

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballon - Balana** Ref: **526**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **356**
Category: **B** Date(s): **13/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	51	52
Streetscape & Public Places	80	43	44
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	47	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	40	41
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	28	29
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	67	68
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	38	39
TOTAL MARK	550	349	356

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2023. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Adh Mór! Welcome to the 2023 Supervalu National Tidy Towns Competition Ballon! Many thanks for your succinct application and wonderful map. Your Tabular idea is a nice, and novel, approach but sometimes more info is needed for an adjudicator to assign marks. Also when the photographs are underneath each project it makes reviewing your endeavours all the easier. For next year also see can you align each individual project to the UN SDGs. You are lucky to live in such a wonderful community and to have so many community partners who support you and vice versa over the last 21 years of entering the competition. Your Community House project is most interesting – on one hand being repurposed but also using the land to help with a parking issue. Make sure one phase complements the other and I wish you the very best of luck with it!

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

Ballon Improvement Group has made impressive advances in multiple areas, contributing significantly to the revitalisation of the area. Highlights in this category include building two houses for rental purposes as well as six semi-detached houses in Laragh Beg – in a housing crisis this is most welcome. Renovation work at a town center house into an apartment block shows repurposing existing infrastructure, while CCTV on St. Peter and Paul Walkway increases safety and security. The creation of a linear park will be addressed under Green Areas & Landscaping. Power washing of pavements near the new graveyard and ongoing upgrades at the Old Credit Union building demonstrate your efforts to protect and enhance community assets. Overall, your endeavours show a proactive approach toward increasing livability, aesthetics, and the sustainable development of your community. I particularly liked how you used your awards money and reinvested it in public seating. In fact, the amount and array of seating was exceptional – on paths, under trees... truly wonderful. Ballon NS was well presented and the thoughtful Remembrance Plaque for the children's burial ground was noted. Could the Village Map be placed somewhere more central I wonder, to increase its impact? Your community centre was very well maintained, no doubt most welcome by your new Ukrainian residents – well done for making them feel so welcome. All shops and businesses looked well, though a special shout out to Café de Mode and the paintings at the Old Village Hall!

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You demonstrated extraordinary dedication and progress in improving landscaping. At Texaco, both raised garden areas and outside the telephone exchange building received much-needed upgrades such as topsoil and compost replacement as well as pollinator-friendly plants. Well done to Nectar Café for sponsoring beds by the school – great to see the private sector supporting their community partners. The Millenium Garden was resplendent though

the plaque was obscured; something perhaps that could be addressed. The 1916 Garden was also wonderful, the Hazel was blocking some of the ornamental rocks though. There was lots of wonderful colour displays and pollinator-friendly planting at Ballykealy Lane. There was a dead tree here that could be replaced and a dilapidated bug hotel that could be removed. Remember a stockpile of deadwood is as, if not more, effective than artificial bug hotels. Also be mindful about large planters with small flowers; the purpose of the planter should never be to be more obvious than the plants. The Grotto looked wonderful. There were empty basket hooks – perhaps remove as there is lots of other ground planting happening here and it will also reduce your maintenance workload. There is an information panel in the centre of a flowerbed on Ballon Hill – an unusual location, no? No-Mow-May is being implemented throughout the village to promote biodiversity, with Ballon Garda Station planting new Heritage Wildlife trees and maintaining a grass path as examples of commitment to protecting nature. The group is to be applauded for managing over 20 large pocket gardens to meet their Pollinator Plan, especially the Pollinator-fairy Garden on Ballon Hill.

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

Ballon Improvement Group has made tremendous strides towards increasing biodiversity and engaging the local population with environmental initiatives. The Carlow Tourism garden festival successfully integrated your heritage tree walk into their festival, demonstrating a dedication to preserving and sharing local history and culture. I also very much enjoyed finding all the trees. The ongoing art biodiversity project by your local artist featuring flying birds adds an artistic element to your conservation efforts, while compiling a biodiversity calendar featuring school children's photos fosters community involvement and involvement. Siopa Glas' distribution of heritage apple trees help support local pollinator populations. The area managed for biodiversity on Ballon Hill – are you operating a cut and collect here or leaving to grow wild? Overall, you deserve praise for commendable efforts towards biodiversity preservation, community engagement and environmental education.

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

You are very fortunate to have Siopa Glas who act as a sustainability community hub. Well done on successfully leveraging social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to help spread your message. Cheetah Electronics deserves special recognition for providing their space free of charge, thus enabling the community group to continue its important work. It was beneficial to have clear information regarding volunteer contributions from Sarah and Shauna whom you mentioned as mentors to the group and their respective roles within it. Also make sure to look to other groups Adjudication Reports in this category or Special Award winners for ideas. Also, your local Environmental Awareness Officer is a tremendous resource for all things 'green'.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

On the day I visited there were no weeds or litter – a tremendous achievement, well done! This has been achieved through a remarkable commitment to maintaining a clean and litter-free village throughout the year. Your regular litter pick-ups - both weekly and daily during summer months - illustrate a dedication to keeping your surroundings tidy. Consideration given by this group in regard to accessibility by keeping footpaths clear and maintaining clean granite seating is commendable. Engaging the community, such as involving school children in clean up efforts or hosting "little event - huge cleanup" events with An Taisce, fosters a sense of civic responsibility and fosters greater engagement. Residents receiving litter pickers, bags, pooper scoopers and poo bags demonstrate responsible waste disposal practices and set an excellent example for others to follow. Your Bring Centre was very well maintained. Some minor issues noted on the day include:

- The Yield Sign on the L6063 needs straightening
- Hoarding across from the Community Centre / Laragh Beg Estate could be addressed
- Old hoarding before Texaco

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

You are well supported by the local homeowners. Mullaunmore looked very well (though it would be great to cease herbicide use). Maple Lawn Estate looked resplendent, especially the front garden of the home at the entrance to the estate.

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

Ballon Improvement Group has demonstrated remarkable commitment to enhance the natural beauty and biodiversity of approach roads. By increasing wildflower planting and encouraging existing flora to flourish, you have contributed greatly to creating an attractive approach to your village. Well done and keep up the great work in this category.

Concluding Remarks:

Congratulations to Ballon on its outstanding efforts in improving the local area! Your dedication, creativity, and collaboration have had an enormously positive effect and serve as an example for others to follow.