

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballina** Ref: **824**
County: **Tipperary(North)** Mark: **296**
Category: **C** Date(s): **04/06/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	46	46
The Built Environment	50	38	39
Landscaping	50	43	44
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27	28
Litter Control	50	39	40
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	17	17
Tidiness	30	19	17
Residential Areas	40	26	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	29	29
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	400	293	296

Overall Development Approach:

You are very welcome Ballina to the Super Valu National TidyTowns Competition 2013.

We congratulate you on achieving second place in your area in the Tiobard Álainn Competition. We see that you hold monthly meetings throughout the year and special project meetings as well. We read with interest about your events during Heritage Week 2012. Well done on your work with your local authority in sending them your annual works TidyTowns Plan. We were surprised however not to find a TidyTowns Plan with your entry. Neither is there any reference to a TidyTowns Plan in last year's adjudication. A three or five year plan will focus your mind on the important issues facing you, and it will help you to prioritise your work. A plan need not be prepared professionally, but you should consult widely and locally in preparing such a plan. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to the Ballina area in drawing up your work programme. Please do refer to the TidyTowns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a three or five year plan. It is essential to progress in the competition and to gain marks under this particular category that you submit such a plan in 2014 - however simple and concise your initial plan is.

We are glad that you have a TUS worker. The details of all the events you organised fills a page. You have received a lot of help from your local authority and from LEADER locally. Moreover we are impressed to see that you also have the support of a lot of local businesses. Well done! Obviously the businesses are aware of how important your work is to the town.

You have varied means of communication - both modern and more traditional. This means your message gets around to the largest audience. Well done to the primary and second level schools in their support for the town, and we are impressed with the number of projects involving schools.

You have made great strides in nine years of participation in the competition. Your involvement in so many aspects of the town is a credit to your breath of vision. We are glad to hear that participating gives a great sense of pride to the community.

The adjudicator used the sketch map you submitted in conjunction with a street plan (coloured map) which the adjudicator found at the Nenagh Tourist Office, and found that this coloured map complimented your map. A key to the numbers you included on the map would have been useful. The current year's projects should be marked on your map - perhaps this is what you meant to do. In fact the numbers were not of any benefit as there was no indication as to what they represented. Thank you for the photographs. A note of caution! Please number or staple your entry form in future years. The adjudicator added numbers as you will see when you receive your entry pack back later in the year. Your marks in this category are already exceptionally high for a town without a TidyTowns Plan submitted with your entry.

The Built Environment:

The jewel in the crown of your built environment really is your wonderful stone bridge in its lovely setting across the majestic Shannon. The Riverside area along the Ballina banks of the river is a credit to you and to your local authority. The landscaping and tree edged car parking, together with pathways and bright blue harbour side fittings looked very well. The stone walls and natural hedging leading away from the bridge gives the area a very mature look. Under 'Roads etc.' you mention the possible night lighting of the bridge. The repair of the lighting on the town bridge is also proposed. Be very careful about erecting new flood lighting. This adjudicator is aware of at least seven different issues created by flood-lighting in relation to Protected Structures. These issues cross many boundaries including safety, environment and biodiversity. Considerable care and research should be given to this proposal before you consider it. We would strongly recommend that you get architectural and conservation advice on any work to do with lighting on or near the bridge - including repair work to lights. Works on the existing bridge and any repair works to any older stone bridge should be advised by your County Architectural Conservation Officer or by a conservation architect, as well as by relevant engineering professionals.

We admired your heritage trail sign relating to buildings. We wonder if you have any concerted plan in relation to these thirteen parts of your built heritage. Have you discussed any plan with the County Architectural Conservation Officer or the County Heritage Officer? We will look forward to hearing more about the new Civic Trust Group which has just started.

The Catholic Church was well presented, and we note your assistance with this presentation. We particularly liked the railings along the roadside boundary. We admired the treatment of derelict cottage windows. Well done to the teenagers who painted the Pump House.

You seem to be mixing up work carried out years before this year under this heading, as last year's adjudicator also referred to the heated swimming pool, so this does not seem to be a project completed in the last year. The same is true of the outdoor gym. So it is quite difficult for this year's adjudicator to know which of the many projects you list under 'Summary of Projects Undertaken for this Year' were actually carried out in the last TidyTowns year (1st June 2012 to 31st May 2013).

