

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Balbriggan - Baile Brígin** Ref: **154**

County: **Dublin** Mark: **296**

Category: **G** Date(s):

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	49	49
Streetscape & Public Places	60	39	39
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	36	37
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	35	36
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	17	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	34
TOTAL MARK	470	291	296

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Balbriggan (Baile Brígin) chuig comórtas Náisiúnta na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2019. Thank you for your entry form which included map and scanned photographs of various events etc. in your community during the past year. See Concluding Remarks in connection with the map and referencing projects/events. Your core of seven is joined by your Saturday Clean Team and your Adopt-A-Patch volunteers. You are also involved with other voluntary groups based in and around Balbriggan some of whom are also members of your Adopt-A-Patch. You now have a school liaison person on your committee who has made contact with the various schools in the area – we encourage this as it is important to get the youth involved in TidyTowns. We were delighted to see that new residents have also become involved particularly the non-national new residents. We encourage you to keep up the good work and we were delighted that you took part in the 'Our Balbriggan' consultative process. Rather than filling out the Entry Form in long essay type format we recommend bullet points. It makes it quicker for the adjudicators to get a sense of your projects – we need this assistance from you.

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

Balbriggan is unusual in that the railway line divides most of the town from the sea shore. As you say it is one of the fastest growing towns in Ireland and so this railway line serves your commuters well. The original village core is located close to the station and this together with main street and the Square is still the heart of Balbriggan. There are some fine historic structures in Balbriggan – the Courthouse, the Carnegie Library building with its circular clock tower, the old Market House, St George's Cofl Church, St. Peter and Paul's RC Church and adjacent presbytery etc. The Harbour area is quite special and with the adjoining beach adds to the amenities provides for your community.

We admired the banners – Love Balbriggan and the modern street lamps in the Square suited this area. The painted utility boxes were noted – we encourage you to do more of this as really, they are an eye sore on a streetscape and if they can be made into items of fun then that's a bonus. Like every town you have your share of dereliction / vacant properties. Isn't it amazing to see fine buildings lying idle! The derelict buildings- Reynolds and the one on George's Square – look very presentable. The colourful benches along the beach walk are also a very successful project – congratulation to all your artists for brightening up Balbriggan. We look forward to seeing 'Our Balbriggan' being realised – it'll take a few years to implement the ambitious plans so patience is required. The new Heritage Trail will add to the visitor experience in your town – well done to all concerned.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasá agus Tírdhreachú:

Balbriggan Town Park along the River Bracken is a great green lung in the centre of the town. The Park is separated from the church carpark by a natural hedgerow with mature trees. The grass has been neatly cut in the

park but we suggest an area be left unmown where it does not interfere with play or football. This will add to the biodiversity of Balbriggan which needs your help. We see that a skateboard area is being made ... the teenagers will be very content with this. There one large tree near the skateboard area is now being used by them as a climbing challenge. We noticed a number of dead trees, both here and in other areas, which should be replaced with new trees. We also noted that the grass is long around many of the trees around the town – this gives an area an unkempt feeling. It doesn't take long to trim this grass. The church carpark is very barren and a new layout with a few trees would make this a softer environment as well as being good for the birds and insects. The flowers under the tall hedge on Chapel Street (near the Harry Reynolds Road junction) were very beautiful and although low in height, added to the area. You have a number of very planting beds in strategic locations around the town – some with grasses and shrubs while others are full of colourful pollinator friendly flowers. We admired the work on Quay Street and also the area under the railway arches at the Harbour. Well done to the volunteer who painted the playground facilities. The graveyard was very tidy and we loved the seats along the perimeter where people can sit for a while and remember loved ones. The new trees along Chapel Street near the roundabout will in time add to this area. We found a distinct lack of trees throughout Balbriggan including in the open communal areas hopefully these trees are the beginning of a tree planting project.

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

With the River Bracken, open green spaces, and beach area you have some wonderful habitats for nature. We encourage you to find out about these habitats and then inform the community so that they are conscious of them. Your new beach signage is the beginning of this dissemination of knowledge and we were delighted to see the signs. We loved the view of the River from the bridge beside The Central Lounge – sitting on the balcony over the river must be very pleasant for the clientele. You have carried out work on the river and hopefully in time will be able to tell us of the habitats it supports. Have you thought about having wildflower areas or pictorial meadows? Our pollinators need help and we can all do our part. The new community orchard will help but you have open communal areas which could be used too including roundabouts. We suggest you do a Biodiversity Plan for Balbriggan this will help plan your work rather than doing stand alone projects. You have had Bat Conservation Ireland come and give a talk on monitoring the Daubenton Bat. Do you have any swifts? The population of swifts is in decline so this is perhaps another project you could undertake – contact BirdWatch Ireland for details on building swift boxes etc.

