

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: Ballinamore - Béal an Átha Mhóir	Ref: 422
County: Leitrim	Mark: 314
Category: C	Date(s): 21/06/2019

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	46	47
Streetscape & Public Places	60	38	39
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	46	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	34	34
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	25	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	38
TOTAL MARK	470	309	314

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

Cuireann an moltoir seo faillte roimh Ballinamore (Beal An Atha Mhoir) pairt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019

Thank you for the comprehensive entry form, excellent map of the town and the ancillary folder of information that included different aspects of the Tidy Towns involvement in Ballinamore.

The area strategy report prepared by Liam and Margaret Scollan was included as well.

Between the entry form and the ancillary information there was a fair body of information and because of the restrictions of a 3 page report covering 8 sections everything included could not be commented upon.

Feel assured that the adjudication was done in a fair and objective manner in line with guidelines but in a much shorter narrative than last year's report.

Your committee of 10 and 10 volunteers is right for a town the size of Ballinamore but one assumes that you are able to mobilise further support when needed.

You have made incremental improvement in marks over the years and are at the high end of the markings in the county.

The list of agencies that you are involved with is substantial but obviously you have had good relations with these as well as Leitrim County Council.

It's good to note that the local schools are very much part of the Tidy Towns judging by the projects that they are part of.

Communication methods are by way of newsletters local, newspaper notes and posters in shops!

Not too sure if the latter is a good way to publicise as it encourages fly posting.

The adjudicator feels that the town could well benefit from an enclosed town information board that could be used for publicising your activities as well as other community related information

On checking there was no evidence of a social media presence and this was rather surprising as it could be useful to get messages about activities out there at short notice.

The project list included in this category was noted and will be commented upon in the relevant categories.

Good to report that you are part of a larger wider coming together of the community and it is more than likely that Town Steering Group was responsible for initiating the Strategy document.

Your comments on the competition per say have been noted especially the one related to a rise on stress levels in relation to completing the online input.

Fear not you have done very well in that regard and you have retained the mark lost last year.

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

As was stated in last year's report Ballinamore indeed is a very fine town with a busy atmosphere about it.

It wasn't until this adjudicator took to shanks mare that he realised how big it was and the size of the area that you have to oversee as a committee.

There are many fine historical buildings and commercial premises that are long associated with the town.

Overall the town is in a good state of infrastructural presentation but like other similar size places it has its fair share of unoccupied and premises as well but to be honest not too major a problem.

One is conscious of the fact that the Committee is aware of these premises and is doing its utmost to engage with owners to make improvements even on a temporary basis.

One of the biggest problems in relation to buildings that are unoccupied for a long time is that of determining ownership.

The adjudicator would agree that the inclusion of historical signage at various parts of the town has been very beneficial to visitors who get a pocket history of Ballinamore as they walk about.

On the day of the adjudication there was a group of Americans getting a talk at the John Joe McGirl memorial which is some edifice in its own right.

The new combined school across from Sean O Heslin Park is wonderful example of good and appropriate design for a public building.

The aforementioned GAA Grounds was very well presented and its new wall was noted, it looked like a Cul Camp was in full swing.

The following are some personal observations that the adjudicator made during the walkabout.

The renaming of the Square in honour of John McGahern was a positive development no reflection on St Felim but many overseas tourists would be so familiar with the great writer.

Some very fine business frontages were noted but the one that stood out for design and its attractiveness was Smiths Funeral Directors and Monumental Sculptors so appropriate as a shop front sign. Ballinamore Credit Union Priors of High Street, Dolphins Garaiste for its contribution to bi lingualism, Peters Bar and Grill, An Post and Supervalu.

The developed area where Tesco Express is was well presented but it was noticeable that a few premises were not occupied – maybe rent costs or lack of business resulted in closure of the businesses that were there.

Shortts Heritage Bar and beside it Scollans Butchers also deserve mention for shop front presentation

The Public Premises including St Patricks Church in a focal point of the town, Fire Station, Garda Station and the Primary Schools on the road out to Carrick on Shannon were presented to a good standard as well.

It was noted that a planning retention application placed on the gates of St Brigids Old National School for change of use to Parish Centre and Office.

The Ballinamore Educational Centre at Aghadark deserves mention for the presentation of its surrounding grounds as well as the building being recently painted

Thankfully it was good to see this as some older school premises are left unoccupied far too long

The Road surfaces and footpaths in the town were generally good with new footpath replacements noticed in a few areas.

The Heritage Trail Notices were very effective in what they were there for – provide pertinent information.

Some street furniture needs painting and the adjudicator did note that the Men's Shed had an involvement in maintenance work for the committee.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

This is a category that you have done well in over the last few years and the works outlined are of a practical nature but you also have been helped by a number of wonderful private gardens during the walkabout.

The adjudicator was again impressed with your approach to ensuring that what is in place is looked after properly and seen at its best year round.

Too many places allow shrub beds to over grow, flowers in planters and hanging baskets to fade as seasons ends, and often don't look after young saplings so well especially if planted away from a central area.

Well done on this approach and the adjudicator took note of this on his walkabout, he did not visit all the areas mentioned but what was observed was well presented.

Some excellent plant stanchion created good effect in a number of streets in the town core area.

Item 4 in your entry on this category where you mention the fact that a one meter of grass strip was left uncut on all verges as one enters the town to promote the preservation of wild life will cross over to the following section.