The parochial house was well presented. The Halla Paróiste is very neat. We encourage you in the use of Irish in public buildings/areas as here.

Our Lady & St Lua's Primary School is delightfully presented, and we particularly admired the wonderful sculpture there. The design of the school is very attractive here. We noted four flag poles, but we did not see any Green Flag flying on our visit. Perhaps it had been taken down for cleaning.

Donovan's was well presented. McKeogh's Hardware was brightly painted and the red railings on the low stone wall screen the car parking area. We admired the simple lettering 'Spencer and Donovan' on the gable of a terrace as one leaves the town along the Nenagh/Portroe Road. Clean and brightly coloured walls and a garage gate on the Limerick road attracted the eye. Liam Ó Riain public house was admired.

We admired some small features of your built environment, such as the lovely wooden gateway and ironmongery of the door set in a stone wall at 'Ferns Hollow'. (The galvanised gate adjacent would benefit from painting). We observed another lovely gate on the approach to the T-junction from the bridge (sited between two beautiful mature trees growing out of the inner footpath). Gooser's Restaurant looked well and the terrace of buildings where it is located rises gently away from the road.

You hope to obtain assistance from the Co-Op/Stores to upgrade their road frontage area. On adjudication day the three rusting churns outside looked poorly - semi filled with plants. This particular property is on a most strategic junction and entrance/exit to/from the riverside area. The security fencing needs to be planted and walls need to be painted. Its storage area which can be viewed from the Limerick Road pedestrian access way to the river would also benefit from screening. On the same shortcut/laneway leading from the Main Street down to the harbour area the apartment complex three-storey building would benefit from fungal staining treatment. It is a pity that the air conditioning units here are quite obtrusive.

The orange colour premises at the junction of riverside and the road leading to the Main Street would benefit from some removal of advertising and the refreshing of the paintwork.

Landscaping:

We note the maintenance work which you have done and also the nursery planting. We also note that you have been cutting grass and strimming in all public places, together with the planting of sustainable shrubs and spring bulbs in various places. You have rehabilitated areas which had been affected, due to machines working.

We admired the lovely trees and gardens attached to the hotel.

We particularly admired the lovely shrub planting bank along the footpath descending towards the sculpture at the Main Street/Bridge approach junction. We would argue as to whether composite artificial planters do anything for the said sculpture, and we think that it would look a lot better with the plain grass surround without the 'fussiness' of stone beds or planting boxes. We noted the lovely semi circular 'flowing' seat set against the brick wall.

The entire Riverside area is a delight and includes beautiful dry stone walls, trees, grass areas, outdoor gym and swimming pool etc. We particularly admired the lovely red seating which was cheerful and bright (in the recessed parking area where one of the nature signs is located). The planters here we consider to be a little unnecessary and indeed on adjudication day they looked a bit lank.

We noticed some dead trees in the open space near the ball alley. Perhaps you might replace these?

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

We admired the lovely fish and birds' wildlife sign between the park and the town. We would hope that when you are putting together new wildlife boards or replacing worn boards that you would include the Irish names for the

species as well as the Latin names.

You continue to enhance and promote the nature trail along the river. You mention the promotion of the Ballina Heritage Trail which is now conducted, you say, by three community members. We are unsure as to whether this refers to the built heritage or otherwise, and are you referring to guiding through the trail? Your description is a little unclear. This probably refers to the Natural Heritage as you list it here.

You mention a possible floating cantilever proposal here but there is no detail. There will have to be discussions to be had with various bodies in relation to this - of which we are sure you are well aware. We notice that you are co-operating with Killaloe on some projects such as walks/landscaping projects. You have provided wildlife talks and you have a Wildlife Tour planned for August 2013.

Have you considered drawing up a Biodiversity Plan for the town? We understand that Tipperary North County Council are about to launch a Biodiversity Plan. You could perhaps dovetail with this plan.

Litter Control:

Your daily litter patrols are very important - particularly in a tourist town. We are impressed to see that you have your own vehicle for collecting litter. You have a very organised approach, with the town divided into zones, and everybody on the committee rises early to pick up litter on the approach roads. Well done on this!

