting on some of these buildings is applauded. Your detailed comments on the other vacant / derelict properties are noted and the adjudicator encourages the Committee to continue to work closely with both the Council and the Building owners to get these buildings refurbished and back into active use.

We agree with the comments of the previous years adjudicator with respect to the wire scape and would like to see it included as a medium to long term project in your action plan. As putting wires underground can be costly, it may be prudent to complete this project in phases or as resources become available. A similar approach could be adopted with respect to the lamp standards in the villages. Finally, the varied finishes of pavements in the village centre was noted, with paths being finished in paving, tarmac, cobble and concrete slabs. As a long term project, it is recommended that a consistent finish is selected (one that is appropriate to the built environment of the village) and in future when pavements are being repaired or relaid, a consistent standard can be adhered to.

Landscaping:

The Committee have certainly been working hard in this category for the 2009 Tidy Towns Competition. Attractive and well maintained planting was observed on the approach roads from Naas (outside KTK) and at the junction of the Bishopshill and Poulaphouca Road (along with the bilingual name stone). The planted boat at Ballymore Bridge (close to the junction of the Kilcullen and Broadleas roads) added a gorgeous splash of summer colour to this approach to Ballymore Eustace. Well done. The landscaped grounds of the Church were also a credit to all involved.

The shrubbery bed at the junction of the Naas Road and the Coughlanstown Road was also observed and the landscaping in the school grounds was considered to be very attractive and it makes a positive contribution to this category. The adjudicator was also impressed with the high levels of maintenance and landscaping on view in a large number of the gardens in the village.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The many mature trees within the village were observed to make an excellent contribution to wildlife. The proposals for this category were noted in the entry form and the Committee are to be congratulated on their tree planting scheme, which appears to have an emphasis on native species. There is no doubt that additional trees will make an excellent contribution to wildlife habitats. The Committee are also to be commended on their management of the hedgerows on the approach roads to the village.

The Millennium Garden in the centre of the village is excellent and is a credit to your committee. It was clear to the adjudicator that the facility is maintained to a high standard and it also seems to make a significant contribution to wildlife and natural amenity. There is no doubt that the Cemetery is also an important habitat and it is heartening to see that the Committee are aware of the importance of structures like nature stone walls to biodiversity and habitat preservation. However, although there is a reference to the biodiversity study in 2007, it was noted with disappointment that this was not submitted. We would encourage you to submit all relevant information with your entry form each year.

The riverside walk appears to be a key element for Ballymore Eustace and the Committee are to be commended on their work in this area. There is no question that it is a hotbed of biodiversity and it is an important habitat. Well done on your planting of buttercups, which you identified as an ideal plant for an aquatic environment. Your comments regarding signage are noted, but it is the view of the adjudicator that the 2008 report recommended that only 'inappropriate signage' be avoided. Therefore, appropriately designed and located directional signs should be considered as they would enable visitors and locals alike to identify the location of the walk. In addition, high quality information boards could also be considered. Congratulations

on the production of your heritage and nature trail leaflets, which are of high quality. The partnership approach of the TidyTowns and the local angling club and the Eastern Regional Fisheries Board is to be commended – as close co-operation between voluntary and statutory bodies is necessary for environmental improvements. Keep up the good work.

Litter Control:

A very high standard of litter control was observed in Ballymore Eustace as no litter was evident on adjudication day. This litter free environment is a reflection of the hard work of the Committee (and their many helpers!) who carry out and organise daily litter pick ups and take part in the National Spring Clean Initiative. Well done to all involved in this strong performance.

Waste Minimisation:

There is no question that Ballymore Eustace continues to underperform in this category and as a result, it represents a major opportunity to the committee to improve on marks. The efforts of the Committee with respect to projects in 2009, i.e. the high take up of recycling services, the availability of a clothes bank, the distribution of the Naas Green Guide and the Composting site in St, Marys Cemetery are noted. These represent steps in the right direction. However, more could be done and the Committee should consider trying to identify potential sites for a bottle bank and organising a local seminar or workshop on waste reduction (through Kildare County Council). Additional ideas can be found in the 'race against waste' booklet.

Tidiness:

The extensive efforts of the TidyTowns Committee in this area are acknowledged and their commitment to addressing very difficult problems (such as derelict and vacant buildings) is to be applauded. The smaller jobs were also visible as weeds on the streets and pavements were kept to a minimum, signage was generally in good shape and the bollards in the village centre were freshly painted. It is noted from your plan that new signage was to be erected in 2009. Has this taken place?

Some improvements are possible in the following areas; the layby opposite the KTK facility on the Naas approach road accommodates some heaps of spoil and is untidy looking, while the verge outside the school a little further along this road is untidy. On Truce Road, a small number of untidy walls and yards were observed, while the poor definition between parts of the footpath and road on this road also contributed to the untidy appearance. On Plunkett Road, the garden of one property in particular (adjacent to oil cnoc) was rather overgrown and in need of maintenance. Finally, it was noted with disappointment that the entrance to the walk at Ballymore Bridge continues to look untidy.

Residential Areas:

The small number of residential areas in Ballymore Eustace were presented to a good standard on the day of adjudication. The name stone, landscaping and maintenance at Hillview was considered to be good, but Liffey heights and Court were not considered to be up to the high standards of elsewhere in Ballymore as some weeds and graffiti were noted, while the cul de sac sign was in need of a wash.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approaches to the village were generally considered to be good, with a high standard of maintenance visible on the verges. As referred to in the built environment section, the pavements in the centre of the village need a consistent treatment in the event of repair or replacement. It was also observed that the road surface on parts of Barrack Street and Truce Road in particular was in poor condition, whilst the pavements were in poor condition outside the derelict sites in Barrack Street. While these matters do not significantly detract from the overall appearance of the village, it is recommended that the Committee continue to discuss these issues with the Council.

General Impression:

Ballymore Eustace continues to improve in leaps and bounds and this is clearly due to the hard work and organisation of the Committee and the support that they enjoy at a local level.