

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballynacally** Ref: **59**
County: **Clare** Mark: **307**
Category: **B** Date(s): **01/07/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	49
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	42
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	43
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	28
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34
TOTAL MARK	450	307

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Baile na Caillí. Welcome Ballynacally to the SuperValu 2014 National TidyTowns competition. You have 12 people on your committee with an extended group of 25 who help with community projects as and when required. We note that you hold a general community meeting to invite ideas and suggestions. This took place last October. Since then you have established a core group. Your committee meets weekly since March. You list a good number of agencies, bodies and businesses who support your activities. These involve public bodies and local groups. You use traditional and modern communication methods, and this is good. Your school participate in the Green Schools project. The children also participate in National Spring Clean.

Participating in the competition for over 50 years has brought obvious results to your village. You say that the result is a community where everyone takes great pride in both their own residences and in their environment. You also say that being involved forms social links, and creates a sense of well-being and pride of place. We are very happy to hear this. You also say that the various categories in the competition have helped you to broaden your areas of interest in the village. The competition also encourages volunteering and it is an organisation where people of all ages can contribute.

Thank you for your village map which was quite detailed, and useful to the adjudicator. However the guidelines this year asked that you would number the projects for this year sequentially through the Entry Form and attach the same number to the same projects on your village map. Please remember to do this for next year. It is important to read the guidelines carefully every year as there can always be changes in the guidelines. Thank you for your photographs involving 'before' and 'after' photographs of many projects. This is useful to the adjudicator, as the adjudicator will not have seen sites that have been improved in their earlier 'negative' state. Your TidyTowns plan is comprehensive and clearly laid out.

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

The Fairgreen is a great space both from a built environment point of view and from a landscaping point of view. You have made this space something very special. It is very difficult to describe in words the visual effect the space has on the visitor. The adjudicator took many photographs on adjudication day. You have retained the integrity of the Fairgreen through the conservation and reuse of buildings surrounding it. These buildings are presented in impeccable fashion with great colour and taste. It is wonderful to see that they now serve a useful community functions individually. This includes - probably the nicest Health Centre in rural Ireland. The cheerful yellow colour of this building would lift the spirits of any person with an ailment arriving at the centre. You have not forgotten to celebrate the original owners and occupiers of these buildings. At the Forge the O'Sullivan clan are commemorated past and present. The Forge was painted this year.

We loved how you treat the details of these buildings – such as the door latches. The Credit Union is another community service provided from this delightful area. Around the corner you celebrate the history of An Post and motorisation in your community in the new mural. You acknowledge the artist individually in your submission.

You say that your biggest project this year under this category heading was the restoration of the community centre. A lot of this work was obviously internal. The centre is at the back of the Fairgreen and is not particularly 'part of' the Green. This is probably good, as the design of the building would not lend itself to the immediate Fairgreen surroundings. Well done on this project which is of immeasurable value obviously to the community but it does not affect the (external) built environment greatly. And now we wonder if you can improve the fine two storey stone building beside the community centre. This building at the moment looks neglected (and is a more prominent building in relation to the Fairgreen) with some broken windows.