We are glad to see that you took part in the National Spring Clean Day. Well done to the scouts who have a monthly litter pick aided by the members of your TidyTowns Committee. You have approached the Farmers' Market with a view to clearing up after the market. With regard to dog fouling we are not sure that erecting more signage will solve this problem - it may even create untidiness and clutter. Education, and indeed the availability of a dog litter warden on a more regular spot check basis would probably have more effect. The visit once a fortnight - which you mention under 'tidiness - probably needs to be upgraded even for a short period until a cleaner pattern emerges.

Very little litter was observed. However there were a few small pieces such as a plastic bottle etc. at the foot of the steps leading from the Main Street pedestrian lane down to the harbour/swimming area.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

We are delighted that the Primary School is involved in the Green Schools Programme and you list all the good effects that this Programme has in the community. You do not appear to have implemented any new projects under this category heading this year. Your details refer to litter picks and recycling. Recycling is part of the waste pyramid, but is rather lower down on the pyramid and you have been recycling over the last number of years. Sustainable Waste and Resource Management is about trying to reduce the amount of waste produced in the first case. You will find lots of helpful advice in the TidyTowns Handbook. We recommend that you make contact with the Environmental Awareness Officer of your Local Authority, who we are sure would be more than happy to help you perhaps organise a Sustainable Waste and Resource Management Seminar. The officer can also enable community groups to participate in the Green Home Programme based on the Green Schools Programme. You have potential to increase your marks in this section by following through on your ideas on this topic before 2014 and addressing the guidelines sent with your entry form this year. One suggestion re: carrying out an audit of waste produced in the community might be considered. Your score in this category is extraordinarily high (in relation to all other centres in Tipperary North) over the last two years in relation to the details you provide us with.

Tidiness:

You say that you have cleaned numerous sites of graffiti, and removed fly posting. Unfortunately on adjudication day we came across an awful lot of new or re-erected fly posting - the most we have seen in any centre for quite some time. This is a serious problem for you. Examples were, firstly on the Harbour side where we noticed two fly posts - one advertising a local music festival and another attached to the traffic lights by the Riverside advertising a charity cycle. Fly posting for the Farmers' Market was tied to a wooden pole beside the yield sign at the T-junction slightly uphill of the Co-Op; this was one of a number of fly posts for the same weekly event on a number of approach roads to the town. We saw fly postings on poles advertising a Funfair, Barber shop, a Fleadh and a Dog Show. Even a dog fouling sign was attached to a pole - which we consider not to be appropriate, as it is important to discourage fly posting. We were quite disappointed with the amount of fly posting and it - together with the following issues - has lost you marks in this category.

With regard to graffiti the situation was better. We observed graffiti on the green door - on what appears to be a substation-like structure, uphill of the town. Here we noted a little graffiti on a Caution Children Sign at Kincora View.

The Bring Banks need a good wash as does the signage. It is unfortunate that a poison bait box has to be located so obviously beside the banks.

On the Nenagh/Portroe approach we saw the torn remains of a flag on a wooden pole and close by - in a recessed space with a wooden gate - we saw two empty beer bottles. At the restaurant on the corner of the Nenagh/Portroe Road Junction, there is a tall official fingerpost pole with many signs. These are quite orderly and informative. However, there are a number of advertising signs on the red building and grey gable behind, as well as a banner tied onto the railings edging the footpath. This clutter of signage looks untidy.

Some sandwich boards and external signage on at least one shop premises intruded on the clean line of the street and the footpath - both visually and from a mobility point of view. We noted the local pharmacy was celebrating your achievements in a window display. An old cream garage frontage has been somewhat improved by the plywood/painting of the window spaces. However, the associated red petrol pump is rusty and deserves to be conserved or removed. In its present condition, it is not attractive. At one point a sandwich board obscured the cut stone sign for Caherelly Close.

We noted some buildings with brackets for hanging baskets that were devoid of baskets. There is no need for a plethora of hanging baskets in your nice street. But the redundant brackets should be removed carefully. We would also recommend the careful removal of redundant hanging basket brackets from power poles in consultation with the authorities who gave you permission to erect these brackets on their poles. We also suggest the removal of the line of metal hanging basket standards which were empty on adjudication day (set in a line opposite the church). There is absolutely no need for these in this area (inside the boundary - parallel with the footpath and grassy banks with semi mature trees opposite the church). Hanging baskets at this location detracts from the natural and beautiful views across the river, as they are an artificial intrusion in a delightful natural unspoilt view.

A bakery on a corner site would benefit from painting of the gable and placing of rubbish receptacles off the footpath if possible.

