

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballinamore** Ref: **422**
County: **Leitrim** Mark: **276**
Category: **C** Date(s): **08/07/2012**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2011 | Mark Awarded 2012 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 42 | 43 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 36 | 36 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 41 | 41 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 27 | 29 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 32 | 32 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 14 | 14 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 9 | 9 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 29 | 29 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 35 | 36 |
| General Impression | 10 | 7 | 7 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 272 | 276 |

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator welcomes Ballinamore to the 2012 National TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your detailed application and supporting documents. We note that you are in the second year of your three-year plan but initiated a process to develop a new plan with professional guidance. Your draft plan is noted. Your maps were very useful this year and easy to follow. Your idea to get groups together to share ideas and work together is to be commended and this adjudicator has seen firsthand how this has really helped raise the bar in Louth with the TidyTowns Together group who help to co-ordinate the various towns' and villages' approaches and work plans. We thank the Leitrim Development Company for supporting you and the other groups. This adjudicator mentioned to another centre that a similar approach for a biodiversity/habitat study would be beneficial to the groups and commissioning this as one piece of work should achieve greater value for money. We are glad that you have two more committee members this year and can call upon a further 12 dedicated volunteers. However, with a population of 1,093 (Census 2011 data) this adjudicator hopes that over the next few years more people in the town will assist you with your work projects as you have a large area to cover. Do you distribute this adjudication report to the householders in the town? It may be a worthwhile task this year to raise awareness of the competition so everyone can see the effort the committee puts into making Ballinamore a nicer place to live and work for all concerned. Perhaps it will give you some leverage to garner extra volunteer support for your work nights. We acknowledge the two secondary school students who are involved with TidyTowns as part of the Presidents Awards scheme – well done and we hope they find the work varied and enjoyable. Please let them get cracking on setting up a Ballinamore TidyTowns Facebook page – many centre's are having great success promoting their works using social networking sites, to keep up interest ensure that you keep it regularly updated with photos and briefings. The Ballinamore TidyTowns website is very informative also. You now have a school liaison officer which is noteworthy and should help the flow of information from your group to the schools and vice versa. You are fortunate to enjoy support from a large number of bodies, agencies, businesses and clubs.

The Built Environment:

The adjudicator last year gave you a very detailed account of your built environment so should assist you in making improvements. We note that there are two new development projects planned in future; a new community hospital on the Link Road and the new secondary school out the Railway Road. The old railway station now housing a school was admired. We visited the GAA pitch and noted the colourful mural; we commend all involved for their efforts the mural has really helped brighten up a dull wall. The planting at the sign was admired here but the wall could be softened with planting. The children's play area was clean and it was nice to see the continuation of the railway theme in this park which gives it a bit of local identify, local children were enjoying the train during our visit! We noted works are currently also ongoing at the Sports Hall. We visited Ballinamore Enterprise Centre and noted flagpoles not being used and one displaying a rather ripped and worn flag. If these flagpoles are no longer of use we suggest they be taken down. The Valspar factory entrance was clean and tidy. The High Street and Main Street in Ballinamore are good and the adjudicator liked the varying heights and styles of the buildings, for example the three storey vernacular in style Cumiskeys to the two storey stone built Poor Scholar. The modern style solicitor's office is considered to be not very in keeping with the rest of the street. The front corner of the Health Centre building beside the chapel is in need of tidying. The paving is getting very green and the electrical box and old notice board are untidy. Properties that appealed to this adjudicator included: The Lakeland Bar, the library (however the red paint is questionable), the AIB, the Credit Union and the Scorpio Boutique. . We visited the Canal Dock and were about to inspect the public toilets when a lady arrived to clean them. Ballinamore Marina is well presented.

Landscaping:

Bases of trees around the Square and in front of the school here could be improved as grass and weeds were noted. We noted the monument to mark the 50th anniversary of the closure of the Leitrim Cavan Narrow Gauge Railway at the school, this is not in a very visible location, but the bright railway gate draws the curious visitor over. Landscaping at the Old Courthouse is satisfactory, the adjudicator thought that the shrub bed here could be weeded and dead plants removed. We noted a dead plant to the background of the Plouezec twinning plaque. Planting at the base of trees was also noted here at the Courthouse which is not considered best practice and is discouraged by adjudicators. Planting at the base of trees was also noted at the John Joe McGirl monument. The Marina site is well landscaped and looked extremely well on adjudication day.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The schools are doing sterling work in this category. We visited the Ballinamore PPS School Garden and polytunnel, the vegetables look good and we wonder who gets to eat them all! We noted the wildlife information panels in various locations including the Canal Bank Walk, Dun na Bo and at two schools along the Convent Road. In Dun na Bo we noted that you have cut one metre from the roadway here and left the rest to grow wild for biodiversity purposes we have assumed. The community garden down Fohera Lane was shown on your map but we were unsure if this was a private property or not and did not proceed past the entrance (no signs present). We noted some knotweed just down from the entrance of High Street on Fohera Lane. We note that you state that you are unaware how to deal with the problem of invasive species. Visit www.fisheriesireland.ie/invasive-species/ or <http://invasivespeciesireland.com/> where you should be able to find details of a person to contact. Your local Environmental Awareness Officer should also be able to assist you. You should first get advice and identify all your locations of the stands, get a suitable person appropriately trained up and competent to conduct the spraying programme or else engage a specialist consultancy. You are very busy in this category with your willow weaving, ducks on the canal, frog survey, partaking in Leitrim Birdwatch walks, Biodiversity training day for the RSS worker, Urban Wildlife Walk etc. You are doing very well in this category so we hope you can keep the momentum up.

