

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballymurphy** Ref: **34**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **272**
Category: **A** Date(s): **22/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	38	38
The Built Environment	50	28	28
Landscaping	50	42	43
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	23	23
Litter Control	50	38	38
Tidiness	30	22	22
Waste Minimisation	20	7	7
Residential Areas	40	34	34
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	32	32
General Impression	10	8	7
TOTAL MARK	400	272	272

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator welcomes Ballymurphy to the 2012 TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your submission including the annotated hand drawn map which was most helpful on adjudication day. Try to fill in all sections of the application form as this can help you assess the success of this years work and plan for future works. You have a new committee of 6 in place this year which is a great opportunity to look at your works afresh. It can be difficult to recruit new residents to become involved but this is an effective way to develop inventive ideas and share the workload. Have you considered setting up an email newsletter to maintain contact with any occasional volunteers? You could pass around an email list at one of your meetings or your Pattern Weekend, and build up a database of people who can then be contacted with dates and times of meetings and also given updates on your works. We would advise your new committee to consult the TidyTown handbook for advice as to how to proceed in order to gain marks in each of the competition categories. A first step would be to compile a simple list of tasks for your village and organise them into short, medium and long term goals. This can then be developed in a 3-5 year village plan as suggested in last years report. Even a basic plan will help you focus your efforts and gain support from local agencies and will also help you gain marks in this category.

The Built Environment:

With a small cluster of dwellings your village core consists of mainly individual residences. However the old stone forge and the neat coach house in the church grounds give reference to another era when travel was a much more complicated business. The pub was well presented also with a dash of seasonal colour although some of the timber planting tubs need to be replaced. The school, we understand, is due to have a facelift with building works proposed. Good luck with this work to such a core building in your community. Once again the church and graveyard were beautifully presented with beautiful stone walls lining the approach to the church. The community building is a great asset to the community and we wonder if there are plans to develop a

boundary here to help tie it into the adjoining rural hedgerows?

Landscaping:

While you have concentrated on feature planting to tubs, containers and feature beds which have created such a pleasant dash of colour to the village core, it is heartening to see you placing an emphasis on tree planting also with the addition of the trees to the Killealy Road, seen against a backdrop of a beech hedge. This will help to create a long term landscape structure for the village. Ensure, if planting trees in areas where there are grazing animals, that they are sufficiently protected to ensure no hungry nibbles at the trees bark which can cause the tree substantial damage. The trees to the field opposite the shop seems to have suffered from this. Dead trees here may need to be replaced as part of future years planting plans. Try to add to the stock of trees surrounding you every year as they will only add to the village setting as they mature. This could be done in conjunction with national tree week. In addition where there are gaps in the hedges in and around the village, they should be planted up with a native hedgerow mix. This would improve the appearance of boundaries and also contribute to enhancing the biodiversity and habitat value of the village.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You have yet to really address this category. A logical place for you to start would be to carry out a very basic survey of flora and fauna and habitats in the area. A simple plan can be used based on the map submitted to indicate areas such as tree groups, hedgerows, garden areas, stone walls, graveyard, meadows etc. This would help you identify key sites of interest and formulate plans to help improve biodiversity by intervention or management practices. In many cases the do nothing scenario is best and you can make sure that sensitive landscape are protected. Again there is lots of help available to you to progress this. Wildlife advice is available from published books as well as from groups such as the Irish Wildlife Trust, Birdwatch Ireland and the Heritage Council. Many of these have resources available online.

Litter Control:

For a small village litter was not a problem on adjudication day and no obvious litter was seen apart from a few pieces behind the Bring Bank at the community centre. Do you take part in the National Spring Clean if the Carlow litter league was not possible for you to take part in this year? Have you contacted An Taisce to get one of their free clean up kits and then you will also get a NSC certificate to commemorate your event. This can be done in conjunction with the school or local GAA club. Ensure you segregate all litter collected.

Tidiness:

Once again the village was very tidy so well done to all involved. The area around the church was again pristine. This adjudicator felt that there were perhaps too many tubs on the verges and road margins in the village. They tended to clutter up the verges somewhat and could be reorganised. Or perhaps some could be relocated to the entrance of the Community Centre grounds which were looking a little bare? Could perhaps the lovely gate to the lands beside the church also be painted?

Waste Minimisation:

It is not mentioned in your application if the local school is involved in the Green Schools Programme? This is a programme that gives an opportunity to students to not only learn about environmental issues but helps them directly engage in taking action both in the school and the wider community. This has been very successful for many schools in your county. You might discuss this with the principal when your new school is completed? Look to ways your committee can lead the way. Do the committee member's compost or use water saving devices? How do they deal with waste? Look to the Green Home Programme also run by An Taisce which has a section especially for Tidy Towns groups.

Residential Areas:

The homes in the village were well presented with lots of seasonal colour and well maintained gardens. The quirky box balls and topiary to the entrance of Inse An Phuca housing estate were admired as was the planting to the first houses gable wall, with wall shrubs being used to great effect to enliven a plain building elevation.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Generally verges were well maintained. Not all grass verges need be cut short - consider the wildlife implications. Road signs were clean and clear so well done here. We thought you could take inspiration from the wall shrubs at Inse An Phuca and get some planting pits installed at intervals to the plain concrete block wall within the church car park. The stone walls lining the approach to the church are so beautiful that the block work walls within the car park seem a little plain in comparison. Some wall shrubs or ivy here would do much to soften their severe appearance.

General Impression:

Well done to your committee and to all involved in this year's submission. Again we would urge you to consult the TidyTowns handbook for advice on how to advance in some categories and gain additional marks to see you progress in the competition. We wish you all well for 2013.