

# Tidy Towns Competition 2021

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Ballincollig - Baile an Chollaigh</b>	Ref: <b>661</b>
County: <b>Cork(South)</b>	Mark: <b>350</b>
Category: <b>G</b>	Date(s): <b>10/08/2021</b> <b>05/09/2021</b>

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2021</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	53
Streetscape & Public Places	60	48
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	50
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	35
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	39
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>350</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. Welcome to the 2021 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your entry and for your commitment to your place in these difficult times. Keep up the great work. Your committee of 12 members have made good use of technology to maintain a frequency of meetings during the pandemic and with the assistance of up to 55 volunteers, you were able to carry out weekly litter picks limited within 5km walk restrictions and when permitted, you operated your weekly work nights in limited pods. Your committee includes four Transition Year representatives and along with your dedicated schools' liaison officer, you actively interact with your local schools and local scout group, helping to raise consciousness and appreciation for the local environment amongst future generations. We also note your new appointment of a Sustainability Officer. You have links with a wide range of agencies that support your work and we see that you make good use of several social media platforms and your website to communicate and promote your work. Your weekly newsletter keeps the wider community updated on your activities and other information of local interest and it is clear from our review of a sample of your newsletters that your volunteers have been very generous with their time delivering on your programme of work as individuals and in pods.

Many thanks for taking the time to prepare your entry form and map with the locations for your projects clearly marked and for including your three-year plan which is very practical and sets clear targets to be achieved. While it is acknowledged that some projects and actions will be relevant under several adjudication categories, try to avoid duplication on your entry form as marks awarded for a particular action or project will only be made under one category, ideally that which is most relevant. Your very comprehensive entry form exudes energy, great commitment and a very organised approach to Tidy Towns and it is clear that your committee and volunteers take tremendous pride in your place. The strong sense of community is well summarised in your adopted motto "Ag obair le chéile, dá chéile!" (Working together, for each other!)

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

Across the country, the use of local walking trails and public parks has surged in response to the pandemic and your work in mapping and marking walking routes in and around Ballincollig and the Regional Park will have been of great value and benefit to individuals and families within your community. You have added to the established network of trails in the area with mapping the Oriel House Walk and the Fionn Laoi walking routes. Additional heritage signs have been installed highlighting features and places of significance. The Regional Park is a wonderful amenity and recreational asset in the locality and your ongoing work in association with Cork City Council to continuously enhance the park is acknowledged. Replacement seats have been installed, information signs have been refurbished and updated and a significant amount of new tree, shrub and bulb planting has been carried out.

Additional areas of wildflower meadow have also been developed.

We note that several buildings on the Main Street have had paintwork refreshed and it is very positive to learn that a number of other vacant business premises have been upgraded and repurposed. It is also encouraging to hear that plans are in progress for development of two derelict sites on the Link Road as noted in the 2019 report and at other vacant locations of prominence.

The installation of cordoned off cycle lanes is noted, and we wondered if any progress was made with renewal of worn sections of the red surfacing on the cycle track and at bus stops along the main thoroughfare as commented in the 2019 report.

Two new tiered planters have been installed incorporating pollinator-friendly plants on Main Street and we note from your weekly newsletter the considerable work and commitment of your Tidy Towns volunteers to watering and maintaining the many attractive container displays throughout the village. The 2019 report mentions that the civic plaza at the CastleWest Shopping Centre could also benefit from installation of some large-scale planters and we wondered if this suggestion had been considered.

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

The Poulavone roundabout was adopted and planted by Griffins Garden Centre in 2018 and 2019 with a range of plants to support bee, butterfly and other pollinators and following the closure of the garden centre, we are pleased to learn that sponsorship of the roundabout has been taken up by McDonalds Ballincollig. This new sponsorship has enabled further pollinator-friendly planting and the roundabout presents a very colourful and eye-catching feature on the approach to Ballincollig as well as being a highlight feature of your Pollinator Corridor project. Well done to Transition Year Students in Ballincollig Community School for giving the roundabout's beehives a colourful makeover earlier this year.

Well done also to your Tidy Towns committee and volunteers for the huge commitment of time and work involved in planting, watering, maintaining and renewing the seasonal floral displays in the numerous planters throughout your village. Your decision to proceed with maintaining the planters throughout the pandemic will have brought welcome colour and a pleasing lift to the spirits of many during these times. The bright and cheerful displays depicted in your photographs submitted speak for themselves. We were also impressed by the display in your photograph taken in February last of the extensive crocus planting carried out adjacent to the allotments and we note your enhancement of other planted areas including the Transition Stone flower bed at Fr Sexton Park. A new wildflower roadside planting is planned for Barry's Road and we look forward to seeing this next year.

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

Your ongoing development and planting of a Pollinator Corridor is an exemplary and highly visible initiative that permeates both the built and more natural environments of Ballincollig taking in estates, schools, managed planted areas, the regional park and more. The interactive Pollinator Corridor Map on your website provides an excellent indicator of the extent of your actions to support bees and other pollinating insects. This includes use of pollinator-friendly plants in seasonal planters and planted areas, sowing new wildflower areas, altering and reducing grass mowing regimes to favour emergence of wild flowers and designating 'no spray' areas.

