

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballyorgan** Ref: **443**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **251**
Category: **A** Date(s): **13/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	42	42
The Built Environment	50	31	32
Landscaping	50	33	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	25	26
Litter Control	50	35	36
Tidiness	30	18	18
Waste Minimisation	20	5	6
Residential Areas	40	24	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	25	25
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	245	251

Overall Development Approach:

Ballyorgan is most welcome to the 2012 Tidy Towns competition. Many thanks for your completed application form, hand drawn map and three-year plan. It is noted that your three-year plan has been 'brought forward' - is this because it was not implemented at the time? Your committee of six seems to be re-energised since you re-formed in 2011. It is wonderful to feel this level of enthusiasm despite being a small village. It was sad to learn that your school closed down but it is wonderful that the building has found a new use. You mentioned later that you did nature walks with the school, was this located outside the village?

You seem to have a range of communication tools at your disposal and this is excellent. It is important to be continually spreading the word and trying to involve as many people as possible. Hopefully this strategy will encourage new people to join your committee and attract new volunteers.

Your fundraising day sounds like great fun, does it attract people from surrounding villages?

The three-year plan contains lots of interesting actions for the coming years and will certainly keep you busy. Do be sure to report on progress in coming years including those areas that may prove to be problematic

The Built Environment:

Well done to the owners of the hall for power hosing the walls and painting window boards. The entrance to the Ballyhoura Forest homes complex is enticing. The school/new education centre was admired and is being well maintained. The raised vegetable plots and poly-tunnel are especially nice features. Piles of gravel nearby however need to be cleared away.

The church is beautifully simple and its well painted oxblood door is a particular attraction. The lawns were well maintained but the poles were sadly without flags.

As you have pointed out in your application form the derelict building beside the church is in a bad way. Have you made contact with the owner? It would require only a little work to improve its appearance.

Moynihan's is very well presented although its hanging baskets are in need of some attention. The Old Forge is beautifully maintained right down to the insets in the stone surround. The Ballyhoura interpretive panels are in good shape while further down the hill the Village Inn is looking most inviting.

There is a wonderful array of vernacular building designs in the village from farm outhouses to pubs and barns. It is all knitted together with stone walls and hedges. Together it makes a most picturesque scene. The old hall is a fly in the ointment but planting climbers as you suggest may provide effective screening in time.

Landscaping:

Ballyorgan is located in a very scenic part of Limerick being nestled at the base of the Ballyhoura mountains and surrounded with lush countryside. As such, nature has given you all the landscaping you could ask for. In conserving and, where possible, enhancing features such as hedges and tall trees you are working with nature to improve the village's appearance. The use of native trees and shrubs, and reinstatement of hawthorn hedges are therefore beneficial projects.

Annual flowers of course also have their place and can particularly draw attention to a point of interest or complement a facade. Painted field gates were admired while planting beds at the schools sign are very attractive being weed free and containing a variety of shapes, textures, and colours. Nice hanging baskets were also observed. Tall sycamore trees along the roadside are wonderful features.

The pump is a nice point of interest and ivy here has done a wonderful job of concealing the grey building to the rear. Japanese knotweed has taken a hold of this area and this is one of our 'most unwanted' alien invasive species. It is difficult to eradicate but should be done if resources allow using best practice as it is easy to spread if tackled incorrectly.

More planting beds were admired on the way to the old Forge. While roses beside the interpretive panel look really well.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

It was very interesting to read that you have started a wildlife survey of the village but no further details were given. Do provide an update in 2013. Surveys need not be static as nature is constantly adapting to changing circumstances. It can therefore be illuminating to repeat surveys over time and see how your wildlife is changing about you. Birds are particularly good for this as they are very dynamic, easy enough to identify and respond quickly to environmental change (e.g. very cold winters).

Being located along the route of the Ballyhoura Way affords you unique opportunities for contact between people and nature. Doing talks such as the one you plan in the school and during your fundraising event are excellent ideas. Raising awareness is really key to success in this category while costing practically nothing. The bird panel needs a bit of a touch up but the illustrations are good. While the river itself is a fantastic wildlife spot. Don't be too zealous in cleaning moss etc from stonework as this is a habitat in itself.

Litter Control:

This category is as much about how you manage the litter issue as it is about conditions on the ground. In this regard you seem to be doing very well. Did you get many people to turn out during the national spring clean? Don't forget that photos can be used to good effect in the application form to demonstrate the work you did and the spirit of the day. You are also vigilant for a litter while out and about, and this is excellent.

The recycling bank is very well maintained and was spotless on adjudication day. Well done! Litter control in the village on adjudication day was excellent.

Tidiness:

Well done for cleaning the graffiti on the wall behind the old pump. Weeding can be tiresome and it is understandable that many resort to herbicides. However if this can be eliminated it would be a winner for the environment and your pockets. Hoeing and pulling by hand can be just as effective.

Your efforts to address poor/unused signage through Limerick county council are acknowledged. Do be persistent and no doubt you will see progress in time. The village is generally very tidy and no significant issues are of note. Verges are well maintained, hedges trimmed and walls clean.

Waste Minimisation:

It is great that you have recognised that even small villages can play their part in minimising waste. The seminar on composting and reduction of food waste was an excellent initiative. Your challenge now is to take the ideas you have and see how they can be applied across homes and businesses. It would be interesting to survey people now to see how many compost, and again in a year or 2 to see if there has been any change. Having no school means you cannot benefit from the green flag initiative. However there is a parallel Green Homes project, also run by An Taisce, that aims to minimise environmental impacts in the home.

There are more ideas in the Tidy Towns Handbook such as holding bring and buy sales or scrap metal collections (this is now quite lucrative). Segregating rubbish is welcome and recycling will continue to be an important part of the 'race against waste'!

Residential Areas:

Ballyorgan has a small stock of houses and no estates. It was great to see how homes are continuing to use sandstone materials in traditional approach to boundary walls. This is important from an aesthetic point of view and reinforces the sense of place, and therefore belonging.

Homes elsewhere blend seamlessly into the village fabric and each has their point of interest and attraction.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach from the R512 (Ardpatrick road) is characterised by beautifully lush hedges and green trees. The welcome sign is clean and attractive but the speed limit sign is a little overgrown.

Signage on approach from Kilfinnane can be poor (bent or dirty) while the entrance to the Castle Oliver (with tumbledown turret) is very untidy (perhaps outside your area but perhaps could be brought in?)

General Impression:

Ballyorgan is a wonderful village with lots of small attractions. This adjudicator has vowed to return when under less time pressure to walk the hills. Keep up the good work and best of luck!