

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Ballyheane - Béal Átha hÉin	Ref: 1854
County: Mayo	Mark: 287
Category: B	Date(s): 12/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	33	34
Streetscape & Public Places	80	37	38
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	38	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	28	28
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	13	14
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	34	35
TOTAL MARK	550	280	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.

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

Ballyheane - Béal Átha hÉin, a mid-sized village with a population of less than 1000 people – has entered the competition for many years and has a committee of 4 members with support of another 15 volunteers.

- Ballyheane Tidy Towns receives great support from a range of local and national agencies and businesses including Daybreak Ballyheane, Moneen Garden Centre, Albany Castlebar, James Staunton Tree Surgeon, Ballyheane Soccer Club, Ballyheane Foróige, Acitve 55s', Ballyheane National School, CLG, Breaffy GAA, Ballyheane Community Council, Ballyheane Sports Company, North West Developments and Ballyheane National School Parent Association.

- You communicate with the public via your social media platforms, notices at mass, community notes in local paper and word of mouth.

- It is noted that the members of the local Foróige assist with the planting and maintenance of flower pots in the village. The National school also supports the children in planting and maintaining flowers within the school boundaries. Ballyheane Soccer club assists with clearing rubbish at the soccer club. Breaffy GAA club also makes every effort to keep their grounds litter free.

The hand drawn map provided with your Entry Form showing the main features of the village was clear and very easy to read. However, please try and include a numbered project list on the map as this helps the adjudicator in navigating around the village and aids the assessment process.

The quality of the application form was good. However, it is always beneficial to include a small number of photos (preferably before and after) highlighting projects carried out under each category. The 3-5year Tidy Towns plan has been noted and is very clear and includes a total of 6 project areas – it would be good to provide some approximate target dates on the plan.

The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the application form, which is 11 pages long. The text inserted on the form was easy to read. The use of numbered bullet points on the inserted text worked very well.

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

- The adjudicator called to Ballyheane on a warm mid-July day. Ballyheane is situated on the busy N84

between Ballinrobe and Castlebar. Significant traffic volumes were evident travelling through the village on the day of adjudication. Despite this, the village is presented to a very high standard with nicely presented private residences, boundaries, well maintained grass margins, tree planting and attractive name signs with suitable floral displays. It may be desirable to consider measures additional to the existing traffic calming scheme in consultation with Mayo Co.Co. This could aim to further improve safety for the pedestrian, and promote the general walkability of the village. Such a scheme may also provide an opportunity to enhance the streetscape and roadside landscape.

- We undertook a walk of the village visiting the old graveyard, bring centre, community centre, St Patrick's Church, the new graveyard, St Patrick's NS, the commercial premises, and the biodiversity garden. The bring centre set back from the road was presented in a neat and tidy condition. The nearby stone building was also very well presented. The Ballyheane Community Centre and Soccer Clubhouse was presented to an excellent standard with a well surfaced and marked car park area. The range of recreational facilities available here including floodlit all weather and grass pitches were especially admired. The access road to the community centre has deteriorated in condition and will need to be resurfaced, when funds are available. In addition, the planting of a native hedge along the boundary fencing along the access road would be desirable.

- St Patrick's Church and the new graveyard to the rear were found to be very well presented, and the purple beech hedging along the road frontage provided a pleasing splash colour here. The Church is a distinctive modern style building with attractive landscaping in the grounds. The national school adjacent is in the process of redevelopment. This was taken fully into account in the assessment of the presentation of boundary along the road and the grounds. It is suggested that the boundary of the school along the nearby stream could be set back to provide for the creation of a river side walk.

