

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballintogher** Ref: **862**
County: **Sligo** Mark: **277**
Category: **A** Date(s): **28/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	43	44
The Built Environment	50	35	36
Landscaping	50	35	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	22	24
Litter Control	50	39	39
Tidiness	30	17	17
Waste Minimisation	20	11	12
Residential Areas	40	27	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	34	34
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	271	277

Overall Development Approach:

Ballintogher continues to make noticeable improvements in the TidyTowns competition. We read in your entry form that you have 15+ members on your new committee and this is an excellent level of participation in a village that is the size of Ballintogher. This also reflects the pride of local people in the village and a strong sense of community spirit. Well done. We are delighted to see that you also involve other community groups in your projects with both Foroige and the Residents Associations taking part in your regular cleanup evenings. Your partnership approach to the TidyTowns with Sligo County Council, the Sligo Leader Partnership and local business also seems to be paying off as major road resurfacing work was underway at the time of adjudication. It is also good to see that you have good involvement with local schools with visits by the committee taking place. The schools contribution of posters and essay competitions and other anti-litter activities are most important in terms of raising awareness and you are strongly encouraged to continue with your joint projects (in areas such as landscaping, litter control and wildlife) with the school.

Thank you also for your plan which was read with interest. It is a very comprehensive document which profiles the village and charts your progress in the competition. It is also very informative as it includes plenty of photographs and detail. It is suggested that when reviewing the plan at the next opportunity, the committee should follow the TidyTowns categories as they appear in the TidyTowns entry form as this will improve the clarity of the document and allow you to ensure that projects under each category has been completed. According to your plan, a village design statement was prepared in 2009 and provides a blueprint for the built and natural run of the village and surrounding area. It is recommended that a copy of this new design statement is submitted with your entry documentation in 2013. Thank you also for the hand drawn map that was included in the entry form. This was a great help during adjudication. However, you are urged to consider including a printed map as part of your five-year plan as this would further improve the clarity and professional presentation of the document. Perhaps a map could be supplied by Sligo County Council?

The Built Environment:

This was the first time that the adjudicator had visited Ballintogher and the village was considered to be most impressive with a range of buildings and features of interest observed. Your plan, which profiled the significant buildings in the village was most helpful as the adjudicator enjoyed reading about buildings such as Kingsfort house, which is a lovely building appearing as it does as a small terrace of traditional houses. The adjudicator loved the intact terraces of traditional two storey town houses along the village Main Street, all of which are presented to a high standard. A number of attractive and well maintained commercial premises drew the attention of the adjudicator and they included the Checkout Shop, Morans and the Express Stop. Trestons, opposite the Church of Ireland was a highlight, while the church with its leaded windows and old style cobble paving at the entrance was admired. The more modern buildings in the village were also observed. The new Community Hall is a fantastic asset for your village and it looked very well on the day. The cluster of buildings on the Ballygawley side of the village also added interest. The Catholic Church looked quite well (but it may need painting for 2013) while the school building with its rather unusual flat roof also achieved a good standard of presentation. It is noted from your entry form that you have some vacant properties to deal with and you are commended for your work on improving the appearance of these buildings through painting, weeding and maintaining boundary walls. Be sure to seek the assistance of Sligo County Council on this matter as they have various powers under the Derelict Sites Act to deal with these issues. Aside from the building, the adjudicator liked the other features of interest in the village such as the John Egan monument, the pump and the Grotto close to Kingsfort House. These features add distinction and identity to your village and it is heartening to see that they are so well maintained and presented. The adjudicator also loved the natural stone walls throughout the village and you are strongly encouraged to maintain and conserve them. It is observed that bilingual signage is proposed for the townlands and we look forward to seeing this in 2013.

Landscaping:

The hard work of the committee is evident in this category with examples of your landscaping seen on each of the approach roads. The colourful landscape provided at the base of the name signs for your village is most attractive and helps to create a positive first impression for the visitor. You are commended on the planting of the nasturtiums at the base of the natural stone walls. The adjudicator loves this approach as it draws attention to natural stone walls while also adding lovely summer colours. The colourful landscaping at the grotto and at the pump was also admired and in both cases the colourful plants used, helped to further enhance and draw attention to these distinctive features. The landscaping at the entrance to the Dun na Ri estate also caught the eye of the adjudicator as a good range of species were visible. You are commended on the projects completed for this year's competition particularly the planting of beech and white thorn hedging. The use of hedging as the boundary treatment is strongly encouraged as it helps to emphasise the rural nature of the village as well as make a positive contribution to wildlife. Well done also on your planning of the new shrub area (on the Drumkerran Road?) and for using Cotton Easter as a means of screening. It is also good to see that your committee have engaged in treeplanting with the semi mature trees spotted in the immediate area of the Catholic Church and it is noted that further tree planting is proposed on the Sligo Road.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You are congratulated on choosing landscape species that make a significant contribution to wildlife and biodiversity in your village. Your hedge planting programme (with Beech and Whitethorn) is a good example of this. Well done also on choosing flowers that support the butterfly and bee populations in the area. It is noted that the 2011 adjudicator suggests that you make contact with the County Heritage Officer in Sligo County Council and that you consider preparing a wildlife and management survey. Has there been any progress on these suggested actions? The wildlife survey would allow you to monitor whether your choice of planting species for your landscaping schemes is sustaining and growing the wildlife populations in your village. We were delighted to read that you intend to provide a nature trail between the enterprise units on the Sligo Road. This is an excellent proposal and we would encourage you to involve the schoolchildren if possible.

