

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

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| Centre: Ballinakill | Ref: 810 |
| County: Laois | Mark: 205 |
| Category: B | Date(s): 16/06/2018 |

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2018 |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Community – Your Planning and Involvement | 60 | 32 |
| Streetscape & Public Places | 50 | 28 |
| Green Spaces and Landscaping | 50 | 25 |
| Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality | 50 | 19 |
| Sustainability – Doing more with less | 50 | 15 |
| Tidiness and Litter Control | 90 | 38 |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas | 50 | 27 |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes | 50 | 21 |
| TOTAL MARK | 450 | 205 |

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Ballinakill (Baile na Coille) chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais.

Welcome back to the Tidy Towns competition. We noted that you hadn't entered since 1996. We commend you for taking on the challenge and are sure that this small step could lead to big wins for your village. The competition is continuing to evolve. While maintaining the name of Tidy Towns, the competition encompasses a more holistic environmental theme to include the areas of Biodiversity, Sustainable Waste, and Resource Management. We recommend you study the guidelines on completing your entry form. The ethos remains the same; it endeavours to make your area a better place to live for yourselves and also for people to visit.

We encourage Tidy Towns groups to submit a 3 year plan (and of course, groups will be given extra marks for this). This does not need to be prepared professionally. A simple document with bullet points under each of the 3 years, highlighting what you wish to work towards is sufficient. We realise that some projects can stall due to lack of finance or co-operation from other bodies etc. However marks are given if it is highlighted that you are working towards these goals.

We noted from your application form that you work with FÁS, the Parish Council, local businesses and the local authority. A collaborative approach such as this is generally the best way to ensure results. Don't forget that you don't need to carry out the work within your own Tidy Towns group. You can reflect the work that is done within the wider community, for example initiatives undertaken by school groups, residents associations and special interest groups.

A lot of your projects were marked as "N" for new project but they seemed to refer to future projects. We look forward to seeing more details on these in your future submissions.

Your village map was a simple, adequate plan with projects marked on it. However there was no legend to tell what these projects related to, nor any corresponding marking on your form except for the first three projects. The submission was somewhat difficult to read in parts. Remember the submission does form part of the competition. Don't leave this until the last minute to send in. You are putting in a lot of work for the Tidy Towns Competition. We want to ensure that all possible credit is given.

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

Ballinakill has a good traditional small town built environment. The centre of the village opens out into a wide bright area of the market place, which highlights the heritage of being a market town. Your monument to the men who died in the 1798 rebellion features prominently and looks well.

For a small area you boast many fine, imposing buildings. The Church of Ireland Church with its traditional planting in the well-kept grounds, St. Bridget's Catholic church with its bright blue door was flanked by two nice small rows of

colourful planting leading up to it. The new national school provides a trio of fine buildings in a row. The old national school is still standing proud on the opposite side of the road. Unfortunately there are derelict buildings, especially on the way into the main street. We encourage you to work with your County Council to try and mitigate this problem. Some Tidy Towns groups can do some remedial work on these, for example by painting the boarded windows. The street lighting would be impressive any town. The maroon and white bunting was very effective throughout. Since the GAA clubhouse was in the same colours we presume these are your club colours! There was a good amount of parking spaces which means the main streets did not look cluttered. There was a welcome absence of inappropriate signage. The local Costcutter shop added vibrancy to the village. The new planters in the villages were colourful and well-spaced.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The new seat on Market Square looks well. However, there were many weeds spotted here. On the day of adjudication, leaves were being picked up on the side of the road to the churches, so maybe the weeding was next? There is a nice shrubbery on the layby but again some weeding is needed here. Small summer bedding would enhance this. Giles pond. We didn't realise before visiting your village that this was at the back of Heywood Gardens. What an amenity to have! It was stunning. The new path from the estate adds to this. The water lilies were a sight to behold and looked picture perfect. The walkway to Heywood Gardens near Claude's Seat would also benefit from weeding.

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

This area is increasing in importance. One third of our bee species are threatened with extinction from Ireland. This is because we have drastically reduced the amount of food (flowers) and safe nesting sites in our landscapes. Everyone can play their part in small, simple ways. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan gives guidance to all, from farmers to local authorities, to schools, gardeners and businesses, to come together to try to create an Ireland where pollinators can survive and thrive. <http://pollinators.ie/communities/> Pollinator friendly perennials have the added benefit of generally being more cost effective. They have a potential life span of 10-12 years if properly maintained. Small amount of annual replacement to supplement as well are complement. For assistance in this category you check out <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie> You mentioned you are liaising with the local angling committee on Giles Pond. This looks like a lake that is getting good use, so it is great to get this organisation involved. Maybe ask them to help erect a sign highlighting the birds/wildlife/plants that are in the area. There is also some redundant signage in this area that should be removed. We would recommend you engage with the Country Heritage Office (as this is so near Heywood Gardens) and if Laois County Council has a County Biodiversity officer please also consider engaging with him/her in exploring ways to further your knowledge in this area.

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

We await with interest in next year's report, the work of your sub-committee in developing an energy conservation project. We noted that your submission referred to a grant for solar panels and marked this with an "N". However since there was no corresponding number or information, we couldn't see when these were. The bins at the recycling area could benefit from a cleaning. The sign behind it certainly could. They were being well used. Check with the local school and local businesses if they are involved in any waste reduction programs. You might get some handy tips on <http://www.epa.ie/begreen/> and on the Tidy Towns website. Remember that the emphasis is now on the reduction of waste in the first place. Avoidance is the foremost concern, followed by recycling and re-use. You can get more up to date information from the Environmental Officer of your County Council

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

In your last Tidy Towns report from 1996, the adjudicator mentioned that there was an "appreciable amount of litter" seen in the central streets. There were minimal pieces of litter seen on day of adjudication. Well done on tackling this issue with your weekly clean-ups. Did you find that video surveillance helped? It is always good when we can find out from Tidy Towns groups what worked and why, so that other groups can learn from them.

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

The housing estate Monaclear View again looked well. It was marked as project 6 on the map but I wasn't sure what I was to look at here as there was no project 6 mentioned in the submission. I did notice some new planting at the end of the estate with some shrubbery. It looks very well and should mature nicely. Heywood estate has some fine houses and gardens overlooking Giles pond. The green area here is well maintained, and the goal posts look like they are used on a regular basis. The footpath from the housing area to the walk along by the pond is very convenient and should ensure more regular use of the amenity, even in normal Irish weather. The house at the end of the square with the purple door, white sashes and sills emphasising the sash windows stood out well. The Duggans sign looks like an old shop sign, but the building seems to currently be a residential home.

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

On the approach road from Durrow, the shrubbery beds need to be weeded. The signs for Ballinakill are in good condition however many are somewhat hidden by high vegetation.

Many of the approach roads have a lot of overgrown patches that encroach on the road. On the road from Abbeyleix the two trees on the road from the GAA clubhouse towards the village had a lot of vegetation that narrowed the effective carriageway. Cutting back is needed here.

The Forge pub which echoes your club colours was a very impressive site. The planter boxes here looked well.

Concluding Remarks:

It is wonderful that you have restarted the journey towards making your town a better place to live and visit. The comments above suggesting further action are meant as guidance, not as criticism. By engaging in improvements of the physical elements in your town, from the built environment to more environmental projects, we generally find in Tidy Towns that a community spirit improves. We wish you well.