

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballincollig - Baile an Chollaigh** Ref: **661**
County: **Cork(South)** Mark: **344**
Category: **G** Date(s): **01/07/2019**
01/08/2019

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	51	51
Streetscape & Public Places	60	46	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	48	49
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	33	34
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	21	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	39	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	39
TOTAL MARK	470	338	344

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Ballincollig - Baile an Chollaigh páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Thank you, Ballincollig for your very concise entry form which was informative and clear and for the accompanying map with locations for projects plainly marked. A minor issue but some placenames were obscured by the colouring of roads on the map making them hard to read and for an adjudicator unfamiliar with the town it would also be helpful to have some landmark properties, businesses or other features located on the map to aid orientation. We were particularly pleased to receive your bullet-pointed response to the comments of last year's adjudicator. You have an excellent Facebook presence and credit to the person or persons who have the responsibility for its upkeep and your website provides a great overview of your activities. In particular, the photographs from 'Times Past' are an encouraging reminder of just how far Ballincollig has progressed through the activities and commitment of your committee. We note you have 13 people on your committee who are certainly getting through a huge amount of work, and their efforts are helped by over 65 extra people. It is clear you have enjoyed tremendous support and cooperation from Cork County Council over the years and we trust that similar will be forthcoming as you forge new relationships with Cork City Council. It is noted that you have a very strong relationship with the local schools through a dedicated Liaison Officer and with the local scout club and I read with interest that you have 5 youth members on your committee which is a very positive step to fostering continuity of commitment to Tidy Towns.

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

The owners and occupants of the shops and business premises along the main street clearly display a pride of place attitude with many well maintained frontages. The generously wide footpaths with their maturing canopy of trees and clean, well-placed stone benches create an attractive pedestrian environment that distracts from the through traffic movement alongside. The high shine lustre of the stainless steel bins, bike racks, bollards and other street furniture gives a bright, contemporary feel to the streetscape. The civic plaza at the CastleWest Shopping Centre was very clean and tidy but would benefit from some large-scale planters along with the existing trees to add a burst of colour and soften the built landscape.

One generally finds the area at the rear of shopping centres to be very functional and often unappealing and so it was a very pleasant surprise to travel along Old Fort Road with its attractive, well-maintained landscaping and smart-looking mix of residential and office frontage with links through to the shopping centre and Main Street. The building which houses a medical centre and pharmacy in this area of the Old Quarter has a pleasing character and is nicely landscaped. We commend your ongoing progress in installing heritage signs at various locations throughout the town – these are a lovely reminder of the towns historic past and help to uphold a strong sense of

place. The sign at Coolroe Limekiln is a little tired and we note that it is scheduled for upgrade. It was positive to learn from your entry form and further details in your 3-Year Plan that plans are in development for many of the town's vacant premises and derelict sites including two sites that were noted opposite the Link Road Business Centre.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Trees are a much admired feature of the landscape throughout Ballincollig and the vast numbers of new trees along with many mature trees greatly enhance the townscape. It is delightful to travel along tree-lined roadways, and a lovely copse of birch at the junction of Link Road with Main Street was particularly admired, while along the Main Street the trees contribute important visual connectivity and significantly soften the impact of the built environment. At the cinema, there is just one small issue for attention where visibility of the weed barrier membrane beneath the trees diminishes the overall appearance.

The wooden planters along the Main Street add some colour to the streetscape but the impact could perhaps be greater if the colours or foliage textures were stronger and the centre-piece was more dominant. The vibrant flower displays along frontages of Aldi and Supervalu are very eye-catching while the profusion of floral displays in pole-baskets and planters affixed to barriers at major road junctions make a good impression. We suggest you aim to have the flowers and foliage trailing over the sides to make the boxes and baskets less visible and it is good to note that much of the planting is chosen for their usefulness to pollinators. We learned from your website about the work and commitment of the 'Waterboys' who we observed in action maintaining the vitality of the many floral displays throughout the town.

