

# Tidy Towns Competition 2014

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Balbriggan** Ref: **154**  
County: **Dublin** Mark: **262**  
Category: **G** Date(s): **12/06/2014**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2014</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	35
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	34
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	31
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	44
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	28
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	30
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>262</b>

### Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

We are delighted to welcome Balbriggan to 2014 tidy towns competition and we applaud the excellent progress that your group has made over the last few years. It is disappointing to note that your committee membership appears to have declined since last year and we would encourage you to go on a recruitment drive. The size of your town (almost 20,000 people) means that there are many sports clubs (such as football, soccer, hurling, rugby and camogie) that could be asked to help out. Social clubs (such as active retirement associations, historical societies, walking groups) can also be a rich source of enthusiastic helpers! Don't overlook determined interest groups with similar aims to your tidy towns committee - they include residents associations, development groups and community councils. An alternative approach could be to delegate projects to interested volunteers. For example, why not ask an active retirement group or some keen gardeners to take responsibility for a landscaping scheme in the town? Also, consider inviting 'guest members' or people who can help out on occasional afternoons or evenings on a project by project basis. Your approach to the competition is highly commendable as you have built up an excellent relationship with Fingal County Council and the Leader Programme and we would encourage you to also approach Tus for assistance with materials and manpower. Well done also in attracting the support of local businesses such as Supervalu and the Chamber of Commerce. We are delighted to read that you have been in contact with three secondary schools and Foroige as they are both an excellent source of young volunteers! Why not set up a junior tidy towns committee and give them the responsibility of their own projects? Don't forget that the Scouts and Cubs may also like to get involved in your efforts. We were delighted to read that your group has very clear goals on what they'd like to achieve at local level and that you are determined to increase participation in your community. Thank you for your comprehensive entry form, which was a great help during adjudication. We appreciate the map supplied and well done on following the adjudicator's advice in 2013 with respect to its preparation as it was clear and easy to follow. We note that a brief plan is included and we would encourage you to produce a 3 – 5 year action plan, as this would help you to pick out projects (and priorities) under each tidy towns category, schedule your work and help to identify potential project partners.

### Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

This was the first time that the adjudicator had explored Balbriggan and experienced its many features of interest at first hand. The town centre was impressive with intact streetscapes of mainly traditional design buildings to be seen on Dublin Street in particular. The good standard of presentation of individual businesses and the diversity of shopfront designs was appreciated with both traditional and contemporary styles to be seen. A number of examples stood out and they included the White Hart Inn, the Adrian Dunne Pharmacy and the Charity Shop (all traditional designs) while the bold modern designs of the Bank of Ireland and the Balbriggan Pharmacy were admired. On Bridge Street and Drogheda Street, McNallys caught our eye while both the Milestone and the Harvest both achieve a good standard of presentation. The centre of Balbriggan is also home to a number of attractive historical buildings

which include the Church of St. Peter and Paul and the adjacent Parochial House, the Town Hall building, the Railway Station, the Smith and Company factory building (with its fresh coat of paint) and the Courthouse – all of which looked well. The old convent building was admired and it is hoped that a new use can be found for this building soon. We were also impressed with the number of intact and attractive terraces of buildings to be found and they included Harbour Terrace, Railway Street, Chapel Street and Clonard Street. The Harbour area generally looked well and it could be further improved as weed and some graffiti detracted somewhat from its appearance. The pedestrian bridge in this location would also benefit from a fresh coat of paint in time for 2015. New buildings with modern designs and finishes dominate the areas outside the town centre with the new Millfield Shopping Centre building, the Flemington Community Centre, the Balbriggan Educate Together School and St. Georges National School all looking well. Attractive and modern office buildings were also observed in the Business Parks. We were delighted to read that you have had such a busy year carrying out projects under this category. We note that you painted the historic Smith and Company weaving factory building on Railway Street and supported Foroige in the repainting of the Fishermans storage containers. Well done on getting Fingal County Council to install new low-energy streetlighting and bins on the beach walkway and congratulations on your richly deserved 'get involved' reward for refurbishing the old lifeguard hut. Your work on improving signage and organising the annual town awards is further noted. The addition of new adult gym equipment along the coastal area is also considered to be an excellent addition to this lovely amenity.

### **Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:**

Congratulations on your success in winning 25 trees from the native wood land trust and we were pleased to read that these trees have been planted close to the Millfield Shopping Centre and we look forward to seeing them mature in the years ahead. The small and attractive landscaping scheme on Chapel Street was observed comprising of colourful summer bedding plants beneath the Julianstown and Balrothery directional signs while the simple and colourful scheme beneath the name stone at the junction of Chapel Street and Harry Reynolds Road also looked well. The large planting scheme outside the Millfield Shopping Centre was generally nice but weed was starting to creep into the bed. The appearance of the roundabout at the Fingal Bay Business Park was somewhat disappointing as it appeared quite overgrown and weedy. However, the Dublin road roundabout looked well with its decorative gravel, nice central feature and colourful ground cover roses. The planting along the boundary of the Church of St. Peter and Paul car park was reasonable but could be further improved by more regular weeding. The planters on Railway Street are a nice addition as they provide bright summer colours. Balbriggan has some excellent amenities such as the town park (adjacent to the Church car park) which looked very well during adjudication with its mature trees and diverse vegetation. The beach is also a fantastic amenity that was proving popular on a sunny June evening and the refurbished lifeguard hut could clearly be seen from the pleasant seating areas along the coastal walk. We were delighted to read that further improvements are taking place to this amenity such as improved (low energy) lighting and additional bins. It is also noted that you are in discussion with Fingal County Council about a number of other projects under this category including the placing of large planters between the town car park and the harbour, replanting the untidy landscaped area and superimposed church and planting a commemorative tree on the Harry Reynolds road.