The Bus Éireann sign on the Limerick Road is rather rusty. The wall on which the Charity Walk was advertised would benefit from painting, as it was a little grubby. We are not sure if this is in the same location which was commented on by last year's adjudicator in relation to a Charity Walk in 2012. On the opposite side of the road - approaching the traffic lights - we noted a cracked piece of wall and some advertising signs. Grey fencing on the Portroe Road (which has been erected to screen an unfinished development) would benefit greatly from repainting, or perhaps some bright mural decoration.

We would suggest that you consider conducting a programme that would involve the painting of all field gates within the town itself and along the approaches. Some poor farm gates were observed. We would suggest a uniform colour.

At the Harbour Junction, we noticed a cracked wall beside the traffic lights and signage. A planning notice at the hotel may now be redundant and should be removed if this is this case. A separate building in the hotel grounds need some paint.

We also saw Santa Claus lighting on a premises, which looks incongruous in June, it detracts from the streetscape. We understand the cost of the erection of lights and taking the lights down - and the bother ensuing, but as a TidyTown it is not acceptable to have Christmas decorations up in midsummer.

You have conducted a weed control program and you clean signs. We encourage you to endeavour to use manual or other non-chemical methods of weed control. We were pleased to see little evidence of chemical weed kills.

Residential Areas:

The recruitment of a Residents' Liaison Officer will be very helpful. We are unsure as to who employs this Liaison Officer, and you have not told us. Is it the Local Authority or yourselves?

The annual Ballina Environmental Awards are a very good idea and well done to a relatively small town in organising such a competition and event.

You have provided flower boxes in various estates and you liaise with residents in relation to weeds/litter/grass cutting. You mention under 'landscaping' that you give assistance to residential areas with grass cutting, trimming and planting sustainable shrubs.

Ard Caoilte on the Boher Road looked well. Lovely views were to be had from Ard Lua which is a mature leafy estate. However, here we noticed some cars parked on footpaths which is unfriendly to people with mobility issues, and also creates an untidy effect visually. We noted further on, cars parked on footpaths at Boru Court, this estate had a weedy approach with high walls that require power washing. We also noticed a vacant site with security fencing. We liked the name sign for Kincora View. On Quarry Road, we noted unfinished earth banking opposite a nicely landscaped housing estate with no name. Marine Village is a mature estate. However the sign for Derg Marina 'enquiries' and the associated gates need an upgrade.

Along the Portroe Road we admired the row of single storey cottages which were generally very well presented.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Your daily litter picks which you have referred to already under 'litter' target the approach roads. You also point out that the National Spring Clean Day, targets lanes and streets. You co-operate with Killaloe in relation to the White Cliff Walk.

Your work on trimming and clearing of O'Briens Lane is noted. Approaching the town from O'Brien's Lane, the general effect could be improved by the whitewashing of the high walls on either side. Work on Grange Road near the national school was also noted.

You intend to reinstate shrubbery removed by contractors. It is a pity that the shrubs could not have been saved but this probably was not possible - or that the contractors were not responsible for reinstatement.

The Smarter Travel Programme resulted in cycleways and new footpaths. This is a good development.

We saw some headless road signs around the town. Two such poles without a sign were observed under the tree in the raised bed by the sign for Sarsfields Ride. Such signs should be reinstated or the support poles removed.

On the Limerick Road approach just before the 60 kph we admired the nice park and picnic areas overlooking the river. However some broken white fencing and rusty double gates were observed near the Lough Derg Fáilte sign. We admired some lovely white roadside clematis in this area. We observed a 'caution new junction layout ahead' sign which was partly obscured by vegetation. The bridge near the Park where the Funfair was setting up had empty holders for hanging baskets.

Some signs require cleaning on the Nenagh approach. A very dirty 'stop' sign was seen. Some boundaries need painting on the Boher Road. We admired the wild garlic on this road. One of the speed limit signs was obscured by vegetation.

General Impression:

We understand the problems which water scheme work can bring for a Tidy Towns Committee. So we do take this into account in our assessments.

You would like to find more volunteers, and you realise how difficult it is to deal with derelict building sites. Well done to those helping you on this. We agree that an education programme is needed in relation to dog fouling. You have many plans for the coming year and we look forward to following your progress. We wish you every success in the future. Go n-eirí libh!