

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballacolla** Ref: **407**
County: **Laois** Mark: **321**
Category: **A** Date(s): **19/06/2018**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	48	48
Streetscape & Public Places	50	40	40
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	46	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	36	37
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	17	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	38
TOTAL MARK	450	318	321

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Ballacolla (Baile Chalaídh) chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. With a population of 190, 12 on your committee, and 15 who volunteer at different times, your Tidy Towns group must play a big part in your community. It was good to see the work achieved this year by your School Tidy Towns committee, details of which are included in their submission to the Tidy Towns School Garden competition.

Your three year plan 2018-2021 was a little confusing. You gave your comprehensive list of projects, but said that some of them have been done for this year's competition. One way of highlighting the current state would be to list them under each of the three years. Alternatively, simply put an N for New Project, M for Maintaining and FP for Future Project beside each line item.

A legend on the map showing what each number relates to would also assist with adjudication. The map itself easily illustrates the locations.

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

There is not much commercial activity in evidence, except for the newly reopened Hayes shop at the area at the crossroads to the village, which is maintained to a very high standard. We wish them success in the future. Although this is most obviously a physical building, the local shop service provided is one that benefits the life of the community, as well as reducing the carbon footprint of people travelling for some items.

The old pump and monument look as good as ever. These are lovely features to have on display.

The "before" and "after" pictures highlighted the improvement to the new stone wall in front of the Garda Station.

There must be a talented stone mason in your midst.

The community area appears to be the very heart of your community. The GAA pitch to the left is very well kept.

The newly painted community centre is well presented with nice seating outside. The local primary school completes this triangle of ingredients for a healthy community. Sharing resources within a community makes perfect sense. The school informed us that they use the GAA pitch for some of their own activities and if it is raining they can use the community centre for sport. The only downside seems to be the sliotars damaging the poly-tunnels every so often!

The derelict house opposite the church with the greyed out windows and hanging baskets brightens up what could be an eye-sore.

St. Patrick's old school building appears to be providing a nucleus for more community activity (discussed under other categories). The old school bench directly outside brings me back! Preserving this might be a very worthwhile future project. The other bench looked well, although it could benefit from a cleaning.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Your past work in planting 1200 trees is a great investment in your community. Most often we plant trees to provide shade and beautify our landscapes. These are great benefits but trees also provide other less obvious social and environmental benefits. You are providing an amazing legacy for future generations.

The time, knowledge, and financial support that your Tidy Towns group gives was acknowledged by the school, which they feel was key to the success of the school garden / outdoor classroom. What initially was intended to create a small school garden for the children to create an awareness of the importance of sustainability has evolved into an outdoor classroom.

The flowerbed just in front of the graveyard could do with some weeding although it is great to see perennial flowers here.

The community garden looks very well in the grounds of the old Ballacolla national school. The area itself is well maintained and thriving

The 1916 plaque still looks new despite now being two years old.

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

Your help in promoting biodiversity was noted in the school. They acknowledged your help in adding pollinator friendly flowerbeds to the front of the school and by planting additional semi-mature rowan trees and forty bare root fruit trees.

The Hawthorn Wildlife Park was spoken about this great enthusiasm by the school. Its location means that it is easier for the school children to access. Your continued development of this area is to be admired. It is good to see that you are seeking advice from Laois/Offaly Wildlife Trust. Have you considered doing any biodiversity surveys to see the results? There can be then fed into the national database. See <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie> for more details.

Bird boxes were observed at the school. We look forward to seeing the result of your Laois Swift Survey.

The verges were cut back. The wildlife signs were noted where verges were left as pollinator areas. These were inside the yellow markings. It is good to get the balance between the need for these areas and the requirement that the road is not encroached upon.

The hanging baskets in the middle of the wildflower meadow do add a splash of colour but consider replacing these. Do you have to make a trail through the meadow to water these? In any case, a wildflower meadow will have sustainable colour of its own after a few years.

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

Well done on the various practices that you have introduced in order to improve sustainable living in your community.

It was interesting to read the range of foods that were planted in the school vegetable garden, among them pumpkins, courgettes and herbs. As Pumpkins and courgettes are both types of squash, perhaps "Three Sisters" companion planting could be attempted as a next step. We note that the success of this venture has expanded to encourage some of the families to continue to work in their own gardens.

The compost bin at the back of the community garden at St. Patrick's School certainly looks like it gets good usage. Our water resources were probably noticed more this year than most. Well done on using the water butts to water the items in your glass house and garden.

You mention that you have made enquiries about getting rain water harvesting for your Community Centre. We would encourage you to seek the help of other local Tidy Towns groups on this.

You are to be further commended in segregating some of the waste collected as either recyclable or non-recyclable. The area of Sustainability is an area that groups are still trying to get to grips with. You might get some handy tips <http://www.epa.ie/begreen/> or on the Tidy Towns website

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your Facebook posts of some of your summer litter clean ups show the support that this task is given in your village. Well done to the hard working group.

The recycling centre at the back of the community centre is well maintained; however the Pieta House bank needs to be cleaned.

The lack of posters was obvious throughout your village.

Signs were noted about Dog Fouling. Your village does not appear to suffer as much as other areas with this issue.

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

The number of people involved in Tidy Towns work is evident in the number of in the high standard of most of the standalone houses in your village and on your approach roads.

The house next door to the community centre was amongst the very well maintained houses. The hanging baskets looked well.

The new brown directional sign for Fergal's park gives good directional assistance. However don't neglect the stone sign in the estate. This needs to be cleaned.

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

Considering that you are a small village, the length of your approach roads take up as much room as the actual village itself.

The approach roads to Ballacolla are well maintained. The Ballacolla signs have been updated to reflect your

Bronze Medal Tidy Towns position in three out four of the signs. Thank you for acting on the advice of last year's adjudicator.

Thank you too for the addition of photographs to highlight your spring daffodil displays. Impressive arrays have been planted [We note that you split these to replant in various areas around the village.

Your stone walls continue to impress. It was noted from your submission that your programme to maintain these was completed after 14 years in 1994. In addition to your tree planting scheme, these provide a great example of community projects undertaken that have a lasting legacy.

The flower beds of roses on the approach roads to your village are a credit to you all and their upkeep must require strong commitment. In general they are impressively weed free

Concluding Remarks:

With the help of so many in your community you continue to maintain and improve your village. Well done to all involved and continued success for the future.