

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballynacally** Ref: **59**
County: **Clare** Mark: **299**
Category: **B** Date(s): **01/07/2009**
30/07/2009

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	48
The Built Environment	50	38
Landscaping	50	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	25
Litter Control	50	42
Waste Minimisation	20	12
Tidiness	30	23
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	299

Overall Development Approach:

We are pleased to welcome Ballynacally to the Tidy Towns Competition for 2009 and would like to commend Ballynacally Development Association on the comprehensive entry documentation which was submitted. Information provided on the Heritage Project was particularly interesting and the commissioned Shane Gilmore sculpture is sure to be a worthy monument to the historic past of Ballynacally. The map of the village was ideal – clear, concise, with all Tidy Towns projects highlighted and litter patrol zones identified, well done. Our particular thanks for the laminated version of the map, very useful as rain was threatening to fall during our visit.

Congratulations to everyone involved in the wonderful achievement of a Silver Medal in 2008. You certainly seem to have kept up the momentum this year and we were delighted to learn that your Committee has grown to 20 members, that in itself is commendable. The hard work and commitment have obviously encouraged Clare County Council, LEADER and FÁS to continue supporting your activities, well done.

It was good to note that you took onboard last year's recommendation and included a Three Year Plan – the projects for 2009 were particularly ambitious and credit is due to everyone involved in the work. The Junior Tidy Towns Group is a very positive initiative which will ensure that the children – future guardians of our environment – will learn to respect and love that environment from an early age. The involvement of your Tidy Towns Education Officer with community groups and the National School should be a very positive influence for the village.

The use of your excellent website; Tidy Towns and Church Newsletters and Public Meetings are very appropriate methods of communicating with the wider community.

We wish everyone an enjoyable SummerFest, particularly as you have the added excitement of the official

launch of the Fair Green Heritage Trail and the opening of the Children's Play Area.

The Built Environment:

The village has an attractive and appropriate blend of residential properties, community services and commercial businesses. The very colourful buildings housing the Ballynacally Health Centre, Fergus Credit Union and Children's Paradise pre-school were immaculately maintained with some beautiful hanging baskets and neat signs including the very informative plaques regarding Michael O'Hehir and Paradise House. The well preserved old schoolhouse nearby was thought provoking.

Residents and visitors to Ballynacally have a great choice of watering holes – the Five Arches, Irwin/Carrig Bar, Daly's and Griffin's, with its very eye-catching floral displays. It was good to see that the village still enjoys the services of a Post Office.

The School had lovely rosebeds, trees and an attractive mural painted on the shelter wall. Ballycorick Church was appealing with its neatly maintained grounds and very attractive flower boxes on the boundary wall.

The GAA clubhouse and grounds were in good order and we were delighted to note that the car park was very clean and tidy during our visit and the abandoned car, mentioned in last year's report, had been removed.

We noted that the redevelopment plans for the Community Centre had to be postponed this year but we wish you well with the project and hope you succeed in undertaking the work next year.

Landscaping:

From our early introduction to Ballynacally on the Kildysert approach, it was obvious that we were entering a village which was the result of hard work and enthusiasm by a very proud and committed community. The well cut green areas with expertly weeded rosebeds, black and red planted containers and some very attractive trees guided us into the village. The bridge, with well painted capping and wonderful display of petunias/surfinas in hanging baskets, was excellent. We were captivated by the Rose Lovers Garden with its inviting bench, neat paving, grass and beautiful roses. It was good to see that the area was protected by excellent fencing at the riverside.

The little pathway leading to St Martin's Well and Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine offered a wonderful moment of peace and an opportunity to pause and enjoy the magic of the cascading waterfall, the scent of lovely roses nearby and the view of the noble Chestnut Tree. We accepted the invitation of the lovely red bench to sit and reflect for a while, bliss!

The Fair Green was a lovely amenity with pretty flowerbeds, mature trees and picnic seating. The Village Pump was beautifully presented with snow white walls protectively surrounding it. Well done on the rainwater harvesting initiative, this should prove very beneficial.

