

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballysteen - Baile Stiabhna** Ref: **2221**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **287**
Category: **B** Date(s): **05/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	44	46
Streetscape & Public Places	80	35	37
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	34	35
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	31	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	16	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	30	31
TOTAL MARK	550	274	287

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.

Thank you for the completed entry form and the excellent hand-drawn map of the village of Ballysteen.

The Sustainable Development Goals are at the heart of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Tidy Towns has now fully adopted these goals and has integrated them into the competition to ask groups to demonstrate how SDGs impact their activities.

Thank you for the input in this category and for giving the adjudicator an insight into how you plan your activities and put them into action.

The map supplied was more than acceptable for the job in hand but the adjudicator suggests that you might consider a simple 2-page guide and village map that would be useful for visitors to your idyllic village right on the banks of Shannon Estuary

The committee of 8 members plus additional voluntary support of 9 is very proactive judging by what has been accomplished over the last number of years.

You have an impressive list of sponsors and supporters that include public organizations Limerick City and County Council and West Limerick Resources, local sports clubs, and organizations, a cross-section of businesses associated with the parish, and of course, the local people of Ballysteen who support your efforts to instill a Pride of Place mentality in the local population.

Well done on organising such practical courses as defibrillator training which was very well attended by representatives from clubs and local schools in Ballysteen and Askeaton.

Being selected for the JP Foundation-supported County Going For Gold Competition was a big plus and whilst you may not have won a prize being involved was the main benefit as it allowed you to interact with other groups from around the county.

Thank you for detailing your methods of communication and what they are used for-very impressive.

You have a strong involvement with local schools in both Ballysteen and Askeaton and the young student from 5th year Colaiste Mhuire in Askeaton has earned stripes for all the practical work undertaken

The specific project undertaken in the last year is the clean-up at Beagh Graveyard which garnered huge voluntary support from parishioners.

The adjudicator visited the graveyard and saw the results of the good work that was done.

Credit to all that were involved in this project.

Ballysteen first entered the competition in 2017 and a lot of progressive work has taken place since then.

Thank you for the positive endorsement of the competition and how it has benefited the local community.

As was the case last year the submission was a little lengthy but no real fault on that except to quote the adage

"less is often more" so maybe consider shortening the entry form next year,
Thank you for the excellent pictorial records that support the narrative.
For the level of planning that has been done in the last year an increase in marks is warranted,

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

The adjudicator was very impressed with the new projects undertaken over the last year and also with the planned for the year ahead.

The sensor lights were noted at the Carnegie Library and they have enhanced this building even more as well as making it safer for people attending meetings and other events at night .

The adjudicator took some time out to have coffee at the Iverus Café and had a chat with the owner and her daughter.

Both were very positive for the future of the combined venture.

It would be worthwhile if the Committee would add its weight by lobbying local public representatives to get the road down to this excellent facility upgraded.

The signposting also needs to be addressed as one could find themselves in a farm yard if the wrong option is taken at the fork in the road !

Good to note that planning permission has been sought to restore this 17th Century cottage ruin at the bend in Beagh Castle.

Restoration of lights in the village and at Hayes Cross and replacing the defective bulbs with energy efficient LED bulbs a very positive development and again it will make night time travel and walking safer.

The following are a few personal observations made in line with guidelines of the competition.

The adjudicator was very impressed not alone with the refurbished Carnegie Library but with the excellent stone wall, the well-designed name sign and the ample parking area.

The sections of new footpaths in the village are of excellent quality and design and again provide safe walking for local people young and old,

Ballysteen National School is very well maintained with a huge quad area and the flag poles protected aka rugby goal posts.

It has its own information panel where school activities are publicised and the post office box beside it is of a higher standard than most seen around the country.

The village pump has been restored but retained within its original surrounding with some nice planting arrangements for accompaniment.

Ballysteen RC Catholic Church and its extensive grounds were just resplendent on a beautiful sunny day and credit is due to the personnel that are responsible for its upkeep.

Ballysteen GAA Club was well presented but is probably the lesser of the two GAA Grounds in the Parish- I stand corrected if this is not the case.

Plenty of activity on the day in question with hurling being to the fore ! and plenty of Limerick jerseys being sported by the many youngsters that were on the pitch.

The club is wished well with its new planned project a perimeter walk.

Ballysteen Pier which has been upgraded some years back was visited and time taken to observe across the Shannon to Co Clare.

Again the road down to this facility is a bit of a nightmare.

Road surfaces in the main area of the village were good, footpaths have already been commented upon as has street lightning.

Signage was clean and visible.

An increase in marks is awarded based on the adjudicator's observations

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Wonderful voluntary work has been done in Beagh Cemetery where the green spaces have been meticulously manicured.

This is one place that rewilding would not have been appropriate in my opinion.

Excellent work on stripping back briars and ivy and exposing the wonderful stone walls.

Plenty of individual planting arrangements both permanent and moveable were observed during an extensive walkabout.

The committee seemed to have reacted positively to the comment on the use of old tyres as flower containers as there were none to be seen

This adjudicator would have made the same recommendation as they are not an environmentally suitable option.

Yes, the village wall looked very well adorned as it was with colourful annuals.

The other areas where planters were placed were visited and noted especially the rustic barrels outside the church, and the little bed at the Pink Pier on the way up from the Castle.

Very good advice was given on sustainable planting in last year's report and this adjudicator would endorse this approach.

