

# Tidy Towns Competition 2015

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballinalee** Ref: **742**  
County: **Longford** Mark: **241**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **21/07/2015**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2014</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2015</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	30	28
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	33	33
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	30	31
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	22	22
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	9	9
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	59	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	28	28
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>241</b>

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

Ta Fáilte Romhat Caonach! Welcome Ballinalee to the Super Valu 2015 National Tidy Towns competition. You have 12 members on your committee. This is good representation from a relatively small community. You do not tell us how often you hold meetings. You are assisted by the local authority, FÁS and the Farm Assist Scheme. Perhaps you would let us know more about how the latter scheme helps you with your Tidy Towns work. Your communication methods are the local paper and the parish newsletter. We hope that you include the minority church in your circulation to the church newsletters. Last year's adjudicator suggested you try using social media or texting. We concur with this suggestion, as using modern communication methods will attract younger workforce to your committee. The school helps with litter picks. Your group's work, you say, contributes to the enhancement of the village.

Last year's adjudicator said "do try and put together a plan of work for the next two – three years. You may have some member that will be able to put a plan together, if not seek outside help and send a copy with next year's entry." We do not appear to have received a Tidy Towns plan from you. We would encourage you to submit a Tidy Towns plan - a three or five-year plan will focus your mind on what you can hope to achieve – no matter how simple a plan it is. A plan need not be prepared professionally as indicated by last year's adjudicator, but you should consult locally in preparing such a plan. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to Ballinalee in drawing up your work programme. Please refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a plan. It is essential to progress in the competition and to gain extra marks under this particular category that you submit such a plan in 2016. Your map is somewhat minimalistic. You show five key landmarks. The map does not show the school nor does it extend to the village edges. You do not show any housing estates, nor name them. We would refer you to the 'How to complete your super Valu Tidy Towns Entry Form (part 6). In the entry guidelines for the competition you are asked to sequentially number each ('mappable') project undertaken for this year 2015 and to carry this numbering system through to the village map. Please remember to read the Guidelines carefully before submitting next year's Entry Form and map. Your marks have decreased in this category and the reason is that we received blank category entries as detailed in the remainder of the report.

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

You have left this category blank. You obviously have no projects undertaken under this category heading for this current year. We would refer you to item 5 of the 'How to complete your Supervalu Tidy Towns Entry Form - which states "if you have no new work in any adjudication categories please do not leave that category blank. Just say no work for this year. If any adjudication category is blank this may lead to a marks a reduction under the Community Involvement and Planning adjudication category."

The Top garage looked well but a parapet wall would benefit from painting for 2016. The green picnic benches adjacent to the Top garage fit in well with the Top garage colours. Rawle's is classically simple and very well cared-for. The associated signage is restrained and was admired. The GAA James McGuire Memorial Park was neatly presented. Can anything be done in relation to the 'tumbledown' house on the approach to the pitch? The General Sean MacEoin sculpture is a fine piece of public art, and the semi-mature trees behind the sculpture looked well and gave vertical emphasis to the sculpture. There was a certain amount of clutter outside Carrigy's and Farrell's shops which can look untidy, and create some obstruction on the footpath for people with mobility challenges. Paintwork in the area of the post box at the former needs renewal. J King is a lovely old shop front. It is a pity that the timber sash windows have been replaced by non-traditional uPVC windows. On the Aghacliffe approach the two and single story old house with boarded-up grey inserts is in need of paint of both the walls and the corrugated roof. This is an important entry point to the village beyond the bridge. The old Boylan green sign looked somewhat incongruous above a PVC door, but nonetheless should be retained.

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

You again have left this category blank. You obviously have no projects undertaken under this category heading for this current year. We would again refer you to item 5 of the how to complete your Supervalu Tidy Towns Entry Form.

Landscaping at both churches is exceptionally good. We would suggest that you remove the floral pots from the bridge to a more needy part of your village. The bridge - as part of the built environment looks well without any embellishment. On the other bridge the pots were empty and should be removed. The black plastic flower pots near St. Emer's Cemetery do not suit this location. The playground looked well. We admired the idea of the seats in the recesses along the approach from the Church of Ireland. However the seats are in need of renewal.

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

You have cleaned up the area beside the Catholic Church car park to be used as a bird sanctuary area. You have given us no details with regard to exactly how you propose to develop this area. Have you surveyed the bird population of the village? We would suggest that you contact your local County Heritage Officer for advice in progressing this project. The Tidy Towns Handbook is a relevant helpful publication. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is also a useful resource. We observed some fairly recent hedge cutting on the Granard approach road. Remember that it is permissible to trim hedging along cultivated ground (e.g. gardens) throughout the year. However with regard to hedge trimming bordering non cultivated land - you are reminded that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2006 to cut vegetation in a hedge or ditch on lands not cultivated between 1st March and 31st August annually - this is for the protection of nesting birds. Before considering trimming any such hedges please consult with your local authority who will deal with this issue if there is a safety aspect involved. We would ask you to try to desist from chemical weed killing. You could consult with your County Heritage Officer also in relation to non-chemical methods of weed killing which are environmentally friendly. And of course there is always the manual method of weed removal.

