

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballon** Ref: **526**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **289**
Category: **B** Date(s): **20/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	45
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	35
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	39
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	28
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	61
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33
TOTAL MARK	450	289

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Na fáiltí geala roimh Ballon Improvement Group go comórtas SuperValu TidyTowns na bliana 2014. Thank you for your completed entry form, the map, your 3 Year Plan and other supplementary material. Your enthusiasm and determination to improve your village leaps at one from each page of your submission. You use the word 'ignited' to describe the change that your participation in the SuperValu TidyTowns Competition has brought about through volunteerism. Siopa Glas has evolved, you say, from your involvement with the competition. So too has the appearance of Ballon evolved over those twelve years. Ballon is on a busy through road and one can imagine what it would look like were it not for the enthusiasm and determination mentioned earlier. So take a bow. While the adjudicator feels that there is no need for such a lengthy submission and no need for the appendices with the exception of the map and a 3 Year Plan he has to admit that he loved the clarity of description of each project in all of the categories. It is clear that you are willing to reach out for assistance where necessary. You have found out over the years whose help you should target. Very good. At times the lists of activities strayed into incorrect sections and were repeated in a number of sections an example being 'Painted the railings at the zebra crossing' found itself in the residential section as well as the approach roads section. This adjudicator feels that Gaeilge should be noticeable in our towns and villages. So he was delighted to see the Siopa Glas, aptly named, the Slí na Sceach and to find your Ionad Pobail is also bilingual.

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

One has to walk this village to appreciate the streetscape. The traffic is too manic to enjoy the street by car. The overall impression is of an enterprising main street that is also residential. Both the businesses and the residents keep their fronts fresh and clean by regular painting. There are a few high walls that must become gritty from the passing traffic but they look resplendent due to your watchful eye. Likewise some tall gable ends reflect the summer sunshine. Some fronts stand out and their appearance must surely entice the traveller to stop a while. The street also benefits from the years of landscaping that has been ongoing. Off the main street buildings like the Credit Union, the Community Hall, the childcare facility, the Church add to the built environment stock. Back on the main road the businesses do all in their power to make Ballon a pleasant experience for the passing motorists as they pass by. The adjudicator felt that the business enterprise centre on the Fenagh Road needs a lift in its colouring either with paint or with floral displays.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

No matter what else one praises in Ballon one will always have to return to the landscaping. There are so many different landscaping projects that have been undertaken over the years. These landscaped areas are not just for visual delight but serve the purposes of nature as in the Nectar Garden or the bug hotel, enhance the appearance of

buildings as in the school, soften sharp corners as at the Fenagh Road junction, seclude housing with hedging, decorate the entrances to the estates. Multi purpose and multi disciplinary. Of course the residents benefit but so does the motorist. The colour and designs are a better tonic than a coffee to the motorist rushing to the next task of the day. The favourite of this adjudicator is the treatment of that tree outside the butchers. No car should be allowed park at that spot and hide this jewel. None of this happens by accident. A glance through your work sheet for the year tells how such splendour is achieved. Another glance through your long term plans shows how much energy is to be expended on maintenance and shows that you have definite plans for furthering developments in the landscaping category. I like the AIB backed orchard idea. Maybe you should look at the appearance of one of the estates with a view to toning it up with more colour and texture.

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

You are not just paying lip service to the demands of this category. You are determined to learn from those who know. And you seem to enjoy the learning process. A walk and talk with a local ecologist, great idea. Bird Watch Ireland are a wonderful resource. You want to follow best practice guidelines. You tap into the skill set and resources of Altamont. You send members to a SEED Conference. Your engagement with the school drives many of your projects in this category and that approach is laudable. Their nectar garden and the bug hotel must be a great source of excitement to the children. And those projects foster care and respect for their environment. The list continues but what impresses the adjudicator most is the planting of native hedging along roadways, the planting of herbaceous plants as well as bedding plants in landscaped beds. In other words the awareness you are building benefits wildlife on the ground. Given the location of the village and given the rich legacy of trees that adorn the village one must look forward eagerly to the biodiversity survey you intend. The one negative image that the adjudicator takes away in this section is the stretch of ditch on the Fenagh Road that has been treated with 'you know what'. The adjudicator did not understand the reference to the bees. But as a beekeeper it did raise a question, do you promote bee keeping among your followers?

