

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballisodare** Ref: **749**
County: **Sligo** Mark: **248**
Category: **C** Date(s): **28/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	41	42
The Built Environment	50	29	30
Landscaping	50	32	33
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	24	24
Litter Control	50	32	33
Tidiness	30	16	17
Waste Minimisation	20	12	13
Residential Areas	40	29	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	20	20
General Impression	10	6	6
TOTAL MARK	400	241	248

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome Ballisodare to the 2012 TidyTowns competition. It was observed from your entry form that you have six people on your committee. Given the size of your town and its rapid expansion in recent years, why not go on a recruitment drive? Consider approaching residents associations in your town as their members generally have a strong interest in the environment and in improving the appearance of their areas. Historical societies, development associations and active retirement groups also have a good track record in getting involved in the TidyTowns movement. Be sure also to encourage flexible participation. For example, a number of people may not be able to give a time commitment on a regular basis but they could be interested in getting involved in specific projects, such as wildlife or landscaping projects. Be sure to encourage this form of participation as it could boost the numbers on your committee in the longer run. Your entry form makes reference to your level of engagement with other voluntary organisations, such as the GAA and soccer clubs and this is to be commended as sports clubs are significant to the TidyTowns movement in other parts of Sligo and throughout Ireland.

It is great to see that you have good links with Sligo county council, Sligo leader and local businesses. This should be regarded as a recognition of the importance of the work that you do at the local level and the difference it makes to the appearance of the town. As the town continues to improve, the level of participation is also likely to increase. Well done on your engagement with the school as it is stated that they have been involved in a number of your projects. Please tell us more about how you engage with teachers and school children. For example, is there a teacher on your committee? Is there a possibility of forming a junior TidyTowns subcommittee comprising schoolchildren? This can be an effective way of raising awareness, encouraging ownership of projects as well as gaining enthusiastic young helpers! The involvement of the Scouts is also to be commended. Thank you for your detailed entry form and map as it was a great help to the adjudicator during the visit to your town. Last year's adjudicator's report referred to the TidyTowns plan, but this did not appear to be included? Please remember that all documentation has to be sent in with your entry

form every year as the Department do not keep any of the material on file.

The Built Environment:

The town has a wonderful setting on the Ballisodare River with the Ox mountains being clearly visible to the West as a backdrop to the main street in the town. It is clear from the town centre that Ballisodare has undergone major changes in the last number of years with a considerable number of new buildings to be found in the town centre and its outskirts. Despite this, the town centre itself, with its neat and attractive terraces of traditional two-storey dwellings and commercial premises has remained intact and in good condition. The majority of new development, such as the SuperValu, its car park, the pharmacy and the leisure club are located parallel to the main street. This provides an interesting backdrop of modern structures, which are generally attractive and well designed. There have also been a noticeable number of new housing developments constructed, particularly on the Sligo side of the town. The new apartment development, directly across the road from the church of Ireland was observed and it is a pity to see that the building appears vacant. One hopes that the building can be brought into productive use soon. The adjudicator was also struck by the high standard of presentation of many of the towns commercial premises. Buildings that caught the eye included Sherlock Butchers, the Sally Gardens and Appollonias Cake Shop. Other attractive commercial premises were Guys and Dolls, Roberto's takeaway and the Post Office. O'Connors is a lovely building and it is among the nicest in the town. However, as referred to in 2011, the containers on the site next door were observed and the blue one at first-floor level appears to have been joined by an orange one in 2012. We are in agreement with the previous years adjudicator that placing these items in such prominent positions detracts from the streetscape of Ballisodare. Outside, the town centre, the Thatch Pub was admired. It was observed during adjudication that there are issues with derelict sites, such as the Dun Maeve Hotel site and the derelict site opposite Toolans. It is further noted that you are in discussions with Sligo county council in relation to these matters and we hope that these issues surrounding these sites can be resolved. However, dealing with derelict sites can be a longer process so it is recommended that you provide us with updates of any progress made in 2013. It was also noted from your entry form that the ball alley in the Sally Gardens green area was painted and this looked well during adjudication. Thank you also for your submission of the village design statement for Ballisodare as it was read with interest.

Landscaping:

According to your entry form, your projects for 2012 included planting in the flowerbeds throughout the town area and your efforts were observed during adjudication with attractive and colourful planters visible, particularly along the main street. In addition the landscaping at the grotto seating area was admired as it displayed a good variety of species. Unfortunately, weeds were starting to creep into some of the beds. The adjudicator admired the town park and its riverside location. The park was further enhanced by its pleasant seating areas and the attractive and colourful planters that were on view. The landscaping observed in a number of the residential areas of the town was also impressive with Knockmuldowney Park and Woodbrook providing good examples. The adjudicator admired the lovely mature trees along the Sligo approach road and they help to give an excellent first impression of the town. We were disappointed to hear that it was necessary to remove the large ash tree from the Sally Gardens green area. However, it is good to hear that it is proposed to replace the ash tree in the coming year.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Ballisodare is fortunate to have excellent natural amenities such as the River flowing through the town and the mountains nearby. There is little doubt that there is an abundance of wildlife as rivers in particular, are frequently a diverse and rich habitat. It is stated in your entry form that the flora and fauna survey has been undertaken of the river in response to the suggestion by the adjudicator in 2011. However, it does not seem to have been included with this year's entry form? Please be sure to submit it with your entry documentation in 2013. We're delighted to hear that you're using the wildlife survey as the basis for bilingual public information plaques and that these signs will be erected at the riverbank and at the Sally Gardens. Given the comments of the adjudicator in 2011, perhaps some plaques should also be considered for the estuarine and inner harbour area?

