

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Ballyhaunis - Béal Átha hAmhnais	Ref: 506
County: Mayo	Mark: 323
Category: C	Date(s): 04/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	43	44
Streetscape & Public Places	80	46	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	38	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	20	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35	36
TOTAL MARK	550	315	323

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 Super Valu Tidy Towns Competition for 2023. We thank you for your entry, and wish you all the best in all your future work. Good luck.

Ballyhaunis - Béal Átha hAmhnais, a small town with a population of 2366 – has entered the competition for 19 years and has a committee of 18 members with support of another 40/45 volunteers.

- You hold monthly meetings and report the minutes to the Ballyhaunis Community Council. You are involved with the Abbey Partnership, the organisation responsible for the day-to-day management of the Augustinian Friary grounds. A positive outcome of these regular interactions and enhanced social media awareness is the welcoming of new residents to join the Tidy Towns committee who actively contribute to ongoing activities.

- Support is received from a range of local and national organisations and businesses including Mayo County Council, Abbey Partnership, Super Valu, Local Authority Waters Programme, Healthwest (Duffy's) Pharmacy, Mayo North East LEADER, Local Public Representatives, Ballyhaunis Community Council, Ballyhaunis Parent and Toddler Group, Ballyhaunis Chamber, Annagh Magazine Society, Delaney's Hardware Ltd, Mayo Sports Partnership and Ballyhaunis Family Resource Centre.

- You communicate with the public via Local newspapers (Western People, Mayo News and Connacht Telegraph), Facebook, Instagram, MidWest Radio, parish newsletter, Ballyhaunis Community Council website; www.ballyhauniscouncil.ie. You have increased your social media communications in relation to community engagement.

- You engage closely with local schools and have included the grounds of the national school and community school in the Ballyhaunis Biodiversity Action Plan, which is at its final drafting stage. Through this new initiative you hope to increase schools' and students' awareness and understanding about climate, and biodiversity in the local area, and environmental stewardship. You continue to liaise with the local Foróige Youth Service (BEY Project) and Transition Year students in organising litter picks etc. Through these initiatives, as well as your citizen science programme, you hope to raise interest in the setting up of a Junior Tidy Towns committee.

- The adjudicator is pleased to read that Ballyhaunis Tidy Towns enjoys widespread community support with large numbers of volunteers taking part in your National Spring Clean and other organised events.

The coloured map provided with your Entry Form showing the main roads and features of the town was of excellent quality. The insertion of a legend of projects on the map, which were colour coded in accordance with the competition categories, was very helpful. The quality of the map made it very easy for the adjudicator to navigate

around the town and generally aided the assessment process.

The quality of the application form was very good. The use of bullet points to break up long paragraphs worked well. A tip for next year – use a different font size and type for all text that you insert on the form, as it makes it easier to distinguish from text already contained on the form. It is always beneficial to use bold or coloured text for headings. The Ballyhaunis Tidy Towns 3-Year Plan (2022 – 2024) has been noted – it is good that specific target dates and responsibilities are now included on 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 27 pages long - well done. The text inserted on the form was also quite easy to read.

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

- The adjudicator is pleased to note that progress is being made on tackling the issue of derelict and vacant properties in the town and that some of these are now in the process of being restored. Well-presented shop fronts add significantly to the attractiveness and character of the streetscape of towns and villages and the new funding available through the Town & Village 2022 Street Enhancement Scheme, will no doubt have a significant positive impact over a short period of time.
- The adjudicator called to the town of Ballyhaunis on a cloudy but pleasant day in early July. We commenced our visit at the square and admired the very attractive 'Fair Day' sculpture piece linking back to the agricultural heritage of the town and its hinterland. This neatly presented public space with suitable tree planting, floral displays, stainless steel planters and modern style timber seating was especially admired. As a former pride of place national winner Ballyhaunis is proud to display signage informing the public of this great achievement. The cast iron surrounds to some of the tiered planters and signage here would benefit from a freshen up with paint.
- It was heartening to note the extensive refurbishment works underway in relation to a number of the properties along the Main Street. The street looked very well with the colourful shopfronts, attractive public lighting, well designed footpath build-outs with attractive tree planting and festive bunting all of which caught the eye. In terms of shopfronts the noteworthy highlights for this adjudicator included the old butchers, James Lyons, Mac Siúrtain's Bar, Val's Bar and Bistro, E.J. Phillips and Paddy Phillip's Bar, Dillon and Leetch Solicitors, the Garda Station, and Delaney's Garden centre. This list is not exhaustive.
- The community center premises were visited and the newly planted area provided here along the building frontage, with a new seating area was positively noted. The building which was is freshly painted certainly looked bright and neat. The small civic space with the 'point of view' sculpture located in a paved area with natural stone work was greatly admired, as was the neat and tidy frontage of the nearby Catholic Church grounds.
- The entrance to the Aldi premises are presented and landscaped to an excellent standard with a very attractive seating area, footpaths with tree and herbaceous perennial planting. A two-story dwelling overlooking the car park area appears to have been refurbished as part of the work at the new supermarket - a great outcome. The attractive stone building located beside the Garda station also looked very well with an attractive cut-stone front wall and railing. The re-painting of the railing would enhance this area considerably. On Clare Street the attractive paved area with eye-catching tree planting was admired and enhances the surrounding streetscape here.
- The site of the old well at Bridge Street with a stepped access and whitewashed boundary walls confirms the importance your committee places on the built heritage of the town and this was superbly presented. It was good to know that this feature was preserved from possible destruction during the 1970s.
- We called to the site of the old Convent School and noted the future plans to develop this property as a Community Hub and the provision of other worthwhile facilities for the town. The colourful residential and commercial properties found along the nearby Abbey Street significantly enhanced the streetscape.
- Ballyhaunis Railway Station is an attractive and historic stone building with a small car park area to the front, which is presented to a good standard. An opportunity exists to create some suitable planted areas at the entrance to the car park, as an attractive welcome feature for visitors to the town. It would also be beneficial to provide some screen hedge planting along the visually prominent palisade fencing, which provides the car park boundary here. Ballyhaunis National School, Scoil Íosa has a footpath and boundary wall along its frontage. This area would benefit from the introduction of suitable landscape elements, such as a line of tree planting on the traffic island fronting the school.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- A major local project for your committee under this category has been your involvement with the Ballyhaunis Art Mural in collaboration with Ballyhaunis Community School students. The 32 panels, displaying the unique Irish biodiversity and Ballyhaunis's cultural diversity, have been very successful in helping to screen the old Scout Den near the railbridge entrance of the Friary Park.
- The wonderful Friary Grounds parkland is a superb amenity available for the residents in Ballyhaunis and visitors alike. The adjudicator enjoyed a walk along the river Dalgan and noted extensive natural vegetation, perimeter pathways, seating areas and park signage providing information on biodiversity and wildlife, which the public can expect to encounter when using the park. The Memorial Garden at the entrance of the park was noted positively. The adjudicator was very impressed with the range of outdoor recreational facilities available to the public, including a covered weatherproof MUGA and children's playground, outdoor adult exercise equipment etc.
- The Riverside walk was visited and the wonderful views towards the arched Bridge were noted here. The vegetation along the river is to some extent impeding pedestrian access and a scheme to upgrade this area in the future is suggested, including the replacement of the boundary railing along the river, provision of a ramped access, upgrading the footpath and clipping back of existing plantings etc. Perhaps there is an opportunity to extend this walk further along the Dalgan River?
- The Ballyhaunis Community Garden has received a Green Flag award which is well deserved. It is quite evident that the garden continues to be managed and maintained to an excellent standard.

