

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballina - Béal an Átha** Ref: **766**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **342**
Category: **F** Date(s): **01/07/2022**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	50	52
Streetscape & Public Places	80	43	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	48	49
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	43	44
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	24	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	37
TOTAL MARK	550	330	342

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Adh Mór...

Welcome to the 2022 Supervalu Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for your excellent entry which has outstanding quality and has a professional feel to it. You have been entering the competition for 32 years. Your entry comprises 51 pages of a PDF document which includes a 4 page 3/5 year plan and a map. This gives a detailed overview of the excellent central role Ballina Tidy Towns Committee (BTTC) has in leading the wider Ballina community towards higher standards of environmental awareness and excellence. The map is very clear with 24 individually identified projects listed over the various categories. You continue to enhance your communication across the community in many ways. BTTC use Facebook as a communications channel with 1014 followers while the associated Ballina Community Clean Up Group (BCCG) have 4182 followers. You also use the weekly church/community newsletter to inform the community. It would be nice to get more clarity on the connection and overlap of BTTC and BCCG. The two Facebook pages gives a good record of your activities with lots of relevant photos and links. You have an impressive list of 11 supporting organisations.

The 3/5 year plan referred to in the new Tidy Towns Handbook is presented as a concise project list. A suggestion: if you had more definition in the assigned responsibility for specific project implementation then the plan could be more easily reviewed with measurable objectives.

Your core committee of 8 supported by 100 regular volunteers, rising to a creditable 300. The associated Ballina Community Clean Up Group (BCCG) have expanded the greatly the number of volunteers. Congratulations in winning the 2022 Pride of Place award: Ballina Community Clean Up won the 2022 Pride of Place Award in category 5 - population over 5,000. The group was founded in 2019 with 6 volunteers and now currently have over 300 volunteers who take part in many projects and activities throughout the year.

These numbers reflect the outstanding community impact of BTTC by a dedicated group of committed volunteers. The application form asks you to identify a specific project where particular effort was applied, you have listed 9 including Bishops Field development, Caltra walk, painting derelict buildings etc. The intent of this question is to select one particular project to highlight the effort applied, whereas it was good to see the wide extent of your efforts, only one project was expected to be nominated here.

It would be good to see the relevant references to the UN Sustainable Development Goals indicated for each of the individual BTT projects by including the relevant number(s), this is a useful practical first step in communicating the important goals (for Ireland and all humanity) as a start to Ireland's ambitious plan to achieve all 17 by 2030.

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

Ballina is a very attractive and interesting town situated on the banks of the majestic Moy (with the Brosna joining a

little downstream). Pearse Street reflects the high standard of the centre of Ballina with excellent paving, street furniture and lamp standards. The mix of two and three storey buildings along the tree lined street has an excellent colour blend. The lamp standards with a attached flower containers added a splash of colour. The traditional Provincial Bank building stands out. The contrasting white and green colour scheme of the Post Office was admired. Generally, the buildings, shops and business premises were well presented with a pleasing colour scheme. The wire free street scape added to the pleasing visual aspect.

The newly renovated McKane's Pharmacy and the Junction caught the eye. Vacant shop windows were used to display historic material. Elsewhere, interesting murals caught the eye in unexpected places.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The enhancement works on Kevin Barry Street was noted. The Bishops Field new riverside fencing and newly constructed flower beds were admired. The Town Park besides the imposing river Moy was immaculately cut and maintained. The stately trees are well looked after. Some of the blue wooden seats need repainting. BTTC Maintain nine shrub beds at various locations throughout the town and mow 10 green areas.

Some lovely planting was noted along the road outside the Railway Station. The green spaces on the approach to Belleek Woods were neat and tidy.

There is a very visually obvious linear space on the Foxford approach between the railway fence and the road which could be considered a location for a wildflower meadow, this could be an interesting pilot scheme for rewilding.

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

The 'Beelieve in Ballina' tagline is a clever motto which will spread the message and increase the awareness of preserving insect life.

Further wildflower areas have been set in various places around the town including Station Road , along Foxford Road and Sligo Road.

It was uplifting to observe a Wildflower meadow in the government offices complex.

The 'Blitz and Bloom Flower' campaign introduced flowers to the Town Centre by offering flower boxes at a reduced rate.

An interesting study of red squirrels in Belleek Woods and surrounding areas invited members of the public to report sightings of the squirrels in order to create a red squirrel distribution map.

