

# Tidy Towns Competition 2016

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballincollig** Ref: **661**  
County: **Cork(South)** Mark: **321**  
Category: **G** Date(s): **14/06/2016**  
**02/08/2016**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	49	50
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	44	44
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	47	48
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	30	30
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	17	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	61
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	36	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	34
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>321</b>

### Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Your response to last year's comments are much appreciated. Thank you for the hand-drawn map which proved to be easily read and clear in its intention of drawing our attention to specified locations as well as backing up the information on the entry form. Increases in marking are awarded for significant advances on last year's entry. It is good to read that name signs are in process of manufacture. The canon motif is first class. It is also good to read that you meet other TidyTowns committees and that you have a 'dedicated liaison officer'. Your statement to the effect that you work with every segment of the community with the sole aim of improving the entire community' is a most worthy one. Congratulations on attracting 49 students from France to observe and share your work. Your break-down of statistics involving 168 volunteer projects (under the heading of Litter Control) is impressive; it underlines and illustrates your overall efficient organisation. The Three Year Plan that will take you up to the end of 2018 is comprehensive and self-critical; should it not include annual targets – deadline dates for the expected completion of each individual project – or perhaps all are so ongoing and overlapping that this would be an administrative encumbrance.

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

Having grown in a comparatively short time from village status to large town, Ballincollig does not possess the usual inherited architectural set-pieces common to long-established towns – among them Court House, Town Hall, Cathedral. The two churches, very well maintained and wonderfully contrasted in appearance, are hardly in the latter class. What has raised Ballincollig into a unique category of its own are three contributors: the handsome former barracks so skilfully adapted, the unique remains of the gunpowder manufactory and storage facilities, and – appropriately for the town's burgeoning economy – several very interestingly designed and superbly presented modern industrial and commercial structures, among them Radisens, Rollerjam, Core HR, Giant, portions of the Link Road Business Centre and the unusually innovative design of the shopping centre that is Tesco. None of these are marred, incidentally, with excessive advertising or mass-produced signage. Most of the small businesses and privately run shops are neat and tidy and may be genuinely proud of their appearance but in the long view they reflect what is the norm in most well-kept towns. It must be added that there is a very pleasing and relaxed atmosphere for shoppers in the short streets and lanes to the north and south of the main street. Congratulations for tapping into the paint scheme for buildings.

### Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The floral decorations throughout the town, whether on roundabouts or in plant boxes or tubs and other containers do not fail to make the desired impression. The wide grassed areas, especially towards the west end and connecting to housing developments, give a sense of thoughtful planning. The extensive, well equipped, sports

fields congregated on the river plain suggest that the youth and well-being of the town is well provided for. The nearby allotments growing what seemed to be unusually large vegetables clearly have a ready-made and busy work clientèle. The Regional Park, in all its aspects, and they are numerous, is the queen of landscaping and open spaces in Ballincollig. Perhaps the section nearest the bridge entrance was looking a little tired on the date of the visit but if so that is because of the large numbers of people walking on its lawns and cars making continual use of its spaces. The internal paths are well surfaced. The Linear Shrubbery Bed was much admired both for the choice of plants and for the work entailed. Thank you for supplying the information that 90 young trees have been planted in Ballincollig in the past year as well as 550 hydrangeas. Access to the Military Graveyard is naturally restricted but a good view was obtained through the gate; has an inventory of names been collected from the headstones? If not, this would be an absorbing project for a scholar. A dead tree should be removed and more urgently ivy should be stripped from at least one ancient yew. It is good to read that you plant bulbs for spring showing.

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

The neighbourhood of the gunpowder mills is rich in mature timber – limes, beeches, sycamores etc. It is good that the indigenous tree stock is being added to all the time. A Wild Life of the River Lee panel was noted. A particularly interesting interpretative panel was also seen at The Fen. Last year's adjudicator wondered if the canal system might be dredged and a centre for watersports, such as kayaking, created: there may be good hydrographic as well as financial reasons for not doing so. Have bird boxes, which you explain were built in the Men' Shed, attracted particular species, and if so what? We would very much like to see the results of the Kenneally Wild Life survey when it is completed. The Bug Hotel was not seen but it can be understood how it is causing such interest. It is a very brave move to tackle Japanese Knotweed.

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

The results of the survey in schools and preschools under this heading make fascinating reading. The schools appear to be well instructed in the various permutations of waste management and recycling – as indeed has been found elsewhere it is the children who bring the information and the understanding home to their parents. Seventeen green flags is indeed highly impressive – it is doubtful if there is such an accumulation of flags in other towns of this size. Litter & waste, energy, water – presumably harvesting rainwater – travel, biodiversity and global citizenship appear to be the preferred topics in that order. It is good to know that you supply the schools with bird feeders, nesting boxes, insect and bee homes. It is encouraging to learn that you are in contact with large firms in their energy-saving and recycling enterprises and that you are sensitively in communication with the Westgate Foundation. Composting is clearly high on your agenda in connection with the local allotments and the Gaisce Awards. It is noted that green waste from estates goes to your composter while hard waste is segregated appropriately for elsewhere. The figure of 606 bags of green waste over a year must be described as a resounding success – and a success that you will be expected to keep up. Ongoing work on water-harvesting, gum litter and the recycling of bottles and drink cans do not appear to be the end of your multitudinous activities. It is astonishing to read that the pupils of one school collected 77 bags of drink bottles. Well done!

