

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: Ballylongford - Béal Átha Longfoirt	Ref: 326
County: Kerry	Mark: 304
Category: B	Date(s): 11/06/2019

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	42	42
Streetscape & Public Places	60	40	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	38	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	31	32
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	19	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	62
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	34
TOTAL MARK	470	295	304

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Ballylongford Beal Átha Longfoirt páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019.

We are impressed with Ballylongford having 12 committee members and another 20 volunteers drawn from other organisations who assist you from time to time in this your seventh year of participation in the competition. This is fantastic for a community of your size. With that level of support, you obviously have strong links with residents, voluntary groups and schools.

Your work is planned on a structured basis involving Sunday mornings and two evenings per week. Your 3-year work plan shows there is much to do in the coming years, and we can see that you receive great support from Kerry County Council, local businesses and other public bodies. The use of Facebook and the tourist web page, notice board newspaper etc., are your means of communication. The multi-faceted involvement with the local school, including an annual competition is commendable.

Many thanks for the map highlighting where to view your projects and for the legend on the left-hand side, but please review the numbers; they are not always easy to read and a little smudged, we had great difficulty making out some of them. Numbers should always be in a sequence (e.g. clockwise) on the map to find them easily. It is important to clearly identify the various landmarks such as the cemetery, school, church etc. because these are important in assisting us to recall the layout afterwards when we are writing the report. Please make all information a larger size and if necessary, use arrows to point to the particular site/s that they represent. Finally, aim to reduce the size of your application form and make more use of bullet points to make this adjudicator's job a little easier. You tend to have a project per page; if you placed several projects on a page, there would be less pages and if you print on two sides of the paper, the document size would be further reduced. You can also gain more space by excluding the footer on each page, except the first one and the last one. For the above reasons, you have not gained any extra marks this year for this category, so please attend to these items for next year's entry.

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

Thank you for your description of your village and we can see that you are a proud community working to improve it in every respect. The new cemetery (Reilig Mhichil) on the coastal road to Tarbert was visited and it looks very smart. We were surprised that it was not mentioned in your application or the three-year plan, although we could make out the name on the map. This is a very important new facility for your village, with about six new graves, and we were pleased to see a fine car park was constructed and concrete walls. But where is the landscaping? We observed a few small birch trees in a margin on one side of the car park, the stakes of which are no longer needed, so we removed one and left it on the ground for collection. In our experience, it is so sad to see cemeteries all over the country where graves are packed side by side and no thought given to planting trees to break up the large

expanse of graves. Now is the time to get the trees planted within the graveyard, before the spaces are filled with graves. After all, isn't it important for deceased members of your community to lie in a pleasant landscape? The hard-concrete walls of the car park can be softened by climbing plants such as ivy; they require very little space for planting. This can be a showpiece, given the correct attention.

Your focus has been on identifying derelict/abandoned buildings in Main Street, Quay St., Well Road and Bridge Street and the total is 16 buildings and you are working with the owners (where possible) to bring them back to their former glory. Well done, we admired the work done on several buildings including the small house near the Fire Station. Your efforts on working with the community to have buildings painted is proving worthwhile. We were most impressed to see so many buildings, including the former home of The O'Rahilly, M. Finucane Bar. On the corner of Bridge Street, we admired the three-storey building painted white with blue corner stones. The dark green colour of Kennelly's Bar was lightened by the white cornerstones, windowsills and decorative over window designs. We noted a similar design in white over windows on a single-storey house painted brown. We liked how you painted the small house on the Tarbert Road with a pink door and window, with curtains to match and the antique turnip chopper outside.

We were very impressed with the welcome sign on Bridge Street beside the entrance to the grounds of the church, school, and community centre. This is a delightful complex and we enjoyed walking around the site, exploring its many attributes. It was great to obtain a leaflet on your Heritage Trail from the side of the welcome sign and to see old pictures of the village. The granite seats here are very high quality, as is the paving, low wall and railings. Inside the railings, several plaques tell more about your history and the stainless-steel replica of Lislaughtin Abbey window looks well. The setting for St. Michael's Church and St. Oliver's National School is a lovely environment and both buildings look very well. We were pleased to see the Green Flag flying at the school and well done to teachers and students for this achievement. The Community Centre with its stone wall exterior enhances this area greatly. We admired the two busts by Jarlath Daly of your famous sons, Brendan Kennelly and Michael Joseph O'Rahilly.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

On the Ballybunion Road, a little amenity area has been developed, featuring a boat with flowers, seating, a curved pathway and an information board on the birds of Ballylongford Bay. We were pleased to see the Irish name of the birds mentioned. We noted the mention of using rubber tree rings around the base of trees to suppress weed growth and prevent damage to tree stems. However, we didn't see any of them in place. We did notice however, that grass can grow right up to the tree stem (on approach roads and beside the Community Centre). When trees are established for a few years, there is no problem in allowing grass/vegetation to grow at their base, because at that stage, they should have developed enough roots to survive. The problem is really for the first two years when it is important to prevent weeds from taking nutrients and moisture from the tree roots.

The main structural elements in the landscape are trees and we were pleased to see several established trees in and around Ballylongford. In planting new trees, it is best to use a single species on a road or street for uniformity. When trees are established it is important to remove the stakes as the stems can get damaged from the ties or stake (such as we did at the new cemetery).

Guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible; they should not in themselves attract any notice. In your case, we noticed some very large plant containers which in some cases are acting as screens for undesirable views. The problem here is that the containers are too visible and are attracting too much attention. It is better to have fewer well planted containers than a large number in which the quality of plants is inferior. Empty or poorly planted containers are less effective than no plant container at all. We admired the several hanging baskets on poles and attached to buildings as well as window boxes on many occupied and vacant premises and overhanging the bridge. That is a great effort as is the care of the six-storey floral container beside the information sign beside the Community Centre.

If considering more seasonal flowers the use of permanent planting including herbaceous perennials for floral displays is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming. This we have seen in the beautiful circular garden beside the Community Centre, called the Ballylongford Pollinator and Herb Garden. We liked the little plan identifying the various plants growing there. Well done on including pictures of spring flowering bulbs which of course are long gone before our visit.

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

You have a rich natural area surrounding your community and we can see you are very conscious of its importance and engaged an Ecologist to undertake a study to identify the flora and fauna and submit them to the National Biodiversity Data Centre in Wexford. That was a brilliant idea and you will use the information to create awareness of your natural heritage. During Biodiversity Week you organised Bat walks and talks. The Estuary is a rich source of nature and you have listed the many birds that frequent there. As mentioned above, we liked the information board on the Ballybunion Road. Well done to St. Oliver's National School students and teachers for having a school garden and bird feeders. We admired the 100 Lavender plants on the open space in front of the church and the school. "Putting the BEE" into Ballylongford is a great slogan; we noted your approach in having wildlife strips on the approach roads. Regarding Japanese Knotweed you did not provide details of the eradication programme. You understand appreciating your local wildlife resources is vital in order to achieve under this category. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. Contact the Irish Wildlife Trust for more information.

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

This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a global and a local problem. To save the Earth we need to move quickly to a zero-waste society.

Your Upcycling Challenge greatly assists that effort and the poly tunnel which we saw behind the Community Centre will also provide education for the community. Instead of using herbicides, you are using a combination of vinegar, salt and washing up liquid on paved areas and apply the traditional hoe on soil areas.

We liked the way you presented the many initiatives that you undertake for sustainability. Regarding water, energy, waste and transport, we congratulate you on these projects and we have no suggestions. At this level of the contest the adjudicator wants to see innovation in tackling bigger issues of food waste (the workshops are noted). Other measures to consider are.....

- Contact your waste contractors and try to find out the amounts being recycled each year and see if there is a trend towards reduction.
- One third of our waste is organic in nature, such as grass clippings. You can avoid collecting mown grass by more frequent cutting and using mulching mowers which shred the clippings and facilitate faster decomposition.
- Working with retailers to cut down on packaging and reminding people to re-use shopping bags.

These activities will highlight the fact that you are focussing on this category and when you develop more projects in the future your marks will increase.

For more helpful tips and case studies from other Tidy Towns entrants please take a look at <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have a programme of managing tidiness and litter. Your work in the improvement of vacant buildings is playing an important part of tidiness as is the painting of buildings, fences etc. The focus on dealing with doggy doo is a good exercise in persuading people to pick up after their dog. It is now a much more common practice than it was even a decade ago. The regular clean-ups are effective, and no doubt require a huge effort; the pizza and coke nights was a novel idea of encouraging young people to lend a hand. Litter fines will work if they are pursued. We are pleased to state that the standard of tidiness and litter control in Ballylongford was very high.

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

Well done on organising the tidy estate competition, best kept street and window box/hanging basket/best front garden competitions. They are a great way of encouraging people to have pride in their home and they also have social benefits.

We liked the established trees and the colourful houses at Radharc na hAbhainn estate. Residents can be very proud of their efforts to maintain their houses in good condition.

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

The approach from Listowel is a very pleasant drive into Main Street. It is interesting to see a combination of one and two-storey houses, some fronting the footpath and others set back with a garden space and a low wall boundary. We noted the improvements of trees and flowers planted on vacant sites between buildings. Well done. On the Tarbert Road, we admired the rose beds on the wide grass margin near Callaghan's Cross. We also liked the avenue of mature deciduous trees and some evergreens. Closer to the village, near the bilingual sign, we noted the recent works near the small stream, including the lovely timber seat cut out of a tree stem. It is most unusual. We liked the roses growing against the fence but unfortunately there is a significant community of Japanese Knotweed beyond the roses. We also liked the planting display across the road around the bilingual village name stone which looks very well. The white painted fences here, make a great impression on the visitor.

On the coastal road to Tarbert we admired the lovely Marian Shrine. The ivy is doing a splendid job in framing Our Lady and the little altar beneath is a lovely feature. The boundary wall is painted white with a blue capping. You have also done a good job on the approach from Ballybunion. You have made good use of the road margins here by adding some planting beds. The signature approach of roses and a bilingual village name in black stone is here also which adds unity to your landscape treatment. The natural hedgerows along most of this approach is fine. The bridge was painted white with a blue capping and looked very well, and we noted that Bridge Street was resurfaced.

Concluding Remarks:

We were delighted with our visit to Ballylongford and to learn about your very interesting history. Well done on your work to date and we hope that this report provides some guidance for your future projects.