

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballinode** Ref: **585**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **292**
Category: **B** Date(s): **17/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	36	37
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	37	38
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38	40
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	32	34
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	32	34
TOTAL MARK	450	279	292

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome Ballinode to the 2015 tidy towns competition as your participation is appreciated. We were interested to read that the Ballinode tidy towns committee is a subgroup of Ballinode Community Projects Ltd and this demonstrates that your community based activities are very well organised. It is also pleasing to see that they are inclusive and attract all nationalities. The list of agencies, bodies businesses who support your activities is most impressive and it clearly shows that your work has the broad-based support of your village and that your projects are appreciated. However, we noted that there are no sports clubs on the list and we wondered if they have been approached and asked to help out? We were surprised to see that there are no details provided on your communication strategy as a group and we would encourage you to submit the details in 2016. Well done also on involving local schoolchildren in your projects and we note that a transition year student is now a member of your committee. Some consideration should be given to setting up a junior tidy towns committee with responsibility for some of your projects on an annual basis. Thank you for your map, photos and plan for in your village and it is noted that the application form has not been completed. While we appreciate that your plan accurately details the work that you have undertaken over the last year (and previous years!), it should not be regarded as a substitute for the application form. It is best if the application form is completed and the action plan is submitted as an attachment. This should improve the clarity of your submission and help to avoid a situation whereby any of your completed projects are overlooked during adjudication.

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

We thoroughly enjoyed our first visit to Ballinode. It is a lovely village with many interesting features and its quite an unusual settlement as it seems to have three discernible core areas – the area which accommodates the community centre and museum (close to the Monaghan approach road), the bridge in the centre of the village and the church and thatched cottage (close to the Scotstown approach road). The magnificent natural stone three bay bridge is a fitting centrepiece to the village and the colourful planters that adorn its walls help to enhance it further. The pedestrian bridge adjacent to the original structure is very tastefully done and it serves as an excellent illustration of how these historical structures can be retained and adapted with clever and sensitive designs. The terrace of single-storey whitewashed cottages (with their lovely colourful doors) were admired and we were most interested to see the old archway directly opposite the Riverside Park. This seems to be a historical structure and we wondered as to its origins? Perhaps this could be explained in 2016? On the Scotstown approach road, the thatched cottage is a most impressive residential building presented in good condition and we loved the natural stone church with its distinctive lead lined windows and nicely maintained graveyard. The repainted murals at Kerrylees shop looked well and it is a shame to see that this shop and the Centra are closed - one hopes that these buildings can find new occupants soon. However, it is pleasing to see that the committee (and responsible property owners) is ensuring that vacant buildings are presented in the best light with the vacant bar opposite the playground

looking well. Maguires haulage yard also deserves a positive mention as it looked neat and tidy – despite the fact that industrial facilities such as this can be difficult to maintain. The rather functional buildings that accommodate the museum and the community centre buildings looked quite well during adjudication. It is acknowledged that the community centre building is continually being improved by your committee and that you are awaiting funding to proceed with the mill wheel project. Your continuing efforts (since the 1970's!) to build a fibreglass scale model of the village are noted and we look forward to seeing this in the years ahead. The work to the floral feature at Connolly corner and replanting the three planters on the bridge are considered under the landscaping category.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

There was an impressive array of landscaping schemes to be seen in Ballinode on adjudication day. The planting at the seating area on the Monaghan approach road (is this Connolly's bridge?) looked well as a notable range of perennials could be spotted in the planted bank behind the two seats. Opposite, the large black planters provided lovely colour and these features help to enhance this important approach road to your village. The colourful planting beneath the village name sign on this approach was observed and we loved the three natural stone beds with their seasonal flowering plants that provided a flood of bright summer colours. The planting at the Riverside Park was also admired and although it is somewhat limited, it works very well and serves to enhance this wonderful amenity. The wonderful basketball court and the Sproai na hAbhainn playground are also excellent amenities. A highlight for the adjudicator was the lovely planted area between Cappog and River View where three natural stone beds could be seen and which accommodated the most wonderful roses in full bloom - in many different colours. The committee is also commended on its use of colourful planters that are located throughout the village in key locations such as the bridge, the playground and the basketball court. Well done also on your provision of pleasant seating areas such as the one on the Scotstown approach road (which also has lovely planting adjacent to it) and the lovely seating area beside the village green in Cappog. The committee is commended on planting additional tree saplings (in the Cappog estate and Green, in the Riverside Park and along the Main Street), for painting railings and fences and seatings in the village and planting spring bulbs. The green areas are also very well maintained and looked great during adjudication.