- There is a small whitewashed cottage located beside McEvelly's pub which could be restored to enhance the streetscape. As this is a prominent feature of the village, in the interim the walls and roof would benefit from cleaning and repainting.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- We called to the old graveyard and noted the works carried out to remove briars and clearing of footpaths etc. The site of the graveyard is very overgrown and it was difficult to access the area safely. It is recommended that a perimeter footpath be installed to improve overall accessibility. The proposed works could be discussed with the OPW or the Heritage Council. Signage providing information on the graveyard and its historic structures might also be provided on site. The perimeter walls also require some attention, including the removal of ivy and other vegetation. Further wall repair works to maintain the stability of the structure should also be considered.

- The central part of the village is characterised by beautifully maintained grass margins and attractive dry-stone walls facing the road. The wooden welcome signage and seating area enclosed by hedging is a most attractive focal point at the entrance to the Community Centre access road.

- The planting bed at the junction of the N84 and the Derrew Road consisting of a range of perennial permanent planting was especially admired.

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

- The adjudicator is pleased to note that the green areas in Ballyheane village are being cut less often, providing for wider verges of long grass situated along the walls and fences. This makes great sense from a number of viewpoints, as it reduces maintenance requirements and costs and adds to local biodiversity.

- At the biodiversity garden, we noted the perimeter path, seating, nest boxes and signage erected, providing information on the natural vegetation and wildlife found in this area. It is noted from your submission that some planting and clearance work has been undertaken. However, this area may need more regular ongoing attention by your committee, to enhance its overall presentation and accessibility.

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

- You are tackling this aspect of the competition very well and are making every effort to try to source or reuse local materials. A local tree surgeon provides you with wood chips for planting and bedding. Another local resident provides the Tidy Towns committee with flowers grown in her greenhouse.

- Re-use and recycling activities are to the fore and it is pleasing to read that you encourage the local community to donate any old paint they may have which are used for the upkeep of areas in the village. The bottle bank in the village & a clothes bank at Breaffy GAA clubhouse ensure there is strong local engagement in recycling activity. Other sustainability improvements worthy of mention include the solar powered lights along the soccer pitch and the provision of a water tap at the soccer club for refilling water bottles.

- When considering new projects under this category, it is worthwhile first of all considering how the proposed project will align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The information provided in the Tidy Towns newsletters and handbook is very informative in this regard.

- You might in the future consider installing a community composter in the village. These are useful and provide a quantity of mulch to use on your planted areas, which will ensure rapid establishment of the plantings.

- Other areas worthy of consideration by Ballyheane Tidy Towns for the future under this category, which is in keeping with the UN 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 look at the provision of public e-car charge points and additional bicycle parking facilities in the village, 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:

- Well done for organising a litter pick up day every Sunday, where you inspect the bottle bank area, community centre, the soccer & GAA pitches. This is a commendable and proactive measure to deal with any littering incidents quickly, as they arise.
- On the day of adjudication, the village area was found to be tidy and litter free - well done.

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

- The main residential area for Ballyheane village is along the N84 and properties along this route are well maintained and presented.

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

- The adjudicator inspected approach roads into Ballyheane from Ballinrobe, and Castlebar which are characterised by wide road margins, with areas retained as wildflower meadows. On the approach from Castlebar trees have been planted behind roadside boundaries and neatly clipped hedges on a garden boundary are an attractive feature here. This approach would be further enhanced by additional hedge planting along some prominent concrete block boundary walls. The re-purposed Drama, Arts and Dance School which retains the original name plaques is attractively presented with freshly painted boundary along the frontage and is an eye-catching feature along this approach. It may be possible to enhance this area with the addition of some floral displays and planters.
- On the approach from Ballinrobe the roadside is characterised by wonderful natural vegetation and mature trees with views out towards the wider landscape. The existing stone walls, village name sign, and planting bed with nicely trimmed margins and wildflowers provide a delightful welcome to the village. In general, it is recommended that your committee consider a review of commercial signage along the roadsides, to ensure they do not add to visual clutter.

Concluding Remarks:

There is great potential to further enhance and improve the appearance and existing amenities and features in Ballyheane, for the benefit of local residents and visitors alike. Well done on the work completed to date and we wish you well with your future endeavours in the competition.