

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballyleague - Béal Átha Liag** Ref: **882**
County: **Roscommon** Mark: **342**
Category: **B** Date(s): **04/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	45	47
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	44	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	36	39
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	25	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	62
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35	36
TOTAL MARK	550	326	342

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 which was exceptionally thorough, and you had taken on board last year's adjudicators' comments to amend the map accordingly. We found the map very useful and also the different appendices provided. You have an excellent long-term plan which you are using to good effect. Completed projects have been marked off and delays or changes in the proposed plan explained.

Ballyleague has a strong relationship with many local businesses, groups, organisations and even this year you have received grants from many and are working with the Atlantic Technology University on your sustainable energy community for example. You have worked with both Ballyleague National School and Lanesborough Community College on projects this year focusing on how your actions are helping Ireland meet the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

You've submitted a wonderful array of photos showing all your different activities over the last 12 months including the Saint Patrick's Day parade, a Christmas Lights Festival and you even had a number of VIP visits at the opening of new amenities. Congratulations on all your hard work.

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

Since our last visit we felt that the focus of Ballyleague has shifted from the streets to the river, and we applaud this and discuss the wonderful new riverside amenities in the next section. New biodiversity and historical signage was admired – photos show a nice crowd attending their unveiling. We read about the history of the ruins visible from the Main Street which are actually a 16th Century Tower House - otherwise known as Bali League castle. . We commend your conservation plan and hope that you would be able to develop this area and open access to the tower eventually.

On adjudication day the Credit Union looked well with nice baskets outside and the kebab shop opposite was being freshly painted as we passed. It was nice to see the cycle parking area at the national school and the flowers planted near the entrance.

It was disappointing to come back nearly a decade since our last visit and see that the Sliabh Ban Hotel is still derelict. You have diligently maintained the surrounds and we know this is something you were campaigning for when we last visited. We assume the Council has advised the owners about the Vacant Property Grants available.

The Council should step in now.

But around the corner you have removed railings and made a wonderful feature of the thatched cottage at the top of the Harbour Road. This is so lovely it has great social-media potential (especially with over-seas visitors), and it is suggested that you incorporate a sign saying Ballyleague and promoted as a spot where people take and share their photos.

We didn't see the new Street Banners (though we visited early in the season) so don't forget to include these in next year's entry form.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You have fulfilled a lot of work for this category of the competition. Congratulations on the completion of the second phase of the AXA Parks - Ballyleague Resilience Park Project. It must be wonderful to see the main concepts from your original village plan from 2008 finally being implemented into this new park for all to enjoy. The four main destination nodes in Ballyleague were explored in turn and we navigated (by foot) between them all.

North of the bridge, we loved the riverside development works. Though not completed during our visit the pencil sculpture looked lovely for example. The access for all facilities and boat is a great amenity and the new building funded by Community Foundation Ireland's was admired and was busy on the public holiday weekend. There were only two disabled parking places here, and only one painted blue. It is suggested that maybe two more places here at least could be allocated and painted accordingly. Wide new wheelchair accessible paths were provided, and we assume picnic tables to accommodate wheelchair users could be installed here before completion of the works. The Official opening was covered on TV, Press and even had a feature on Nationwide.

The 1916 Garden of Remembrance was visited and yellow irises here are a good choice. Each tree has been assigned to a name of one of the seven signatories but the plate with the names needs to be removed because they're now inhibiting the growth of the trees.

Harbour amenities looked very well with lovely information boards, outdoor seats and even a children's play area (the stick for the xylophone was missing but that's easily replaced). The public showers and toilets were lovely and clean on a busy bank holiday weekend - there was some fresh litter but nothing that wouldn't quickly be picked up.

The outdoor library for the community to share books is a lovely idea. Beside it we were very impressed to see the easel for people to use whilst painting landscapes. The two seating benches adjacent to here had seen better days and maybe your talented volunteers at the Men's Shed could replace these.

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

As well as the elements listed above, in the Biodiversity Garden the new willow-tunnels, eco-walkways and fruit trees were all admired – great work. Thanks to the Junior TT members for planting the willow trees here. We liked your herb garden where you've named all your herbs, and the compost heaps you have for all your grass cuttings.

