

# Tidy Towns Competition 2015

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballycloughan** Ref: **476**  
County: **Longford** Mark: **217**  
Category: **A** Date(s): **11/07/2015**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2015</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	25
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	31
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	28
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	17
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	7
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	29
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	29
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>217</b>

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

Fáilte Beal Atha Clochain! Welcome back Ballycloughan to the Super Valu 2015 National Tidy Towns competition. Your last entry was in 2012. We note that you have quarterly meetings. We wonder if this is adequate to conduct your business as Tidy Towns volunteers. We note of course that you meet new residents unofficially as well. You have help from your local representatives, the local Community Resource Group, and sponsorship from local business. What engagement do you have with regard to professional advice on issues such as architectural conservation, heritage, sustainable waste management etc. with Longford County Council? Perhaps you would tell us about this next year.

We note that you have a variety of communication methods both traditional and modern. This is good. We are very sorry that you have lost your local school, but are encouraged by the fact that you share your information with local schools in the area. We expect that this is a reciprocal arrangement. These are the Tidy Towns committees of the future. And where the local schools engage in the Green Flag programme the benefits percolate to the community in general - particularly in relation to the Sustainable Waste and Resource Management category. We are happy that entering the competition keeps everyone focused on looking after their area.

Your map was adequate in relation to naming local landmarks. However, it did not indicate projects which you completed during the current year. We refer you to the 'How to complete your Super Valu Tidy Towns Entry Form (part 6)'. In the guidelines 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 all of the Guidelines carefully before submitting next year's Entry Form and map.

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, but you should consult locally in preparing such a plan. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to Ballycloughan 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. We note that the adjudicator in 2012 referred to your Village Enhancement Plan. No such plan was submitted with your entry this year. Perhaps this plan is out of date and needs renewal. This is a pity as this adjudicator had no opportunity to read about your enhancement plans for the future. An enhancement plan usually covers a lot of the issues considered under the Tidy Towns competition category headings. However, we would suggest that your Tidy Towns plan would be drawn up on the basis of the eight category headings which are adjudicated upon.

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

You state that you have not carried out any projects under this category heading during the current adjudication year. Under the 'Residential Streets and Housing Areas' category you mention that thought is going into the use of the Community Hall and the old school - as to how you can best integrate these into your community, and you also have an ambition to provide a childrens' play area. The lovely stone church of St Anne's is very well kept. It is a pity that the name sign is not legible from the public road and is screened by hedging. The sign itself is appropriate and attractive but paint is peeling from its surrounds. Some gates are beginning to rust in both the church and hall, and we would recommend that you attend to this rusting issue before it becomes too late to restore the attractive gates. Gates are interesting items of your built environment. Please continue to maintain them. Your stone wall tradition in the area is also worth maintaining..

The single storey house opposite the church, although in need of painting is traditional and attractive in style. The now closed school is outside the village proper. We would appeal to you if possible to stop letting it get rundown with such things as rusty goalposts, and a dirty boundary wall - as well as part uncut grounds, as observed on adjudication day. The bridge between the school and the village was so overgrown as not to be considered a feature at present. This adjudicator said in 2007 on their last visit to Ballycloughan "You could possibly make more of a feature of the Carn Bridge close to the school by cutting back growth in the area." Have you any plans in this regard?

What plans have you to use Irish in your village environment? Remember that this is an aspect of your Built Environment category.

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

Ballycloughan is a linear village with good natural rural hedge boundaries leading into the village centre on all sides. These have been conserved. You mention that you have planted daffodils. As adjudication takes place during the summer it would be helpful if you could perhaps send us some photographs of this spring daffodil display. You mention that they have been planted throughout the community, but we are not sure if this is in private gardens or on public space - or both. Please let us know. You mention that you provide and maintain flower beds at the church, at village signage and at the water well. In relation to the water well there is no signage to indicate where the well is located on the ground. As your map is diagrammatic and not to scale it, is very difficult for the adjudicator or visitor to locate the water well in the absence of such signage.

