

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballylongford** Ref: **326**
County: **Kerry** Mark: **253**
Category: **B** Date(s): **28/06/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	31	35
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	33	34
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	34	35
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	20	21
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	10	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	28	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	28	30
TOTAL MARK	450	234	253

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Céad fáilte roimh Ballylongford TidyTowns Group go Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara na bliana 2015. Thank you for entering the SuperValu TidyTowns competition. You are now becoming accustomed to entering and long may that last. Thank you for your entry form, the map that took so much thought and effort but was mighty helpful, the 3 Year Plan, the photos. Before and After photos are a great help to the adjudicator. The adjudicator sees that you were not involved in this competition for a number of years but the enthusiasm you now show augurs well for the coming years. Your interaction with Kerry County Council is reaping rich rewards for you and justifies the existence of a group like yours in the village. From the content on community involvement it seems that your work has been embraced enthusiastically by the community. I cannot imagine anyone being stuck for a tractor in Ballylongford! Good to read that you also interact with the school and that the school is attempting to gain Green Flag status. Your group has been rejuvenated and the plan is to rejuvenate your village also, a worthy aim. It is significant that your group sees an improvement in the appearance of the village, that you perceive a better community spirit among the residents, that a 'feel good' factor is developing. For the last two parts of the Community Involvement and Planning section of the entry form a paragraph on each rather than a bullet point presentation might be more effective in expressing thoughts and emotions. There is no need for so many maps. In the interest of saving time and labour submit a hand drawn map which shows the approach roads, the main buildings and the projects that you have engaged in for the previous year.

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

The enthusiastic programme that is outlined in your submission is evident in the appearance of the village. You are right in your assertion that the village has beautiful shop fronts, the plaster work on so many a unique inheritance. The village streetscape is a joy to behold and a credit to all involved in its presentation. Wonderful work has been done in painting, in preserving, in maintaining buildings no longer occupied as in the Garda Station or as in a number of enterprises that once were at the heart of village life as in the creamery or in residences that could now be eyesores. But the residents of the houses on the main streets can be justly proud of the fresh paint and presentation of their homes. Some of the pubs need to make the standard of presentation of those streetscape residences their standard also. The manner in which your built heritage is remembered illustrates the value that this community places in its roots. The whole Church complex is a joy to visit whether it be the Halla an Phobail or the Church edifice itself or the school. But the surprise that awaits one on this site would be worth taking the ferry ride for. It is as if your ecclesiastical history has been written in stone, those treated limestone information plates are decorative as well as informative. The various sculptures add an extra layer of interest. There is a sense that these people appreciate the creativity and the hard work of their forebears in the appearance of the main bridge, in the preservation of the creamery and the whitewash at the granary, in the care of the graveyard. Well done. The Gaeilge is to be found throughout.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

As in the previous section the adjudicator wonders will the landscaping live up to the hype of the submission and here again one can say that the landscaping work reflects the enthusiasm of the submission. There are a few stand out features for the adjudicator. The design of many of the landscaped beds give the impression that these beds grow naturally out of their surroundings, no raised bed, no stone or timber surrounds just gravel and perennials. Make this style of presenting landscaped beds your brand so remove tubs of flowers from grassy areas and replace with the practice on road widening areas or decide to leave the grass margin be a stand alone feature without planting. Another feature that the adjudicator liked was the treatment of areas where road had been widened. These opportunities arose on a number of occasions and all have been grasped with astute tree planting, the creation of recreational areas, well maintained grassy verges, a variety of furnishings as with the boat bed or the boulders or a bike or creamery cans. The village already possesses fine trees and the practice of continued tree growth has been continued down the years. So it is most encouraging to find so many areas where this practice is being continued. Recent hedging was also noticed. I suggest that you do not interfere with any of the poles as the baskets are now too sporadic to make a positive impact. There are lots of other places in which to express your green fingered talents. The adjudicator came across two examples of a two tiered raised bed, delightful and well placed. Your initiative in replacing the concrete masses with your beautiful containers to define an area does you great credit. A final word to all the people who bring colour with their window boxes and hanging baskets. One on occasion a beautiful tub of flowers enhanced an old black painted corrugated gate. Samhlaíocht. Could the information board in the pollinator garden be made a more permanent feature?