The 2019 report commented on a visible and heavy reliance on herbicide to control grass and weed growth at several locations which is contradictory to your efforts to promote pollinator-friendly habitats. We commend your launch in March 2020 of a No Spray initiative to promote control of grass and weeds, wherever possible, without the use of chemicals which is wholly in keeping with environmental protection measures. It is accepted that the use of chemicals may still be necessary to assist in control of invasive species. In your entry, you have made us aware that your initiative was unfortunately let down by spraying subsequently carried out by Cork City Council but we understand that the Council is engaged in active and positive discussion with Ballincollig Tidy Towns on the issue. We look forward to hearing of increased cooperation and support for your No Spray initiative in next year's entry.

We are pleased to hear that the bird boxes you have installed are achieving full occupancy and note your more recent installation of swift boxes. While the schools could only derive limited benefit from monitoring your nest box and bird feeder cameras during this past year due to school closures with the pandemic, these are excellent initiatives to generate interest and awareness of nature amongst young people.

Well done on the ongoing implementation of your Biodiversity Action Plan and it is wonderful to hear that a School Biodiversity Plan is in development with Coláiste Choilm. Please tell us more about this in next year's entry. We also note your planned installation of signage and development of an otter trail in the Regional Park

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

You have developed an impressive range of waste management and sustainability projects in conjunction with local schools and it is acknowledged that monitoring and progress with these activities has been curtailed by the pandemic.

We commend your impressive rainwater harvesting set-up at Scoil Barra which involves pumps operated by solar power and we note your investigations to establish a second rainwater harvesting farm at another location. From a sample review of your weekly newsletters on your website, we read with interest your weekly analysis of water used to maintain containers and floral displays and wondered if your existing water harvesting system is achieving self-sufficiency in meeting your water usage.

You mention that you have recently purchased and distributed recyclable shopping bags to help reduce use of plastic shopping bags. Your ongoing composting and soil recycling activities are also noted, and you have established cardboard and other waste segregation and recycling processes. We are pleased to learn that you are able to revive and make good use of plants that are no longer saleable and donated by Tesco.

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

Your ongoing and extensive maintenance work involving weekly litter picks, washing of signs and traffic islands, cleaning, painting and edging of kerbs and kerb lines, bin maintenance and weeding, is acknowledged in this category and well done on your continuing efforts to keep Ballincollig clean and tidy. Paintwork on An Post post boxes has been renewed and you mention phased removal of unsightly black and white plastic sleeves from sign poles – are you reverting to painting the sign poles black and white instead? We wondered if you have been able to address the renewal of bus stop signs along the main thoroughfare with the service provider as mentioned in the 2019 report. We are pleased to hear of success with additional installations and good use of both butt and gum bins and dog fouling bins and commend the wider community for supporting your work in making proper use of bin facilities in the village. We are also pleased to hear of the success of your efforts to address removal and curtailment of graffiti.

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

There are over 100 residential estates in Ballincollig and your Annual Estates Competition has greatly helped to promote and maintain good standards of presentation. Hopefully next year may see the return of the estates' competition. Your focus in engaging with committees in estates is to encourage planting and maintenance regimes that support and enhance biodiversity including no spraying and reducing frequency of grass cutting. The 2019 report commented on the potential in some estates with very extensive areas of grass to retain some areas of long grass as wildlife strips similar to the well-managed meadow areas in the Regional Park. Has this suggestion been embraced, where relevant, by any additional estates? The 2019 report also commented on the overuse of herbicide to control grass growth along kerb lines and around mowing obstacles within estates and the launch and promotion of your No Spray initiative is welcomed as a positive step in addressing this issue. We strongly encourage the local residents' associations, local elected representatives, Cork City Council and contract grass cutting services to actively support the initiative and to look at implementing alternatives to herbicide use. It is encouraging to hear that recent residential developments at Heathfield Estate and Westfield Estate are being developed to high standards with renewable energy systems and biodiversity-friendly landscaping being incorporated. Your work in carrying out additional planting at Fr Sexton Park and maintenance and renewal of hedges at Prospect Lawn is noted, as well as the tidying up of a derelict house. We also commend the support of volunteers from VMware with helping you to cut back edges in the Regional Park.

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

Well done on keeping up your annual programme of washing and cleaning traffic islands and the several hundred road signs as well as sweeping and maintaining kerbsides free of weeds and debris. The hydrangea corridor on the approach to the Poulavone roundabout has become well established and must make for a lovely display in late summer and early autumn. Your seasonal planters located throughout the village and at junctions coupled with regular maintenance of planted areas no doubt add a valuable boost of colour and year-round interest. You have mentioned installation of a new parklet feature on the Main Street under this category. We would suggest this project might be better located under the 'Streetscape & Public Places' category. This is an innovative concept initiated by Cork City Council which incorporates seating and pollinator-friendly planting and is aimed at introducing mini green spaces into the streetscape where people can sit and relax. We are interested to hear more in next year's entry how the use of this new feature has evolved and how it has visually integrated into the streetscape as your photographs submitted show the unit in its construction phase.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Well done on maintaining your momentum to keep Ballincollig tidy and well-presented despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic. The impact of your work this year, and from the accumulated work of all your volunteers going back over many years, on the living, working and recreational surroundings within Ballincollig will have yielded many positive benefits for all in the wider community especially over the past year and a half of this pandemic era. Your three-year plan indicates strong and clear continuity of your commitment to the various regular maintenance tasks alongside more projects for Ballincollig Tidy Towns on into the future. The best of luck with all this work and well done on the huge amount you have done so far – Ballincollig is very fortunate to have such a dedicated group of volunteers.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

