

# Tidy Towns Competition 2019

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballybunion - Baile an Bhuinneánaigh** Ref: **323**  
County: **Kerry** Mark: **312**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **13/06/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	45	46
Streetscape & Public Places	60	44	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	41	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	32	32
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	21	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	62
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	34
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>312</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Ballybunion Baile an Bhuinneánaigh páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019.

The relatively small size of your committee of four members supported by another six volunteers is surprising for a town of 1,354 people. Much credit is due to you for the well-prepared impressive application. We note you have reduced its size compared with last year and compliment you for taking the advice of last year's adjudicator. Attaching a separate laminated map with the index on the back is a good idea and makes it convenient for the adjudicator to know what they are seeing on their visit. Just one more tip. Please place your numbers in a sequence on the map and reduce the time taken trying to find a project location. The colour coding works well. We suggest you aim for one application document by including pictures in the relevant sections rather than having us go over and back through two documents. Please make the pictures a little bigger.

We have taken note of the list of works your committee has to do by themselves because there are no Council services compared with other towns in Kerry. In that regard, we can only compliment you on the huge effort of the committee and volunteers and encourage you to keep in contact with officials and elected members of the Council to obtain support. We note you have a Community Rural Social Scheme who help with grass cutting. Can this be expanded or are there enough applicants in the community for an expansion?

You receive varying types of support from numerous groups in Ballybunion including local businesses and public bodies, so well done. The use of Facebook, notice board newspaper etc., are your means of communication. The involvement with local schools is commendable; this is from where your future committees will emanate. Thank you for the brief appendices which includes the Tidy Town Plan Summary. While a summary is enough, we would like to see some columns indicating when the various projects are/will be carried out.

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

The Garda Barracks on the corner of Main Street and Church Road looks well but the trees in containers at the front of the building are in poor condition and add very little enhancement. Have you considered having trees planted into the ground where they have a better chance of surviving; birch trees would look nice and would not impact negatively on the building or traffic? We liked the decoration on the side of the building. The statue of former USA President Bill Clinton is well known, and no doubt is now a landmark in the town. He was very fond of your famous golf course. Kilcooley's Bar and Restaurant is an attractive building which is even more enhanced with the climbing plants growing against the wall. Buildings we admired in the town centre were Garretts Hibernian Bar, Hellards, The Olde Attic, Harry Costello and Courtneys, although the gable wall here could be improved by painting. The SuperValu complex just off the Main Street was well-maintained and we liked the surfing mural on the wall at the car

park, but we would also like to see a few trees being used to break up the hard impact of the car park. The modern playground was being well used and we enjoyed the cliff walk with a beautiful view of the sea and the very clean beach below with the old castle ruins forming an important focal point. The telescope, seats and signs provided are high quality and well maintained. Attractive information plaques are well-designed and in good condition. Nearby, we saw Maunies, a vacant premises that you have made look its best by painting. The large campus of St. Joseph's Secondary School has a boundary wall and railing. It looks well but the landscaping element is not in scale with the building. A concrete wall on the left inside the entrance takes from the site. We suggest either have it painted or plant some climbing plants such as ivy in front to make it green. The impressive Convent of Mercy building is well-painted and is a reference point for a walking route. There are some concrete walls in this vicinity that we also suggest be softened with plants. The Ballybunion Health and Leisure Centre has a very interesting modern design; we could see the challenges there for trying to establish trees in the landscape. The car park was clean and tidy.

On the East End, we sought out the old water pump and the motifs of fishes in the footpath, an interesting and appropriate art feature. Well done. Overhead wires are a problem in your streetscape until they can be placed underground at some future date.

At Ahafona Cross we visited the grotto and noted the solar powered light. This is a well-respected area and very welcoming but please leave the Pelargoniums in the vicinity of the grotto, not on the bank of the small stream where native planting is more suitable. The small fire station building on the large site caught our attention. The building is well-painted and the grounds well-maintained. The boundary wall painted in white with red capping and red piers with white capping that matched the station building was an interesting treatment.

At Doon Cross, we gazed at the old church ruin where the last mass was said in 1972. St. John's Church is a beautiful building and we enjoyed reading the story of the benefactor Mrs Mary Young (nee O'Malley) who provided funding of £8,500 for its construction and died three years before its construction was completed. The sculpture in front is a fitting tribute to her memory. The grounds were well-maintained, not a piece of litter and the adjoining cemetery also looked well. But again, what is missing is landscape treatment. A long concrete wall with no softening. This can be simply done by planting ivy at the base. Not a tree to be seen in the car park nor the cemetery. In years past, it was common practice to plant yew trees in cemeteries. They added character and shelter; why don't we do that anymore? The Tintean Theatre is a fine building, but the gates were closed.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

The triangular open space at Ahafona Cross has great potential but would require a design modification. Items such as the dolphin sculpture and the granite seats look well but the two black containers on the grass are no addition. Why not plant low growing perennials such as alpine plants into the circle surrounding the dolphin. We appreciate the problem you have in tree establishment because of the coastal climate but suggest that you plant some sycamore trees as small specimens (whips, not standards) and they will establish and provide some green vertical scale for the site. They are also good pollinators. The 'Welcome to Ballybunion' in boxwood is a novel feature but needs better clipping to prevent the letters from merging with each other. The 'Murphy's' millennium plaque is a little lost here; there seems to be too much happening on this corner, including the sporting mural on the gable wall behind the boxwood 'welcome' feature. In the previous section and others to follow, we have written about the need for trees in many places in Ballybunion. These are the main structural element in the landscape and should be the first consideration. In that regard we agree with the following comments from last year's adjudicator who suggested ...that you consider moving away from trees in boxes to trees in the ground for long-term sustainability. Considering the success of *Olearia traversii* especially at Doon Cross, we suggest that you use this plant more often in public plantings. It is very wind resistant.