### **Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:**

The coastal location of Balbriggan gives the area an embarrassment of riches when it comes to both coastal and inland habitats. This seems little doubt that there is a rich level of biodiversity to be found here. We were delighted to read that you are playing a part in raising awareness of biodiversity by undertaking bat 'talk and walk' events and by erecting bat boxes in the local Millfield linear Park. However, we would also encourage you to speak to the school in order to identify some other projects under this category. Perhaps some of the transition year students in the secondary schools would consider undertaking a survey of the flora and fauna that can be found either in the coastal location in Balbriggan or in the linear Park? The resulting information could then be used for information or interpretive signage in these locations. Remember also that the plants that you use in your landscaping schemes can make an excellent contribution to maintaining biodiversity by providing a source of food and shelter for native birds and bees. Additional ideas for projects under this category can be found in the tidy towns handbook.

### **Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaíthe:**

We note from your entry form that you have consulted with the Fingal County Council Environmental Education Officer to help to bring the communities attention to the importance of sustainable waste management and natural resource use. It is important to remember that under this category, tidy towns committees are encouraged to raise awareness within the community about the importance of minimising waste and using resources (such as water, fuel, energy) sustainably. This can be achieved by organising workshops and seminars (perhaps with the assistance of the environmental education officer in the Council) on waste minimisation in Balbriggan. You are encouraged to consider undertaking a simple survey (perhaps with the assistance of some of the schools) to ascertain where improvements can be made in Balbriggan in terms of minimising waste production. Tidy towns groups are also expected to lead by example in achieving waste minimisation when carrying out their projects. For example, do you make your own compost or harvest rainwater for use in your planting schemes? Are your plants sourced locally and do you use recycled materials for planters? Many more ideas for actions under this category can be found in the tidy towns handbook. We would also love to hear about what local businesses are doing to minimise waste. The Committee are also commended on monitoring the bring banks in the town as convenient access to recycling facilities is vital for sustainable waste management.

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

We were delighted to read that your litter picks takes place all year round and this demonstrates the commitment

and determination of your committee. Your organised approach to litter control is also to be commended and in the view of the adjudicator, it is succeeding as your performance under this category is generally good. We are pleased to report that the town centre is largely litter free, but improvements are possible in a small number of areas outside the centre that seem to require additional monitoring and they include the site adjacent to the Council Depot on the Drogheda approach road, the playground at Chieftains Way, the area around the Flemington Community Centre, the access road to Martello and the Castlemill shopping centre. Weed seems to be a challenge with weed growth observed in a number of locations that include the Drogheda road approach and in the vicinity of the Flemington Community Centre and the adjacent Educate Together School. We are delighted to read that the Committee is exploring the idea of an 'adopt a patch' scheme as this could help to address the challenges with weed, litter and maintenance that can be seen in a small number of your residential areas. We are pleased to report that the bring centres in the car park of the Millfield Shopping Centre and in the Church car park were both in excellent condition and both appear to be subject to regular maintenance. It is pleasing to see that you undertake an annual cleanup in association with both the schools and local residents associations and you are also commended on your continued involvement in litter control and beach management. Keep up the good work!

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

Well done on your work in cleaning up the Moylaragh estate and the town community award scheme is an excellent initiative which appears to be having the desired effect. The standard of presentation of the majority of housing areas in Balbriggan is quite good and this no doubt reflects the hard work and continued maintenance by the residents and the tidy towns group. However, we note that no details have been provided on the winners of these competitions? Perhaps this can be included in the application in 2015. The standard of presentation of residential areas in Balbriggan is reasonably good with a number of examples of very well presented estates to be found on adjudication day. Hampton Cove was quite impressive with lovely views of the coastline available from its nicely maintained amenity area. We also liked Croaibhinn Park with its attractive mature trees, pleasant amenity areas and nicely presented houses and gardens. Derham Park was reasonable but some poor road surfacing, kerb weed and small amounts of litter detracted from its appearance. Nearby, the modern scheme of Hamilton Terrace was let down by overgrown roadside verges and small amounts of litter. Further north, Brecon Close looked particularly well with its nice community garden, mature trees and very well maintained public areas. Opposite, Lambeecher could be improved by more regular weeding of its entrance planters. The appearance of many of the estates to the north west of the town (including Moylaragh) was quite mixed with some areas looking well with neatly trimmed amenity areas while in other estates (such as Hampton Woods), the landscaped strips and amenity areas were noticeably overgrown and this is presumably due to the existence of different maintenance arrangements (with some estates under the control of Fingal County Council and others being controlled by management companies). We wondered if it would be possible to agree a common grass cutting schedule as this would provide for a more uniform (and tidy) appearance of these residential areas? Perhaps this matter could be discussed with Fingal County Council. Further south, Clonard Court achieved a good standard of presentation while Bracken Court also impressed.

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

The approach roads into Balbriggan appeared to be reasonably well presented and the committee is commended on their work installing welcome signage on the key approaches. The welcome sign on the Drogheda road approach looked well during adjudication but weed was starting to creep into the landscaped bed at its base and the weeds at the edge of the cycle path gave the approach a rather untidy appearance. The standard of presentation of both the Naul Road and the Dublin Road was generally good. Overall, the standard of road surfacing was quite high with the majority of roads in good condition. However, the surfacing of a small number of roads in the vicinity of the Castlemill Shopping Centre could be improved. It is pleasing to see that cycle paths can be found on a number of the main approach roads including the Naul Road and the Drogheda Road. It is noted that Church Street is not included in the Fingal County Council landscape maintenance programme and it is recommended that this matter should be raised with the Council and the local elected members.