The Regional Park is a beautiful park and is an incredibly valuable amenity for the community with something of interest for all ages. On the afternoon of adjudication, the sun was shining and there was an abundance of people running or walking the various marked routes as well as sitting enjoying the sun, and using the playground and outdoor exercise equipment. The map of the park at the car park entrance off Iniscarra Road needs updating to show the new walking routes alongside those relating to the gunpowder trails, and you mention that an up to date map is planned. The new areas of rhododendron and tree planting were favourably noted and the established grass garden was considered an interesting feature. It was great to see the fairies and bats happily co-existing in trees on Beech Walk! The new fairy trail is a fun feature and well done to all the artists of the fairy doors. Do keep in mind however that nailing anything into a tree is intrusive and that every wound creates a potential entry point for decay, so keep breaches of the trees protective outer layers to a minimum and consider alternative means of attaching any further elements of the fairy trail. The meadow areas with neatly mown edges and paths mown through are a wonderful example of how to effectively blend meadow areas into the managed parkland setting. Signage depicting 'Wildflowers of The Meadow' is appropriately located at some of these unmown areas and are key to ensuring park users understand and appreciate the purpose and value of these meadow areas. The choice and arrangement of plants at the newly planted area with the red bridge as a focal point adjacent to the car park off Inniscarra Road entrance was admired. The recycling bank in the car park of the Regional Park is nicely integrated against a backdrop of grasses and other planting.

At the skate park some graffiti slightly distracted. However, it is acknowledged that skateboarding culture often goes hand in hand with graffiti as an accepted form of artistic expression and it can be of positive interest where it is proactively encouraged and managed as an artistic feature in conjunction with skatepark users. The newly seeded wildflower area near to the freshly white-washed Watch Tower was very eye-catching - please provide a little more information on where the seeds or plants were sourced and how you manage this area and other similar wildflower areas into the future. Always be sure that wildflower seed mixes are comprised of native species collected and grown on the island of Ireland to ensure that while endeavouring to add to the amenity and biodiversity of your locality, you do not introduce any foreign species.

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

Promotion of biodiversity is underpinning a significant amount of your ongoing work and we applaud your encouragement of the wider community to engage with this work through allocating marks for biodiversity projects in your Estates Competition and through developing Biodiversity Plans with the local schools as seen from the projects completed in recent months within the grounds of Coláiste Choilm. Just to note that there appears to be some problem with the link on your website to the overall Biodiversity Action Plan for Ballincollig as only a few pages of the document were displayed when we looked. Throughout the town, the brightly coloured signs indicating areas that form part of your pollinator corridor network are very evident and the map on your website clearly shows the distribution of the sites. We noted the stretch of hydrangea and heather planting on the N22 and the new wildflower area in Coolroe Heights was just getting ready to flower at the time of adjudication. The wildflower area on the embankment adjacent to The Cloisters on the Leo Murphy Link Road was in full flower and buzzing with insect activity. It did however appear at odds with the heavy use of herbicide in evidence around sign poles, trees and along the kerb lines of grass margins on this road. Use of herbicides is not compatible with a pollinator friendly environment and the scorched and dead vegetation is unattractive. While more time consuming, hoeing, using a spade to create neat edges and manual removal of weed growth is preferable.

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

Your water harvesting initiative was remarked from gates of the works compound located in the Regional Park – it was not possible to gain access for a closer look but we were delighted to see one of the units being used by 'The Waterboys' tending the containerized plantings on the streets. Your adjudicator was also unable to access the allotments but your new composting bays are acknowledged and we were pleased to observe very active use of the

facility with many happy plot holders enthusiastically tending their crops.

Well done on your coffee cup biodegradability experiment with the national schools to look at how the decomposing process for biodegradable coffee cups compares to that for standard non-compostable coffee cups. It brings to mind the quote 'Tell me and I forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn.' This same mantra applies to the many wonderful awareness raising projects you have listed that are being carried on with the schools in the area. We read with interest the comparative analysis of results from your 2019 survey of Sustainable Waste and Resource Management across 9 schools in the locality and also the Post Primary Student Survey carried out by your Junior Committee members and it is hoped that these will prompt further implementation of environmentally conscious actions within the schools and in turn generate awareness amongst the students that will carry into the wider community.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The general level of tidiness and the control of weeds and litter in Ballincollig is most impressive and on adjudication day the main thoroughfare was spotless as were the approach roads and the residential estates visited. It is heartening to read that litter quantities are reducing with a 25% reduction in the number of bags picked over a 12 month period. Congratulations on this very significant achievement. The stainless steel bins on Main Street were remarkably clean and in general litter bins would appear to be regularly emptied. As you mention, the butt and gum bins are largely a great success although a small number of isolated hotspots for cigarette butts were noted in some side lanes off the Main Street. Some opportunistic dumping was also noted at the recycling banks in The Square car park. Dog fouling was not an issue and the availability of suitable bins was noted. Some Bus Eireann stop signs along the main thoroughfare need straightening while others require painting or renewal of the artwork. Well done on your 'Washdown Saturday' events which have ensured signs throughout the town are generally clean.

