

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballintubber - Baile an Tobair** Ref: **794**
County: **Roscommon** Mark: **364**
Category: **A** Date(s): **07/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	45	48
Streetscape & Public Places	80	46	48
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	49	51
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	42	44
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	27	29
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	69	69
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	42	42
TOTAL MARK	550	352	364

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.

For a small community you have great voluntary support and are well organised. You are one of the subcommittees collaborating with Ballintubber Development Association. Social media channels of both groups were up to date and showed the voluntary efforts and long-term aspirations for Ballintubber. Your entry was packed with pictures of your efforts and you have involved residents of all abilities.

Well done on your funding also to develop the multi-purpose natural play area at the old School House as this will make a lovely amenity area in the village.

We were impressed with your intercontinental educational program that you coordinated last summer with 63 American students and staying and learning about the heritage in your community. This would have taken a lot of planning.

Finally we would like to thank you for your lovely entry forms, filled with pictures showing school pupils, children, teenagers and many volunteers supporting many projects – and with the dates all confirming the work completed over the last 12 months of adjudication.

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

We were very impressed that you have secured funding to commence conservation work on The Castle. The Heritage Council's substantial funding ensures that this work will continue. From the 1300s, the Castle is now being given the attention it warrants. Information signs nicely illustrated what life would have been like in the castle in its hey-day.

The centre of the village is very attractive with nicely presented premises such as Kenny's and Lennon's Post Office and The Church. We would love to know the significance of the canon here – maybe a notice would help explain its origin?

Garáiste PJ's caught the eye, being nicely presented and with dare I say it, its signage which could be considered vintage now! More Irish signs enticed you into the Gairdín Beoir at Garvey's. You have made a big effort to ensure signage is primarily As Gaeilge or at least bilingual and it's great to see this.

Nearby the doors of the Castle Hall which have been tended nicely in the past are now in need of a little attention. The forge was a more modern building than expected but you have a nice collection of farm machinery in this maintained area and your volunteers did some lovely restoration work.

There's a great sense of fun in the village with faces of drivers in the hackney car and even the oil tank at the old school painted up to look like a giant bumble bee. The old shop fronts were lovely including J&C Daly - what a gorgeous window display Ballintubber Tidy Towns maintains here - well done to everyone. Nearby even the phone box has the old payphone still in place with the A and B buttons that were often pressed as a child to try and solicit some forgotten coins.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Just as we arrived, we were delighted to see a red squirrel run a circuit around the edge of the fountain as it was being mobbed by two magpies. Then it disappeared up into the adjacent sycamore tree!! A wonderful show just for us in Holland Memorial Park. You have also created a lovely walk under the trellises here and have recently planted new trees too in the area. The school should be applauded for the management of their playing fields - keeping the edges unmown for wildlife benefits.

You have many mature trees in and around the village. One near the forge has died so maybe you can replace it? A nice project would be to collect local acorns and grow these and then give the saplings to children on special days such as their completion of National School.

At the road junction near the Castle there was a lovely managed bed with a soft, gentle sway of flowers. Nearby there was a more formal rose garden which was nicely maintained. The Church is gorgeous and the lovely landscape bed nicely divides the tarmac car parking area. Perhaps in the longer term the bollards separating the pavement from the car park could be replaced by a stonewall planted up with flowers that would look more attractive. Also could the disabled parking bay could be repainted if the surface is good enough for painting.

Street furniture was nicely maintained.

Recently planted trees are growing nicely and support straps are not too tight. The herb garden needs attention - not just for its sign but the fact that mint has taken over and there was just mint and some redcurrants but not many other herbs.

There appeared to be blue slug pellets sprinkled on the lovely stone raised beds around freshly planted dahlias. We were surprised by this as you don't use any herbicide in the graveyard and other places. Maybe you didn't know they were being applied?

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

You secured nearly €3000 to advance your Biodiversity Action plan in association with the TY students of Castlerea Community School. We look forward to seeing pictures of this work in new year's entry.

It was a delight to visit the old graveyard and Saint Bridget's well - what an oasis beautifully managed for people and for wildlife. We appreciated the 'no spraying' and 'no cutting' to help protect our pollinators. The planted bed on the left as you descend down the new graveyard had some really lovely flowers of purple and pink. Nearby lavender was planted - another excellent plant for our pollinators. Even in 'The Stations of the Cross' garden - the longer grass hosted many lovely flowers simply as a result of allowing the grass to grow for #NoMow May. Do you encourage homes to copy you in their gardens?

There were works ongoing in the newer graveyard upgrading paths which will make it much more accessible. We continue to follow progress after our visit, by viewing your Facebook posts. So it was lovely to see the active age volunteers painting the outdoor benches!

