

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilfinane** Ref: **277**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **232**
Category: **B** Date(s): **10/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	34
The Built Environment	50	36
Landscaping	50	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	18
Litter Control	50	25
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	11
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	232

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for your completed Entry Form for the 2009 TidyTowns Competition. A sketch map would have been helpful during our visit, as this adjudicator had not had the pleasure of visiting Kilfinane for some years. It is a positive development that your committee has increased in size from 2 members back to its previous 2007 level of 5 members. Yes, it is a pity that the voluntary commitment is not as strong as your Committee would desire, however you should not be discouraged and your partnership with agencies including Ballyhoura Failte and the Social Employment Scheme are positive features of your TidyTowns activities. A recommendation would be to attempt to prepare a short concise three year plan for 2010-2012 which would guide your activities and help liaise with partner agencies. While difficult with a small committee, it would also be helpful if you could meet on a more frequent basis throughout the year, and increase your number of meetings from three, as at present, to say 6 per annum. This may put some strain on your time resources, so your interaction with the broader community through meetings and the local media becomes even more crucial. It is encouraging to note that you have been able to obtain the support of Limerick County Council and Ballyhoura Failte.

The Built Environment:

Kilfinane's many fine public and private buildings looked quite well on this lovely June day of our visit, contrasted by the natural setting of the Ballyhoura Mountains. The Catholic Church and its stately spire, and the Presbytery nearby occupy prime locations within the town and are an excellent attraction, and feature in Kilfinane. The railings were being painted on the day of our visit and the church complex should serve as a model for other buildings in the town in terms of excellent upkeep and maintenance. The market square created a warm welcome in the wonderful amenity area with its fine water feature, well constructed walls, paving, bench seating. If you have such a lovely water feature, we would recommend that it is portrayed to its

maximum by having the water flowing and any litter removed from its base. The old water pump painted green is itself a feature of time past. Staker Wallace's monument was also impressive. On the outskirts of the town in contrast, the modern Scoil Pól looked well in its lovely open setting, with fine views of the surrounding countryside. Ballyhoura Centre was an appealing building with fine open and walled garden areas. Kilfinane Health Centre, painted yellow and white with silver handrails, and McCarthy's Hardware were well presented. Other business premises which impressed included several attractive pubs - McGraths, O'Seachnasaigh's, O Céilleachair's and Healy's. The Kilfinane Education Centre was attractive in its lovely grounds and is a wonderful example of the changing role of education buildings, now with a different market niche. Ballyhoura Farm Supplies was well painted with good signage. The Rent-an-Irish Cottage complex looked well maintained in its rural setting. The old problem of some derelict buildings throughout takes from the positive image of the town, but it is appreciated that this is an issue outside the control of your Committee, maybe a topic for discussion with the County Council at a meeting on urban renewal.

The wonderful view of the market square made possible by the removal of the overhead cables is to be applauded. Well done to all concerned on the excellent urban renewal project and the positive image which it portrays for the residents and visitors alike.

The Health Centre on the Kilmallock Road was nicely decorated in bright yellow, appearing clean and welcoming.

The bilingual signs were admired within the red brick structures at junctions and housing developments around the village.

Landscaping:

As in 2008, landscaping schemes throughout the town were colourful and well presented – from the lovely double baskets suspended on the lamp posts to the neat bedding plants with the brick mounted name plates. The floral displays at the Market Square were eye catching and it was nice to see well protected young trees in the area. Shrubberies and open green areas at junctions and in the various housing developments were attractive. The car park opposite the church was enhanced by lovely sapling trees, which were approx 22 in number, and bedding plants, which would be more attractive if some weeds were removed.

It is recommended that a future project might include the tidying and landscaping of the entrance area to the grounds at the old Church of Ireland site.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The work with the Ballyhoura Failte in promotion of the driving routes and nature trails is positive.

As was stated last year, it is recommend that you develop plans to focus attention on the river, as this could afford many opportunities to encourage wildlife and could earn important marks in this category. A survey of existing wildlife in the area could make an interesting project for your local schools and the results could be used to help in deciding what plants or facilities would need to be provided under a river development project.

The Kilfinane Outdoor Education Centre makes great use of the natural environment in which the town is situated. With outdoor activities such as mountain biking, canoeing, kayaking, hill walking and mountain climbing taking place on the local Ballyhoura Mountains and in nearby Lough Gur, being catered for in the centre, as well as English Language Educational Classes, this is an excellent facility, and compliments to the courteous staff also.

