

# Tidy Towns Competition 2021

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballon - Balana** Ref: **526**  
County: **Carlow** Mark: **339**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **11/08/2021**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2021</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	50
Streetscape & Public Places	60	42
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	46
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	38
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	26
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	37
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>339</b>

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

Fáilte Chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu 2021. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn. Go raibh maith agaibh as ucht bhur dtacaíocht le linn na paindéime. Lean leis an dea-obair. We welcome Ballon Improvement Group (Balána) to the 2021 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your entry and for your commitment to your place in these difficult times. The stunning photo on the front cover of your entry sets the tone for what follows. We only wish we could visit your lovely village in person this year. The community energy and dynamism jump out from the page. You have shown no shortage of determination or ideas to keep the community engaged and active during the lockdown months. The free library and digital photographic competition are just some examples that you mention. You have kept awareness levels high through regular posts on social media including Instagram. It is heartening to hear that the teenage cohort is assisting with the community effort. The students of Ballon N.S. continue to lead the way in all sustainability matters, more about that later. Well done to the business community for offering support in a variety of ways. You really do appear to have a cross-community effort and this is leading to a progressive Tidy Towns programme and a vibrant community in which to live, work and play. Thank you for submitting your comprehensive Tidy Towns Plan (2021 – 2023), which assists you in prioritising projects in all the competition categories. Keep up the good work.

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

It is wonderful to hear from towns and villages this year that new businesses are opening on the Main Street and we wish your new pharmacy and dog groomer's success and no doubt the properties will enhance the streetscape. Well done to all involved in the Heritage mapping project, with support from Carlow Tourism and the Towns & Villages fund. It is important to map and highlight your landmarks of historical interest. The upgraded pedestrian crossing and walkway, new footpaths and new lighting all serve to improve the connectivity of the village and make it a safer place so that walking and cycling is encouraged, Well done on your efforts to secure funding for these significant projects. The new seats give this walkway a fresh appearance. The interactive information board is a welcome addition – we are curious as to how it works.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

We love your approach to planting and would love to see a few more photos. Your sustainable landscaping approach has led to you cease container planting and restrict hanging baskets to a few key areas. This means less water resources are needed, therefore less maintenance. You work closely with the school on various planting projects, including the growing of fruit, vegetables and pollinator-friendly plants. Showing the children how to grow plants in your busy polytunnel is truly sustainable! Many areas are designated for wildlife. You are successfully overcoming challenges at the walkway, where some plants have been damaged due people gathering. Maybe a

review of what gathering space is needed for the teenagers could be carried out? We are delighted to hear about your community orchards, new tree trail and the fact that you choose native trees for the most part. It is wonderful to hear that school classes took place in the community garden and in the woodland 'classroom' during Covid times – definitely a good way of encouraging the children to be at one with nature while keeping everyone safe and apart.

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

In Ballon, there is a strong link between this and the 'landscaping' category as you consider local biodiversity and sustainability in all your landscaping initiatives. It is wonderful to see that there is such a genuine interest across so many sectors of the community, much of this stemming from the awareness-raising your group has done over the years. You continue to do this through promotion of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan actions. Your 'Ballon Buzzing with Bees' slogan is simple but catchy. You have huge support from the school students and staff of Ballon N.S., who are biodiversity experts at this stage. It is great to see the children using the community garden and woodland for learning purposes. Initiatives such as Bee Day and the water workshops further increase knowledge and understanding.

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

It is a brave move for a community group to open a shop of any kind so we are delighted to hear that your venture has been a hit with the local community and has become a hub in its own right. An inspiration for other villages to follow perhaps... Well done to the teenagers for assisting with creative signage. Not only are you promoting the sale of reused items, you provide a water refill station and distribute homemade compost. We are delighted to hear that you use only homemade compost on your beds as this is more sustainable than purchasing it. You show good and creative links with local businesses when it comes to Reuse, e.g., local coffee grinds and items for shop displays. You have completed several interesting projects in this category including the Climate Change Project. You got good mileage out of this by including winning entries in your calendars – well done. It is encouraging to hear that an even bigger polytunnel is required for all the community growing activities and we wish you luck sourcing funding for same. Well done to all involved in securing a 6th Green Flag for Ballon N.S.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

We applaud your efforts to encourage family bubbles to take part in weekly clean ups during Covid, which ensured the high standards of cleanliness were maintained while people had a chance to socialise while staying apart. We note your comments regarding increased take-away littering and commend your efforts to have the litter laws enforced. Well done to all involved in daily litter patrols and segregating litter for recycling. Efforts to spread the message in relation the nuisance and health hazard that is dog fouling are also commended.

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

Well done to the Oaks housing estate for adopting a 'no mow' policy last May, in line with your pollinator-friendly guidelines. We acknowledge your frustrations regarding the unfinished estate and unsightly properties around the village. Sometimes things are beyond the control of your voluntary group and you are doing everything you possibly can. It is good to hear that further native planting has taken place at Mullaunmore Estate. Would items relating to the Millennium Garden & Sculpture be a better fit under the 'Landscaping' category? The powerwashing of name stones is noted. Well done to all residents for playing their part and taking pride in their village.

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

Thank you for submitting photos of your stunning wildflower displays along your main approach roads. They give a wonderful first and last impression. A lot of time and effort goes into the maintenance of grass verges, to give a neat and welcoming appearance, while at the same time preserving wildlife corridors. The elimination of pesticides is most welcome and means you don't have the unsightly lines of brown burnt grass that actually detract from the overall appearance. You have busy with your deep cleaning of walls and pathways, and cleaning of name stones. It is disheartening to read that your native tree signs are constantly vandalised, have you tried changing up the design/materials used?

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Ballon Improvement Group continues to aim high, raise awareness and become even more sustainable, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. We are impressed by many of your simple yet innovative ideas that succeed because all sectors of the community are working together for the benefit of the community. There is a great sense of pride apparent among Ballon residents. Thank you for an excellent entry during this strange year and we wish you well with future projects. Keep up the great work.