The green water tank at the graveyard was nicely fenced off. Once the works are complete at the graveyard, we are sure you will also screen off the gas tanks and extraction fans from the nearby public house with more wooden fencing similar to that around the water tank. Maybe some of the lovely clematis or honeysuckle that you have growing here could be put around some trellis in front of these?

We love seeing the valerian and even some simple mosses on many of the stone walls around the village. We also like your use of old cauldrons and a farm as planters.

The uncut meadow can be controversial, but you addressed that by having an ecologist-led guided walk with quite a number of attendees in the photograph learning about biodiversity. And you also had a great crowd attend for the IPCC walk in July. We love the way you tied together your different initiatives so that the winner of the sunflower competition was given their prize during biodiversity week in your biodiversity garden. And goodness me - the sunflower he grew was taller than him!

Have you thought about facilitating a seed-swap? We were jealous of your two-day training course teaching about the wildlife of the River Suck as it involved a guided kayak tour- what a lovely idea. We were pleased to see you are hoping to develop this tourism offering from Ballintubber.

All produce in the poly tunnel was coming on very nicely and we taxed you two strawberries!!

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

Sustainability was also one of your themes at your St Patrick's Day parade 2023 and you advanced a lot of projects for this category of the competition. Inside the Old School House you have a library of books to share. Outside, the community composter with four separate stalls had compost at different stages of development. It was great to see this in use and it looked like some had been transferred into your planters. This is a really good example of diverting waste from landfill and reusing it.

We were impressed to see not one rain water collection tank, but at least six and a mobile bowser allowing you to water baskets and planters around the town. This is very impressive as was your polytunnel and your community garden. The young people's 'maris pipers' were doing really well. We noticed you were using slug and snail killer here – is it necessary?

The grotto looked well is the light here an LED light it might be worth giving the light cover a clean so that more light shines up on the statue. Do you have any battery recycling?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

There's no excuse for anybody to drop litter in this village because there are eight bins generously supplied by the premises at the central crossroads. But if they did your volunteers would quickly clean up after them.

The dog waste bag dispenser was empty and a few signs about dog waste were noticed. Is this still a problem? Hopefully not, but maybe a children's poster competition could help raise awareness of the issue?

The bottle bank area was clean and nicely presented with just a few bits of fresh litter and cardboard that would no doubt be quickly picked up by your litter volunteers. There's an old sign above the banks that needs to be removed as the writing is no longer legible. The other Roscommon County Council sign is outdated and has a phone number on it that no longer works- we tried! We suspect the banks would work fine without a sign at all – maybe a community notice board could be positioned nearby?

Well done to Kenny's shop for giving away free wrappers for gum as part of the 'Bin your Gum' initiative. Gum can ruin pavements so this should help.

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

Homes on the Main Street were all very nicely presented, many catching the eyes such as Ballybond with its lovely lilac window boxes and pastel painted doors, gates and windowsill. Silver birch trees were growing at the entrance to Bán an Chaisleáin where homes were nicely presented and a couple had attractive decorative door wreaths and planters.

The Cluán Bhríde name stone sat at a nicely tended seating area and homes here were also nicely presented. Beside the name stone were two plant pots - perhaps the shrubs could be planted into the ground therefore they would need less tending in the long term? There were nice trees maturing at entrance to Slí na Sruthán. As mentioned previously, maybe the plastic plant pot could be removed from here and the shrub planted directly into the soil?

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

Arriving from the North from Castlerea the approach road is nicely managed with the pavement separated from the road by a nice strip of grass where ox-eye daisies could grow. Two different name stones greet you on this approach. At the top of a hill there's a lovely stone sign 'As Gaeilge' and as you descend into the village a bilingual sign has been erected by some seating. In contrast to the old stone walls the seats look a little out of place, being comprised of precast concrete but what a nice spot to sit and bask in the sunshine. The nearby Ballintubber farmland rambling loop looked very enticing and the style and matching red painted entrance field gates work very well maintained.

There are wide grass margins in the centre of the village and it is suggested that not all of the margin needs to be mown. Maybe just half of the width would be sufficient while still demonstrating your arrival at somewhere special. Indeed you could leave quite a lot unmown as part of the emphasis to support pollinators and create a path towards the handball alley. The handball alley was visited and it would be great to see a new handball club formed and the amenity brought back to its former glory.

The astroturf with cut-out letters spelling 'Fáilte' was disappointing in such a nice area it's recommend that this is removed – maybe our early visit meant it was not complete?

Concluding Remarks:

As suggested, we did 'suigh síos ais lig do scíth' on a beautiful summer's day to enjoy your village. In your entry you say your work is all about inclusivity and having a whole community approach to involve all and to ensure you can collectively address issues that may arise. This is very apparent in your submissions. Good luck with your exciting future plans and congratulations on 50 years of involvement with the National Tidy Towns competition.