The adjudicator in 2012 suggested that the shrub bed at the corner of the church wall/car park could be better planted. This year's adjudicator would concur. The fact that the clothes recycling bank is located very close to this bed probably does not help to improve its overall appearance. However the bed within the church grounds containing the weathered (but appropriate) statue looked well this year. The green area on the Longford approach - which you maintain - is considerably outside the village. We wonder if you would be better to concentrate on the long length of actual village itself. On this green space outside the village proper we noted a fallen green striped road bollard, as well as a piece of litter. The space itself is rough with no defining feature. Well done on the maintenance you are carrying out of landscaped/grassed areas.

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

You mention that you plant evergreen shrubs. In general it is preferable to plant deciduous trees and shrubs as they are more environmentally friendly to wildlife. In 2007 this adjudicator - on their last visit to your village - suggested replanting some of the evergreen trees at the church with deciduous trees/shrubs. This is because of the superior value of deciduous tree for wildlife. Have you ever considered that suggestion since?

You mention that the area at the water well is 'preserved for wildlife, habitats, and natural amenities'. Our comments in relation to the location of the water well on the ground apply again. We await with anticipation some survey and analysis as well as how you propose to convey the results of your Birdwatch Ireland local resident's survey and analysis to the locals and visitors. This can be by on-the-ground interpretation or by app for instance. Provision of directionally signposted public access to natural amenities and interpretation of habitats studied is very important. We suggest that you consult the Heritage Office and the Biodiversity Officer of your local authority in relation to how to move forward with plans for same. You should also read the Tidy Towns Handbook which is quite detailed on this category. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is also a useful resource. The adjudicator in 2012 referred to your frog/tadpole survey. That adjudicator said that we would look forward to receiving details of the survey. However no such survey results have been submitted with your entry. Perhaps next year you could ensure that we receive same - assuming that the survey proceeded. The same adjudicator also referred to walks and trails to Carrickboy. Likewise we received no information in regard to this possible project in this year's entry.

We observed some hedge cutting on approach roads. There was a major detour route through your village at adjudication time, and this may account for possible hedge cutting by the local authority for safety purposes. However 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 trimming any such hedges please consult with your local authority who will deal with this issue if there is a safety aspect involved. We also observed recent hedge trimming on the other village approach.

We noted some use of weed killer on setbacks on the Carrickboy approach, and we would recommend that you endeavour to weed manually - which is more environmentally friendly. Your County Heritage Officer would also be

able to advise you in relation to environmentally friendly nonchemical methods of weed control.

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

You indicate that you encourage the community to reuse, and replant. You might give us more information as to how you convey this message - whether this is only at meetings (are these public meetings?) or do you circulate leaflets or use social media to convey this message? It is important that you give some detail as to the content and communication methods in use next year. The adjudicator in 2012 asked that you might include copies of your newsletters to provide evidence of work completed in relation to community encouragement under this category heading. Basically we are repeating this question this year. You referred to the annual cleanup here in this category. However, this is more appropriate to the Tidiness and Litter Control category and is considered/credited under that category heading. Have you looked at the Tidy Towns publication in relation to Sustainable Waste and Resource management - the updated version sent to you as an 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 completed any practical steps to prevent or reduce waste produced across your community. You could as a community - for example - get involved in the Green Homes Programme. As already mentioned the Green Schools programme is an asset to any village. Even where villages do not have a physical building of the school present - nevertheless the school-going children from such villages can get involved at whatever school they attend.

