

Tidy Towns Competition 2010

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballina** Ref: **824**
County: **Tipperary(North)** Mark: **279**
Category: **C** Date(s): **10/07/2010**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009	Mark Awarded 2010
Overall Development Approach	50	44	46
The Built Environment	50	34	36
Landscaping	50	41	43
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	21	21
Litter Control	50	39	40
Waste Minimisation	20	14	15
Tidiness	30	16	16
Residential Areas	40	24	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	28	28
General Impression	10	8	9
TOTAL MARK	400	269	279

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome Ballina to the national TidyTowns competition 2010 and thank you, the Ballina TidyTowns Committee, for entering the 2010 Competition. Your Entry Form is prepared in a most comprehensive manner and thank you for that and for the supporting material. This submission for 2010 is an excellent production and well done on the attention to detail. This work is a credit to all those responsible for the research and preparation of the document. Your submission consists of detailed entry form information on all aspects of the competition, which is set out over 18 pages of text, including a town map, relating to TidyTown activities in Ballina. In addition there is very comprehensive further information set out on 13 Appendices, including; hardcopy material on Newsletters (I liked the press clippings attached to the colourful cardboard Stars); Local Environmental Awards; Heritage Trail leaflet; and Photographs of TidyTowns activities in Ballina. Also part of the submission is a very detailed 46 page TidyTowns Action Plan 2010-2012 prepared for Ballina by Donaldson Tourism and Heritage Consultancy. There is obviously a very good community spirit in Ballina and well done on the progress made over the past few years. Credit to all 10 members of the Committee and to all additional volunteers involved. Congratulations to all the partner organisations, both public and private, and their members that assist in the work of TidyTowns. The people of Ballina will benefit from all this work by improving their quality of life in this fine waterside town. Your most dedicated Chairman deserves praise for his ongoing energies and leadership illustrated by the regular 6am litter patrol work. In this difficult economic climate well done on your ability to link and benefit from financial and other supports available from the public and private sector, this is of major benefit to Ballina. Your Communications strategy is excellent, highlighted by the Environmental Awards Night. The links with the schools in Ballina, Boher and Killaloe are paying both short and hopefully longer-term benefits for pupils and parents/ guardians alike. We liked the WOW (Walk on Wednesdays) initiative. The Pride of Place is evident in Ballina and well done on the social networking aspects of your activities and efforts to further help the area become an all-inclusive society.

The Built Environment:

Ballina is a busy commercial, tourist/leisure, heritage and dormitory town, and is coping well with maintaining a good balance between the old and the new. The area is located in magnificent closeness to the Shannon and Lough Derg and the hills of North Tipperary and Clare. Due to the above features of the town, road traffic is seldom slack. The Ballina Quay area caters well for the water-based leisure traffic. As a Heritage Town it has many excellent features including; The Washerwoman's Bridge; The Bridge across the Shannon; The Lakeside Hotel; the Church of Our Lady and St Lua; The Station House; and the former Constabulary Barracks. The Church is a beautiful structure in well-maintained grounds and nice floral displays on the surrounding railings. Attention to detail such as indicating the Collection point outside the church is noted. The Bridge is an imposing historic construction dating back to 1770. The Lakeside Hotel is a superb facility for the town and surrounding region with magnificent landscaped gardens. The Fountain Stone as a landmark is probably little noticed now in its location near the school but a reminder of a meeting place in former times. The National School is an excellent educational facility for the town; it is well maintained and landscaped. I liked the two sculptures outside. The Templekelly Cemetery with the new bilingual signs is now looking in good condition. The old Parish hall looks well. The business premises are a credit to their owners with high quality shop fronts well maintained and adorned, in the main, with appropriate floral displays. Premises to impress include, McKeoghs complex (I liked the Millennium clock); McKeoghs shop; The River Run Restaurant; Country Chic, Collins Pharmacy, A Touch of Class Fashions, O'Donovans Pub and Restaurant, Flanagan's Restaurant; The Cherry Tree; Alex O'Neill Solicitors; Mills Bar; JD's Sportsbar; Katwalk; Mollys Bar; the Lady Penelope; the Photographic Studio; Liam O'Riain's; and Goosers. Well done to those responsible for the coat of paint to the "old garage" and the adjoining "old disused cottage" I loved the red door of the "cottage". There is one old and seemingly derelict building visible across the field from the Ard Lua road, which could be better maintained. While much work is evident on the lampstandards the wirescape of the overhead cables is still a distraction. The Riverside Park needs to be completed as soon as possible. Street name plates would be an asset to the visitor. The removal of plastic name plates on shopfronts might be considered as a target