The adjudicator was delighted to have the opportunity to visit Ballincollig again – the first in several years. Before we visited, we reviewed your entry form and were very impressed with how you have presented this. This was concise but comprehensive and it was amply illustrated with photographs of your many initiatives. Your first-round adjudicator has already assessed your entry but it's worthwhile remarking on some of the stand-outs here. Well done on your forensic knowledge of your splendid Regional Park. Also on your detailed account of your planting scheme which really helps us (as we only get to see your centre at one time of year). We're delighted to see crocuses making a welcome appearance here. This is a group that should be considered in more centres around the country. Your new pollinator corridor looks great in your entry (but do please let us know how long this is and what species are within it etc.). It's good to see that you're spreading the good word with All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

signage and we saw this when we visited your allotments a little while ago. You paid good attention to the Sustainable Development Goals throughout your entry form and that's acknowledged here. Some of the sustainability measures undertaken that really appealed were your rescue of old supermarket plants and the composting cup experiments. Very good!

We started our visit to Ballincollig at the regional Park and what a delight this area is. Along the way (and it is a long way from one end to the other) we saw really well-presented heritage buildings with discrete signage. The experience was made even better thanks to the Powdermills App that we downloaded for extra information. The Gunpowder Trails signage is very well done and the trails here well signed and maintained. We also saw the Ballincollig Tidy Towns Biodiversity signage with information on local wildlife. We passed some of the wildflower areas like 'The Meadow' that you have helped to create as well as the 'Low-Mow' areas and the tree trail that was surprisingly large in scale. Watch out for straps that have become too tight! Perhaps best of all were the little informal trails like the one that brings you right up to the Lee. It was good to see Parkrun signs and well-kept dog-litter bins. A green portakabin near the car park could do with some attention.

Heading away from the Park, we viewed your allotments and enjoyed seeing the bug hotel, barrels with personality, rainwater harvester and of course your initials! It should be noted that the entrance to the car park here is far from pedestrian / bike-friendly. A footpath leads you past the gate but then disappears to leave the pedestrian/cyclist to mix it up with vehicular traffic. This should be addressed.

Travelling around Ballincollig we saw some of the newest estates and the high quality of the landscaping here. We also visited Gaelscoil Uí Ríordán and admired the landscape planting on the way. The school site itself would surely benefit from additional tree-planting. It was good to see grass being allowed to grow long on the Link Road embankments. A clothes recycling bank in front of a newsagent's appeared to be somewhat out of place and is no addition here. A large derelict site detracts from the road.

Your Parklet looked lovely – really bright and cheerful on a somewhat overcast day. Many bursts of colour were also appreciated at your main junctions where the crash barriers have been made much prettier. Significant floral additions were also seen on the lampposts and on long displays such as that alongside the main street in front of Aldi.

Overall, the Main Street looked really well. It was just about litter-free at time of visit and street furniture looked clean and bright, well done. The square wooden planters looked very well and they served to break up the hard-surfaced areas. Despite the numbers of people, the plaza at the Castle West shopping centre was neat and also litter-free. Congratulations to the many businesses that contribute to the colour and interest of your Main Street. Just to single out a few notables – Tudor Rose was a blaze of many hues, Búistear O'Crualaóí is a lovely example of the modern shopfront and Desmond Menswear had terrific flowers. Quish's Supervalu was sharp and clean and isn't it nice when you can see into a shop? A great effort made by the Tradehouse was much appreciated. An old Heaton's sign could be removed at this stage, it is thought. A second-hand shop has shutters that are unappealing. Are these necessary? If so, they'd look much better painted up. Speaking of which, the murals at the Post Office looked great.

The residential areas of Ballincollig we visited were well-kept and neat. Cooper's Grange and Miller's Court have lovely wide greens with scattered trees. A 'Slow Zone' here is a good idea. Nearby, it wasn't abundantly clear when one is on a footpath or cycle path. Some more stencils for the uninformed would be good. Please also have a look at the bike lane at the junction at East Gate. Is this as safe as it could be? By chance we spotted the Ballincollig Tidy Towns logos on the pedestrian bollards – very nice! Nearby, the entrance to the local authority Parks Department compound is less than appealing. Perhaps the Tidy Towns group could suggest some illustration? A fingerpost sign for GAA Club is in need of a touch up.

Overall, very impressive Ballincollig! A few issues remain for you to address but we know that you're up to the challenge. Many thanks for all your hard work.