

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: Clonakilty - Cloch Na Coillte	Ref: 669
County: Cork(West)	Mark: 365
Category: D	Date(s): 15/06/2022 04/08/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	53	55
Streetscape & Public Places	80	50	52
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	47	49
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	38	39
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	38	40
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	42	43
TOTAL MARK	550	353	365

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 Super Valu Tidy Towns Competition for 2022. We thank you for your entry, and wish you all the best in all your future work. Good luck.

- Clonakilty, Cloch Na Coillte, a small town with a population of 4592 people – has entered the competition for many years and has a committee of 7 members with support of another 45 volunteers.
- The committee meets fortnightly, and meetings are also held weekly with the participants (10) of the CE scheme to agree tasks and plans for the week and to identify any support required.
- The adjudicator is particularly impressed with the very wide scope of voluntary and community involvement in Clonakilty across all sectors including local businesses e.g., the 'Business at Work Scheme' established in conjunction with the Clonakilty Chamber of Commerce. There is strong engagement with recently retired people, the welcoming of new residents, and your links with residents of Clonakilty Lodge, provide a very important means of integrating the residents currently housed in that facility into the local community. Well done to all concerned with this and in particular to Ms.Noreen Minihan and Mr. Mike Deasy who spearhead these activities.
- The County Council through the local CE scheme and the participants are a great support to your activities, particularly in the propagating and growing of plants and flowers in their polytunnel.
- Support is also received from a wide range of different National and local agencies including the departments of Cork County Council, Local supermarkets, Sustainable Clonakilty, Branch Out, GIY groups, the Park Hotel and the local Chamber of Commerce. It is recognised that your committee is working closely with Foróige who take ownership of some flower beds in the town. Your committee is wished well in your endeavours to renovate a building to provide a new centre for the Foróige group.
- You communicate using your Facebook pages and Website together with social media, texting and Twitter. It is also good to note that your committee members take the time to make personal visits to local businesses to update them on activities, events and to encourage participation and involvement. Face to face communication remains very important in getting people on board and fully engaged. Local printed media and radio stations are also an important method of communication for you, enabling you to give regular update bulletins to the general public.
- There is strong engagement of your committee with local schools. You pro-actively engage and communicate with the Green Flags Programme in both primary and secondary schools through a specially assigned sub-committee. You meet regularly with school principals and TY co-ordinators, Board of Managements, teaching staff etc. on projects of mutual interest.
- The annual junior litter patrol which is an integral part of the summer work programme is a great idea as it highlights to children the negative impacts of littering on our environment and encourages young people to be more

aware of the problem and have greater civic pride.

- Clonakilty has performed excellently in the Tidy Towns Competition over many years. This has helped to bring success in other competitions such as Pride of Place, LivCom, "Great Town Award for 2017" and in the Entente Florale Europe competition. All of these accolades are a worthy testament to the very strong community spirit which exists in Clonakilty and of which you can be very proud.
- The development of sustainable tourism and associated activities in the town is positively noted, as is the vote of confidence in your committee by the Courts service, which directs court fines to help fund your activities.

The coloured map provided with your Entry Form identified the projects included in your project index.

Unfortunately, when printed the details on the map such as road names, places of interest etc. were too small and faint and could not be readily identified, which hampered the assessment of the town somewhat. In the future before submitting the application it would be good to print out a test copy of the map to ensure it is easily read. The adjudicator understands that there already exists a Clonakilty 'pull-out tourist map' with all the main roads and places of interest clearly shown and perhaps this could be used, subject to the necessary permissions, as your base map to identify future projects.

The quality of the application form is very good and the photos highlighting the projects are very informative. The five-year work plan 2021-2025 is very comprehensive under all categories and was positively noted. The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the Application Form, which is suitably concise at 39 pages long - well done. The text inserted on the form is also quite easy to read and the adjudicator was particularly happy to see the various category headings and Project Titles – Index, identified with different colours. The number of projects mentioned under each category is also very appropriate and was therefore, very helpful to the adjudicator when assessing your town. It would be good to include a short note within the main body of the form, referring to the fact that all the information on the projects, undertaken under the various categories, is grouped together at the end of the form.