St Fa thleachs is a great local amenity with pitch and clubhouses and stands. No doubt it took a lot of voluntary effort to build this and to maintain it. The roadside fence has great potential. There are many GAA clubs leading on actions to support biodiversity following suggestions from the All-Ireland Pollination Plan and the booklet for sports clubs is available from www.pollinators.ie Some lovely honeysuckle or clematis would look lovely growing here.

It was great to see in your entry form your Pollinator Action Plan with its detailed actions that you are sharing with homes to help benefit Ireland's pollinators. We did look for the goat sanctuary – you could probably rent these out to clear overgrown sites without the use of weedkiller!

Overall this is a strong submission with a lot of actions carried out (too many to mention) raising awareness of your biodiversity and important habitats.

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

We wish the GAA Club and Ballyleague Community Hall success in applications for energy-savings refurbishments. It is hoped that if successful, they can share details of energy usage pre, and post, renovations. Have you promoted the energy-saving grant with homeowners as part of your Sustainable Energy Community? You have been promoting micro-scheme update with small businesses. Again it would be great to share stories of your successes. The Tidy Towns Unit are always looking for good stories to include in their newsletters. As part of your SEC work did you install the energy-efficient boat charger? How does this work? We admired the solar powered water fountain.

We were pleased to see water butts at premises positioned near floral planters so that they could be easily watered. You also have a mobile watering system – how clever. Other actions relating to this category of the competition include mulching of grass, composting and use of LED lights. You do have large composting bins for grass cuttings at the harbour area and in Lough Ree Park estate – do you use this compost in your own landscaping schemes. Perhaps you can run a workshop on using up leftover food to prevent food waste? Or a seed-collection workshop?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Thanks to all your litter pickers and those involved in the Spring Clean, and smiling in the photos of your St Patrick's day parade.

The presentation and tidiness of nearly everywhere around the harbour was very high so congratulations to all. Throughout Ballyleague litter bins were available and in use and clean and were good to see. However the harbour bottle banks, and recycling bins are in poor ship as the paint is peeling off them and you should request that these be replaced into more attractive bins. You do monitor these bins as sometimes dumping occurs here – do all residents know what to do if they come across dumping?

The sewage vent pipe near the garage is a need of repainting.

The permanent installation of the Christmas tree structure is disappointing as they should only be erected in the festive season.

It was excellent to read your letter plan based on the audits carried out in spring and summer 2022. Analyzing the locations and types of litter dumped meant that you were able to devise specific actions to deal with them accordingly. We'd like to particularly highlight your great efforts on your dog waste campaign as you note this has had a good impact. During adjudication any dogs noted were with responsible owners who picked up after their dogs!

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

The entrance planting and the road down to Meadowbrook was really nice with roses and other perennial shrubs. Here many homes have their individual touches that looked well – and we smiled seeing chalk drawings brightened tarmac at the end of the cul de sac tarmac. On the main street, two lovely semi-detached bungalows with nice front gardens one of many nice homes in the village.

Is great to see many modernised homes in the village and homes freshly painted and looking well and many with solar panels and TV panels.

You have provided a detailed list of actions completed in each estate including reduced mowing, pollinator planting, LED lighting – all wonderful actions. Well done to all and it was great to note links with the committee in each estate.

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

Arriving into Ballyleague on the R371 the name signed looks very nice and is under planted with perennials meaning you're saving money and they looked well. There's a post nearby with no sign in it that could be removed and further up there's a children's road warning sign that is very faded and is suggested it's replaced.

Sadly from the West on the N63, the disused garage makes a poor first impression as you arrive into the village. It would be great if some enhancement works were permitted at the site as you are keen to progress some here. There are wonderful views here – it could be a great site for campervan parking maybe?

There is a lovely welcome as you cross the Shannon as you focused your landscaping efforts on the raised beds by the bridge.

There is good continuity of pavement the whole way to the church and but it's difficult to then walk from the church to the Community Centre across the large road maybe some cleverly position planters could demarcate it and allow for clear pedestrian routes here.

Concluding Remarks:

For 27 years Ballyleague TidyTowns has participated in this national competition. You have been a driver for many key initiatives in your community. In 2023 many of these concepts and ideas came to fruition so you, and all the bodies involved, are roundly applauded for the completion of many of your projects. A big round of applause for your endeavours.