Landscaping:

The location of Ballina over the water is superb. The viewing area and car park area overlooking the river, the lake and Killaloe is a lovely introduction for the visitor to this lovely town. Thanks to the Festival Committee of 1991 for work on this viewing area. The Information Panels add to the nice landscaping but the absence of litterbins here is a negative. Opposite the landscaping at the corner of Ard Coillte and Boher Road is excellent. On the way into town from Birdhill the riverside park is in good condition with well-maintained grass area and mature trees. However the boundary concrete railings are a work in progress. The concrete cobble stone area at the Nenagh/Birdhill junction offers a nice display of flowers. The hanging baskets and containers at the bridge near the cemetery are attractive and in full bloom. The mature trees at the stone wall area on the main road at Ard Coillte and at the lower end of Boher Road offer a wonderful display. The ongoing planting of trees from National Tree Week at Ard Coillte, the School and Cnoc Ard and Cnoc Cluain is all positive. Your strategy for year round colour in green areas and roadside flower beds in addition to the encouragement of the housing estates to plant spring bulbs is very positive. Credit to the initiative of the two ladies in taking ownership of the flower bed on Main street. The annual Local Environmental Awards are so worthwhile for the residents and the business people alike. Well done to all participants in the seven categories. We noticed the lovely plaque for the best kept housing estate at Ivy Grove. The nominations from the seven estates are indications of the positive feel good reaction to the Awards. Your attention to year round colour in flower and shrubbery beds is indicated by the excellent work at the corner of Ard Coillte, with the switch from spring daffodils to a summer bed. The area around the Washerwoman's bridge is still a work in progress. The GAA grounds looks well. The little oasis opposite Mill's Bar is a restful location; the salmon sculpture is excellent. The three landscaped milk churns near the Co-Op stores are nice. The old village water pump in county colours is attractive set in nice flowerbeds. The landscaped area at the corner of Grange Road is impressive. The School and the Parish Hall both look well. The flower baskets on the railing at the roundabout are attractive. One area requiring attention is the footpath as it approaches the Lakeside Hotel, grass from the adjoining field needs to be trimmed and cut back. A further area, which would benefit from additional attention, is the gravelled area near the seating beside the bridge. The little Grotto near the school is a nice feature and well landscaped. There is a hidden 'garden' as one approaches the bridge across the Shannon, guarded by the iron gate and two magnificent mature trees.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

At the riverside park area on the Birdhill road there is a sign stating this a Preserved Area and Not to Disturb, there is a similar one at the Slipway further down. These need further information for the visitor to fully appreciate the efforts being made to preserve the areas. The display of a number of interpretative panels showing the native fish and the birds of Lough Derg is very worthwhile. Your plans to add the Flora and Fauna panels are positive. The ongoing Riverside Park issues are being worked on and remain a concern. Well done on the Getting to Know Lough Derg Newsletter and the "Walk and Talk" evening with Dr Dan Minchin in May last. The swimming pool area and car park is in excellent condition and the pool a great facility for the public.

Litter Control:

Our visit to Ballina was on the wettest weekend of the Summer (so far) but despite the rain the town was mainly litter free. There are still areas where cigarette butts are in evidence. The TidyTowns Litter Patrol is doing excellent work, Praise to the Chairman and Leader worker for their "dawn patrol" clean up. At the viewing park overlooking Killaloe there is need for some litterbins. The Swimming Pool and the Car Park areas were clean. The residential estates were almost all well turned out and free of litter. No Dumping signs were in evidence in the Estates. Your work with Killaloe on National Spring Clean Day is very positive. Twenty bags of litter and rubbish collected is a positive outcome on the Clean Up day. The TidyTowns utility truck is an excellent help. The use of the mechanical street sweeper on a more frequent basis is also positive. The St Patrick's Day Float deserves a mention. The Local Environmental Awards between the different categories of gardens, estates and Business Frontages is a catalyst for involvement of many people. Credit to FÁS and the County Council and TidyTowns volunteers for the more frequent bins collection.

