

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Ballyvaughan	Ref:	60
County:	Clare	Mark:	300
Category:	B	Date(s):	12/06/2014

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	45
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	45
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	42
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	33
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	10
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	28
TOTAL MARK	450	300

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Baile Úi Bheacháin - Welcome Ballyvaughan to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. Thank you to the Tidy Towns Task Teams of the Ballyvaughan Community Development Group for the work on-the-ground and in submitting the Entry. The Tidy Towns project is a standing agenda item at the monthly meetings of Ballyvaughan Community Development Group. In the formation stage of the task teams fortnightly meetings took place.

You list six agencies, bodies, and businesses that have supported Ballyvaughan Tidy Towns 2014 activities. We note that all works undertaken this year have been undertaken by community volunteers.

Your communication methods are very good and include a Facebook page, a revamped website; e-mailing and a quarterly colour printed newsletter, as well as a quarterly public meeting.

Youth and schools are involved in the Tidy Towns overall work through various means. It is excellent that the school is working towards its fifth Green Flag. Other student projects involve biodiversity work and beach cleanups.

You say that the competition means that the community work together to enhance the village for its inhabitants and for visitors. You are aware that doing well in the competition benefits tourism – which you say of course is the primary wealth creator for your village.

We note that your previous Tidy Towns plan is now redundant, and that you are in the process of devising a new five-year strategy for village enhancement. You will submit this plan in 2015. Be sure to use the competition category headings as a basis for your Tidy Towns Plan. The plan need not be prepared professionally, but you should consult locally in preparing such a plan. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to your village in drawing up your work programme. Please refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a plan.

The map attached to your entry form is rather sketchy in relation to exact locations for various projects. For instance in Built Environment and Streetscape you did not mark any project for this year on your map. Because Ballyvaughan is in a small village it is relatively easy for the adjudicator to find various project sites. However in the guidelines for filling in the Entry Form you were asked to number all your projects sequentially through the Entry Form and to match these with sequential numbering on the village map. You have not numbered the projects sequentially throughout the Entry Form starting at the first project and finishing at the last project, but have numbered each project sequentially only within each category. And you have not shown each project on your map. Your map is really too small a scale for this purpose. We understand that some projects competed in any year are not

'mappable' because of their nature – but many are.

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

The adjudicator was very impressed with your Geopark fold-up map. This is an excellent project, and it will draw local and visitor attention to the wonderful - small scale buildings - but unique - which you possess in such a small area. Eleven of the twelve entries in this Heritage Trail Map refer to this heritage. These buildings are made of (mostly local) stone, and therefore this approach to the geology of this part of the Burren is an excellent and novel approach. We will credit you for Entry number two – 'Cuillighageeha' under Landscaping and under Wildlife. This publication will inspire you to conserve this wonderful heritage, and we wish you every success in gaining support for the long term conservation of these buildings. We assume that you have worked with the County Architectural Conservation Officer and with the County Heritage Officer on this project.

Another project for this adjudication year is the continued maintenance of the vacant properties. You maintain the curtilage of the vacant hotel site, and you also continue to maintain various other vacant properties around the village. The large blue 'for sale' sign at the disused hotel site is intrusive.

Your third project was the research and publication of a short history of the old primary school – now your village hall. Aspects of this publication relate to the built environment, but the overall project is really concerns the wider spectrum of community involvement and planning.

The Garda station was pristine, with a lovely dry stone wall and planting. The Community Hall looked resplendent – although we would have preferred that the original timber windows had been conserved. uPVC windows are not appropriate for such a building from an architectural conservation point of view. J.M. Mooney is a fine building, but the uncared for open space between it and the next property is unfortunate. What can be done about this?

The church looked really well, and its grounds complement the beautiful building. The hood moulding on the 'Soda Parlour' and adjacent building was 'picked out' nicely through colour contrast. A lovely traditional farm gate was admired near the Tourist Information Point. The clean mural (with the Irish name of the village included) opposite this gate looked well. The Irish lettering on Ceard Siopa Uí Chuiinn was admired. We noted your village name/Fáilte sign. Hyland's Hotel – a well known landmark – has retained its unspoilt appearance, and it forms an important part of the built heritage of the village. There are a few too many small signs on its elevation facing the junction. New infill terracing beyond Hylands - curving around a corner - is in keeping with the village streetscape. The garage/convenience store is tidy, but the large hard surfaced forecourt could do with some 'softening' through planting. O' Lochlainn is another lovely part of your built heritage.

The buildings at the Ballyvaughan Enterprise Centre on the Lisdoonvarna Road are not maintained to the same standard as is general in the village. Two faded and rather grubby freestanding advertising signs at the entrance did not improve the general appearance of this complex. The elevation of these buildings to St. Joseph's Park is very poor and most uncomplimentary to the excellent work being carried out at that estate.