The garden of the vacant house across the road from the Fairgreen appears to have been given a weed killing treatment, and the garden did not look the better for it. The pristine white wall with blue capping connects the Fairgreen area back to the eastern part of the village. This looked so clean that an adjudicator could almost believe that it had been painted the night before! It is quite a feat to have such a clean wall so close to a busy road! The delightful rosebushes along this wall boundary added to the good effect. However we would not consider the hanging basket standard to be an asset to this area, as this traditional wall and planting does not need in modern addition. Furthermore the standard causes a certain amount of obstruction on the footpath. A red shed corrugated roof in this area (at the end of the mural) would benefit from repainting – although a large part of the roof is covered by vegetation. There is no need to remove the vegetation - but just to paint the exposed roof. By contrast the corrugated roof at the village end of the clean white wall has been upgraded. We found the Heritage of Ballynacally information board interesting, and we particularly enjoyed seeing the aerial photograph of the village. This gives a great sense of context to where one is presently located. Built heritage such as Paradise House and St Martin's Well, Canon Island and Ballycorrick Church are described. You provide important information about the built heritage on this board, including information about protected structures/listed buildings. This is excellent. The village pump on the Fairgreen looked really well in its whitewashed square enclosure which is sited on the grass area, and surrounded by low growing pretty red flowers in two triangular beds. We notice your repeating of the choice of flowers in various locations, and we commend you for this as it gives a lovely clean organised look to the village, which is not formal, but yet has a visual unity. The well painted yellow single-storey building behind the pump provides a terrific colour contrast. The church is beautifully presented and very well landscaped. At the school three flagpoles were empty. The gates would benefit from repainting, as would the vertical railings at the door. The boundary wall needs repainting before next year. The adjudicator admired the school mural in the school shelter but felt it could be freshened up, as could the 'cartwheel' seat. V. Carrigg is a very fine building with classically simple lettering. However a little touching up of paint - particularly over the name sign - would improve the overall appearance. The large surfaced space in front of the building with the lower elevation painted red would benefit from some softening. The potted yellow flowers by the door – although colourful were too small in scale to create a landscaped effect. M. Griffin was very well presented with contrasting green and black elevations, although the chimney would benefit from repainting. A pebble dash single-storey house with lupins growing in the garden and white boundary wall with salmon pink coloured capping had an access beside it which lead to a galvanised roofed shed (which could be seen from the road). The presentation of this shed was superior, even though it was at the back of the house. This is the type of attention to detail that is to be seen in a village like yours - where everybody seems to care about doing the best for the village. The red garage door was echoed by the magnificent geranium display in the small window – and all this could be seen from the public road. Well done to the owners. It must be very difficult to keep the low yellow wall in front of Daly's Bar clean, as it is directly at the road edge. The remainder of this property was very well presented – apart from the intrusion of a satellite dish on the front elevation. We wondered how many arches there were to the bridge, as we suspected that some were overgrown. We found our answer in the stone carved monument in the Fairgreen. Your bridge is five arched – although we could only see two. The beautiful stone arched bridge had its yellow and black traffic 'warning' paint renewed. We feel that some of the stonework may have been treated with weed killer? We noted some lovely red gates in the area of the stone bridge. Perhaps red is the colour you could choose for painting all gates in the village (please see our comments under Tidiness). We appreciate the fact that you have some problem with the derelict properties on the approach to the bridge from the Kildysart approach. You can only do what you can, and we note that you will eventually succeed in improving this situation. Meanwhile the lovely whitewashed walls and raised hedging in front of this property ameliorates the situation.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

We admired the extensive grassed area on the Ennis approach which included information plinth, picnic seating, and insect hotel, stone-enclosed flower beds, and lovely tree edging. The lateral garden/landscaped area along the roadside at Griffins/Slán area was much admired. The green shrubbery and colourful floral insertions looked well against the stone walls and the green wall behind. We loved the old bicycle with the overflowing basket of flowers. This would make an excellent Irish postcard. We have already said that the Fairgreen is the most important aspect of your built environment, but it is also an equally most important part of your landscaped environment. Full marks to the way in which you maintain its landscaping. We admired the lovely mature trees and the cared for grass space. We think the advertising/directional sign on the corner at the edge of the square should be replaced with – if necessary at all – a finger post sign. Across the road the junction on the Kildysart side has a nice gravelled area edged by good potted floral containers. The monkey puzzle tree here is imposing, and gives a vertical emphasis to this area. This distracts the eye somewhat from the less presentable corner of this junction on the village side. We understand the reason for this of course is the on unoccupancy of the house on this corner. The rose lovers' bench (sponsored by the Credit Union) area by the riverside is a quiet oasis. This is tremendous use of a small space as a

naturally landscaped area. The black bench with its rose insert was well maintained. We noticed the continuation of the Tree Trail at this point. Well done on maintaining the natural ambience of this lovely space, whilst augmenting the tree planting, and making it usable without destroying its character. One boundary along the path to the Holy Well looks a little raw - with concrete post and wire fencing. We hope that this can be planted with some hedging, so that the area will look less raw. The other boundary of the footpath looks very well. The limestone monument in the Fairgreen with significant local representations such as Paradise House is a great addition to the Fairgreen. Obviously you had a good stone mason working on this project. We very much admired the lovely children's playground with the cheerful yellow gate. What a delightful place for children to play in and adults to rest in. The seating around the semi circular paving faces the children's playground and can provide a supervisory 'post' for adults whilst children play. Your taste in your village is evident again in the excellent sign which you had designed for the playground. You have created an apple orchard using traditional Irish varieties. We admired the new circular stone flower beds at the Forge Cross and at the Kilydysart side of the village. You restocked the flower beds next to 'the Cliff.' Alpines were planted into the cliff face. Plant cuttings have been started for the future planting of the Celtic Knot garden in the Fairgreen. Whereas this sounds like an interesting project we would caution you against cluttering the Fairgreen. Be careful! You removed dead trees and shrubs and generally maintain all landscaping.