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

You mention your regular cleanups, but you do not state or explain exactly what you mean by 'regular.' We credit you with your annual cleanup here also, but it is important that you give us more information as to its organisation and participatory elements. The adjudicator in 2012 asked if you had developed a litter control plan or a litter strategy and also asked how often you conduct your litter picking activities. These questions appear to remain unanswered. We fully understand the problems you have with your village being located straddling a main road where passing traffic is often responsible for littering. You do not mention the safety issues involved in litter picking on such a road, but we are quite conscious of this matter also. We hope that you can work with your local authority in addressing a safe way of dealing with this issue. We see that you call upon the local authority to remove large masses of litter if found. This cooperation is to be commended for both participants. We see that you obtain assistance from your local FÁS workers. You stated that grass verges are kept very well trimmed, and this is true. The head of lanes are likewise well maintained. We fully accept that road works caused some road-head problems in relation to storage of materials for road works. However, in general the damage at this stage looked minimal. Well done to those who saw to this. There is still a small amount of restoration work to be carried out before next year. You are philosophical enough to realise that such temporary disruption is for the overall good of your community. A small amount of grass had not been removed from the earth banked areas. We noted some small amount of broken brown glass at the clothes recycling area fronting the community Hall/old school, as well as a few papers to the flower bed side of the recycling bin. Some weedy edges to the footpath in front of the church were noted and also car parking space/lining need painting. We did not notice any wheelchair space for cars. However perhaps we missed something.

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

You mentioned the cleanup of the estate at your village. It is good to see that the lighting of the estate has now been completed, and that you are working on having footpaths fully completed. The road surfaces are yet unfinished. It would appear that there is a high unoccupancy rate, and as a result issues like an entire garden left after treatment with weed killer. This looked poorly. It is difficult for the occupants of those houses which are inhabited to deal with these issues - literally on their doorstep - and they have our sympathy. There are very weedy 'beds' between the footpath and the estate road in places. One individual house was also without roof tiles. We were disappointed to see that the housing estate is not named on the ground and indeed not named on your map. We hope that its name sign will be in place by 2016 and that it will be bilingual. In 2007 you indicated that the naming of the new estate in Irish - Rath na Carraige was imminent. What happened? We admired the good boundaries and landscaping of the houses on the left-hand side as one approaches from Carrickboy. In general residential properties are well maintained and presented. However an unfinished house opposite Mount Ashborough had an overgrown garden and unfinished block walls. We hope that a stone faced wall will replace the block finish in due course as the house is completed. The recess area and the hard shoulder were also completely overgrown. We admired 'Avoca' which is a very neat property - and the garden to the adjacent single story house. As on our last visit we were most impressed with the traditional two storey house/tasteful extension opposite the church and it is still retaining its timber sash windows. It is also very well maintained and landscaped traditionally with a very well-cared for gate. Well done to its owners/occupiers!

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

You are having meetings and discussions with your local authority with regard to the provision of a footpath from Carrickboy to Ballycloughan village. The adjudicator in 2012 wondered why you did not place the village nameplate sign just before the school on the Carrickboy approach. This question remains unanswered. On the Carrickboy approach there is street lighting and a footpath, but the hard shoulder outside the footpath is very badly in need of surfacing, and on adjudication day was partly flooded. Improved drainage is required. The footpath edges were very weedy along this stretch.

On the Longford approach the 60 K pH speed limit sign is slightly inclined. The T junction sign as one exits along this route towards the 80 K pH speed limit is dirty. The village sign on this approach was very attractive with some

lovely wild climbing roses about. However the property adjacent to the sign looked poorly with many farm gates in need of attention /silage bales/untidy hard shoulder/pole and stay etc. close to the attractive sign.

We would recommend that you consider painting all field gates on approach roads and in the village in a uniform colour. Some gates are badly in need of paint. The painting of gates in a uniform colour will delineate your village. This is particularly important in a linear village which appears to 'flow' into the surrounding countryside and where it is difficult to define boundaries.

**Concluding Remarks:**

We are glad to have you back in the competition. We hope that you will continue to participate annually. You have a history of looking after your village which you intend to maintain, and we wish you continued success. Go n-éirí libh!