Waste Minimisation:

Well done on the projects in the 2010 programme. These are set out under the different categories; e.g. Education – the Walk and Talk evening in May seems to be a success. The links with the school are praiseworthy in particular in the WOW initiative and the water conservation programme. I liked the multilingual signs at the recycling bins. The other promotions that deserve mention and congratulations include: Local Recycling of glass, plastics and aluminium; textiles and other materials; the existence of and use of the utility truck in waste and litter minimisation; and St Patrick's Day Float.

Tidiness:

Well done on your projects outlined in the 2010 programme.

Ballina looked tidy despite the rain and the road traffic. The wire free streetscape is not yet achieved and is a project needing completion. The new footpath and bollards on the road opposite Goosers is an excellent project and looks well.

Good car parking exists at the viewing area at Riverside Park near the junction at Ard Coillte/Boher Road and also at the quayside near Flanagan's. At the riverside park on the Birdhill road the new concrete fencing is still a work in progress. Some of the picnic tables are set in concrete platforms that are not level.

Some tidying up is needed on the footpath, on road leading to the Lakeside Hotel, of overgrown grass through the wire fence.

Many of the residential estates are quite splendid in their layout.

The Riverside Park needs completion. There is a bit of clutter with the various signs at the roundabout near the bridge. The old post box set into the wall near the bridge could be painted.

Residential Areas:

The pride of place was evident in both the more traditional single residences and the residences in the housing estates throughout the town. Many of the houses on the outskirts of the town are in excellently maintained condition and the gardens are set out in an attractive landscaped manner. With many of the housing estates, the houses are well laid out and the common grassed areas are well maintained in addition to some excellent individual gardens. Little or no litter was evident on my visit to all Estates. Private residences on the outskirts were in first class condition and showed obvious pride in their homes with display of summer colours in gardens. Particular estates of note included: Shannon View (noted bilingual signs at entrance to estate); Shoreside; Ashgrove Meadows; Ard Coillte; Ivy Grove(the winner's plaque 2009 at the entrance was noted);Palm Grove Drive; Cnoc Ard, Ard Lua. Some of the older estates now benefit by the erection of bilingual signs showing estate names. The residences and buildings on Caherelly Close look well and the landscaped stone sign is small but attractive. The Local Environmental Awards is an excellent incentive for the householders to partake in a very meaningful way in TidyTowns activities.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach roads looked well on my visit; with flower tubs, flower beds, and hedges in good condition. Approach roads are well landscaped and in general well maintained. The hanging baskets at the bridge look well. At the Nenagh/Birdhill junction the cobble stone effect of the concrete area is attractive and will be easy to maintain. Car Parking at the Birdhill/Nenagh entrance entices the visitor to spend more leisure time. Boher Road with its tree canopy and tall hedges was very impressive.

General Impression:

It poured rain during my visit to Ballina in an otherwise beautiful summer to date. Despite the rain I enjoyed my visit to a lovely part of our country. The views from the town are spectacular. The Shannon and Lough Derg are majestic. Your neighbour Killaloe looks well on the other side of the river and in another county. Thank you for all the ongoing work and commitment to the TidyTowns competition and to the excellent improvements to your town. Credit also for the co-operation established with your neighbouring town of Killaloe. Keep up the excellent work and congratulations to the committee, your partners and to all the volunteers on a task well done. There are many fine projects articulated in your three year Action Plan 2010-2012, the achievement of which will result in further progress in the competition. It might also be worth considering a visit to a prize-winning town in the national TidyTowns competition as an opportunity to exchange experiences and also as a further social occasion. I look forward to future visits to Ballina.