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

This is the third category which you have left blank in your Entry Form, and the same comments apply as already made. Have you looked at the Tidy Towns publication in relation to Sustainable Waste and Resource management - the updated version sent to you as updated handbook extract? We strongly suggest that you choose some simple starting point from the project examples given in that publication, and let us have details for 2016 as to how you have raised awareness, and also as to how you have completed any practical steps to prevent or reduce waste produced across your community. You could - for example - get some of the community to survey how much food they waste in a week! Check out the 'Food Waste Challenge' on [www.foodwaste.ie](http://www.foodwaste.ie) for guidance. Promoting waste prevention ideas and initiatives are a big part of the Tidy Towns Groups' role in this category. We would strongly suggest that you invite the County Environmental Awareness Officer to visit your community and to spend some time discussing ways to advance the community's management of waste and ways to promote efficient use of resources. If the school has a Green Flag (you have not told us, nor was there a Green Flag flying at the school) you could involve the children in sharing their knowledge.

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

You have purchased a street blower to improve cleanliness in the village. Well done on this. Is it a voluntary worker or somebody from one of the rural employment scheme that does this work? You maintain standards in the children's playground.

The metal gate and railings at the school on the Granard road approach are badly in need of painting. The gable of the shelter facing the road also requires repainting. There was nothing on display on the three flagpoles at the school, so we are not aware as to whether they are in the Green Flag programme or not. The generic Ballinalee village interpretive board - like all of the County Longford village interpretive boards has faded considerably and needs renewal.

The bring bank area has receptacles sited behind the timber fence with portholes for delivering the bottles. Because of the gap between each a certain residue of bottles has got caught between the wood and the receptacles. There was also a cardboard box left at the bring banks and a few pieces of stray litter. We wondered about the chip van parked in the large open space nearby. If this is a permanent fixture it looks poorly at the entrance to the village. There was one fly post at the Clonfin directional brown sign.

At the wooden slatted fence near Farrell's hardware the lower part of the wooden slats (on top of the wall) are peeling.

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

The residents' associations help to keep their own areas clean. Cois na hAbhainn has nice trellis edges to its open space. Some hanging basket brackets had no contents. Such redundant brackets should be removed. We admired the semi-mature trees in the well landscaped estate. We noted that this estate was a winner in the estate's competition 2012. One side of the entrance looked well, but the other side adjoined a field with ragwort. A Gala container and a shed might be painted at least. One or two trees need staking and the circus fly post at the exit should be removed. Sean Tobar had weedy footpaths at the top of the estate and the open space was a bit overgrown; otherwise the estate looked well.

This estate opposite the Top garage had no name on-site but it was very pleasantly landscaped. The stepped roofed two-storey houses uphill of Farrell's looked very well with fresh paint. The standard of residential property outside the estates was good also.

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

This is the fourth category in which you have no projects listed, and we once again refer you to the entry guidelines. We admired the stone/gold village signs, but we wonder about having the blue village sign so close. This can give a cluttered look. Are two signs necessary for entry to a village? We noticed some fairly recent hedge cutting on the Granard road approach. We refer you to our comments under Wildlife above. We noted a very dirty school sign on this approach road, as well as a very dirty 'don't pass' sign. Surfacing on both sides of the road here is needed in the hard shoulder area. We observed some litter including an old traffic cone. It would be good if you would consider painting all field gates on this - and on other approach roads in a uniform colour. We observed a farmyard with a rusty gate & sign 'beware of bull!'). A road boundary here needs paint. Old fly posting for a circus was noted. Some on-footpath parking was noted. In front of the line of houses on the left-hand side of this approach road some setbacks require surfacing. The long timber fencing needs screening either outside or inside the fence, and we note that last year's adjudicator also made this recommendation. Some directional signage was obscured by vegetation.

Parking on the footpath above Farrell's hardware shop should be avoided if possible.

On the Edgeworthstown approach road one of the 80 K pH signs is was obscured by vegetation and was also dirty. The community alert sign on this approach was dirty too. This approach is a nice leafy approach, and is well trimmed but again we noticed a little hedge cutting. The roses on display at the white dashed two-storey house on the right-hand side approaching the village was admired.

On the Aghacliffe approach road one of the 50 K pH signs was skewed. We noticed the use of weed killer in set-back areas leading right up to the 50 K pH speed limit signs. Please refer to our comments under Wildlife. We also observed some lateral hedge trimming here. The Lakeland site looked very poorly. We observed fly posting along this approach. The junction sign outside the garage approaching the village was very dirty.

The approach from the Church of Ireland road has nice trees and a good downhill footpath into the village. A boundary wall would benefit from repainting. The house on the right-hand side erected in 1897 looked well. The green village pump was admired.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Ballinalee is a nice traditional village with some good vernacular buildings and two fine churches. The changes in level make the setting interesting. We wish you well into the future. Go n-éirí libh!