At every stage of our visit we were greeted by superb displays including the wonderful Galatea Boat flowerbed and the eye-catching 'Failte' in the bed of red begonias. We also noticed the lovely roses nestling against a stone wall nearby. The additional tree planting, fencing, hedging and new flowerbed at Roscliffe Estate were a credit to this lovely small estate. The Grotto was very appealing with appropriate planting. The new raised bed at the junction near Dangen Castle and the hanging baskets at Ballycorick Bridge were beautiful.

Hanging baskets, window boxes and planted containers were enhancing most homes and businesses in the village and the overall presentation was superb, congratulations to everyone.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

It was good to note that you have consulted an appropriate wildlife expert to provide guidance for your activities under this category. Projects which have been completed were impressive.

There are huge opportunities under this category and the planned Biodiversity Survey, Birdwatch Shelter and Community Nesting Boxes are all very worthwhile projects and will have long term benefits for Ballynacally. We wish you every success with them.

As suggested previously, we strongly recommend the involvement of local school pupils, under the guidance of the wildlife expert or a teacher, in projects where they could gain invaluable experience and an understanding of the need to protect their fragile environment.

Litter Control:

The use of litter patrol teams and zoned areas within Ballynacally are excellent ways of ensuring that the village remains clean and tidy. During our stroll through the village we only spotted one mineral bottle so congratulations to all. It was good to see signage reminding visitors that Ballynacally is a litter free area.

The removal of the litter bin from the Fair Green seems to have worked out but obviously the area will need to be checked regularly. National Spring Clean days are very worthwhile but their impact can be limited by failure to maintain ongoing vigilance – thankfully that is certainly not the case in Ballynacally, well done.

Waste Minimisation:

The range of projects which you have undertaken this year is very appropriate and should produce excellent results. We were particularly impressed by the recycling campaign for the mobile phones, disposable batteries, etc and the Ballynacally Environment Challenge.

As we are all aware, water quality and supply is always a concern for communities and your rainwater harvesting unit will ensure that the maintenance of the superb floral displays does not drain other crucial water resources in the village, good work. The recycling facilities are excellent and hopefully are getting plenty of use.

We wish the pupils, teachers and management of the National School every success in their endeavours to gain a Green Flag. We have no doubt that they will achieve their aim, based on the dedication and commitment exhibited by the whole community in any projects undertaken to date.

Just a word of caution regarding your planned community compost unit - collective community composting is illegal without a licence so it would be important to consult the County Council for guidance. What is normally recommended is composting by individual households.

Tidiness:

The close co-operation between the community, FÁS, the local school and School Parents Council is obviously very successful and is paying great dividends.

We noticed the efforts which had been taken to reduce any negative impact of older or derelict properties, particularly the well painted white wall outside cottages on the Kildysart side of the village and the charming old man at his window with his flower filled bicycle propped against the wall.

The recycling area was generally clean and tidy with the well painted wall behind and neat flowerbed/shrubbery in the corner. The dirty white bottle bin does detract considerably from an otherwise neat presentation. If it is likely to take some time to replace the bin, perhaps it could be given a coat of paint as a temporary measure.

Traffic and litter signs, display boards and name plaques throughout Ballynacally were all clean and in good condition.

Residential Areas:

Homes throughout the village were presented in very high order with lovely landscaped gardens, hanging baskets and planted containers visible nearly everywhere. The older properties were generally well maintained and were standing proudly alongside the more recent additions to the residential stock.

Roscliffe was a lovely estate with excellent open green areas and appropriate tree planting. As mentioned already, the additional landscaping work which has been undertaken is excellent.

The lovely old school house was nicely adorned with window boxes and hanging baskets and we admired an attractive gate lodge painted red on the Ennis approach.

It was obvious that residents of Ballynacally have devoted time and effort in maintaining their homes and gardens and this has created a very appealing picture, congratulations.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

All approach roads were generally in good condition. The main approaches from Kildysert and Ennis were very impressive with excellent landscaping, well painted bridges (both Ballycorick Bridge and the Village Bridge) and in the case of the Ennis approach, superb stone walls which led the way to the heart of Ballynacally. Road surfaces in the area were generally quite good, grass verges and landscaping were neatly maintained and the overall impression was very appealing.