Litter Control:

Thank you for your information in relation to the Bring Bank, including your approach to maintenance. The Bring Bank was presentable and we noted your plastic planting tubs on top of the wall behind the banks. We noted a bag of clear glass bottles at the base of one of the receptacles and seen that the two clear glass receptacles were full. However, we noted upon further inspection a grey receptacle was also labelled to accept clear glass but this was not overly clear due to a TidyTowns sign and perhaps the person leaving the clear glass did not see this receptacle either. In this instance you have not been penalised as we understand that there are currently issues with emptying the receptacles all over the country. Litter control in and around the town was satisfactory but we would draw your attention to the fountain area at the Railway junction, some litter was noted in the fountain and dog fouling and coke cans were seen on the grass here. Continue to encourage all dog owners to act responsibly and clean up dog fouling when out walking dogs. Once again this year well done with your Good Friday Spring Clean and we hope it is the first of many that Donohoe's Supervalu will assist you with.

Tidiness:

The area around the Tesco complex and retail units on the Inner Relief Road is very poor. Two cranes are still in place and should be removed and the boarding on the unit is less than desirable. We acknowledge that you have tried to contact someone at KPMG regarding this matter but were given a brief and unhelpful response. Perhaps seek advice from the County Council on how to progress. This adjudicator thinks that this whole area impacts negatively on the aesthetics of Ballinamore. The 'Shannon-Erne Waterway Muckros Lough to Garadice Lough' sign beside the Canal Bank Walk should be removed as it is unsightly and unreadable. We note that you have written to Waterways Ireland regarding this and feel that this will be removed, but as this has been mentioned previously we suggest you persist. We also reiterate the sentiments of the adjudicator last year with regards to the four signs on the opposite side of the river at the Canal Bank; seek to remove these. Be aware that Leitrim County Council has a new signage policy (roads, parks, verges etc) aiming to eliminate unauthorised and inappropriate signage and advertising in public property where a Section 254 licence is not in place. Include regular cleaning/washing of signs in your work programme, a number require cleaning including the 50km sign on Willowfield Road. The auctioneering sign at the Convent should be removed.

Waste Minimisation:

The schools in Ballinamore are dedicated to the environmental cause and we are delighted to note that there are no fewer than five Green Flags attained in the town. Congratulations to all involved and we hope that you can keep up the good work. Many of the projects you mention are concerned with recycling. While we encourage recycling this category is essentially about not generating as much waste in the first place. If the reuse of football boots scheme gets off the ground this would be an innovative project. Many centres run a school uniform reuse scheme which would also be appropriate. Awareness raising, information sharing and the waste audit would all be worthwhile projects to undertake. You should use your Tidy Towns website to promote waste prevention.

Residential Areas:

We are pleased that the committee has approached one person from each area of the town to act as a contact for that area. Residents in the Sean Bhaile estate are thanked for forming a residents association in 2011. The adjudicator wonders how many of your residential estates have established residents associations. In Pairc Fea properties were presented well however the communal green areas were in need of cutting. In contrast the green in The Willows was recently cut and appeared well maintained. Attention to roadside verges is required to some properties on Willowfield Road. We visited Lahard and noted the polytunnel; there is good planting in Lahard. We thought that the basketball court and in particular the basket rings/hoops appeared a bit worse for wear as they were rusted. Tratnona senior citizens and the community centre here are neat and all presented well. You have succeeded in getting some improvement works carried out at Dun A Bo - well done.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The blue and white welcome signs contained in stone planters were admired; the Fáilte and Slán additions are a nice touch. The new road junction at the Railway Road was noted and this helps to enhance the square in this vicinity which is one of your main focal points in the town. Consider more planting of native species on your approach roads, alder (suitable for wet areas), birch ash, and wild cherry, are all great for wildlife and easy to grow

General Impression:

The adjudicator found it a little hard to know if your works had been carried out since your last adjudication in 2011 or previous to that. You mention some work projects that are detailed in the 2011 adjudication report. Perhaps consider this while drafting your submission next year. The many photographs and supporting documentation enhance your application. The committee and volunteers are working hard to improve Ballinamore. You appear to be very enthusiastic and have a good number of projects planned. We wish you well with these and hope that you get some more volunteers to get their hands dirty for Ballinamore Tidy Towns next year.