

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballyforan - Béal Átha Foirne** Ref: **283**
County: **Roscommon** Mark: **307**
Category: **A** Date(s): **03/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	38	39
Streetscape & Public Places	80	42	44
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	41	44
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	32	35
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	18	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	33	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	37
TOTAL MARK	550	295	307

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 your entry form and your adjudicator was intrigued to read about Ballyforan Area Transition Team (BATT) and the associated sustainable development that you are advancing. We have not heard of the Emerge Program to support communities transition to a 'climate-proofed economy'. It is important that communities work together to develop and build their areas so it's great to see your involvement in this project and how the wider community have been invited to become involved. For a small community you have a great number of volunteers - over 40 on top of your core committee of 15. This is a really good number, and we imagine that you would be able to complete a lot of work. We were impressed with your efforts to invite people to join your group which include open meetings, door to door leaflet drops, and other local communication. We loved seeing the photos in your entry form showing smiling volunteers throughout the year. You even managed to have Santa make a VIP visit especially to Ballyforan.

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

Buildings were nicely presented in Ballyforan. The church is a lovely building, really nicely kept and presented. Perhaps the beautiful gates could be appropriately re-painted - your County Council's Heritage Officer could give you advice for this.

Likewise, to the west of the village there are some nice wrought-iron gates to Claremont House that could also be considered for restoration. Recently painted, Maureen's Foodstore and The Big Apple Pub add to the overall visual appeal of the village.

Pairc Naomh Aodáin was freshly painted and flags were flying nicely here. You also manage the bottle banks nearby which were clean and tidy.

The Hook & Tackle is one of the buildings that need attention and you have tried to contact the landlord to no avail. The tenants have given permission for you to paint the premises but this would cost you, both in time and money, which is a shame. But fair play to you for your efforts to enhance the streetscape and not leave any building out.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Bog, flood plains and grassland are important habitats in Ballyforan and you share details of these habitats. Many do not realise the importance of stone walls as a habitat also. You do, and are adding to these by planting toadflax

and other suitable plants at the gates to Claremont.

Your main work over the last 12 months was to revamp the rockery located at Dempseys garage and the strips across from St Aidan's GAA Club. Well you did a tremendous job as shown in the 'before & after' pictures provided and it all looked great when we visited.

The Village Fair Green is a lovely amenity in the centre of Ballyforan. The erection of a frame for lights to form a Christmas tree here would have been a lovely focal point in the winter and we're so pleased to see it's been put away outside of the festive season. The new bed by the garage looked really lovely.

There are many nice, mature trees around Ballyforan. We wonder if you might plant some around the inside boundary of the Fairfield? Three trees have been planted behind the hand pump but they seem to be failing, so maybe a large Oak could be planted here for future generations to enjoy. Or perhaps a project could be to collect acorns and grow the saplings for a few years until they can be presented to pupils when they graduate from National School.

On adjudication day volunteers were tidying up The Grotto - so fair play to them for their efforts on a gorgeous public holiday weekend. The posts from which you hang baskets are positioned all around the Fair Green. We were delighted to read that you are scaling back your work to allow you to make a strong impact with your baskets and planting. We agree and we would not want to see baskets hanging from every post as they would be too much to manage, and over stretch your volunteers. Maybe the unused posts could be converted for something else (e.g. for flags) or maybe they can be removed? The hand-pump planters and the hanging baskets made a great impact when we visited.

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

Bog, flood plains and grassland are important habitats in Ballyforan, and you are raising awareness of all of these habitats. Many do not realise the importance of stone walls. You do, and are adding by planting toadflax and other suitable plants here.

You have been heavily involved with the development of the Bog Look Walkway and the new Greenway is to be advanced to here – how fantastic! Being involved in educating and providing access to some of the world's most precious habitats must be rewarding.

Special mention goes to St Aidan's GAA club for taking part in "No Mow May" and supporting your work. This as a great example of how sports organizations and bodies that hold quite large pieces of land can do their bit to help Ireland's biodiversity.