Individual shop owners also provided colourful hanging baskets but over beautification was not overdone.

In an overall context the standard was very good and merits an additional mark.

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

The input in this category is of a practical nature and the adjudicator has to admit that this was the first time that he was made aware of the Hedge Laying Association of Ireland and that its main man was a resident of Ballinamore.

So well done on this rather new and indeed very practical contribution to the preservation of the various species of wildlife that exists within hedgerows

The input under item 4 in the previous category is considered under biodiversity as well and need no further comment.

The comment that you enjoy working with the schools and Men's Shed, local bee keeper and bird watcher shows a commitment confirms your commitment to the promotion and the preservation of wildlife in the area.

You have such a range of natural habitat especially along the Canal and maybe more could be made of this resource.

It would be worthwhile to consult with the Wildlife Ranger or equivalent in Leitrim County Council plus a representative of Waterways Ireland to see if it might be possible to draw a Biodiversity Plan for Ballinamore.

There are more potential habitats in the town catchment that could be exploited for instance there is rather large and overgrown area at the Enterprise Centre that could be considered.

The National Pollinator plan requirements could be considered as part of the package as well Biodiversity Ireland www.biodiversityireland.ie is a source for additional information and direction as is the National Parks and Wildlife Service www.npws.ie
The Green Communities Project under the auspices of An Taisce is another source that can be tapped into for information on various biodiversity projects.

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

This is a category that has created quite a lot of unease for committees around the country inaptly but the “doing more with less” slogan has been gaining momentum and tidy towns groups have become far more familiar with the concept over the last few years.

The main objective is to promote “the reduction of production of unnecessary waste at source” and to help reduce the large volumes that go to landfill each year.

The initiatives that you have mentioned are very acceptable but are standard around the country but there is a lot more potential for you to work on and as you have received a relatively high mark in the category over the last two years it is important that you get involved in projects that are unique to you as a community.

Consult, if you have not already done so, your local environmental officer for a little direction.

Also consult the following websites www.localpreventoin.ie and www.greenhomes.ie for further ideas that could trigger off some relevant mini projects for the years ahead.

www.sustainableprocessing.ie is another website to consult and also reference the circular economy and its benefits,

Information on the circular economy in Ireland can be accessed at www.dccae.ie

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

In fairness the town performed well in this category under the category guidelines of the competition.

Yes there are more than a few areas of concern when it comes to unoccupied buildings that could fall into disrepair if not monitored regularly.

Some open spaces, especially the area at what was once supposed to be the hub of entries development in the town, are untidy and run down,

A suggestion in relation to the use of the area mentioned has been made in the previous section.

The adjudicator was impressed with the work of the TUS workers who were very active cleaning up litter and freshening up beds at the base of trees in town on the day.

Well done to the Rehab Centre for adopting the Golf Links road to pick litter and well done to the Tidy Towns Committee for engaging with the centre as part of your inclusive approach to getting things done.

Yes it was noted that there were no litter bins to be seen and one is very much aware of the reason why.

This approach has been taken in many other villages and towns.

Good to report that you have a litter plan and that you work in tandem with the appointed litter warden.

Overall the standard of litter control and general tidiness was very good and warrants an increase in marks.

For a large enough town you have a good handle on litter control and tidiness.

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

The adjudicator didn't realise that there were more housing developments in the outskirts of the town than he had anticipated.

The map which probably was drawn some years back didn't identify many of the newer housing schemes.

Anyway the job of adjudication is to seek these areas out and assess them.

The category now includes town houses in the core of areas of places like Ballinamore.

The adjudicator was quite impressed with the standard of presentation of some fine private residences a few of which had been recently restored in line with the original facades.

The Best Kept Competition has certainly encouraged both business owners and individual home owners to put their best foot forward.

Well done also on entering the estates in the Leitrim County Council sponsored Love Leitrim Competition.

This has helped to get residents enthused about having their particular areas looking well.

The following housing developments were vested Na Sali, Gleann Dara which still seems to have no name sign, Cois Abhan and Cul Fee.

Last year's adjudicator gave some very positive suggestions on individual issues pertaining to each of these estates.

It takes more than a little time to implement these as discussions, cost and other infrastructural considerations have to be taken into account.

But for the future it's important to give due consideration to these suggestions and see where possible if improvements can be made.

Overall the standard was good

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

A number of items mentioned in your entry in this category this year seemed to be referred to in last year's report and one wonders what has happened in relation to these in the interim period.

For instance what's the update on the applications for funding for footpaths to the graveyard and lighting to Edentiny?

Well done on looking after the verges in accordance with good practice.

The adjudicator approached the town from the Newtowngore direction and this was very acceptable but not to be too picky lettering was missing from the name sign.

The Carrick On Shannon entrance was very acceptable where the Town and Twinning Signs were clean and visible without obstruction.

Road margin advertising seems to take on a new life during the summer months advertising anything and everything in terms of events from Mike Denver to Family Fetes.

Thankfully the signs mentioned in last year's report seem to be gone on this entrance.

The road in from Enniskillen is now enhanced by the new Secondary School and improvements to the GAA Club boundary wall.

Overall the standard was good but with room for improvement in certain places

Concluding Remarks:

It was a first time for this adjudicator to take time out in Ballinamore the previous time was only a drive through.

The visit was a pleasant one as the town has a lot to offer in terms of architecture and history.

You have done well in the competition to date and you are wished well for the future.