The remains of a small derelict vegetation-surrounded single storey house on the right hand side of the Kinvara approach (which has a well tended roadside grass area would benefit from painting. We admired a lovely traditional red gate opposite the pier area on the Black Head Road.. The surrounds of the (green and black) water spout on this road could be improved.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You maintain long areas of grass along the sea frontage, as well as approach road grass. You discuss St. Joseph's estate under this category heading, but we discuss it and credit you with the work under the Residential category.

On the approach road from Kinvara we loved the montbretia planting along a high stone wall and seasonal purple and white foxgloves had been planted here also. These looked appropriate and beautiful. Landscaping nearer the village is superb – especially the 'beehive' feature bed. The colourful displays are all sustainably planted in the soil. In the village street on the Kinvara approach there was an element of clutter - due to projecting signage and lighting on some premises and the overuse of floral attachments – including a hanging basket on a power pole. This should be avoided for safety as well as aesthetic reasons. Sandwich boards cause clutter and obstruction.

The planting bed along the gable of the property facing the iconic village fountain made for a nice setting for the fountain. Do not 'overload' this space with container planting. The emphasis here is the fountain. We loved the yellow shrubbery echoing the cheerful yellow gate theme. The magnificently and appropriately planted gardens at the tea rooms by the quayside are a good example of how to landscape a garden in this type of limestone landscape.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádurtha:

You have designated the road from the bridge/school road to the primary school as a wildlife habitat. This involves a no weedkiller, strimming, mowing regime and collaboration with the school which is already active in the Green Schools' project.

You have just begun in the process of freeing up the drain which brings water from the turlough area to the sea - with resultant benefit to fauna, birds, trees and wild flowers etc.

The replacement bollards at San Souci Park will control unauthorised parking etc., and this will give the wildlife in this area freedom from users which interfere with their habitat.

You continue to support the Burren In Bloom programme, which involves much discussion of wildlife and habitats, together with walks and talks.

You are in the process of commissioning a survey of the wildlife habitats and natural amenities of Ballyvaughan. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geo-Park office has generously agreed to fund the survey under its EU LIFE programme. A range of specialist assistance has been put together for this purpose. It is good that the schoolchildren and the Cub Scouts are getting involved in gathering data for this project. We look forward to seeing the results. It will be important then for you to consider interpretation and management of your assets in this regard.

You mention that the Scouts have already erected a bug hotel on 'this' site. However you fail to name the site or to show it on your map. However we found it at San Souci! The area here is a delightfully quiet area with the interesting bird hide. There is some rough ground between the San Souci area and the picnic area.

Most of your work under this category heading is preparatory; we look forward to seeing results in 2015. We commend you for putting time and resources into good preparation. This will reward you in the longer term. The minus for the moment is that you have to wait a little longer to increase your marks appreciably.

We noticed that some hedges appeared to be recently trimmed on the Kinvara approach.. Remember that it is permissible to trim hedging along cultivated ground (e.g. gardens) throughout the year. However with regard to hedge trimming, you are reminded that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2006 to cut vegetation in a hedge or ditch on lands not cultivated between 1st March and 31st August annually - this is for the protection of nesting birds.

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

Although you discuss the relocation of the recycling bins to the New Pier Road, this is a project to be considered under Tidiness. You are considering a community composter and business interests are involved in a Green Certification program - which commenced in April and will finish in October of this year.

The Bay Hop will, if it continues, provide an alternative to road use for journeys to Galway.

In all you have really not done a huge amount to increase your marks in this category in 2014. Nonetheless we see that you have every good intention of moving forward. You acknowledge the increased importance of this category in relation to the promotion of Green Tourism venture. We would suggest that you perhaps also concentrate on the general community's approach to sustainable waste and resource management. We feel that you would very much benefit from some help in 'progressing' your community in this area and in improving your marks in this category. Sustainable waste and resource management is about trying not to produce waste in the first case. The Environmental Awareness Officer in your local authority would be an excellent contact to help you to put a programme together in relation to this topic. Perhaps you may be able to attend a sustainable waste and resource management seminar. In the meanwhile look at the Tidy Towns Handbook, and the revised guidelines on this topic - which were sent out with your Entry Form in 2013. Moreover you have an educational resource in your Green Flag achievers!

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have marked the various projects under this category heading on your village map. You are working on the removal of electric and telecom cables and the removal of freestanding and other business signage. However, you have given us no exact instances of where - for instance - signs have been removed. There are no 'before' and 'after' photographs available to us. You are currently working on both these projects 'on paper,' and with those involved, and we hope to be made aware of the location of such results in 2015.

You say that the control of weeds at kerbs in 2014 is a new project. It is appropriate to use an organic rather than chemical weed killer. However, on the road to the new pier we observed what we consider may have been the remains of chemical weeding?

