

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Balbriggan** Ref: **154**
County: **Dublin(Fingal)** Mark: **251**
Category: **F** Date(s): **04/07/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	39	40
The Built Environment	50	30	33
Landscaping	50	30	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28	30
Litter Control	50	28	28
Tidiness	30	15	15
Waste Minimisation	20	9	11
Residential Areas	40	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	29	29
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	241	251

Overall Development Approach:

Balbriggan is welcome to the TidyTowns competition for 2012. Thank you for your entry and map. Your committee of 14 are getting more focussed on the competition and engaging well with the local authority and other relevant groups. It is good to note that you see the TidyTowns playing an important role in improving and enhancing the town of Balbriggan. The committee should look at putting together a three year plan for the town. Perhaps there is a member of your group who could prepare such a plan or you could look at getting it prepared professionally in conjunction with your committee. In doing such a plan try and get the view of the community and take into account any other plans for the area such as a local area plan. Having a three year plan in place enables entrants to make more progress in the TidyTowns. You can elaborate on your current schedule of works to develop a more comprehensive plan. Is the detail submitted on your entry form your plan as this was unclear to the adjudicator?

The Built Environment:

The adjudicator started at St Georges Square and it is noted that Balbriggan has taken on a plaza appearance. In this area the fine stone Court House, the Library with its clock tower, new Town Hall and the Bracken Court Hotel makes the town centre very attractive. The new energy efficient steel lamps with no overhead wires add a very modern touch to an area of great historic value. St Georges Church of Ireland was the next stop. This gothic style building still looks superb. The town park adjacent to the harbour and Railway viaduct are all a superb amenity. St Peters and Pauls Church, Dublin Street with its fine Harry Clarke stained glass windows looked superb. The Garda Station with its attractive railings was another fine building and Bremore Castle which is under construction. It is good to see such a beautiful building being restored by the council. McNally's funeral undertakers are a fine building with stone arch. Also noted was Molly's coffee which was pleasing on the eye.

Landscaping:

The town being a seaside town has natural landscaping in its surrounds. The town park situated at the centre of town has a beautiful green area bordered by mature trees. There are fine landscaped beds in this area. The Dublin Road roundabout with its stainless steel sculpture is a symbol of Balbriggan's association with Hosiery and weaving industries. This sculpture works well with its surrounding landscaping. The new hedges planted at various locations such as the Garda Station and the Wavin factory will enhance these areas. The many hanging baskets and planters around the town all added a splash of colour to the streetscape. The Tidy Towns unit are greatly in favour of all year round planting. All year round planting not only provides colour for the year and a natural wildlife habitat, but cuts down on costs and resources associated with annual planters. Planting can help to enhance the built environment by softening the edges and added colour to an area to present them at their best. The planting of one tree species on approach roads can be very effective.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The town has great potential for wildlife and natural amenities. The Bracken River is a natural habitat for wildlife. The mature trees in this area and the additional hedging that you have sewn for this year will all add more shelter and provide food for wildlife, not to mention the seaside in the natural habitat it provides. You state in your entry that you have appointed a Biodiversity Officer. This is a step in the right direction to educate and create awareness in protecting the environment and native species that are all around this lovely town. The erecting of bat boxes along the Bracken is one of the many projects that you have planned. The town has a large population but somehow there was a great feel of rural walking through the park admiring the landscaping. Under the railway bridge the sea is so close but yet seems hidden. There is so much to admire. Well done on your work in this category.

Litter Control:

In a town of this size, with a large population, litter can be a problem. The development of an education strategy, as you have outlined in the schools, residents and youth groups is a step in the right direction. This will help create a greater level of litter awareness and help in combatting litter. Regular clean ups and engaging with the local authority on litter black spot areas to eradicate old litter accumulated in grass verges is a step in the right direction. There was litter spotted around the car park, at the river and the car park at St Peters and Pauls Church. Continue to spread the word of no litter and continue to progress in this area.

Tidiness:

The new welcome sign and new street signs are to be applauded. They are bright and easily seen. The approach roads were well presented. Some of the grass could do with trimming and the grass growth along kerbs and pavements is problematic this year. The Council can usually help out in most towns but the weed growth seems to have returned. The bring banks were generally neat but the bag of rubbish left at one somewhat distracted from this. There is excessive street signage used but you are working on this matter with the Council. Graffiti is showing its head also which is another matter that needs to be addressed.

Waste Minimisation:

The Tidy Towns group is very active in the promotion of waste minimisation. You have joined the green homes programme which is a good start also try and engage with the schools green programme. Consider composting, either households or community based. Do remember that community composting needs to obtain permission from the relevant local authority. Composted leaves and grass can then be used on landscaping in the town. Continue to circulate waste minimisation information to homes and businesses in the area or this can be done via Twitter or Facebook. Prepare and distribute a local newsletter during the year highlighting waste minimisation plans. You could also use this as information on the general Tidy Towns work programme.

Residential Areas:

Balbriggan has some delightful houses in some parts of the old town, the nice thatched houses and other more modern houses. The houses opposite the Garda Station were noted, as were the terraced houses, the apartments on Drogheda road and the many housing estates all make up the fine streetscape of this town. The more mature estates have landscaping that has matured nicely and softens the buildings effect. The newer estates with proper planning and planting in time will mature. It is good to see the Tidy Towns and residents working so closely together encouraging the residents to take ownership of their own estates in helping to maintain them.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach roads were well presented and grass verges in most areas good. There was good landscaping with mature trees and hedging with nice welcoming signs. The presentation of the approach roads is of great importance as it gives the first impression of a community that cares about how others see them. The traffic

through the town although very busy was flowing freely. The cycle lanes are important on such busy roads. The new street signs add brightness to the town. In this category entrants are reminded that the cutting of hedges during the nesting season from 01st March to 31st August is not permitted as per Section 40 of the Wildlife Act 1976.

General Impression:

Balbriggan has a new energetic committee full of enthusiasm and are engaging well with all the relevant bodies to create a much improved town with better facilities for people to have and to visit. The town has the potential to improve and the TidyTowns group has the ability to move things forward. It was a pleasure visiting the area. Good luck in the 2012 competition and in the following years.