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

We note that you began the eradication of Japanese knot weed which is prevalent in the area. We sympathise with you on having this virulent weed to deal with. We were delighted to see the very interesting wildlife board at the large grassed/picnic area on the Ennis approach. Here the wildlife/birds have (we are glad to say) been given their Irish name. You rebuilt the insect hotel incorporating a roof to attract bees and butterflies. You defined an area at the picnic area as a wildflower garden. You are correct in not removing lichen from stone walls. You maintain natural hedgerows, river banks and other natural areas suitable as habitats. You established links with the Biodiversity Officer in Clare County Council who has been advising you. (We note you took best advice from the Tree Council of Ireland when you were installing the Tree Trail in the past as they are credited on your Tree Trail signage). This is good practice. You also obtain advice from the local authority in relation to communal composting. We noticed the bird table at the grassed recessed space on the Ennis approach road.

No new project has been presented this year which raises awareness and understanding to the general public, nor have you presented any survey data with regard to your wildlife stock, but we are sure that your preparatory work will lead to further advancement in this category in the near future. It appears that weed killer had been used in various places and on approach roads. This is not good for the environment. We would encourage you to consider nonchemical methods of weed control. If you speak to your County Heritage Officer/County Biodiversity Officer we are sure that you would be well advised in this matter.

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

We notice that you had a solar powered traffic sign near the bridge. You collect rainwater. You have replaced all bulbs in the public lighting system around the Fairgreen to energy-saving bulbs on a timer switch. You use texts and e-mails to save paper. You encourage the community to check relevant websites in relation to this topic. You started an ongoing used clothing collection service. You held a very successful bring and buy sale. You are involved in a number of other recycling issues. These latter are all admirable projects, but recycling is only part of 'the story'. 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.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We were a little surprised to find some of the low wooden notice holders were bereft of their notices on the wide grass picnic/landscaped area on the Ennis approach (right hand side) on adjudication day. We were also a little taken aback by the rough state of the area between the road and the GAA pitch which is also very roughly surfaced. Furthermore the clothes banks here was surrounded by weeds, and a few parking cones and concrete blocks. The field behind the banks was also weedy and neglected looking. This gave quite an untidy impression contrary to the initial impression along the Ennis approach. One of the adjacent road signs was also a bit grubby. There was a small amount of dead vegetation on the inside of a red capped boundary wall near the bridge. The bring banks are located discreetly at the back and to the side of the Fairgreen. The bright primary colours of the bins are complemented by the red contrast in wall behind. This gives a lift to what can often be a very dull and dreary location in a village or town. The bins - apart from the white bin - are clean and they are placed on a raised bed with nice floral planting to each side and with floral troughs in between each bin. The white local authority sign has some faded graphics. Otherwise the signage is clean and clear. We noticed that you had placed a litter bin beside the bring banks. This is a good idea as sometimes in adjudicator finds a plastic or cardboard container abandoned beside bins after people have emptied their 'cargo'. At the junction opposite the Fairgreen the white wall along the minor road badly needs repainting. We understand that this is part of the unoccupied house; however it is at a strategic corner. See what you can do before 2015. You replaced damaged litter bins and put one in the picnic area. You repaired and repainted communal seating. You cleaned and painted their children's play area on the Fairgreen. You have cleaned and restored signage and information boards. You took part in the Spring Clean Day. You say that your village has always been litter conscious. We saw just a few isolated scraps of litter. You carry out litter patrols according to the needs of the time of the year. You carry patrols out daily for seven months of the year. Local walkers are helping you. On the Ennis approach, despite the excellence of the approach maintenance - as in

all approach roads to the village - field gates are in their raw metal state. In your village which has achieved so much it would be a great idea if you could encourage the landowners to paint field gates in a particular uniform colour. This will add an extra dimension to the neatness of your village, and will also give unity to the village. In due course when the economy improves you will hopefully be able to underground cables.