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

An Siopa Glas, what a wonderful community venture. A person could spend the day nosing about. And it is a worthwhile reuse, rethink project but so demanding on the volunteers. It illustrates that there is a strong community spirit in the village. Someone is really civic minded in offering a premises in the heart of the village. And, this belongs by right to the streetscape section, your front adds to the interest of the street. Then there are projects that the adjudicator loves to read of: the water butts, the involvement with greenhome.ie, engagement with businesses on being green. A water conservation conference in September could get you on the John Murray show, and what a boost that would be. It is clear that you understand the priorities in this section and that you are gearing your projects to the needs of your community. You will notice the increase in the total marks in this category so much more will be demanded of you in the future. The adjudicator is surprised that the school pupils do not figure more frequently in this section. I read in last year's report that the school has 4 Green Flags, great. But this year's submission on sustainability is somewhat mute regarding the school.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Tidiness has many meanings and one concerns serenity. Were it not for the traffic calming measures in the village one would never be able to describe Ballon as a tidy place. The traffic is relentless. The traffic warden deserves a people of the year award for her patience and concern. That pedestrian crossing is vital. One wonders if another is necessary. The railings outside the school and the railings that shepherd the children onto the path are vital in creating peace of mind and so wonderfully painted red. Thankfully the road markings are well maintained and clear. The attention to road verges, to signage, to weed free kerbing all contribute to the tidiness in Ballon. So often farm gates can be a tidiness issue. The adjudicator was very pleased with the state of gates in the village and suggests that you might now take their appearance to another level by having them painted the same colour or have them painted yearly with paint from the Siopa Glas. You engage in daily litter picks, a must in a village with so much passing traffic. And still it is nigh impossible to keep a place litter free. The adjudicator met some litter, sorry despite all of your urgings as Gaeilge agus as Béarla. The Bring Centre was almost litter free. Someone had left a bag which angered the adjudicator. There is a little residue of broken glass that is somewhat offputting.

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

Your map was a great help in ensuring that nobody was overlooked in this section. One can divide the housing into the residential along the street, the housing estates and the single builds along the approach roads. All the residential areas are proudly presented. Your urgings to residents to freshen up with paint are being followed up in all areas. Some residents enjoy panoramic views and up on Ballon Hill one wondered would the wildlife mind if the hedge was cut so as to provide access to the views. Some of the newer estates have been able to take advantage of those views. These newer estate are settling into their surroundings, the landscaping is maturing but in some cases the residents need to be encouraged to bring more texture to their fronts. Your submission mentions the dumping of grass cuttings in one area. The dumped grass was spotted and the adjudicator wondered if there is any grass or general composting happening. A feature of all the estates is the amount of open space that exists, which is wonderful. But in the case of the slope at Ballon Hill the adjudicator feels that more of the grass along the front perimeter should be left uncut as an incentive to wildlife. If you agree with this policy of leaving areas unmown you might make an audit of such sites. Stand alone houses are a joy along the approach roads as are residences on the street.

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

To your credit you do not confine your activities to the speed limit signs along the approach roads. That means that Ballykealy House Hotel feels that it is part of the drive to present Ballon beautifully. There are some houses that also benefit from this policy. Traffic calming on the approach roads is vital to the peace of mind of all residents. Then the name stones sprout out of the ground to announce your village. The adjudicator liked the manner in which those stones are planted on the grass margin. Verges are regularly attended to as can be seen from the deep green colour of the grass verge. Residents play their part in ensuring that their patch is proudly presented. Look after the Fenagh approach along the left hand side.