Litter Control:

The litter clean up by residents, the pupils of primary school and Limerick County Council staff is been working well in the village, however, it is important to ensure that approach roads are also targeted. The Main Street and Market Square were almost litter free. The front entrance to the Rent an Irish Cottage estate was clean and tidy.

Litter bins around the village had been emptied and were coping well with the level of usage.

Waste Minimisation:

As was pointed out in the 2008 adjudicator's report, the Bring Bank in the car park opposite the Church was immaculately maintained and the yellow traffic control markings brightened the overall presentation. It would be a good idea to erect high quality, appropriate signage identifying the area and giving guidance/instructions

on usage. The County Council recycling sign across the road was clean and in good condition.

This category is not intended to cover normal clean up or litter management issues, its focus should be on segregation of waste, recycling and reducing waste. As mentioned in the previous adjudication, composting and clothes recycling could be worthwhile projects – in addition to promotion of these activities in the schools, individual households could be encouraged to undertake home composting. Your encouragement of business operators to maintain their own premises could be expanded to encourage them to get involved in recycling initiatives and waste reduction programmes.

Tidiness:

The Market Square area is a wonderful attraction for Kilfinane and it deserves great credit, and will serve as a catalyst for other projects in the town over the coming years. The absence of overhead cables on the main street allows an uncluttered view of the wonderful improvements, which have taken place under the Village Renewal programme. It's a pity to see the attractive lamp standards being used as advertising points for all sorts of events, from Fun Fair to local and European Elections. Old plastic ties need to be removed from the lamp standards. Somehow these posters need to be placed elsewhere, maybe a dedicated advertising board physically removed from the market square area.

Weed infestation was still a considerable problem in some locations, including kerbsides between the Church and Scoil Pól. Also there was evidence of weeds growing in the paved areas of market square. Some grass margins on approach roads were in need of trimming, including the approach road leading towards Ballyhoura Heights. A rusty signpost on the island junction near Scoil Pól should be removed.

The Michael Fox Memorial Park GAA grounds were well maintained and the hurling figures on the wall outside were appealing, with the list of names from the 1897 All-Ireland a nice tribute. But the car park surface was uneven and in need of attention.

Residential Areas:

The Radharc Cillin scheme of newly developed houses on the left of the approach road from Kilmallock is a first class County Council development and deserves credit to all concerned. The newly planted grassed area in front of the houses is just beginning to show growth and, with its fabulous views over county Limerick, holds great potential. A nice sculpture on the entrance could do with identification, as could the estate itself.

Three fine residences opposite the Health Centre were well maintained also, with nice window boxes in full bloom.

A nice terrace nearby the bus depot on the outskirts of the town is typical of the well maintained residences in the area.

St. Anne's Terrace, nicely labelled with a bilingual sign, includes some well maintained residences in this quiet cul de sac.

Past the Grotto is found Treada na Ri, a new development of semi-detached houses. The green area here needs significant maintenance.

Mountain View is another estate of houses outside the village. It is now well signposted with attractive redbrick bilingual name plates; with these in place, it is recommended that old dilapidated signs be replaced.

At the Vale View estate, the green area also needed tending.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The comments from 2008 are in the main still valid. The main approach roads to the village were in fairly good condition; however, there were potholes on some of the smaller roads, including the road near the Grotto. Several traffic signs were in need of attention. The white Kilfinane sign opposite Ballyhoura View was on a very rusty pole, which should be replaced. The white Kilfinane sign near the GAA grounds needed to be cleaned and the white caution children sign was obscured by vegetation. Ardpatrick and Kilfinane signs on the Kilmallock Road needed to be cleaned. A couple of signs for Ballylanders were almost illegible and should be replaced.

General Impression:

Kilfinane in general looked well on the day of our visit. The Village Renewal programme has transformed the centre of town, the superb amenity area at the Market Square and cable free Main Street with the fine fountain, excellent paving, street lighting and landscaping has created an excellent focal point. The remaining derelict sites and the possibility of further dereliction, arising from properties being left unoccupied, continue to be a cause for concern, in particular. In the current economic climate, it is even more difficult to improve the situation. However, as far as possible, it is important that you keep pressure on property owners to ensure that premises do not fall into dereliction.

The joint marketing endeavours under the various Ballyhoura initiatives are commendable and have done much to improve the environment and facilities of the area. The Walking Festival is an excellent opportunity to showcase Kilfinane and, thus, receive the recognition it deserves. Many congratulations on your good work in a difficult economic climate and we wish you success for the future.