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

On the Ennis approach just before the village name sign we greatly admired a lovely farmhouse built on three different levels, with three varying roof levels. This is a lovely traditional house, and it is meticulously maintained. You are correct in saying that local residents maintain their properties to a very high standard. You try to maintain unoccupied properties. You paint and clean all common areas. The Rossclyff Court Estate does not appear to have any name sign. However we did notice its foundation stone which confirmed – together with your map that this was the estate's name. Perhaps you can arrange to have this estate provided with a name which is legible from the public road. It would be good if you could also inscribe the estate name in Irish on a stone boulder or plaque or whatever method of identification you wish to use. The estate was very well presented. We wholeheartedly commend the man who was gardening at the open space at the bottom of the estate on what was a very hot day. We admired the lovely landscaped bank between the estate and the public road. We also admired the lovely brick enclosed raised flower bed with its bright red flowers. The housing estate has an active residents committee. Well done to them on receiving the second place award in the 2013 Clare County Council's best kept estate in Clare. We admired a pristine white single story house facing one on a hill as one emerges from the school road.

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

At a distance from the village we encountered the Catholic Church. The church is beautifully presented and very well landscaped.

The first introduction one gets to the main part of the village is the delightful grassed recessed space where the simple black and white metal name sign is located, together with the Tidy Towns award sign. (With regard to the Tidy Towns award sign we think you can add an extra few years since 2010!) It is rather a pity that there is no place to pull in off the road properly here. The adjudicator parked in a field entrance just on the Ennis side of this lovely incidental space. The area is meant to be visited on foot from the village because it is accessed by footpath from the village. But the natural reaction of the curious/inquisitive visitor is to pull in and read the interesting notices available here. The splayed entrance area where we parked appeared to have been treated with chemical weed killer – evidence of which weed treatment we noticed elsewhere in the village. (Please note our comments under Wildlife). The raised bed here is delightful visually, but there is much to engage the mind also with regard to the Ballynacally native Tree Trail information. It is somewhat of a pity that the Irish names for the native trees have not been included. There are lovely views to be had also from this approach road to lush surrounding countryside, and of course we noted the Castle on our way into the village. You show the castle on your map but you do not mention the castle in any of your literature. Are there any plans to conserve the Castle? There were a few dead branches in the grass margin at the opposite side of the road here. And just beyond the recessed space with the village name sign we observed a site on the left-hand side approach – a site with quite an amount of withered branches and some scrap wood etc. As one moves on towards the village along this Ennis approach road one is struck by the meticulous care of the grass areas at the roadside and of the care of the footpaths. In this area we observed the insect hotel; the information plinths with their opportunity to scan material related to the village, picnic table and planted containers. We would be inclined to suggest that you stick with planting in the soil in this area, as it is more sustainable and more appropriate to a rural village. The road down to the school is very roughly surfaced. The school road has been trimmed but the cut grass should be removed. Between the school road and the village the edge of the road looks poor in places. Nearer the village a whitewashed stone wall and bright red gates opened onto a field in which there was a hay barn, the red roof of which would benefit from repainting. On the Kilydysart approach we admired semi-mature trees and good grass edges /whitewashed walls. One dead tree was observed. The Tidy Towns Gold Medal sign here also needs updating as it refers only up to 2010. We would suggest cutting back on the number of pots between the trees on the grass margin. Once again we would suggest planting sustainably in the soil instead. An earth bank could be reseeded. Some rough edges to the road on the Kildysart side of the stone bridge were noted. You liaise with local landowners to maintain the stone walls around the village. You realise how important a feature these are to your village. You maintain and cut verges on approach roads and see to the capping on bridges. Roadside hedges are trimmed and maintained. Planters on the approach roads are filled with plants marking the approach to the village. We saw a very good example of the amalgamation of signage on a sign which accommodated four signs. These four signs included two directional signs – one for Ennis – one for Cranny – one for the narrow bridge – and the final one with regard to keeping the village litter free. This is an example which many other centres could learn from. The sign was located on a well maintained grass verge clean green grass bank behind. This also helped towards legibility of the signs due to the lack of clutter. Signage was cleaned and repainted during the year.