

# Tidy Towns Competition 2011

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballon** Ref: **526**  
County: **Carlow** Mark: **260**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **07/07/2011**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2010</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2011</b>
Overall Development Approach	50	40	41
The Built Environment	50	34	34
Landscaping	50	33	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	25	26
Litter Control	50	35	35
Waste Minimisation	20	8	10
Tidiness	30	15	15
Residential Areas	40	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31	31
General Impression	10	8	8
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>260</b>

### Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for the excellent application form which was supplemented by material in support of the submission, you are most welcome to the TidyTowns competition of 2011. The attached map was most appreciated by this adjudicator as it was my first visit to this very pleasant village on the N 80. The village has a beautiful setting against both the Blackstairs and Wicklow mountains and even though the day was one's usual Irish summer's day the scenery was charming. One noticed that you are justifiably proud of one of the parish's most famous sporting sons and rightly so. Since it re-entered the TidyTowns Ballon has made great advancements in the competition and this was primarily due to the strong relationship that the Ballon Improvement Group has with local community. The application outlines in great detail the work being undertaken under each category, this type of undertaking necessitates major inputs from different sectors of the local community. You are fortunate that you have a strong bond with a number of pertinent agencies and of course local organisations such as Ballon Community Services Ltd. The school is an integral part of the TidyTowns movement in the village and this is well reflected and reported on in your application. One has to be very impressed with the manner in which you promote the practical use of the Irish language through the Glor Na Gael group whose formation you facilitated. Other parts of the country, including Gaeltacht areas, could take a leaf out of your book, no doubt there was one or two people who were the catalysts for this movement. You are wished well with the other progressive developmental projects that you have outlined under this section. The "Ballon Village Landscape – Imaging the Roads Ahead" is a prime example of the co-operative involvement of the parish with over 40 people involved in the process to date. Your background work in the last year in this particular category merits an additional mark.

### The Built Environment:

Ballon has a heavy throughput of traffic and the manner which it is managed is impressive with traffic calming measures in place as one enters from Carlow and particularly at the school end of the village. The

roundabout at the well maintained Top Service Station and convenience shop serves its purpose well. The zebra crossing at the school should be repainted, I doubt if this would impinge that much on the budget constraints of Carlow County Council. The Main Street area of the village has some very impressive and may I say colourful properties, the following appealed to this adjudicator Joe Doyle's Bar and Kavanaugh's on the Fenagh Road both had nice contrast of colour, McAsseys Shop and Victualler also had a nice contrast of red and ochre. There were a number of excellent private properties in the village a number of which seem to have been recently refurbished. Some comparatively new buildings that have been built at the Enniscorthy end of the Village are in keeping with the existing street scape. The National School, a very well designed modern building that fits in with the existing architecture, was well presented as was the RC Church off the Main Street up towards Ballon Hill. Credit is due to the personnel that are responsible for the upkeep of these public buildings.

The road surfaces and footpaths were in very good condition and the street lighting stanchions were well set back from the road.

Over head cables are not that problematic as they are relatively high up and unlikely to be a hazard to passing truck traffic, the possibility of having them put underground seems remote in the present climate of penury! In an overall context the standard in this category was very good but a few negatives such as badly maintained boundary walls in parts of the village need to be addressed. Your plans for the future were noted so let's hope that financial constraints will not hinder them and that you will be able to continue with the excellent work that you are doing on behalf of your village.

### **Landscaping:**

The landscaping arrangements that are in place in the village and its surrounds are very effective and indeed colourful. Well done on making sure that the basics of good landscaping maintenance are to the forefront at all times, its fine to have lovely planting arrangements and features but if they are not maintained properly then they lose both their appeal and effectiveness. The new community garden is a fore runner of what is to come, it was top class and this adjudicator was impressed with way the mulch/pulp from discarded remnants of trees was used. The window box competition will instil a bit of friendly rivalry amongst the locals as well as contributing to the overall look of the village- well done on this initiative. Your approach to trying to cut down the use of chemical pesticides is to be commended. When the Landscape Plan is fully completed some years down the road the village will be in all probability totally transformed so the best of luck with this very ambitious plan. I have no doubt that with the commitment of the local community being harnessed to the full that you will succeed and you are also fortunate to have some expert landscape design people available to you. Finally a word of praise for those people who had some very fine individual gardens that combined colour with greenery to very good effect.

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

The Group has taken a very proactive approach in this category with the future very much in mind as what you plan now will be a legacy for future Ballon generations. Sorry to hear that the Sli Na Slainte was not allowed to go ahead because of infrastructural problems, personally I did not see any problems with the footpath at the top of Ballon Hill but there you go, obviously the County Council had some issue with it. The Tallanstown insect hotel model seems to have spawned a myriad of like structures around the country, I notice that yours is an "insect motel" shades of Kris Kristofferson and Me and Bobby McGee! The Wild Flower Garden Blathanna Fiaine on the way in from Carlow was wonderfully colourful as well as providing a haven for numerous species of both bird and insect life; I am in agreement with you on the need to cut down on high maintenance work such as grass cutting and the like.

