

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballina - Béal an Átha** Ref: **766**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **354**
Category: **F** Date(s): **27/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	52	54
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	49	50
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	44	45
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	25	26
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	37	39
TOTAL MARK	550	342	354

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valú 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 Super Valú Tidy Towns Competition for 2023. We thank you for your entry, and wish you all the best in all your future work. Good luck.

Ballina - Béal Átha n'Fheadha, a large town with a population of 10,171 people (2016 census) – has entered the competition for the past 33 years and has a committee of 8 members with support of another 7 tidy towns trainees and up to 400 additional volunteers.

- You have a committee which meets monthly during the winter months and every Monday evening during the spring and summer months for 'works sessions'. Saturday clean ups and an annual tidy estates competition take place on a regular basis.
- Support is received from a wide range of national and local agencies and businesses including Mayo County Council and you collaborate with a range of local community organisations on specific projects and individual sponsorship schemes.
- You communicate with the public via regular news items in the local press and parish bulletin and through social media, Chamber of Commerce leaflets, Tidy Estate Competition, telephone, email and letters etc.
- You engage closely with the local schools and young volunteers, as part of the outreach programme in transition year, assist your volunteers with various Tidy Towns work programmes. Local children are also involved in the Spring and Autumn clean ups.
- The voluntary work undertaken by Ballina Tidy Towns Committee has helped to heighten awareness locally of community involvement and civic pride in the Town with participation from all age groups creating a positive sense of community effort. The preparations for the Tidy Towns competition has fostered co-operation between local groups working towards a common aim for the benefit of the entire community – congratulations to all involved with this important work.
- A major element of the work carried out this year by Ballina Tidy Towns Committee has been associated with the preparations for the visit and homecoming of President of the United States Mr. Joe Biden, followed by Mayo Day and the West of Ireland Mini Marathon – all over a period of just 3 weeks. In relation to the first event this involved liaison with Whitehouse officials and Dept. of Foreign Affairs and An Garda Síochána, the Defence Forces and local Chamber of Commerce. Over a very short timescale extensive power washing, cleaning, and painting of walls, streets and railings and various enhancement works were completed to ensure the town was presented to the highest possible standard, for this once in a lifetime event, televised across the world. The US Presidential visit was clearly a great triumph for the Tidy Towns Committee, given your significant contribution to the overall success of the event –to all in Ballina Tidy Towns Committee who were actively involved you can justifiably 'take a bow'!

The coloured map and aerial photograph of the town with the associated colour coded legend under the various

competition categories, showing the various projects completed over the year provided with your Entry Form, was of excellent quality and greatly facilitated the assessment and navigation around your town - well done.

The quality of the application form was excellent and very professionally produced. The various categories were clearly indicated on the form and individual projects completed within each category were easily identifiable. The clear text with bullet points, use of photos and graphic displays and numbered pages significantly enhanced the usability of the entry form. All in all, this is one of the most impressive Tidy Towns entry forms for a large town, that this adjudicator has seen over the years.

The 3-year Tidy Towns plan (2023 -2026) shown as an Appendix to the main entry form, has been noted and is very comprehensive – we wish you well with its implementation over the period of the plan. The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the application form, which is suitably concise at 56 pages long - well done.

