

# Tidy Towns Competition 2015

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballybunion** Ref: **323**  
County: **Kerry** Mark: **294**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **01/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	43	43
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	41	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	39	39
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	29	30
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	29	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	33
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>294</b>

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

Congratulations to Ballybunion TidyTowns Committee for taking part in the 2015 SuperValu TidyTowns Competition. This evidently is a group that engages with many other organisations in the town and the relationships seem mutually beneficial. Your engagement with various agencies also seems to bring your plans to fruition. Congratulations on your engagement with the school s. It is great to read that you feel Ballybunion has been transformed in recent years and that volunteer work is recognised as community building. A few comments on your submission that are meant to reduce expense and time in preparing the submission and to make the submission more adjudicator friendly. Your maps are beautifully presented but too awkward for the purposes of a visit on which the adjudicator spends a lot of time walking/cycling. The adjudicator drew his own map and that would have been perfect for the purpose it serves. Photos are a great help on a visit, especially ones that capture what the adjudicator cannot see during the visit. So where is the point in including a photo that shows a dog fouling warning? The amount of time spent in choosing, in laminating and in putting the photos into an order is frightening. The TidyTowns Unit have encouraged groups to edit the material in the submission and you should heed that encouragement. Make sure that whatever is submitted will be relevant to the current year's entry. But a word of appreciation to the person or persons who put that vast tome together. Well done.

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

Arriving from the Listowel side the streetscape immediately creates the seaside excitement. The shop fronts, the colours, the mix of old and new signage combine to recreate that day at the seaside excitement of old. This is not a faded, jaded seaside town but one that believes in its product and will fulfil on its promise, especially if the weather allows. If it rains there are options too, all inviting. Apart from the Garda station the main elements of the built environment are a little away from the centre. One finds the old Church of Ireland, now functioning as a library and evidently at ease with its new function. Another building with a modern use is the one that allows the men to express their skills in the Mens Shed. The Catholic Church dominates on its spacious site. A school peers out at us through its lovely railings but not blocking the view. Former pupils of the old convent could enjoy that view in their time and the convent still has an austere appearance that ensures its grounds are litter free, in case the Revd Mother might be on the nun's walk. But Ballybunion can boast of its modern buildings too. That other school has a twenty first century spark in its design. And what of the theatre? The adjudicator wondered what events could fill that big space but loved the fact that the theatre existed and marvelled at its front elevation. Your leisure centre complex is also a fabulous building. The journey is not complete without a visit to the Clubhouse, a strange design but one worthy of the Course it serves. It would be a major omission also not to mention the superb playground.

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

The adjudicator is very aware of the landscaping challenges of a coastal town. Your submission mentioned that the winter winds shred the plants leaving leafy dreams in tatters. But you survive. It took a second trip to find your new raised beds and what a delight. The barrier put one off the first time. That Cashen Point commands a darling view. The information panels are full of interest although you need to take a look at the white inscription in one, the adjudicator gave up on the reading. An aspect of this landscaping is the beach stone you skilfully placed as a surface. Your attempts at providing summer colour in the containers is successful but experience has taught you that there are horses for courses. Where plants are sheltered from the wind by a house they seem to thrive in peoples' gardens. That colour may be all that can be provided. Horses for courses. But one came across many shrubs that can survive and thrive, especially in sheltered parts. An example would be the pampas grasses on the way into Marconi. In that estate there are lone soldier plants sitting forlornly in big open spaces. One feels that the open space would look better without these ornamental grasses or else grow them in clusters at the vertices of the open spaces. The wind will not strip the paint from the recycled tyres. Well done. The boats are another appropriate landscaping feature and look majestic in their bright colours. Benches dotted here and there help create the relaxed atmosphere. The beds, the boat, the grass and the general presentation of the houses along Nuns Beach Road are most attractive. Another charm is the entrance to Fuchsia Drive. When one stopped to admire the mermaid one spotted a stone wall, how unusual, and the divine raised bed that softens a sharp corner, landscaping with a purpose. At the Catholic Church one felt that you might attempt the ivy growth that one found at the base of a wall somewhere along the way. At the theatre one felt that the choice of shrub is too tall, wind blown and liable to interfere with the car parking. Maybe a decorative gravel without planting might be more appropriate.

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

Awareness of the biodiversity of an area is the basic requirement in this section of the competition. Therefore, it is encouraging that you have been engaged in making yourselves aware of the habitats of the area, of the birds that visit, of the plants that grow naturally in this seaside location. You have made yourselves aware of the threats to that biodiversity also. The adjudicator admits that he did not take notice of the nature signs but had already seen them in your submission. It is a better idea to let the adjudicator know that such a trail exists and let him find them in their appropriate setting. The biodiversity plan mentioned that there are instances of Japanese Knotweed to be found and again the adjudicator is pleased that you attended a seminar and had a follow up with your volunteers. What action has been taken, or what are the steps you have mentioned. Your biodiversity plan takes a holistic approach to biodiversity in the area and so outlines the threats that exist to biodiversity welfare of Ballybunion. How have these threats been taken on board by your committee? One mentions in particular the consequences of intensive mowing which is a major temptation for appearance sake. So do wildlife corridors figure in your plans and practices? You have a very solid blueprint to guide you over the next few years. What are the priorities that arise from the biodiversity plan?