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

We were very impressed with the many populations of oxeye daisies (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) which are growing in so many places in Ballybunion. Examples include along the East End and particularly in a field beside the grotto. We also saw wonderful growth of other wildflowers in fields which are not being used for development at present, for example, behind the old pump on East End. The survey undertaken on Japanese Knotweed indicates that you have two locations where the plant needs to be eradicated. You have plans to improve the river walk and some other projects.

You have a rich natural area surrounding your community and it is important to promote an awareness of its many traits and to map these habitats. Appreciating your local wildlife resources is vital in order to achieve under this category. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. Try to list the plants and animals to be found there and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). This information can be fun to gather and can involve the schools or other interested parties. Raise awareness through holding events such as hedgerow walks or bat walks. Contact the Irish Wildlife Trust for more information.

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

Well done on the list of projects included under this heading. The light bulb survey should be revealing. The solar panel to light the statue halo at the grotto is another good idea and we note the lesson in light bulb comparison in 5 classes in the primary school. Recycling of batteries is another great project aimed at environmental protection. In the campaign against the single use of plastics, you organised a seminar on 'The Evils of Plastics'. You recycled plastic bottles collected after the marathon, and some were converted into Christmas gift items and you made St. Patrick's Day parade decorations from recycled plastic bottles, aluminium cans, newspaper and cardboard. Under composting, you have used tea bags for fertiliser and made plant food from nettles and seaweed for flower

beds. Well done on these initiatives.

At this level of the contest the adjudicator wants to see innovation in tackling bigger issues of food waste, plastic disposal and energy use. What are homes and businesses doing to tackle these?

Other measures for you to consider are....

Contact your waste contractors and try to find out what is being thrown away and armed with this information you can start to think about how waste can be reduced. Examine the waste pyramid and note the recycling is only the fourth most preferred option after avoidance, reducing and re-using.

- One third of our waste is organic in nature, such as grass clippings. You can avoid collecting mown grass by more frequent cutting and using mulching mowers which shred the clippings and facilitate faster decomposition.
- The use of self-watering hanging baskets are a help in reducing the amount of water used and the task of watering.
- Working with retailers to cut down on packaging and reminding people to re-use shopping bags.
- In response to an overuse of chemicals for weed control, many useful products of the past are no longer available and therefore communities are encouraged to use other means such as hoeing to maintain weeds. In some cases, allowing wildflowers to develop is an acceptable alternative.

These activities will highlight the fact that you are focussing on this category and when you develop more projects in the future your marks will increase.

For more helpful tips and case studies from other Tidy Towns entrants please take a look at

<http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/>

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

Recycling brink banks on Kit Ahern Road are nicely situated and some side screening is provided. They were clean and tidy, but we wondered at the need for a concrete container with some plants. The container design is interesting with a base to reduce maintenance. Our question is why not plant a larger area in front of the screen and take away the container. At Ahafona, we saw more recycling banks and were pleased to learn that old tyres were removed from Mike's Garage. The clothes banks here were neat and tidy but need painting. The old container behind the building looks abandoned. Well done on surveying the beach and providing information to An Taisce. What were the survey findings that you sent to An Taisce?

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

The Sandhill residential estate looked well, and we noted use being made of Phormium, (New Zealand Flax), a very hardy species in terms of salt and wind resistance. Ballybunion Holiday Cottages looked very well with white buildings sitting in grassed areas. We wondered when the landscape works will be carried out. Trees and shrubs would make a big improvement. There is plenty of space available and some of it could be managed for wildlife/pollinators.

On Doon Road there are residential estates on both sides of the road. A wide grass margin is located on one side of the road and several flower beds placed along the centre. There is also a sculpture and an old pump. These features certainly give an impression that residents in this area have great pride in their neighbourhood. However, there is a need to add scale to the landscape by planting trees and/or hedges that would also add some shelter. Very few residents have any plants in their gardens. Perhaps an estate or garden competition would stimulate some interest and help to improve the overall appearance. The houses are well-maintained. Hillview Close is an estate of single storey houses which look well. We were surprised to see a large 'Victorian' style fountain on the linear open space opposite the houses. The estate looks well and we suggest some trees would enhance its appearance.

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

The Kit Ahern Road junction has a Lartigue Memorial stone plaque which is illegible, and the associated planting is poor. We suggest that sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) tree cultivars should be planted on this road to enhance the streetscape. East End Road would benefit from street tree planting, but your coastal climate is a big challenge. Has there been any attempt at establishing trees on the margins on this road? If you plan to do so, we suggest the use of small specimens that would be more adaptable and easier to establish. At Doon Cross, we liked the long stone with the town name. On the opposite side of the road there are vertical symbols promoting what you have to offer. These look great but we had to get out of the car to see them; they would be more visible if placed on the other side of the road.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Well done on the application and congratulations on the community efforts to improve your town. We hope this report provides some guidance.