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

Ballincollig has many attractive and well-presented residential housing areas with extensive, neatly maintained green spaces punctuated with trees and landscaping. All of the estates visited had name signs and landscaping at the entrances and many have attractive heritage style finger post signs to identify the roads within. There are however a lot of different styles and colours of signage and namestones throughout the different housing estates and streetscapes which can be visually conflicting – something to consider may be the development of 'palette' of sign designs and colours together with other complementary street furnishings that would help define a unique identity and character for Ballincollig.

With over 100 estates in Ballincollig, it was unfortunately not possible for your adjudicator to visit all but the general upkeep and presentation of almost all of the residential estates visited was outstanding and it is obvious that the residents take great pride in their area. Muskerry, An Caislean and Coolroe were just a few that impressed us greatly with their high standards of maintenance. No doubt the Estates Competition which you run with the much appreciated support of Quish's Supervalu is a big help in maintaining this good standard and your annual awards ceremony is a great way to acknowledge residents' groups that are making and maintaining a particular effort. Residents are to be applauded also for the presentation of their individual homes to a high standard with some attractive front garden displays which contribute greatly to the overall appearance of an area.

In this age of technology, it was heartening to see so many of the green areas in estates in very active use by many children and young people for social and recreational activities. In some estates and main roadways, a heavy reliance on the use of herbicide to control grass growth along kerb lines and around sign poles, trees and other obstacles was noted and we strongly advocate minimising this practice as much as possible for environmental reasons. In some estates with very extensive areas of grass, consideration might be given to leaving a strip of grass to grow long for the benefit of pollinators and wildlife. As already mentioned, such areas are very well integrated into the town's Regional Park.

The new planting scheme with its central standing stone on the green at Fr. Sexton Park was admired and maintenance of beech hedging at Prospect Lawn and the entrance to Innishmore Court is acknowledged. Railings around the green areas in Innishmore estate need painting and some sections require repair. We applaud the support you receive from VMware's staff volunteers in carrying out particular tasks such as the verge clean-up in Cranford Pines. We loved the colourful artwork on the utility box at Coolroe Meadows painted by a student on the YMCA Step programme. Perhaps this initiative could be replicated at other locations. We also admired the attractive roundabout on the main road through Coolroe with its vibrant pink roses and begonias which stood out beautifully against a solid backdrop of green.

In general, there is a very high quality of landscaping in new and ongoing residential developments such as Heathfield while many older developments incorporate extensive and well-designed areas of green open space. The relatively recent developments at Leslie's Arch and Cooper's Grange present an interesting and innovative 'streetscape' style layout with attention to design detailing that contrasts with more traditional housing layouts. We are interested in learning more about your committee's engagement with developers and the planning authorities in bringing this about.

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

Your adjudicator arrived to Ballincollig from Cork via the N22 and the very high standard of this entrance raised great expectations which were not disappointed. The Poulavone roundabout which has had a makeover in

conjunction with Griffin's Garden Centre is very impressive with its beehives and colourful flower beds in a blue and yellow colour scheme. The approach roads generally look very well with carefully tended grass margins, weed free roadsides and clean entrance signage with attractive landscaping. Some sections of red surfacing on the cycle track and at bus stops along the main thoroughfare need renewal.

Concluding Remarks:

Our first impressions of Ballincollig were excellent. The town exudes tidiness and an air of order and neatness prevails throughout. It is obvious from our visit that years of hard work and forward thinking have brought Ballincollig to where it is today. Well done Ballincollig Tidy Towns - you have presented your town with an enormous sense of pride and are setting a high standard across all areas of the competition. We wish you continued success.