Well done to the local fabricator who was able to convert waste plastic into bird and bat boxes. You have some very exciting projects planned for the immediate future and again you are wished well with these. It is good to note that you have had good interaction with the OPW on the use of land adjacent to the Garda Station and that the area in question will be home to Heritage Fruit Trees another legacy for future generations to come.

### **Litter Control:**

There was very little litter to be seen on the day of adjudication and of course did not happen by chance. The work being done in the background by your group members to spread the gospel of anti litter is having its desired effect. Congratulations on your excellent achievements in the Carlow Litter League and the recognition of the local peoples' effort. Continuous promotion of the anti litter mantra is the key, making sure that local people will take it upon themselves to observe the rules of good practice.

Something that caught my eye and that I have observed on a regular basis during my travels is the ransacking of waste bins by birds primarily cheeky crows and rooks. If you can come up with a worthwhile solution to this problem put it on the Ballon website.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

Some excellent work is being done by the Group to promote the whole ethos and culture of best practice waste management and minimisation. The ongoing projects and those planned for the future are very imaginative and practical in that they can be achieved within the timescales outlined. The idea of promoting

the use of non disposable lunch boxes and healthy lunches as part their green schools award project is a plus for the National School and I'm sure that it will be successful in its main objective of getting further green school flag status. I've counted 14 or more very practical mini projects that you have carried out to date this is very impressive. I have already commented on the "insect motel" and I have observed the open compost bin at the top of Balloon Hill.

Keep up the excellent waste minimisation promotion methods that you have in place at present as they are proving to be very valuable in getting the message across to the local population. A very good performance in this category again this year and one that earns you 2 additional marks.

### **Tidiness:**

All the approach roads and outlying extremities of the village were quite tidy and credit to homeowners for keeping frontages and side areas in good condition. The core area was orderly and almost free of clutter but the low level boundary wall across from Nolan's could do with painting as it looks a little out of sync with the rest of that area. Some pockets of kerbside farm related activity residue was noted which is understandable at this time of year especially since the village is in a farming heartland and is also on a very busy main road. The Dog Litter Signs are most welcome as many owners are oblivious to the need to keep streets and public areas free of dog dirt not to mention the health hazard especially for young children. Public Signs were clean and visible but I wish that businesses would desist from the practice of putting garish and in appropriate advertising hoardings at entrances to villages aka Jimmy's Take Away plonked at the corner of a field at the Carlow entrance. Overhead cabling was mentioned in a previous section and it is good to note that the ESB have been approached to tidy up wiring at the base of Ballon Hill.

### **Residential Areas:**

The following residential areas were visited by the adjudicator; Ballon Hill estate, one would be fairly fit if you had to traverse the hill up a couple to times a day, was nice and tidy with some very pleasant and attractive gardens especially one at the entrance to estate. Mullawnmore, a newish estate, was in good condition with a fine spacious green area that might benefit from additional planting arrangements on the perimeters. Maple Lawn is an old established extremely well presented area with exceptional planting arrangements but why is the pole in the middle of the green area and the seat may require painting. Forge Meadows is a very attractive housing development and as you say in your application is very well maintained, the tiered boundary wall fronting off the N80 adds to the area immensely. The Oaks off the Fenagh Road was also in good condition with green areas well maintained no doubt the sharing of grass cutting amongst the residents is paying off. Laragh Beg has been commented upon in last year's report and your current application highlights a few issues that in essence there is very little that you can influence except to offer support when required. Overall the standard of presentation and the treatment of communal areas, boundary walls and individual properties was quite good.

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

The entrances into the village from both sides of the N80 were very inviting and maintained to the highest standards complemented by a number of top class planting features. The designated wildlife area on the Carlow side of the village is something that could be replicated by many other centres as maximises free space to good advantage and in doing so is contributing to the promotion and conservation of varying species of wildlife. Private residences also enhance this entrance enormously. The Fenagh Road entrance is acceptable, road surface a bit uneven and a few side areas that need to be tidied – does the village boundary go out to Burren Celtic Grounds? The verges on this road as you rightly pointed out are teeming with various forms of insect life and are treated accordingly.

### **General Impression:**

This was my first visit to the Village of Ballon and indeed the surrounding area and one could not be but impressed with the work that is being undertaken under the umbrella of the Balloon Improvement Group. The Village is making great strides both overall developmental terms and in the Tidy Towns Competition proper. You are wished well in the competition in the years ahead.