

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballinahown** Ref: **239**
County: **Westmeath** Mark: **286**
Category: **A** Date(s): **10/06/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	48
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	38
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	25
Litter Control	50	39
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	21
Residential Areas	40	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	36
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	286

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome to the 2008 National Tidy Towns Competition. This is a landmark year being the fiftieth year of the Competition. The Ballinahown committee are to be congratulated in engaging the help of the broader community. It is noted that the net is widening in relation to applications for development assistance from many agencies and this approach is already paying impressive dividends, illustrated by your application to become a centre of excellence for the midlands for craft retail and the achievement of first place nationally by the Westmeath Offaly project housed in the Old Celtic Roots building.

Thank you for your submission, which included a very detailed report together with the Ballinahown Development Plan 2006-2010. The Development Plan is a wonderful undertaking and clearly outlines your development approach in the years ahead under the following headings: Landscaping; Wildlife; Creation of a Village Pond; and The Built Environment. The promotion of the Irish language in the village is an admirable objective and the audit on the existing signage is a good way to commence this project. The introduction of the old Irish sayings on seating is a good way of communicating Irish heritage as indeed are the bilingual wildlife boards. This project could be further reinforced if the commercial premises within the village, Flynn's Bar and Rohan's Agri Supplies, were also to engage in hand painted advertising and name signs using the Irish language.

The Built Environment:

Like many Irish villages Ballinahown retains a strong urban form and generally buildings within the core retain their unique vernacular scale and proportion and they are nicely presented. It would be a well worthwhile undertaking for the committee to have these buildings architecturally assessed with a view to their proper conservation and regeneration. Existing features such as doorways, sash windows, chimney stacks and

railings should be particularly noted. Your plan would appear to be well on the way to achieving this objective particularly in relation to the village hall, the old school and the Celtic Roots Studios. Your adherence to conservation principles in relation to a colour scheme for these buildings was noted and the use of muted colours more suited to midlands village is very successful.

There was one derelict house adjacent to the post office where cleaning and strimming work was being carried out on the day of adjudication. The well-kept urban quality of the village compliments the idyllic scenic setting and contrasts well with the woodland atmosphere of the approach roads.

The Church is the focal point of the village and together with the parochial house set on magnificent grounds containing a nicely presented grotto with future plans for a meditative maze, is one of the village highlights. The community hall with its magnificent forecourt bedding plant layout and the nicely painted school opposite were a hive of activity during adjudication. The car park containing the attractive millennium water feature is a very welcoming introduction to the village.

Landscaping:

The church car park, which forms the basis of a village square, has a high quality landscape finish and is set off by the previously mentioned water feature, surrounded by begonia beds and interesting mature pergola, containing reams of information on the various aspects of village life. The school and its grounds have matured beautifully. The trees, shrubs, flowers and carefully manicured grass in the school grounds looked magnificent on the day. This mature setting enhanced a magnificent vista of the Church when viewed through the Garda Station from the well maintained set down area. Throughout the village the high standard street furniture, public lighting standards with planted flowerboxes, seating, bollards and litter bins looked well.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The park and adjacent playground are tremendous assets and their close proximity to one another enhances their educational value. We note from the Ballinahown Development Plan, your plans to further develop all aspects of wildlife in your area. The development of the pond feature and other outlined efforts, in relation to the promotion of this agenda, should give a truly sustainable result to this effort.

Litter Control:

The school was flying its Green Flag on the day of adjudication. Your effort in co-operating with the school and Foroige is to be commended. The addition of cigarette receptacles at the pub will be a welcome addition, as indeed will the new signage that you are proposing to discourage people from littering. The litter patrols that you have in operation are obviously successful as the village was litter free on the day of adjudication except for a small amount of paper at the park and playground.

Waste Minimisation:

The Bring Centre at the Flame Sculpture Park was well maintained and looked well on the day. This is a good location for this facility. The audit undertaken by Celtic Roots under the EU Green Flower Label for the eco-tourism project, together with your various engagements with the Westmeath County Council, The Irish Peatlands Conservation Council, FAS, the RSS, and the local school children is to be commended and will promote a well worthwhile result for sustainable waste minimisation in the long term. Well Done on this effort!

Tidiness:

The school was flying its Green Flag on the day of adjudication. Your effort in co-operating with the school and Foroige is to be commended. The addition of cigarette receptacles at the pub will be a welcome addition, as indeed will the new signage that you are proposing to discourage people from littering. The litter patrols that you have in operation are obviously successful as the village was litter free on the day of adjudication except for a small amount of paper at the park and playground.

Residential Areas:

Private residences and gardens throughout the village were presented to a high standard. A number of individual gardens looked particularly well.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The village road surfaces and footpaths were in generally good condition and the completion of the new works at the community hall will further strengthen this aspect of the village. The approach roads from Clonmacnoise and Athlone are most attractive, lined with stone wall and strands of mature trees from the announcement signs on both roads to the village proper. Roadside margins in this area were neatly trimmed and simply presented. The Ferbane Road entrance also looked well and contains strands of wild flowers, but

some weed control was needed in this area.

General Impression:

Ballinahown is a unique village containing all the best characteristics and features of traditional Irish villages and the hard work of the committee will pay huge dividends if this tradition is preserved.