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

The adjudicator is impressed by the number and variety of projects that have engaged you since last year. Your projects suggest that you are coming to terms with the demands of this sustainable living section and that you are creating an awareness among the community as to what is involved. Great that you engage with the schools and that a Green Flag has been achieved. At a recycling level one is pleased to read of the Christmas card event, to see the use the recycled tyres are put to, to see the posters for the electrical waste collections. At the level of resource reduction and elimination one is pleased to read of the water butt, the bike racks, the car boot sales and the lunch box initiative. So where do you go from here? A slight concern is that many of this year's events were also mentioned last year therefore you need to take on a new project each year. Did anything come of the waste decomposition exercise? One would like a couple of sentences on the content of the event, what you expect from such information nights and what follow-up resulted from your evening. An important element of this section is that you see yourselves as innovators who set about changing peoples' attitudes to our established living habits.

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

Tidiness is often an issue for seaside towns. Firstly there is the litter. Day trippers may not be as careful about litter disposal when away from home. Then there is the winter weather that attacks the best paint that can be found. The salt rusts all before it. Businesses come and go so there are always premises awaiting their next use. Ballybunion has to face these issues too and does. You cope well. You pay attention to derelict buildings that are within your control. Sometimes one has to be patient with other buildings but an area like the SuperValu shows that renewal eventually happens. The street colouring creates a sense of joie which in itself contributes to the ordered place despite the clutter of seaside activity and the redevelopment of some premises. Buildings seem to have been painted last week, there is a freshness almost everywhere one looks. But you have to be vigilant. The benches on the way to the beach should shout summer in their maintenance and colour, just as the bins on the beach do. The brown of the timber rail on the wall at the car parking is a bit sombre. A personal opinion but, in any case, it needs painting. Landscaped beds on the way into Sandfield Park need weeding. That gable end at Le Chéile, could the advertising be presented on a stand alone stand? One wishes you well in your negotiations with the Golf Club regarding that fence. Its time has come. One hopes that in replacing the fence recognition is given to all of the walkers who use this road by providing a footpath. Your submission tells us clearly that you make litter a priority. What a challenge. Ballybunion seems to attract smokers who are expert at flicking butts. Those plastic spoons should be tested for DNA. It seems so unfair to the people who care but you must continue your litter battles. The adjudicator did not meet any evidence of dumping and there is not a lot of litter, but some is too much for this beautiful place. Your dog fouling campaign seems to be getting through to the dog owners.

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

The number of estates of holiday homes shows that Ballybunion is a much sought after holiday destination. These homes create much of the spend in Ballybunion during a short holiday season. For the most part these estates are well presented and many of them were visited. One loved the sense of space in many of these estates, strong colours on doors lift the predominant white in some estates. Glór na dTonn and Gleann na Mara are such apt names for estates in Ballybunion. One estate does not benefit from the wilderness along its boundary while the adjudicator loved the fact that so many original boundaries had been retained where estates were being built, thus not interfering with the wildlife in those ditches. Then there are the traditional holiday homes that contribute so much to the Ballybunion brand and personality. One of the delightful features of the town is that one is likely to find a holiday home in the most unlikely places. Obviously there was a time when the attitude to planning permission was more cavalier than nowadays. Verandas, porches and sun lounges abound, in case the sun shines. It is obvious that many of the older homes have been bulldozed away to make way for the more modern holiday home and again, in most cases, these fit in gracefully to their surroundings. On the Doon Road one comes across one of the highlights of the visit, the colour schemes on those houses on one's right. At first one drools over the contrasting strong colours of neighbouring houses in this area. The next minute the colours are of a more muted pastel type and one is over the moon again but in admiration for the exact opposite some yards down the road. What wonderful work. Marian Crescent is part of that fabulous colour scheme.

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

You have a most beautiful, Ballybunionised welcome sign that draws a smile. Make sure the vegetation on the Listowel road does not interfere with it. The dolphin and its accompanying landscaping creates a sense of place. Well done. There are many strips of wild vegetation along these roads and they should be allowed express themselves. Housing dominates the approach roads and you should compliment most of those residents for the contribution they make to the welcome to Ballybunion. Whether these houses be large guesthouses or more modest cottages and bungalows their appearance helps create the Ballybunion stamp. An unusual feature of the approach roads is the many grassy ditches that are front boundaries to fields. These are all over and because they are so well tended to they form a most attractive feature. For the most part stone walls as front boundaries do not exist. In the town there are little roads or back streets, teeming with houses and personality that is created by the higgledy piggledy nature of the housing, by the hydrangeas and roses. Lovely. These areas can sometimes appear somewhat neglected. For instance, Cinema Lane brought a lot of pleasure to many and deserves to get attention.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

I felt weary when I first saw the size of your submission. That weariness lifted as soon as I arrived in Ballybunion. The improvements are universal. The reaching out to people to come into a particular premises is obvious. The pride of people like your group is to be seen in the little add-ons, in Maunies, at the old bakery, in paint, in planting way out in the Cashen car park. One senses straight away that there is a sense of pride being expressed in the colour schemes of terraces of houses, in the delightful street signage, in the appearance of the beachside bins. This is a community on the move.