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

The Sunday and Mid-Week litter picks evidently yield up much discarded material. Have you undertaken any study as to Who drops litter and Where is it most likely to be dropped? and is it worth following up such findings with prosecutions? One dislikes seeing energetic young people turning to this work, however voluntarily, when they could be engaged in more creative activities. Ultimate success under this heading would mean that no litter had to be scavenged because none was dropped. It is good to read that the staff of businesses in the town help in this work. The purchase of gum and cigarette bins and dog fouling bins is applauded. It was surprising to see some kerbside weed in quite salient places, both in business and residential areas; it should be the responsibility of each streetside proprietor to look after their immediate patch – probably five minutes work per month. Does the County Show really need so much lamp-post advertising? – five ads within 100 yards of one another on one stretch of road alone and plenty more elsewhere! It is understood that you are actively engaged in dealing with a derelict site. A length of high boundary wall on Flynn's Road was in need of freshening up.

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

There is very little 'traditional' street housing in Ballincollig, where large traffic-free estates with conspicuous greens and trees are much more usual, or large scale apartment developments. It was pleasing to learn that a previously unfinished block of apartments at Old Fort Road is now properly instated. It could not be ascertained if there is in fact a significant view of Inniscarra from Inniscarra View; neither Inniscarra View nor Rosewood would be among this adjudicator's premier estates but since they are among yours it is merely a matter of taste because in fact there are no unkempt estates in Ballincollig and all are well looked after by their particular residents who must appreciate their individual styles and layout. This adjudicator would have placed the unpretentious housing near the Church of Good Council high on his private list. Apartments at Old Quarry appeared to be well looked after, as indeed are the apartment blocks in the town centre near the former Barracks though some of these will be needing repainting before long. Daffodil Fields appealed as unusually imaginative, and a very smart new development at Lisheen Woods looked as if it is bound to be The Estate that has Everything. Well done in approaching the County Council to have bollards placed where traffic was insensitively disfiguring the verge in Castle Park – it is good that you are present as watchdog.

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

The nearby motorway and the roads leading into Ballincollig from it are first class, as are the roundabouts, praised

last year. Roses were seen to be thriving on the big Cork roundabout. Traffic was observed to be very congested at certain times on the roads leading to this point. Restoration of old stone walls and replication of others was favourably noted. The pedestrian streets off the main street, whether business or residential, were uniformly well looked after, making shopping or simply walking a pleasure. The neighbourhood of the Main Street and Inniscarra Road intersection does have an overall shabby appearance – individual properties and structures are reasonably well maintained but the mix of residential, industrial, commercial, advertising, traffic signage and poles within a very small area, as well as a broken field gate, is unappealing and unexpected in such a well coordinated town.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Ballincollig impressed this adjudicator immensely, not only its overall appearance but also in the exceptional detail of planning and maintenance and the thoughtful organisation of the various physical and social elements.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

Congratulations to the Ballincollig committee on a very comprehensive entry. The documentation submitted is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of relevant photographs including before and after images on the various projects and improvements carried out on the town and its hinterland. The approach roads generally look very well, have a welcoming appearance, the presentation of roundabouts being particularly admired.

The new town centre incorporating the refurbishment and conservation of a number of the former Military Barracks buildings integrate well with the old town. At the Old Square, buildings and shopfronts have been nicely developed and retain their original scale and charm. The lines of Alder trees have matured well and the buildings are enhanced by a successful colour scheme and good quality signage. The raised cobblelock traffic calming platform, linking across to Coach House Square, strengthens the pedestrian link between old and new. Coach House Square had a busy atmosphere on the day of the visit and the adjudicator understands that this area is further enlivened on Wednesday when the weekly open air market is held here. The stainless steel street furniture has a high quality, the centrepiece being the abstract sculpture. Nearby, the covered way between Gino's and Carraig Donn, with an array of tables and chairs arranged along the street, had a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Perhaps this innovative approach should be considered in other towns when town centre renewal schemes are being considered. The nearby Marketing Information Centre is an important building in a prominent location and it is to be hoped that a new tenant will be found for this building in the short-term. Some signage on this building is beginning to fade as is the Ballincollig Shopping Centre sign, especially at the top level. Generally, signage is very well controlled, particularly in the central areas, but it is less so in the environs, as at the Leo McCarthy Road at both the roadside ground level and on a number of buildings. It was great to see the 'Shaping Space' project exhibited inside the main shopping centre which was visually very attractive, consisting of twelve design solutions of a 'Living Pod' for visually impaired children. This youth project, developed by Transition Years in Colaiste Colum under the guidance of their teacher and a local architect, was excellently presented in the form of three-dimensional scale models and must have a significant educational value of both environmental and lifestyle issues. Well done to all concerned with this project!

The Regional Park has an excellent presentation and had many visitors on the day of adjudication. The whitewashed Watch House is a visually attractive introduction building at the western entrance, enhanced by the nearby wildflower garden. The bi-lingual information boards are informative, nicely illustrated with explanations of the interesting Gunpowder Trail. Keeping in contact with over one hundred residential areas is a mammoth task for the committee to undertake but you have obviously been successful in this endeavour, as the standard of presentation is generally very high. Your annual inter-estate competition is a good initiative to promote contact and you are to be commended on this successful venture. Your approach to biodiversity and landscaping is impressive and sets a standard for others to emulate.

It was a pleasure to visit Ballincollig and see the projects achieved in recent times. The high level of your commitment was in evidence throughout the town and its environs. Well done to all concerned!