You say that an ongoing litter picking programme is in place, and that litter is segregated. However you do not indicate what this litter picking programme involves. How often do you pick litter? How many people are involved? What exact areas do you cover? Does the regularity of the picking increase in summer? What is your policy in relation to litter bins? To increase your markings in this category we suggest that you prepare a litter management plan for the village. This can be included in your overall plan or attached as an Appendix - if wordy (!) The County Litter Management Plan will give you ideas, and you can dovetail your village projects into the broader County projects. The Environmental Awareness Officer of Clare County Council, we are sure would be delighted to help you in preparing such a plan.

The erection of the salvaged anchor really is not an approach road project, but we can consider it here under the tidiness category. It is good to see that people are interested in helping.

The School Road is a little untidy, despite new surfacing. Some general strimming of verges and property is required. We saw some fly posting on this road (as well as elsewhere in the village – such as that for the Doolin Folk

Festival). There were two fly posts on one pole near the junction – on the Black Head Road. There were no Green Flags flying at the school, despite the fact that there were four flagpoles, which presumably belong to the four Green Flags achieved. The school gates would benefit from repainting, as they have become a little rusty. We note that last year's adjudicator also referred to this issue. Stone walls on this road need repair and the bridge area needs strimming. It is important to look after your wildlife designated road.

We noted the relocation of the recycling bins to the New Pier Road
Grass on the New Pier might be removed. We note that last year's adjudicator also asked that this be done.

Residential Streets & Housing Areas / Sráideanna Cónaithe & Ceantair Tithíochta:

The standard of house presentation in the village is very good.

What a nice idea to find that the young residents in St. Joseph's estate maintain their own area. You say that the residents of this estate continue to set the example for all of Ballyvaughan, especially in relation to the involvement of the youth of the estate - both in maintaining the open space and in organising litter control. The estate is exemplary and we particularly admired the landscaped setting of the pump, and the lovely stone name sign in its setting also.

Dolmen Village has a number of non-permanently occupied holiday homes. This you say poses difficulty in relation to maintenance and tidiness. Nonetheless, it was well maintained on adjudication day - but for the open space on the right-hand side approach, which needed cutting.

Of the Galway Road an estate access road has no name. Does it have a name, and if so can the name please be attached at the road junction? There are beautiful views from this estate of individual houses to the Burren Hills. A large semi derelict container in a field adjacent to this estate access road looked poorly.

We observed some on-footpath parking in the village with resultant damaged footpath paving. This should be discouraged.

Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes / Bóithre Isteach, Sráideanna & Lánaí:

The approach road from Kinvara is along a nice treed length of road. The spire of the church is seen in the distance. We noticed some weedy footpath edges here and an unfinished access road. Some advertising signs on the village side were noticed, and one of these was blank. Some untrimmed grass on the right-hand side (just beyond the access to the unnamed estate) was observed. We noted that one bed and breakfast premises had two advertising signs. Is this necessary? Some advertising signs were 'competing' with road signs. The back of some signage is not in good condition visually. There were some weedy splay areas and a cracked wall was noted on this approach. We would consider that this approach requires a footpath rather than a sign which asks traffic to be careful because walkers are about. We noted a 'headless' large road sign just on the village side of Gentian Villa. The relevant sign should be reattached or the pole should be removed. A side road joins the main road here from the east, and on this approach we noted some weedy roadside set back areas fronting new house stone walls. A huge advertising sign dwarfs the lovely simple green and white village sign. Generally however this approach is neat and green and well cared-for.

On each approach road rough metal field gates give little sense of 'arrival' in a village. We would suggest that you paint all field gates within the village boundaries and on the immediate approaches. This will create a sense of arrival, identity, and a sense of tidiness.

On the Lisdoonvarna approach we noticed a fly post for a nursing home. A little trimming was necessary around the 50 K pH speed limit sign. We admired the green and white simple village sign, which is located well outside the 50 K pH speed limit. The 'inner' village sign at the 50 K pH speed limit looked a little 'tombstone-like', and would benefit from some surrounding vegetation. The work to the stone wall to the drain referred to in the Wildlife category will be ongoing.

On the Black Head approach some black and yellow low traffic bollards were dirty and bent - as one approached the picnic area. Strimming along the roadside boundary of a house near San Souci was needed. The large gaudy advertising sign at the stone floored (well) recess space near San Souci detracted from the space. Road edges are poor on this approach, but we hope that when the footpath works are complete that this issue will be addressed. The 50 kph speed limit sign is 'stuck' in a lump of concrete. There are too many (yellow) signs for a premises on this road approach. One of these was a sandwich board sign held by rough concrete blocks on the road margin. There was a lot of broken footpath areas on this approach on the village side of the pier – opposite side of the road.

There is a cul-de-sac approach which joins the village area at St Josephs Terrace. This has very weedy footpaths and road verges needed strimming particularly at the right-hand side on the approach. There is a very poor surface to this road. In places the footpath has been damaged. This road has public lighting.

You are in negotiations with Clare County Council to re tarmac the seafront car parking area and the new path to the San Souci nature area, (this latter is a work in progress only), as well as resurfacing the roadway from the bridge to the old pier.