Weed control throughout the village was excellent, particularly in the various flowerbeds where it was hard to imagine a weed had ever been allowed to survive for more than a minute or two! The pathway to St Martin's Well was immaculately maintained (not a pothole in sight) and with some excellent fencing and a good protective handrail.

Congratulations to everyone involved.

General Impression:

Our first visit to Ballynacally was a really charming experience. Everywhere there was evidence of an intensely proud community working together as a cohesive unit to create a magical environment.

We appreciate your concern about the possible negative influence that the Children's Play Area might have on the Fair Green, however, in our opinion, we feel your concerns will prove to be unfounded. In fact, it was lovely to see some little ones happily enjoying their new facilities during our visit and providing parents (and others in the community) keep a close eye on the area, the amenities should be totally compatible.

We were impressed with the tunnel growing project to reduce the cost of providing the magnificent floral displays. Perhaps as the initiative develops you may be able to link with other communities undertaking similar projects and exchange seeds, plants, etc. In a similar vein, you might consider visiting other high performing towns or villages in the TidyTowns to compare approaches under the various categories.

Your entry in the 2009 TidyTown Competition has been very encouraging and we wish you well with the planned projects for 2010 and beyond.

Second Round Adjudication:

At the outskirts to the village I came across Ballycorick Catholic Church which is very well maintained and the green doors match well the grey stone colours of the Church. I admired the two green box shrubs and other floral displays that added colour to the fine car park and tarmac yard. The stone wall outside is sturdy and impressive and is matched with a great traditional stone wall on the other side of the road over a lovely footpath that leads into the village which is most picturesque and this setting does not need any intervention - only maintenance. Good landscaping on the right hand side gives a welcoming effect to the village, and the boat there reminds us that we are near the Shannon. I loved the grotto.

The centre of the village is very pretty and I admired the well kept open area with well manicured grass, flowers, trees and shrubs. The community centre is a wonderful traditional building. The well presented traditional water pump is a reminder of a bygone day, but I would prefer to see it painted a dark green or black, and this is a preference and not a criticism. The children's playground is a great amenity and it was great to see a lot of children enjoying themselves there on a nice sunny evening. The spotlessly clean recycling centre is nicely secluded in this area.

The private houses and business places have impressive displays of flowers, shrubs, trees and lawns that bolster the fine efforts of the TidyTowns committee and presented the village in spectacular condition. The stone bridge is attractive and I wondered why the capping stones are painted which, in my view, gives an artificial appearance to a structure that can "speak for itself". There were beautiful flowers in baskets at the bridge and they were being touched up by Francis O'Shea and Maria Gavin who told me of the prayers on 10th and 11th November at St Martin's well and Our Lady of Lourdes shrine. I followed their recommendation and enjoyed a stroll down the nice passageway with fine views of the waterfall and the statues nestling peacefully there - a great experience, and well done to all concerned with the upkeep of this historical place. The Kildysart road is well presented with great landscaping and the fine traditional stone walls, but some parts of the walls need to be repaired, and caution is urged here as traditional stone walls must be repaired in the same style as the existing parts - no fancy stonework or pointing and the mortar is mainly a lime based mortar, with little or no cement used. In some cases grants can be obtained for this type of work and you could enquire about this from the conservation officer at Clare County Council.

I took a trip out the Cranny road to Kilchreest graveyard and it is well maintained, but I felt that the larger entrance gate could be freshened up with a few coats of paint. In the graveyard there are some great historical window and door openings and great stone work in the church ruins, and here again some repairs could preserve these wonderful features and this is a second reason to have a meeting with the conservation officer at the County Council. I loved the traditional stone wall outside.

It is clear from the supporting material provided that there is a professional approach to the enhancement of Ballynacally which makes it a great place to visit and better still a wonderful place to live in. The first adjudicator has given to you a comprehensive report under the different headings and I am delighted to confirm the findings.
Congratulations on a great effort.