Litter Control:

Your entry form refers to regular cleanup evenings as well as anti-litter poster competitions for schools. It is great to see that the school children, Foroige and Residents Associations get involved in litter control and cleanup events. Your performance under this category is consistently strong and once again, the village was almost litter free during adjudication. Aside from a small number of items on the Dromahair approach road, no litter was spotted. Well done also on your litter strategy as it appears to be working very well.

Tidiness:

The standard of tidiness in Ballintogher was very high despite the fact that extensive roadworks were taking place at the time of adjudication. The committee are congratulated on their efforts to control weed growth which were very effective, despite the heavy rain that we've been experiencing. The village generally appeared very neat and tidy and all paths and road verges looked cleanly swept.

Your initiative of removing fly posting from poles is also to be commended as none was observed during adjudication. As always however, improvements are possible. The linear landscape bed behind the Ballintogher name sign on the Ballygawley approach road was a little untidy and would benefit from some weeding. There is a very unattractive yield sign close to the entrance of Kings Fort just up from the grotto. In general, it was considered that the directional signage in the village needs to be audited as a number of signs appeared dirty and rather untidy looking. The clothing bank outside the express stop was very dirty and badly needed a wash while the boundary wall of the School with the Catholic Church (and one of the gates) needed painting.

Waste Minimisation:

The focus of this category is to reduce the amount of waste generated at local level and it is recommended that the TidyTowns committee concentrate on two areas. The first of which is to ensure that your own projects achieve a reduction in the amount of waste generated and that any waste that is generated is recycled. Secondly, the TidyTowns group is encouraged to raise awareness amongst the residents of the village about the need to reduce the production of waste. Your group certainly seems to be getting on with raising awareness as the organisation of the seminar on waste minimisation demonstrates. It is also noted that you plan a further seminar on waste minimisation for businesses in your village. With respect to achieving waste minimisation in your own projects, it is good to hear that you segregate all litter collected during cleanups and we understand from the 2011 adjudicators report that you have set up a composting facility. These are both good initiatives to minimise waste and we would encourage you to continue with them. Perhaps you will also consider growing your own plants? More ideas for waste minimisation can be found in the TidyTowns Handbook.

Residential Areas:

There are a number of attractive residential areas in Ballintogher, all of which were visited during adjudication. Kings Fort is a nice estate with ample green spaces that appeared to be quite well maintained, although the landscaping bed adjoining the entrance road was a little weedy. The surfacing of the access road could also be improved as the level of the man holes was higher than the road. Will this road be included in the Council resurfacing work programme? The entrance to Dun na Ri is very nice with attractive and colourful landscaping bed at its entrance and all the houses and gardens within the estate looked well. Residents in the village seem to have responded very well to your request to paint and maintain the houses in time for adjudication, as a very high standard of presentation of individual properties and gardens was observed - well done!

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The roads in Ballintogher were in the process of being resurfaced so no doubt, they will reach a good standard in time for the competition in 2013. The approach to Ballintogher from Ballygawley is quite attractive with the verges nicely trimmed and the 50 kmph signage clearly visible. The adjudicator liked the traditional black-and-white name signage and the raised natural stone bed with its colourful landscaping was admired. On the Dromahair approach, the signage at this approach is quite good and the verges appear to be very well maintained while the hedges were left to grow – well done. The work to the Sligo approach was also observed, where the nicely strimmed verges appeared neat and tidy during adjudication. Well done also on following the advice of the adjudicator in 2011 by approaching the farmers and encouraging them to paint all gated farms in the village. It is hoped that this project can be completed for 2013.

General Impression:

The adjudication took place in the middle of major road resurfacing works so we are looking forward to seeing the village in 2013 when all of the work is complete. You are congratulated on your hard work, your organised approach and your innovative ideas (the adjudicator liked the colourful nasturtiums at the base of the natural stone walls) and there seems little doubt that you will continue to improve in the TidyTowns competition. Best of luck for 2013.