Overall the standard was good but do look at the all-year-round options and revisit your planting strategy.

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

Key to this category is being aware of habitats that exist in one's area and where they are.

Knowledge of the types of protected areas such as Natural Heritage Areas and Special Areas of Conservation is also very important.

There is legislation in place to protect wildlife and habitats and committees should be familiar with this before embarking on any wildlife project.

The best intentioned group might unknowingly breach wildlife law while undertaking a project so it is vital to know the basics.

The Wildlife Act was first introduced in 1976.

Well done to you as a group in your use of the Facebook page to highlight and make people aware of the importance of biodiversity in general.

You can add the introductory statements above in time as additional information.

Promoting the need for Invasive Species Training is an excellent initiative as communities need to be familiar with the adverse effects of Japanese Knotweed and the like have on the local environment and biodiversity.

Top marks also for encouraging local people to observe fauna and flora and feed in information to Biodiversity Ireland www.biodiversityireland.ie

You also state one basic fact that people often forget to feed birds during winter months.

Well done on the prudent planting that promotes wildlife preservation and for purchasing Irish wildflower seeds from a recognised source Sandro Cafolla down in Carlow.

There is an excellent website www.wildflowers.ie that offers both information and talks on wildflower growing.

We have certainly moved on when the robots are cutting the grass in Ballysteen Sportsfield whatever happened the tried and trusted gang mower ?

Thank you for giving the adjudicator an insight on Ballinacourty House, Geoff Hunts talks to the local school children and LAWPRO Officer Ruairí O Conchuir on his presentation on preserving waterways in a proper fashion.

Well done to the Askeaton/Ballysteen Heritage Society for organizing informative talks over the course of the year.

A fine gesture on the part of Iverus Café contributing to your work in this category.

Do keep in touch with the County Biodiversity Officer for updates and possible workshops that might be planned for the county during the autumn and winter months.

Biodiversity Ireland is the source for updated information on the All Ireland Pollinator Plan

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

This category has been developing in keeping with up-to-date EU and government policy.

It summarizes how we try to lessen our use of resources within a community so that we reduce our environmental impact.

The objective in this category is now very much within the realm of promoting the concept of reducing the production of potential waste at source.

“Doing more with less” is just not a catchphrase it is now a necessity if we are concerned with our environment and what we are doing with it.

What you have mentioned in the entry form very much fits within the guidelines some of the content is very particular to Ballysteen but quite a lot has been replicated around the country.

Groups have become far more comfortable with the category as they got to know more about it.

Well done on the sourcing of self-watering barrels to replace existing ones as you state are a great way of making the best use of water and liquid feed when added to the water.

They also reduce the maintenance time involved in watering planters.

The repurposed cable wheels were seen to good effect at Beagh Castle and the very novel fairy garden, with its popular fairy phone at the school, is a new attraction for schoolchildren.

To get more out of this category access the Tidy Towns Handbook under this section where there is a store of pertinent information and links to relevant websites.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

There is certainly not very much wrong with the village of Ballysteen in the context of litter control or general tidiness.

On the day in question, there was little or no litter to be seen bar a wrapper or bottle on one of the entrance roads. The committee has had the goodwill of the local community who support your efforts trying to keep the village clean and litter free as well as deterring dog fouling.

Some additional anti-dog fouling signage might not go astray as the area under consideration is somewhat spread out.

You have numerous initiatives on the go and it's good to see that the local school children are involved in many of them.

Scrap metal collections are a popular way of getting rid of waste material as well as making a few bob for worthy causes.

Well done on influencing the Limerick City and County Council on getting the faded speed signs upgraded.

Your involvement in the Limerick Clean Up Day looks to have been a fun outing with a serious mission.

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

Quite a lot of the input in this section has been covered in other categories.

The adjudicator is mindful of the fact that some duplication will occur.

The section of footpath featured here has already been commented on in positive terms in Street Scapes and public places as has the National School.

There are some fine private properties within the village with tidy frontages and well-kept boundary walls.

Some nice front gardens were observed during the walkabout.

These had some well-laid out shrub beds that had a mix of perennials and annuals that were coming into summer bloom.

What was noticeable was that there seemed to be no untidy areas even in one or two of the farm yards that were seen,

The adjudicator made his judgment based on the criteria and what he had seen on the ground.
It was a very fine summer day and everywhere looks a little perked up on such days but an increase in marks is awarded.

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

The adjudicator went on the L1201 and saw the result of the work of volunteers which indeed was transformational.
Well done to all involved in this restoration work

The entrance from Pallaskenry has been enhanced with the upgrading of the stone surround which was populated with colourful flowers mostly annuals.

The adjudicator had decided to come into Ballysteen via Pallaskenry village off the N69 as it had been over 30 years since he travelled this route.

It looks like that Castletown C of I is still in use.

The entrance from Askeaton had a similar stone bed at the place name sign which was also populated with annuals.

The boundary wall on the left seemed to be part of an old landed estate but could be wrong with my assumption

The trees on the far side of the road from the wall were overhanging the road and could be dangerous to large vehicles notably tractors and silage carriers.

Concluding Remarks:

It was nice to return to Ballysteen after many years and observe the wonderful changes that have occurred.

Carnegie Library was restored as a Community Events Centre and was in resplendent condition and Ballysteen

GAA Club still going strong.

You are wished further success in the competition in the years ahead