The new bug hotel was admired - maybe some magnifying glasses or butterfly nets could help allow the children to monitor residents in this 5star establishment. The environmental park could become quickly overgrown – what are your plans for here? Currently it is a lovely area to explore but we doubt many do.

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

You have outlined many lovely actions for this category of the competition. St Aidan's runs a book swap. A cycling initiative was delivered during Bike Week in May. The National School was awarded another Green Flag continuing work for a new theme over a number of years. This time the committee and Ms Carney were presented their Global Citizenship Energy Flag in a special award ceremony. And thanks to Mary & Carmel – a plant and seed exchange was co-ordinated for the residents of Ballyforan. They are the geniuses behind the planted bays in the car parking area on the road that we admired during our visit.

Some of your more recently planted trees need some TLC. Perhaps you can appoint volunteer tree warden/s. They could remove or loosen a lot of the support straps and wires that are actually rubbing and cutting into the trees.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

My goodness just reading your entry form we can feel the desperation about litter dumping around your community. Bikes, dead animals, dolls and even toilet seats have been dumped. You are working closely with Roscommon County Council's Litter Warden. Do encourage everyone to keep a watchful eye. Does everyone know what to do and who to ring if they witness or find any dumping? The more you get involved the better hopefully.

But take heart in that you do have dedicated litter picking volunteers. We loved your poster for your trash bash!! Like most small communities, there wasn't much litter obvious in the centre of the village. There were just few bits of fresh litter near the playground but no doubt they would have been quickly picked up by your volunteers. There was other good news though – in that after sustained lobbying the ESB removed the redundant ESB pole from the walkway in the village.

It's worth going round and removing a small number of old cable ties, bailing twine from lamp posts and duct tape.

Dog waste dispensers were located in a few places around the village. Have you still got a problem with this? Maybe work with the school children to make posters to raise awareness of this issue and the winners could be displayed around the village.

Finally, it was lovely to see you have a Summer 'Thank-you Party' for your volunteers – what a lovely idea.

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

You have provided details of the actions by residents in all four housing areas in Ballyforan. All of which looked well during adjudication. It was good to see so many homes been upgraded and refurbished in the village, some even with PV and solar panels. Residential homes by the school look lovely as did those in Claremont. The road surface entering Ashbrook Avenue was poor and would need some attention. The wildflower meadow here has been left to grow again but it looks as if it's quite nutrient rich. Last year did you take away the cuttings at the end of the season? This might be good place to plant yellow rattle to reduce the nutrients loads and make the soil more wildflower friendly if you intend to continue with this.

Homes around the playground all looked really well, with a nice mixture of two and single storey homes. An idea might be to ensure bilingual name signs are at the entrances to all. With more homes opening in Pairc Caislean, do continue to reach out to these new residents. Maybe direct them to your social media pages so they can learn about local events.

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

The new footpath from the school and the village right down to the river and the bridge provides for a safe, continuous route through Ballyforan. Maybe a bench could be provided to allow a break when walking this distance. Elsewhere you have hand-weeded and power-hosed footpaths within the village, and all looked lovely.

It would have been easy to simply tarmac the road, but your adjudicator particularly likes the inlets into the tarmac parking areas which divides up the spaces. This enhances the area as you have been able to plant the shrubs, flowers and trees grown by Mary & Carmel, and enjoyed by us all. We loved the new planting. The snooker hall looked well also.

The grass on the roads into Ballyforan had just been mown after a month of no-mowing to benefit wildlife. We liked the fact that some of the longer bits were left along the stone walls.

The slipway and picnic area provide lovely views of your 13-arch bridge. This would be lovely to cycle over if there was no other traffic! Good luck with the on-going consultations about the greenway routes. At the end of the pavement near the bridge there are two old maps of Roscommon and the village and suggested perhaps these are replaced or removed as they're quite faded and hard to read.

Concluding Remarks:

You have been participating in the Tidy Towns competition for over 40 years and Ballyforan has benefited from many improvements thanks to your involvement in this competition. On adjudication day it was a delight to visit your community. It was as if you'd put out the red carpet for us even though these are anonymous, unscheduled visits. Everything looked lovely especially all the new planting, the weather was fantastic, and it was great to explore your community for the first time.