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

- Ballina Tidy Towns Committee has undertaken a wide range of new projects this year under this category, many associated with President Biden's visit and others involving tackling dereliction through building painting schemes, creation of wall murals, and local town enhancement schemes. A considerable programme of future works is also planned under this category
- We commenced our visit to Ballina on a warm but rather cloudy day in late June. On entering the town, we were struck by the high level of activity on all the various thoroughfares within the town which reinforced the sense of vibrancy in the town. It was heartening to see new businesses opening up and building renovation works taking place. Barrett Street was the first port of call and we admired the well-designed Arts Centre, an impressive modern style building faced with natural limestone which is an attractive feature in this part of the town. The colourful electrical boxes on the footpath were also positively noted. The brightly coloured aspect of the street was enhanced with the recent painting of building facades in this area. The Ballina Manor Hotel which overlooks the Moy River, also looked very well with attractive stone façade, and suitable tree planting along its frontage.
- Pearse Street in Ballina is a jewel in the crown of your town, with excellent presentation of commercial and residential properties, and wonderfully colourful and interesting shopfronts. The wide paved footpaths, traffic calming arrangements, use of quality materials has very much enhanced the ambience and general walkability of this busy street. Tree planting, seating, street furniture and a sculpture feature added to the strong visual aspect. Moy Lane looked very well and we were interested to read the historic information signage located here and noted the nicely painted ornate railings on the upper floor of the nearby library building.
- The adjudicator especially admired the colour scheme chosen and presentation of the residential properties at the lower end of Pearse Street and the photographic exhibition placed in the window of the 'Old Pearse Street?' premises. The rethatching or re-slating of the nearby unoccupied property called 'The Gem' would greatly enhance the quality of the streetscape here. The nicely planted corner site with seating and attractive backdrop of trees is a wonderful feature here.
- The Jackie Clark's collection and the outdoor garden area was visited and we were especially impressed with the overall design, and standard of cultivation and maintenance of this important attraction. It is no wonder that the garden space has been awarded a green flag status.
- The development of a new civic space adjoining Market Street and nearby housing scheme, currently under construction, was visited and it is good to note that the existing lime trees growing in this area have been retained, providing suitable visual enclosure to this space. The completion of this scheme is eagerly awaited. The nearby and now famous President Biden Wall Mural created on the gable of Mary H's fashion premises was especially admired and no doubt will remain a very important feature and visitor attraction here for years to come.
- The area around the memorial sculpture known as the Font is beautifully presented with attractive tree planting and a very well maintained herbaceous perennial border, together with an interesting cobble paving scheme. Some of the blue wooden seating in this area would benefit from a re-painting. The newly created outdoor space to the rear of the Aldi supermarket was also greatly admired.
- The area around the General Humbert memorial was enhanced with floral displays and a representation of a salmon, expertly made entirely from willow twigs. It was interesting to read about general Humbert's connection with the Town of Ballina and the 1798 rebellion and the arrival of the French expeditionary force. The e-car charge point located in the nearby Humbert car park was positively noted. The Bring Centre in the car park was also inspected and a small amount of littering was noted here.
- The adjudicator crossed over the pedestrian suspension bridge over the river Moy close to the Arts Centre – a site between the bridge entrance and the Arts Center is prominent here and perhaps could be screened from public view pending further development. The nearby Barrett Street car park was nicely presented. The site of the Augustinian Abbey near the Cathedral was visited and the adjudicator read the signage placed here providing a detailed history of the site. The remaining structure of the Abbey buildings are covered with heavy growth of ivy and perhaps the advice of the OPW national monuments service could be sought on remedying this. The railings along the frontage of the Abbey site would benefit from re-painting. The Cathedral building is an imposing feature in this part of the town and this entire area came to the fore during President Biden's visit. The frontage of the Cathedral looked well with nicely presented piers, gates and railings fronting the road. The seating area overlooking the Moy River is enhanced with attractive floral displays and trees and natural stone paving. The blue timber seating in this area would also benefit from re-painting. Across the river at Dillon Street the new coffee and bakery premises in a contrasting black and white colour scheme additionally enhanced this area.
- The restoration of the seating area with beautifully scenic views overlooking the river at the outdoor swimming pool on the Downhill Road, including new picnic benches and planted areas, painting of the houses on the Bunree Road and new footpath and perimeter fencing at Belleek Woods, were all positively noted and admired.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- The main project completed this year under this category is the commencement of an ambitious plan to plant 10,000 trees in the town, a tree for each resident living in the town, to celebrate the town's 300th anniversary. It is also proposed to plant wild flowers on the Foxford Road.
- The Tom Ruane Park located to the northeast of the town was visited. This is an excellent local amenity space located along the Moy River providing a range of facilities for the local community to enjoy, including a children's playground, tennis courts, MUGA, walkways, grassed areas, and trees etc. It is noted that plans for a sensory garden in the park are currently under consideration. Congratulations are due to the maintenance staff who work in this park on an ongoing basis, as it is maintained and presented to an excellent standard. To further enhance the park the introduction of some wildflower areas, particularly under the trees and in areas which are difficult to maintain, is suggested in the interests of biodiversity. An area between the existing park boundary and the Moy River, could be developed as a Green/Blue Way, where adequate space is available.
- The overall standard of presentation of existing planted areas and beds throughout the town was excellent and the seasonal floral displays enhanced the streetscape and seating areas. Some of the younger ash trees planted along approach roads and along the river Moy are showing signs of ash dieback disease and judicious pruning in the short/medium term will improve the longer-term viability and appearance of these trees.
- Reducing further your use of seasonal bedding plants for your floral displays and hanging baskets is an important initiative for your committee to consider in future years. Colourful perennial and pollinator friendly plants e.g., *Alstroemeria* spp. can be used to very good effect as an alternative to the flamboyant but labour/water/energy-intensive annuals such as *Begonias* and *Petunias*.

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

- It is noted that your committee has been active on several fronts under this category. You have planted wildflowers along Station Road and Sligo and engaged with research in relation to the red squirrel population at Belleek Woods.
- The adoption of the draft Biodiversity Plan for Ballina is a very positive development which will provide a blueprint to enhance nature and biodiversity in Ballina for years to come. You are encouraged to explore further the possibility of providing for additional areas of wildflower meadows in Ballina, which will create habitats for birds and insects and will significantly improve biodiversity.
- Changing grass maintenance regimes should be handled carefully, to ensure there is good local support. Edges to roads and footpaths should always be maintained on a regular basis for safety reasons – a closely mown edge strip of 2/3 m along road and footpath edges is recommended for the larger areas of grassland on estate open spaces and for wide margins on approach roads.
- You are wished well in relation to the exciting plans to develop Belleek Woods.