- Reducing Ballyhaunis Tidy Town's overall use of seasonal bedding plants for your floral displays is an initiative for your committee to consider under this category for the future. Colourful and permanent perennial and pollinator friendly planting e.g., using plants such as Alstroemeria spp. can provide a good alternative to the flamboyant but labour/water/feed and energy intensive annuals such as Lobelias, Begonias and Petunias etc.

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

- Progress is being achieved in relation to the preparation and implementation of a Biodiversity Action Plan for Ballyhaunis. Ballyhaunis has a significant number of important wildlife habitats and biodiversity assets which are worthy of protection and continued conservation and monitoring. We wish you well with the plan's continued implementation.
- The adjudicator is very pleased to read that Ballyhaunis Tidy Towns has this year started recording FIT counts supporting the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and water monitoring using the 'traffic light' system. This is a wonderful initiative and it is great to note that the citizen science will continue to be carried out by Tidy Towns members during the season (April-September) and promoted for other local people to join this year and in future years.

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

- Your model for optimizing the use of resources and sustainability in Ballyhaunis is the community garden, where composting and rainwater harvesting and sharing of materials are being effectively used.
- Well done on the installation of ev ChargePoint's in the town and we note that further points are planned in the future. The expansion of the number of these facilities across the country is critical over the short term and Ballyhaunis is leading the way on this.
- Increasing the number of cyclists in the local community is very beneficial from an emissions and health perspective and the holding of bicycle maintenance workshops is a practical way to encourage more cycling in the area and the repair and re-use of older bicycles.
- 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:

- It is noted that due to demand, a second Big Bin has been installed in the SuperValu's car park in an effort to discourage fly-tipping or illegal dumping. Your regular and annual clean ups in the town are well attended and are supported by Mayo County Council.
- On the day of adjudication, the village area was found to be largely litter free, although some discarding of waste was noted near the Bring Centre. Some tidiness issues were also noted in relation to the presentation signage around the town.

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

- The adjudicator is pleased to read that Residents' Associations have been set up in 9 local housing estates which facilitates availing of funding under GMA (General Municipal Allocation) for the maintenance of green areas and playgrounds. The colourful residential properties in the centre of the town were generally presented to a very good standard.
- The adjudicator called to Hazel Hill Downs, The Maples, Clare Court, and the new unnamed development at Abbeyquarter. The general standard of maintenance and presentation of these housing estates was very good. Tidy Estates competitions are a useful way to ensure a consistent standard of presentation between individual estates in the town can be achieved.

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

- The maintenance of roadside margins in the interest of biodiversity is commended.
- On the N60 Clare Road approach to the town, the road environs are generally characterized by attractive hedge planting on both sides of the road with a footpath and neatly presented grass margins. There are good road surfaces and markings here. However, the predominant feature on this approach is the extensive Dawn Meats factory premises and the associated car parking. There is an opportunity in the future to reduce the number of car parking spaces along the road and introduce some suitable tree planting, which will help to soften the visual impact of the factory premises along this approach.
- On the approach to the town from the Knock Direction, the Community School premises and frontage enhanced this area. The Grotto at Gurteen is a very attractive feature as are the many well-built stone walls and attractive natural field boundaries.
- On the approach to the town from the Charlestown Direction, the steeple of the Church dominates the skyline as you enter the town. On the Roscommon and Ballindine approach to the town, the road is characterized by attractive natural vegetation and well-maintained boundaries and margins with good quality road surfaces and markings. Recent footpath improvement works have made the situation safer for pedestrians and you are advocating for further improvements in the vicinity of the Rugby Club.

Concluding Remarks:

Ballyhaunis Tidy Towns continues to make good strides in the competition and it was a great pleasure to visit your

lovely town and note the work undertaken and plans in place for the future development of your community. You can be duly proud of all your achievements this year.