

Tidy Towns Competition 2010

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballinahown** Ref: **239**
County: **Westmeath** Mark: **293**
Category: **A** Date(s): **22/06/2010**
20/07/2010

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009	Mark Awarded 2010
Overall Development Approach	50	48	47
The Built Environment	50	37	37
Landscaping	50	39	41
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	26	27
Litter Control	50	39	39
Waste Minimisation	20	10	11
Tidiness	30	21	21
Residential Areas	40	25	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	36	36
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	400	290	293

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome to the TidyTowns Competition 2010 and congratulations on a really excellent submission this year. Your approach to the competition is focussed but holistic and inclusive. The adjudicator admires your recruitment techniques! Good luck with the new Community Walking Day, a great idea.

The Built Environment:

Your village is not short of architectural interest, as your survey has shown. Scoil N. Colmcille is just beautiful- and a Green Flag school, of course. The adjudicator loved the planted tubs and the Litter-Free statement. The Garda Station really doesn't come up to the standard that is set around it. The frontage of the agricultural supplies business is very well kept. The pub looks really well. The RC church looks amazing with lovely parkland trees and clever planting. The CORE building looks really well and is a mix of old and new. The Post Office/shop looks very well and very busy but should be careful of pavement clutter. What is the idea behind the 'Information Box' on the old P & T telephone box? The Community and Heritage building is lovely and so well kept.

Landscaping:

The adjudicator was extremely impressed with the thought, planning and artistry of the landscaping all around the village. Well done! A real ambition is felt when looking at the end result in front of the heritage centre. The front of the Sport Park is a bit of a disappointment, by comparison. The Play Park is a different matter (see below). The fountain is quite stunning. The Clonmacnoise model is clever and would be popular with children.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Are the results of the wildlife audit available? Well done on the various birdbox projects. Make sure that there's a good plan in place to maintain these. Well done on the great quality signage in the playground. The nature trail here is excellent (a shame that it doesn't loop). Why is a pond not possible? These add greatly to the biodiversity of an area.

Litter Control:

Your anti-litter initiatives are well directed and effective. No litter was seen on adjudication day. Well done to all. Keep it up.

Waste Minimisation:

You have a comprehensive range of initiatives which tackle many of the core elements of this category. Well done for garnering help and advice from experts in the various fields. The adjudicator feels that you have yet to tackle a strand at the heart of this category- the minimisation of waste: a different thing (albeit related) to composting or recycling. It is acknowledged that Rome wasn't built in a day and that this is a stepwise progression but baseline data on waste is surely central to this. Just as your energy audit takes stock of the energy needs and unnecessary usage, a waste audit is vital. Your water conservation measures are noted.

Tidiness:

The surface of the carpark of the Sports Park is poor and is spilling out onto the road. This is dangerous for cyclists. Lots of weed spraying has taken place here but little else. The wooden sculpture at the junction is suffering a little wear and tear at the base and should be repaired. There is a layout error on the information boards at the pergola (a lovely way to present information, by the way). There could be more sympathetic signage at the entrance to the Park. The red and white plastic 'Do Not Park' affairs jar badly with the organic surroundings. A couple of litterbins were made homeless and (bafflingly-given the immaculate surroundings) thrown into the field opposite the church. What is the telephone box doing? The recycling area is quite amazing. Clever technology along with nice landscaping and new tree-planting. Well done.

Residential Areas:

Houses and gardens look well across the board but this adjudicator feels that they are rather left behind by the public areas of the village- it is so often that the converse is true! Well done on addressing the nameless avenue issue in such a democratic way. There are very nice gardens here but some fences need attention.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The (Play) Park is a real gem. This is probably the finest layout of a children's play area this adjudicator has seen. It is the integration of wildlife, organic-feeling play equipment and wildlife / habitat information that makes this special. Year-round this is a wonderful venue. The benches were admired for their brute simplicity, colour and functionality (a few aspiring gymnasts were also using them at time of visit). The area was also spotless. The Sports Park is an excellent facility with top-notch surfaces (aside from the very poor carpark) and a lovely line of mature trees. There is a really nice experience in the approach road from Athlone. The stone wall and new planting are very nice in tandem. The use of native species is noted.

General Impression:

This was a very impressive presentation of a lovely little town. There is distinct feeling of ambition in your work as well as a great attention to detail. This is a village on an upward trajectory both in terms of this competition and your contribution to the environment. Well done to all.

Second Round Adjudication:

I parked my car in the spacious central car-park where one's attention is immediately drawn to the water sculpture due to its noise and striking visual impact. Immediately the presentation of a picturesque location is noted, firstly from the sight of the impressive public lighting poles with the cables underground, the views of the majestic stone Church and Grotto alongside, the parish hall, Core Crafted Design Studio and the Post Office and shop in the distance. Beautiful shrubs and flowers give a distinctive flavour to the surroundings, and the public seating offers the opportunity to sit and enjoy the surroundings. A sign post leads me to the visitor information and I read the interesting details on the notice boards; History of Ballinahown village, Village Hinterland, Welcome to our village and Ballinahower village. At the other side I read Ballinahown National School, Ballinahown Nature Park and riverside trail and Sculpture trail. I now felt ready to explore these locations.

Across the road I visited the grounds of the distinctive church with the tall elegant tower where the workmanship was of a high quality, and the later style Grotto nestles peacefully surrounded by wonderful lawns. I loved the sturdy stone walls in this location and the small gates are gems. The old stone St Colmcille's Church dedicated 1902 is a most attractive feature.

I then went back across the road to the Sculpture trail outside the parish hall, which retains its original identity

of a church, though now the function of the building is much different. The small sculptures here are most impressive and the images "tell more than a thousand words" of the history of Ballinahown. At the back of the hall there is the neat lawn and I admired the selection of new native trees. The composting area is a welcome sight, nicely secluded, but doing a great job ensuring the production of compost – well done. The weather vane leads us along nicely to the recycling centre which must be one of the finest in anywhere to be seen. And this area was spotlessly clean.

Out on the side road the Garda barracks looked well with nice flowers and shrubs. The "Litter free school" was just that, and Woodland Avenue is a nice small housing estate. I admired the lines of Box hedging unusually along the outside of the path leading down to the cross roads. The playing pitch is a fine amenity and the car parking area will be much enhanced when the two loads of stone chippings are levelled off. It is good to see that new trees are planted near the road at the playing pitch. I noticed that the base of the timber statue near the corner is decaying somewhat at the bottom.

The children's playground is a great facility and it was pleasant to see the children at play there away from the televisions. I admired the information panels giving details of hedgerow habitats, habitats of Ballinahown, trees along the nature trail, wildflowers, birds and butterflies. And here again I admired the composting area the Gazebo and bird boxes. I took a walk along the nature trail and the small stone chippings made for comfortable walking.

There are many other notable features not least the beautiful traditional water pump and the old phone box. The first adjudicator has increased your marks by six and I am pleased to confirm this. Energy and leadership is obvious amongst your people that turns out your place is such great condition – congratulations for a fine effort.