Litter Control:

Your entry form states that you have continued your litter patrols and concentrated on the problem areas identified by the adjudicator in 2011. It is further noted that you have requested that Sligo county council empty your litter bins on a more frequent basis. Taking note of the points made by the adjudicator in 2011, we are pleased to report that the standard of litter control appears to have improved with only isolated amounts of litter observed in a small number of locations. Litter was spotted once again on the Sligo approach road, no doubt due to passing cars. It is clear that this represents a litter blackspot in your town. Litter was also spotted near to the Thatch Pub and on the verges of the Ballina Road. We were delighted to find that the Main Street had dramatically improved with no litter present in areas such as the grotto and the Park was also spotless.

However, no further details are provided of your litter strategy. For example, it was noted that the Scouts were involved in your litter control efforts in 2011. Is this still the case? Are the schools involved in your litter patrols? Remember that raising awareness of litter can be very effective in reducing its incidents in public areas. Please tell us about your litter awareness campaigns in 2013.

Tidiness:

It is noted that the adjudicator in 2011 spotted a number of matters that need attention under this category. The adjudicator considered each of these suggested improvements as well as your projects for 2012 which included removing advertising signage and planning notices from the grotto \ bridge railings and throughout the town as well as hanging baskets that were no longer used. Your work on Weed control was also observed. We are pleased to note that there was a significant reduction in advertising signage and that this makes a big difference. Congratulations also on your hard work in the area of weed control as kerbs, paths and road verges were generally weed free, clean and recently swept. There is no doubt that this improves the appearance of your town. However, improvements are still possible. On the Sligo approach road, it was observed that weed killer seems to have been applied but the dead weeds were not taken away. Also on this approach, graffiti was once again observed on the wall of the new apartment building and the neighbouring site was very untidy looking. A sign post without a sign was observed at the roundabout on Main Street and it was noted that the bollards (and the neglected planters) outside Toolan's remain in place (having been noticed by the adjudicator in 2011). The area directly opposite Mount Verde (the housing area to the rear of the grotto) is very untidy looking with open sheds and debris visible. A very untidy site was also spotted directly opposite the entrance to St Mary's College. The entrance into the industrial area on the Ballina Road also continues to be untidy.

Waste Minimisation:

The projects in 2012 included segregation of litter after cleanups and advertising the collection of used silage wraps in May. Thank you for your update on the composting facility and it is great to hear that it is so successful with 1000 tonnes of waste being diverted from landfill into compost. As well as avoiding the creation of waste in the first place, the diversion of waste away from landfill is exactly what this TidyTowns category is all about. It is good to hear that you are using the compost in your TidyTowns projects. The logical next step would be to grow your own plants and shrubs. This can be done either in committee members gardens or in a communal area. You're also encouraged to consider other innovative means of waste reduction. As suggested by the adjudicator in 2011, a public presentation by the environment officer in Sligo county council may be effective in raising awareness of the issue and helping people to think of new and innovative approaches. It was noted from the adjudicator's report in 2011 that the business community are doing their bit by using biodegradable packaging. Is this the case? Please also tell us what the schoolchildren are doing to reduce the amount of waste they generate.

Residential Areas:

The growth of the last number of years has certainly provided Ballisodare with new residential housing areas as a number were spotted during adjudication. It was considered that the appearance of the residential areas in the town was generally good and it is great to see that the vast majority have attractive amenity areas with landscaping. In fact, the distinguishing characteristic between them is the frequency of maintenance of these green and landscaped areas as the quality of the housing areas is generally good. A small number of estates such as Willow Wood and Knockmuldowney Park seem to set the standard and there were excellent during adjudication. A number of other residential areas such as Cloon Dara, Kilboglashy, Salmon Court and Wood Brook (despite its untidy entrance) were also attractive, while the estates of Mill View, Craig Abhainn, Stella Maris and Oak Ridge are also nice but the level of maintenance observed was a little below the high standard set by the others. The committee is also commended on its proactive approach to improving the estates and residential areas of Ballisodare. Providing machinery and equipment to residents associations is an excellent way of encouraging local residents to maintain their local areas. Have you considered having a tidy estates competition? Perhaps a local shop or restaurant would be interested in providing a sponsored prize? Sligo county council may be interested in the results of such a competition, particularly if they have a similar competition on a countywide basis.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach from Sligo was reasonably good as the signs are clean and visible. The verges however are a little untidy looking and could do with a trim on both sides of the road. No landscaping was visible and this could be an opportunity to improve the first impression of the visitor. As mentioned previously, the mature trees were admired. The approach from the Ballina Road is also reasonable with clear signage, but the verges also needed a trim. The approach road that comes past the Thatch Pub was a little disappointing as the verges were quite overgrown. The verge on the section of the road opposite the Thatch Pub was also in poor condition and untidy looking while the landscaping beds outside the pub were in need of attention and these issues detracted from the approach somewhat. In general however, your work on verge maintenance was

noted and the majority of verges appeared to have been subject to a maintenance programme prior to adjudication.

General Impression:

The adjudicator was impressed with the efforts of Ballisodare and there is no doubt that improvements have been made year-on-year. It is recommended that the suggestions made by the adjudicator this year and last year are listed and included in year 3 to 5 year plan. Furthermore, an attempt should also be made to devise a realistic schedule to dealing with each one of these actions. By taking this approach, we are in no doubt that your improvement will continue. Best of luck for 2013.