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:

This section seems to hold no fears for you. Already there is an awareness of the importance of visiting migratory birds. You are making the public aware of the variety of birds that are to be seen in Ballylongford through your attractive information panel. Your hedging and tree planting, your pollinator garden all indicate that landscaping is planned with the birds and the bees in mind. But the element of this section that excites most is the biodiversity project. You have been fortunate to have been chosen for such a study. One would like to have got a sentence or two or a photo on the bat and owl walks. An exciting plan is the bird watching hut. Where the adjudicator had come across such huts they are a major addition to the interest in the locals in the area wildlife. So one expects a sentence or two on this next year. The detail in your account on the Tidy and Wild projects is mainly a matter for your committee and could be summarised in a few sentences for the purposes of the adjudication.

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

Well done on the work you have been undertaking in this section. While some of the work has yet to show results such as the Energy Audit and the water butts, you are working on those and your thinking is properly focused. Each of the projects mentioned by you are relevant to either reuse of recycling or upcycling and certainly relevant to your rethinking. The adjudicator is delighted that you have had direct input from the Environmental Area Officer, the awareness that he will create in your group will soon be disseminated among the whole community. I am looking forward to seeing the self watering butts in the planters. One paragraph should cover the list of activities in the school as these are school activities. Just make the adjudicator aware. The adjudicator is impressed that the projects you have included in your 3 Year Plan include projects in this section of the competition, that some projects have already been completed and that most of the projects mentioned are specific and definable. The weakness the adjudicator finds is that there is not sufficient emphasis on waste reduction and where waste reduction is mentioned it is connected to recycling. There may be a little confusion, therefore, between elimination of waste and recycling among you.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The appearance of the streetscape helps to create a tidy image of the village. There are no garish colours on the street that distract the eye from the overall attractive picture. Now there are a few signs that are not in keeping with the traditional signage that is so distinctive. Encourage owners of premises, especially newer premises, to choose materials and lettering that fit the village image. There are fine footpaths throughout. But there are times when the adjudicator wondered if ye have access to a street sweeper and wisps of mown grass and pebbles created an untidy image. The fact that you pay so much attention to unoccupied premises and buildings is a great help to the appearance of Ballylongford. But, of course, the nicer an area looks the more the exception stands out. And there are places that you can easily identify and decide what can be done to improve the site or building. Some road surfaces need attention. Part of the Centra car park presents an opportunity and a challenge. One read your submission with interest on the litter activities of the group. Well done. But there is litter. If only the adjudicator had visited after one of the twice litter picks! So be alert to this perennial curse. That said the litter levels are not great. How many litres of paint did you use on the fencing all over the village. That painting, laborious as it must have been, does wonders for the tidiness it creates and also helps to brand the village.

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

Since the start of this report the adjudicator has been singing the praises of the presentation of the buildings all along each of the main streets. And rightly so. Housing along the approach roads also adds to the charm of Ballylongford. A disappointment is that so many estates do not have a name stone. These nameless estates deserve to have their identity displayed. All have their own personality: in one case the open space leads onto a wilderness of trees, in another the view is panoramic. In all cases care is taken in the presentation of the houses. But you have a challenging project ahead of the residents, to install name stones.

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

The name stones of the village create an immediate welcome and are well worth the effort. All are treated with imagination and pride. Where road widening has occurred full advantage has been taken to improve the appearance of that area. This is most apparent on the Tarbert Road and the Asdee Road. On the Listowel Road it is the housing that gives the approach road its personality. But it was worth visiting Reilig Mhichíl to discover that an off the main track area is not neglected. In fact the opposite. Then one discovered another delight, the Memorial Cross. While one admires the landscaping, the decorative tree, the management of road verges one also believes that there are stretches where nature should be given full expression and that happens also.

Concluding Remarks:

While the adjudicator feels that you could and should reduce the amount of material you submit, the enthusiasm for Ballylongford that was so obvious made the adjudicator wonder if this enthusiasm would be a reflection of what would be experienced on the visit. The visit actually was a delight. You are an ambitious group with a wonderful raw material to work on. It is imperative that there are no further breaks in your involvement in the competition. Your submission shows that you already experience the positivity that comes from entering TidyTowns. Reduce the workload in the submission and entering will not be such a chore but a joyful sharing of your pride in Ballylongford.