Belleek Woods and the Moy river offer many diverse habitats which can be further developed.

The River Moy Search and Rescue Group and the Mens Shed are a marvellous resource which is currently effectively used and will also assist in the future.

You are looking at producing a detailed Biodiversity Plan which would be a comprehensive and systematic guide to future measures.

The All Ireland Pollinator Plan requests all Tidy Towns groups to include a Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT-Count). FIT Counts are very simple – you watch a patch of flowers for 10 minutes and count how many insects visit. It is a very useful tool for TT groups to measure change in their local biodiversity. Especially when they have taken action already for pollinators, by carrying out FIT Counts throughout the year and across future years will help track the impact of their actions on insect numbers and diversity as well as providing important data for the Biodiversity Centre.

Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) - National Biodiversity Data Centre (biodiversityireland.ie)

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

Irish Water has selected Ballina to roll out its new Sustainable Water Towns Initiative.

Irish Water is providing specialised training to business owners to assist in lowering water consumption and reduce operating costs while protecting the environment

Congratulations on being chosen for Eco Eye's focus on Dereliction and for hosting Mayo's first ever Climate Action Gathering in Ballina on November 12th and 13th 2021.

Another very significant event was the Establishment of Ballina – Ireland's Greenest Town which is an initiative to make Ballina Ireland's greenest town by 2025 bringing together families, business and community groups in Ballina and North Mayo to work together on ambitious, transformative projects to bring about a brighter, more sustainable future

You report that the Water Find and Fix team has saved an impressive 2000m³/day of water.

The E-bike system and the Ripple system together with the plan for Ballina to be Ireland's Greenest Town are exciting projects which may have national impacts.

These are all important starting points in the sustainability journey. For additional ideas, have a look at the Top Tips in page 8 of the Sustainability section of the Tidy Towns Handbook , available on line at the Tidy Towns website <https://www.tidytowns.ie/competition/handbook/>

One additional suggestion, consider joining as a Sustainable Energy Community:<https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/sustainable-energy-communities/join-the-sustainable-ener/>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The town was essentially litter free and poster free on adjudication day. However Bachelors Walk had moderate littering. A number of Mayo Co Co teams were observed early in the morning picking litter, watering flowers, street sweeping and doing an excellent job.

The 'Battle of the Clubs' street sign clean off initiative is a very imaginative and innovative measure to carry out a mundane possibly boring, repetitive job!

The Mayo Day, Earth Day and National Spring Clean stimulated Ballina's biggest ever clean up with an impressive 300 volunteers - which must be the biggest litter picking group in Ireland. The riverside banks were commendably clean not only in the town area, but also down towards the Quay. The "Believe in Ballina" project has inspired local residential associations (Among these are the Quay and Parkside) to get involved and improve their own areas. Weekly groups of runners - 'Ploggers' - litter pick as they run. BTCC has brought flair and innovation to the mundane litter picking and harnessed many sectors of the community and built a positive momentum for Litter Control.

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

The main streets including Lower Pearse Street, Barrett Street and Kevin Barry Street looked well - your continuing work to improve the visual aspect of the town is commendable. The flower boxes and containers added a distinctive splash of colour. The wire-free streetscape was enhanced with the beautiful traditional lamp standards. Among the many well presented housing estates Castle Court, Glen Ri, Mossgrove, and Waterstone caught the eye. The Residential Estates Competition certainly looks to be paying off.

Residents with empty front gardens might be encouraged to plant an appropriate species of tree to add visual and biodiversity interest.

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

The approach roads were well surfaced with good signage and verges trimmed appropriately. On the Foxford approach a new bed with surrounding top soil being spread was noted. The distinctive blue Ballina town sign informs us that we are approaching the Salmon capital of Ireland. In the town, the many interesting lanes are a notable feature, Victoria Lane, French Lane, Pawn Office Lane and of course the newly refurbished Dr. Kathleen Lynn Lane - which gave very welcome shelter during an unexpected downpour. There is an excellent riverside walk/cycleway behind the Art Centre with the striking modern pedestrian bridge looking downstream on the complicated river weir with an almost hypnotic aspect to the surging river flow.

Concluding Remarks:

Ballina is a distinctive town and an outstanding place to visit. The results of decades of hard work are apparent. Go n-eiri libh amach anseo.