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a pleasure being asked to visit Ballincollig (Baile an Chollaigh) and to be second round adjudicator for the SuperValu Tidy Towns competition of 2019. Your town is not one we know very well and so we spent a while driving and walking around to get a feel for the town before we began our adjudication. Thank you for your clear entry form with photographs showing the projects undertaken. These were marked on your map along with the schools and other structures/areas of interest. Situated between the River Lee and the N22 bypass, your town is an entity to itself and although busy, it is busy with those who want to do business or visit your community. We noticed your Tidy Towns Gold Medal Winner 2108 sign proudly displayed congratulations on your win.

It is wonderful to see so many of the old barracks buildings still in existence and being used for modern day life. We admired the Heritage Signage – they are discrete and informative. Take care on where you put these signs on the structures so as not to detract from them e.g. don't put them on gates or on gate piers but put them on the walls beside the piers. Many of the businesses in the town had made a great effort in presenting their properties - Trade House Central, Bite Size, Kenneally Dental, Essence of Beauty, EBS, Westward, etc. Please commend them. We noted the various hints given by Bite Size on how to reuse coffee grounds ... excellent!

The planting beds on the access roads are a credit to Cork Co. Co. and we particularly admired Poulavone which has been adopted by Griffin's Garden Centre. We were happy to see that they have converted the planting to perennials and that heathers have also been added – this will take a while to mature so be patient. We loved the addition of the bee hives which act to remind the public that planting for our pollinators is essential. We suggest planting behind, as well as in front of, the sculpture on the entrance road from the Poulavone roundabout, as this is on view as we exit the town.

We were delighted to see that Coláiste Choilm is taking biodiversity as a school project. Please advise the students (and indeed the general community) that it's important to only plant Irish Wildflowers and not to introduce varieties which are not native. Unfortunately, the ones we generally see on sale are not Irish. You have wonderful tree lined roads throughout the town and we must commend Cork Co. Co. for this – it is wonderful to see such an amount and variety of healthy trees in a town. In addition to the roundabouts and tree lined roads you also have planting beds and planters strategically located around the town which add greatly to the areas where they are located. The ones on the Main Street add greatly to the centre of the town. We also admired that, in many areas, a grass margin separates the footpaths from the roads which make it very pleasant for pedestrians. The planting into the new Heathfield estate is quite spectacular – compliments to those involved.

We love your new looped walks – it's always good to introduce designated walks into a community. The metal and plastic walkway signs are quite intrusive ... we're thinking of the simple low timber post with an arrow sign that we've seen in other locations.

A pedestrian desire path has been made through the trees at the junction of Main Street and Link Road – a formal path is needed, so we recommend to discuss this with Cork Co Co area office. Truthfully the path is quite beautiful meandering through the trees but it needs to be formalised for winter use. We saw the Ringfort sign ... interesting and good to inform the community of its existence. We noticed quite a number of temporary signs – bee signs, etc ... don't forget to remove them as signage is clutter and detracts from the streetscape.

We recommend trimming the grass margins at footpaths, at roadside kerbs, at the base of sign posts, estate names, etc. etc. rather than using weed killer. Tracts of dead grass edges are unattractive. Use a spade in the spring at pathway edges and kerbs and this will keep them tidy for most of the summer. Use strimmers (or clipping shears) around the sign posts etc. Rough up the earth around tree bases. We appreciate this is more time consuming, but the streetscape will be so much more attractive as a result.

Your Regional Park of some 55 hectares is a wonderful natural amenity to have so close to the centre of the town. We noted your allotments and see that rainwater water is collected from the adjacent school roof. The Ballincollig Tidy Towns watering unit is excellent. The large bug hotel is located behind the fence a pity it's not more accessible for children. Picnic benches are an important addition to any allotments, where growing techniques, hints and advice can be exchanged over a cup of tea and we were delighted to see you had quite a few.

It was a pleasure to visit Ballincollig. You are involved in a great many projects which is to your credit. Well done on your hard work which is reaping its just rewards.

We agree with the marks awarded by the previous adjudicator.