

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballinahown** Ref: **239**
County: **Westmeath** Mark: **290**
Category: **A** Date(s): **23/06/2009**
21/07/2009

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	48
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	39
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	26
Litter Control	50	39
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	21
Residential Areas	40	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	36
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	290

Overall Development Approach:

Ballinahown is currently scoring extremely highly in this category and this is obviously a reflection of the many years of hard work and organisation. Your development plan is excellent and you clearly have engaged the whole community in an enthusiastic and professional manner. The launch of a community-based web site is a wonderful initiative and it is hoped that this will flourish and grow. Well done!

The Built Environment:

It is excellent that you have started on an architectural assessment of buildings in the town. Well done on becoming a centre of excellence for craft workers – this is sure to add to the character of the village. The school looks great and is very tastefully landscaped. The town is gorgeous and the water feature creates a real focus for the eye among all the beautifully maintained buildings – church, café, Celtic roots studio and St. Mary's C.E. The carefully preserved stone walls and considered colour scheme of the town really knit things together.

Landscaping:

Projects noted for this year include the school, the Athlone road, the grotto, recycling centre and work on the maze – an impressive work schedule. It is great that you insisted on native trees as these will also have a benefit for local wildlife. The beautiful planting all the way through the town was greatly admired and it is noted that you are moving to perennials for lower maintenance and year-round effect.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You should give more detail on the audit of wildlife that was carried out. What did you find? Your interpretive panels are excellent and were admired in the playground. It is great that you are involving local school

children. To build on this you should expand the project to survey the entire town and surrounds. While you are already making positive actions in this category, a survey and action plan would give a more coherent approach (after writing this I realised that this must surely have already been carried out when I saw the habitat map in the playground). The Perspex display of 'habitats of Ballynahown' needs to be replaced as it is quite weathered.

Litter Control:

Your approach to litter management is very comprehensive. The reinstatement of the art competition is very worthwhile. New cigarette bins outside the community hall and the pub were noted. The town was once again litter free – well done!

Waste Minimisation:

Once again you have taken this category to an advanced level with your new recycling facility and composting initiatives. To go even further why not work with businesses and Westmeath co. co. to audit waste in the town. This will identify areas to be worked on in accordance with the 'reduce-reuse-recycle' hierarchy. The school's green flag is an important achievement in this category. An Taisce also have a Green Homes initiative that seeks to build on this and extend the ethos throughout the community. Why not find out more?

The new recycling centre looks fantastic – more like a picnic area than a bring bank! Well done on this exciting achievement and it shows that small communities can be at the vanguard of creating our sustainable future !

Tidiness:

You have a very impressive work programme under this heading with a range of projects. An old broken bin beside Flynn's bar should be repaired. The town itself is very tidy with little by way of clutter. Parking on the footpath detracts from this somewhat. The bent 'Kenko' sign in front of the shop should be binned. The old, now vacant, telephone box should be removed or restored.

Residential Areas:

The row of houses across from the school looks great but has no name. In general all homes are presented to a very high standard.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The entrance road from Athlone is very well presented with attractive stone walls, well trimmed grass and native Irish trees. The town is somewhat of a hidden gem however, and is not signposted from the (old) main Dublin-Galway road. Your new status as a centre of craft excellence is a good opportunity to put yourselves on the map.

General Impression:

Overall one cannot help but be impressed with Ballinahown and the tremendous effort that is put in by the community. There is no reason why you could not win one of the top prizes! Congratulations to all concerned and keep up the great work!

Second Round Adjudication:

Living proof that small is indeed beautiful, this community have created a 'must stop and explore' location on the busy Athlone route to the south. From the eye-catching timber carving on the junction "The Pillar" – the title itself is evocative and thought provoking - to the charming and visually stunning village centre featuring the fountain, sculptures and wonderful floral display this truly is a magic location of colour and commitment, of local pride striving for perfection. Well done to all.

Attention to the next generation is not overlooked either; we noted the ecology signage in the play area and the school rightly and proudly displays its Green Flag; - a new flag needs to be secured to replace the present frayed "long service" veteran. The layout and presentation of your bottle bank recycling area is awesome. The well presented stone walls on most approach roads are set off beautifully by good planting and suitably cut grass. All roads feature the large and imposing village name plates in well executed stone. Some spoil outside the kerbs at the sports grounds and else where distract from the overall picture as do very minor amounts of litter. Sadly litter items were very prominent in the charming fountain. The glass/ Perspex covering of the excellent display boards need to be replaced and all of this structure needs to be brushed and spruced up.