

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballyneety** Ref: **1881**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **256**
Category: **B** Date(s): **15/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	33	35
The Built Environment	50	33	34
Landscaping	50	32	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	22	23
Litter Control	50	33	33
Tidiness	30	21	23
Waste Minimisation	20	10	10
Residential Areas	40	27	28
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31	31
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	249	256

Overall Development Approach:

Ballyneety is most welcome to the 2012 Tidy Towns competition. Many thanks for your detailed entry form, three-year plan and additional information. Congratulations on increasing the size of your committee for the second year running. You now have 18 and this is tremendous for a small village. Your comprehensive approach to the contest is excellent and reading the application one can detect the level of enthusiasm and energy. You have a wide range of communication tools at your disposal and you seem to be using these to great effect. The use of Facebook is excellent for promoting your events and posting photos, how many 'likes' do you have. Does this help you attract new volunteers? You are also engaging with a host of other agencies including Ballyhoura, local businesses, Limerick county council, Fás and sporting clubs and each it seems to have their own part to play. In addition you have active liaison with your schools and this is so important in ensuring that the younger generation are included and play their part.

Your map was lacking slightly in that it was quite schematic and the legend was presented on a different page. Given that Ballyneety is a small village could the main landmarks be written in longhand while numbers could then be used to mark locations of projects for the adjudicator's attention?

Your three-year plan came to an end in 2011. Was it considered a success in terms of getting actions done? You will now have to set about drafting a new plan and we look forward to reviewing this next year.

The Built Environment:

You are to be commended for clearly taking on board comments from last year's report and addressing them one by one. Well done to all those who got out the brushes and paint this year to freshen up their facades. The mural that was painted by the sixth class students in Knockea national school is extremely impressive

and both they and their teacher are to be commended.

The crossroads is the main focal point of the village and here the visitor is presented with a varied cluster of buildings. The thatched cottage is a real treasure and is beautifully adorned with flowers that complement its colour scheme. The Garda station is simple but well presented while the limestone 'Sessions House' is equally distinctive. The row of shops adjacent to the cottage is attractive in their various colours. The Ballyneety interpretive panel is clean and interesting. The Stroller pub is well maintained and was adorned with many flags in support of the 'boys in green'.

The row of terraced cottages is an attractive vernacular feature and your work on the green roofs section was admired. The volume of parked cars so close to them served to practically conceal them however. The Credit Union is looking smart while the natural stone houses across the road add significant character. Has any progress been made on re-thatching this roof? The Monster Soft Drinks entrance is beautifully presented.

Landscaping:

You have been busy all over the village in planting and trimming. In this rural setting some of the most striking landscape features that you have are the tall trees and hedges that in some cases stretch right into the town centre. They should always be cut in, not down so that trees have a chance to emerge through the top and set flower. It seems like this is being done and that is nice to see. Do note that beech is not a native tree in Ireland and while it is fine to plant it in a parkland setting it should not be included in hedging.

The planting bed of geraniums beside the Stroller adds colour but perhaps is plain outside the season. It is likely to be high maintenance so would more robust shrubs etc be more suitable here? Planting in the stone bed at Texaco is also attractive up close but again is probably too small to have any impact from a distance.

In general it is felt that for landscaping to be effective in Ballyneety you need to think bigger - literally! The upside is that larger shrubs need less maintenance and costs less in the longer term. Smaller annual flowers are still attractive when they are to draw attention to a particular feature for example the thatched cottage or as hanging baskets on premises.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Many thanks to the children who prepared the chaffinch project - what a wonderful thing to do and a great chance to see nature up close. You also got up close to a hedgehog, why not catalogue all these sightings and over time you can build up a picture of the comings and goings of your local plants and animals.

Your Lake nature trail sounds promising and congratulations to the photographer who snapped the swans, a beautiful picture! You intend to carry out a wildlife survey and we look forward to reviewing this upon completion. Your dove box and bug hotel no doubt add further interest. Overall this is an impressive approach to what is sometimes a difficult area for some centres. You have shown how much fun it can be at very little cost.

The lake is a wonderful wildlife feature in your village and nice to see it retain its fringe of semi-aquatic vegetation, this is so important in maintaining the species that use it.

Litter Control:

You have held an impressive series of litter picks this year, have you noticed any change in the volume that is collected? Hopefully it is going down but your problem with passing traffic is acknowledged. Are there ways do you think that this can be addressed?

Some litter had collected behind the entrance of the funeral directors. There was also some litter in the Texaco forecourt. Elsewhere litter control was good but occasional items were noted throughout

Tidiness:

You are to be once again commended for systematically addressing the issues raised in last year's report. In this regard the village was found to be very tidy and free of clutter. Perhaps the traffic is the only major issue here with the volume and speed of through traffic combining with an over abundance of parked cars to make walking the village rather difficult. Could some traffic management plan be developed with Limerick county council?

Waste Minimisation:

Your use of materials collected from the municipal recycling centre is a novel initiative and a wonderful way of saving money. It is great that composting at home has become established but maybe refresher courses are needed to encourage more people to get involved. It is hoped you are successful in your search for a location for a bring centre. Are there other ways to reduce waste at source, i.e. through prevention? Perhaps you could contact Limerick county council to hold an information evening. One of the growing sources of waste is uneaten food so perhaps this could be highlighted. An Taisce also runs a green homes project, along the lines of the green schools, and this might be worth considering.

Finally you mentioned elsewhere that one of the schools has a green flag. They should be given full credit here as schools are leading the way across Ireland in waste minimisation and environmental management.

Residential Areas:

From the range of projects and activities here it certainly seems that you are fully involving your residential areas in the Tidy Towns effort.

Bellewood is a fine estate of detached houses and has enormous areas of open space that, despite the labour that must be involved, are very well maintained. The new stone plaques were admired along with the many new trees that have been planted. The gravel bed does require some weeding however.

Elsewhere homes in Ballyneety were presented to a very high standard and a number of attractive gardens where admired.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach from Croom is attractive with its lush hedges but the Ballyneety name sign seems excessively small. A similar sign was noted on the Limerick approach. Could something more substantial be installed here?

Flowers in the green boxes on a lamp pole on the Caherconlish approach and elsewhere are too high and too small to have any real impact.

How do people cross the road in the village? This seems like a hazardous pursuit, has the installation of a pedestrian crossing been considered, or traffic calming measures?

The Bruff approach has wonderful stone walls complemented with older whitewashed walls set against a backdrop of tall trees.

General Impression:

Ballyneety has made great strides in the tidy towns contest and this adjudicator was impressed with the range and scale of projects you are engaged in. Your energy comes through the pages and this would be the key to your continued success. Best of luck!