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

Your action plan indicates that the committee was busy with projects under this category for 2015. It is great to see that the committee is very active with respect to wildlife projects and that you have attended a range of workshops that are designed to improve your understanding of this subject and identify suitable projects for your village. We note that you attended the River workshop in September 2014 and we wondered if this led to any suitable projects being identified? Please let us know in 2016. We were very interested to read about the bat detection and monitoring training that the committee members undertook in 2014 and we would love some further details on this. Is there a bat population in Ballinode? If so, has the bat species been identified? In terms of monitoring, is the population increasing or falling? Have any projects been identified that will provide for or improve the habitat for bats in your village? Please let us know in 2016. Well done on organising an annual eco-camp for schoolchildren and why not consider undertaking a waste minimisation or wildlife project (or both!) as part of it? We were also pleased to read that you are engaging in wildlife friendly planting and we note the 2014 adjudicators report that this includes sedum. Does the committee plan to include wildlife friendly planting in each of your planting schemes?

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

Although this category has increased in importance in the tidy towns competition in recent years (as it has been allocated 50 marks), it frequently causes difficulties among tidy towns groups as many struggle to come up with innovative ways of minimising and eliminating waste generation and sustainable resource use. However, we are pleased to see that your committee appears to have a good grasp of what is required under this category with a number of interesting projects undertaken for 2015. These include car sharing local with tidy towns groups when going to external events (a very practical and commonsense idea), working with the schools to reduce waste generation, recycling of clothes, bottles and furniture, using old lorry tyres as planters and liaising with local businesses to see if waste minimisation practices are taking place. These are all commendable but don't forget to tell us about what the group is doing in its day-to-day activities to minimise and eliminate waste generation. For example, do you make your own compost or harvest rainwater? Consider also undertaking a survey of residents in the village to see how many are actively trying to reduce the amount of waste they generate as this will help you to identify projects that will achieve this.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We are pleased to report your village was exceptionally clean and tidy during adjudication day with virtually no litter to be spotted. The only exception to this was two pieces of litter on the Monaghan approach road which appeared to have been recently dropped. This is an impressive performance as your village covers an extensive area that must be challenging to keep so clean. It is great to see that you carry out weekly litter picks with volunteers, Tus and Fas workers and that you have provided new bins for the sports court and the local chip shop. However, we would love to hear more about your litter strategy in 2016. For example, do you divide the village into different zones for litter picking? Have any blackspots been identified? Well done also on taking part in the national spring clean and we are pleased to read that you also intend to carry out an Autumn cleanup. The standard of tidiness was exceptionally high and so far as we can see, the village appeared to be a weed free zone during adjudication with no weed to be spotted at the base of walls, at pavement kerbs or on roadsides. Despite this excellent performance, some improvements are possible. We were surprised to note that the speed limit signage on some of the approach roads was obscured on one side by vegetation and it is recommended that this matter is addressed for next year. The River view estate name sign needs attention while the gate of the water treatment plant is somewhat untidy looking.

The seat at the playground may need to be painted in time for 2016 and the parking area opposite is untidy looking due to its rough surfacing, potholes and visible weed.

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

The residential areas in the village generally achieved a high standard with Cappog looking exceptionally well. Its neatly trimmed village green, discreet but colourful planters and semimature trees provide a lovely central area while the standard of presentation of individual houses and gardens was high. The small park area with the seat adjacent to the entrance is a wonderful space. Riverside and Riverview both looked well even though they did not achieve the high standards of Cappog. The modern estate of Sean Mhuileann is exceptionally neat and tidy with very well maintained green area. However, the green area is a little bare and perhaps some landscaping could be considered for future years. The committee is commended for liaising closely with local residents groups in maintaining green areas and we acknowledge that you have contacted the owners of derelict properties to encourage them to improve the buildings. Perhaps the assistance of the Council should be sought in dealing with these problems? We note that there is a large retail premises in the centre of the village that is challenging to deal with due to legal problems.

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

The standard of the approach roads into the village was generally good with the verges, roadsides and pavements all very well maintained and looking neat and tidy. However, it must be said that the adjudicator found that the approaches to the village were somewhat confusing and this is due to the fact that 50 kmph zones do not begin at the start of the built up area and in 2 cases (Lemaculla Corner and Connollys bridge), the village name signs are not located close to the 50 kmph signs. This means that the entrance and exit points of the village were not considered to be sufficiently clear and this may lead to confusion for motorists. It is strongly recommended that this issue is discussed with your Council Engineer as in most cases, the 50 kmph zones should commence at the start of the built up area.

Concluding Remarks:

Congratulations to the committee on an excellent performance in 2015 and we are delighted to see that your village continues to go from strength to strength. We look forward to 2016 when no doubt further progress will be made.