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

- It is great to read that Coca Cola Ballina supported by Ballina Tidy Towns Committee, has been recognized as an advanced manufacturing facility and leader in sustainable technologies aimed at reducing energy usage. We note that the facility is one of 18 sites around the world added to the Global Lighthouse Network and the only Coca Cola site worldwide with this designation. The reduction of 29% in energy usage in the Ballina plant is indeed impressive and well done to all concerned with this project.
- The adjudicator is pleased to note the installation of an e-car charge point at Humbert Street and indeed the facility looks very well. Let us hope this is the start of a trend in Ballina to facilitate the provision of additional sustainable transport infrastructure in the town, such as the proposed pilot e-bike rental scheme and Ballina Ripple project. The establishment of the 'Ballina-Ireland's Greenest Town' initiative will also no doubt include further proposals in this regard. You are wished well regarding the many events associated with the 300-year celebrations during the year.
- When considering new projects under this category it is worthwhile to first consider how the proposed project aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The information provided in the Tidy Towns newsletters and the Tidy Towns Handbook is very informative in this regard.
- Other areas worthy of consideration by Ballina Tidy Towns for the future under this category, which is in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals, include the development of small electric microgeneration schemes for Wind, Solar and Hydro, in partnership with the Local Authority - these may also attract suitable SEAI or Leader funding.
- You might also look at increasing the number of dedicated off road scenic cycle routes and provision of additional bicycle parking facilities in the town, and where there are deficiencies, suggest suitable locations where these could be provided in the short term.
- The Committee might also consider in the future initiating membership of the Sustainable Energy Communities programme run by the SEAI which includes engaging in learning networks, preparation of energy masterplans and local energy action plans etc. The following are useful links in this regard.
<https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/sustainable-energy-communities/><https://www.codema.ie/sec>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

- You are fortunate that Ballina enjoys a valuable partnership with transition year students who assist you with the various clean-up projects including the National Spring Clean, Mayo Day and Earth Day etc. around the town. Well done to the residents of Parkside who have done trojan work to enhance the presentation of their area to the public.
- The adjudicator is very pleased to note that Ballina Tidy Towns has taken delivery of a physical weeder

machine, which reduces or prevents the need to use weedkillers. No doubt the machine is very efficient and removes a lot of tedious and back-breaking work from your regular maintenance schedules.

- On the day of adjudication, the town area was found to be largely litter free. However, some small amounts of litter were noticed at a number of locations and extra vigilance would be desirable, particularly during the busy summer months.

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

- Under this category you have included various painting schemes for residences and premises located at Barret Street including Becketts House, Teeling Street and Kevin Barry Street. Also included here was the upgrading of the community garden at Parkside and the development of the Caltra loop walk.
- The quality of presentation of the approximately 18 residential estates in Ballina is improved on an annual basis by participation in the Ballina Residential Estates Competition run by the Tidy Towns Committee and sponsored by Coca Cola. This is a perfect way to ensure a high standard of presentation of estates is achieved across the town.
- The adjudicator called to Greenhills, Knocknalyre Estate, Moyvale Park, Quignalecka, Riverside Drive and Castle Court Estates and found the overall standard of presentation to be very good with attractive open spaces, entrance name stones and tree planting. Residents are to be commended for the quality of presentation of their estates and no doubt they are encouraged in this regard by participation in the Ballina Residential Estates Competition.

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

- It is noted that the projects undertaken under this category include the replacement of approach signs to the town, enhancement works to the space at Barry Street and replacement of the wall at the Ballina Harbour area. Footpath enhancement works have also been carried out at Belleek, with a connection to the existing greenway. We look forward to the outcome and proposals included in the transport and mobility plan for Ballina and environs.
- The approach to the town from the Dublin direction is characterized by beautifully maintained roadside margins which are enhanced with avenues of trees, attractive stone walls, herbaceous planting beds and an imposing and attractive piece of sculpture. Private residences and well-maintained gardens improve the visual appearance of the road environs. The median herbaceous planting located under a line of trees in the centre of the road came in for special mention. A sloping bank on the Station Road where trees have been removed is visually prominent and perhaps consider replanting this area with native trees in the not-too-distant future. Other approaches worthy of positive mention include the N59 from Sligo, the Quay Road and Brook Street.

Concluding Remarks:

The activities of Ballina Tidy Towns Committee and your teams of volunteers were pivotal in making this year's historic American presidential visit a success story for Ballina. Building on this success will continue to bring great benefits to your town. You are making significant strides in the competition and it was an absolute pleasure to visit your lovely town and see first-hand the outstanding work undertaken over the past 12 months. You can be justly proud of all your achievements this year.

You have exciting plans in place for the future development of your town and community and you are wished the very best with these endeavours.