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

We loved the idea of 'Fresh Air Friday' and getting the schools on board meant that the parents too were involved. Your stand at the Balbriggan Summer Fest incorporating waste reduction fun games was a success for you and hopefully you have continued with something similar this year – let us know in next year's application. You have engaged with local butchers in using containers brought in by the customers and thereby reducing plastic wrapping. This is admirable and we hope this practice can be expanded to include other food stuffs. We see that nearly all the coffee shops offer discounts when customers bring in their own cups. The solar powered smart benches in George's Square were noted as were the charging points for electric cars. Have you plans to introduce more benches and charge points? The Balbriggan Freecycle is a great idea and we can imagine it is very popular for both the person who wants rid of the item and the person who is getting it free.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhairreacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your Saturday Clean Team works all year round which is some commitment. Please commend them for this. Unfortunately, like most large towns litter and weed growth is a problem for you. Some large communities have asked walkers to pick up just three pieces of litter – could this be something you might consider and post on your Facebook page? We also came across some fly-tipping – in the Town Park and at the bring banks in the church carpark and in the SuperValu carpark. Bring banks located against walls always attracts fly-tipping with people dumping between the wall and the bins and in SuperValu carpark this is what we found. We suggest that the ones in the church carpark be turned at right angles - this will reduce the length of the 'hidden' from view. While the graveyard itself was tidy the 'waste' area was not. Plastic and compostable waste were mixed. We suggest a bin for plastic is places near the compost area and this will allow people to separate these and dispose of them correctly. We noted numerous Bin the Poo signs these detract from the streetscape. We suggest painting 'Bin the Poo' or 'Clean up after your Dog' on the pavements where you find there is a problem with dog fouling. This eliminates unnecessary signage and we have been told by other communities it works better than signs. While ivy is encouraged as it adds to the natural habitats it should be removed from areas such as natural stone walls, bridges etc. to allow the beauty on the structure to be seen. Litter bins are well located throughout the town and were clean and had been recently emptied when we visited. Your Clean Coast group working with other communities along the north Dublin coastline is a valuable resource and we are grateful for your tireless work.

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

Having a 'best presented' award scheme encourages residents and resident associations to make an extra effort in presenting their houses, roads and open spaces. You have introduced a 'Best Presented Estate Entrance' which is now in its third year. Having the public vote for the winner is quite brave and we can understand how this generated interest. There is a very pleasant planting bed at the entrance to Tara Court – but take care not to block out the estate name. We noted ivy has been planted along some of the blank walls leading into or along housing estates and we encourage this as these walls are uninteresting and unpleasant. Have you a list of pollinator friendly flowers and plants on your website that the local community can see – include photographs of the plants in addition to the names. Also advise on the preferred location for planting them. We visited quite a number of the estates and also the housing areas within the core of the village and were impressed of the presentation of most.

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

The entrance roads to Balbriggan generally had neatly trimmed grass margins and hedgerows and presented well. As you rightly point out there are quite a number of trees on the outskirts and approach roads. There are trees on both sides of the Harry Reynolds Road but we noted that some had failed and need replacing. Sucker growth was noted on many of the trees around Balbriggan which should be dealt with. Grass margins were neatly trimmed in most areas. Generally pedestrian 'desire lines' in the estates had footpaths which we were delighted to see. You have some new stone walls around Balbriggan and these are a great habitat for insects so we were delighted to see them – not as good as dry stone walls but better than sand and cement render. We liked where railings had been installed over a low wall to give security to an area instead of a high wall with no visibility /overlooking. Road surfaces were generally good and road marking although worn in some places were clear. The roundabouts with the exception of that at Hamilton housing, were pleasant. You have the support of a number of business whom you list who take care of entrance planting beds etc. near their premises; please commend them for this gesture of social commitment.

Concluding Remarks:

We were delighted to visit your town our first in quite a few years. Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2019 competition and keep up your excellent work.

A suggestion on filling up the form and producing the map(s). In the application form, please number the projects as, New N1, N2, N3.... Maintained M1, M2, M3 and Future Projects FP1, FP2, FP3. Please number the projects consecutively in your Application form. These numbers can then be transferred onto the map(s) so that the adjudicators can locate the projects and see your hard work. Needless to say, attendance at seminars etc. will not be transferred onto your map(s). Please also provide a legend on the map(s).