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

- The adjudicator visited Clonakilty for the first time on a sunny afternoon in mid-June 2022. The town was a hive of activity with large numbers of both pedestrians and cars on the move through the busy streets. This is no surprise because the town has a wonderfully colourful interesting and historic streetscape, which conveys to visitors and locals alike, a palpable sense of vibrancy. The overall standard of presentation of shopfronts, commercial premises, private residences etc. in the town is outstanding. The use of the Irish language in many of the shopfront signage was very positively noted. The one-way traffic system seems to work very well and as a pedestrian, the adjudicator did not feel at any stage to be too much in competition with the passing traffic, which is calmed with subtle changes in the design of road surfaces. However, in the longer-term serious consideration should be given to excluding through traffic on certain roads, together with enhanced pedestrianisation in the centre of the town.
- The choice of kerbing, paving materials and road surfaces is very good and this coupled with the undergrounding of overhead power lines along Pearse Street, no doubt carried out as part of a previous street enhancement scheme, retains the character of the streetscape here. The use of high quality mainly natural materials, well designed and constructed confirms the overall sense of a town which is very much cared for by its citizens. The tree planting along Pearse Street, comprising upright growing ornamental pear trees, also introduces a natural element and sense of human scale which adds much to the overall quality of the streetscape.
- Asna Square was visited and it was great to see so many people sitting outside drinking coffee and enjoying the sunshine. Because of its small size, perhaps the square paved area could be considered in the future for exclusive pedestrian use, with any existing car parking spaces converted to bicycle parking (there seems to be a shortage of bicycle parking in the town?). The Horse Chestnut tree which is growing well, is an imposing feature in this part of the town, providing shade and shelter for those who might need it and should therefore, be considered a treasured asset for future care and protection.
- On a walkabout of the centre of the town the adjudicator noticed a corner site in the vicinity of Mill Lane, where a concrete planter has been placed. Perhaps in the future this area could be developed as a small pocket park? The Long Quay apartments which are faced in stone were particularly impressive here. The nearby Clóna factory premises was in full swing. To soften the impact of the factory premises, this site would perhaps benefit from tree planting installed behind the boundary fence, if sufficient space is available?
- The recent completion of essential flood control measures for Clonakilty is no doubt a very welcome development, for all business owners and residents of the town alike. Having viewed the completed project on site, it is the adjudicator's view that the overall design of the scheme, the use of materials, standard of work etc. is superb. The OPW, contractors and all relevant stakeholders are to be congratulated for the finish which has been achieved in relation to this important project. The adjudicator was particularly impressed with the design of the flood walls faced in stone, some with coloured insets and the designers even went to the trouble of installing steel brackets on the river side to hold flower boxes! The quality of the paving installed on upgraded footpaths consisting of bound gravel together with the use of lime and field maple street trees, was greatly admired. The use of glass panels at certain locations to allow visual access to the river, is particularly important as otherwise the river channel would become hidden from view and would appear too enclosed.
- The area in the vicinity of the roundabout near Deasey's Quay was visited and there is potential for some improvement works to be carried out in this area, including the upgrading of an attractive somewhat overgrown property located near the roundabout. The advertising hoardings dominate this area and perhaps there is scope to remove or re-design these and develop a small Park or an infill development here.
- Other features of the built environment which impressed the adjudicator greatly when exploring the town included the availability of extensive off-street parking areas, the Spiller's Lane and Recorder's Alley Lane commercial areas, the impressive Church buildings, Emmet Square and the Michael Collin's statue and house, the Clonakilty Boys National School, the old Post Office, the Public Library and Council offices, Clonakilty Distillery, the

old Town Hall etc. This list is not exhaustive and Clonakilty can be duly proud of its wonderfully presented heritage buildings.

- Project 6 - Parklet development and decade of centenary commemorations – it is great to see a small local space being re-purposed to include an impressive wall mural depicting historic events linked to the town and a mini phone box library. Wall murals can invigorate town centres and provide interest, but their introduction needs to be carefully considered bearing in mind the surroundings and future maintenance issues. This area looked very well and has proven very popular with the public.
- Project 7 - Clonakilty Community Youth Centre. Well done for supporting this very worthwhile project with fund-raising etc. This will be a very important addition to the town and will greatly support the social life and leisure activities of local young people at a critical juncture in their development. The excellent quality of finish on the building was noted and its location close to the all-weather pitch will have significant advantages.
- You are wished well with your efforts to secure funding for the upgrading of the children's playground. The traditional type play equipment has become very costly in recent years and there has been a move to more natural play space type facilities, which are less expensive and have a broader play appeal. This might be considered as a possible option as you progress further with this project.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- The Open Space known as the 'Croppy Park' was visited and was found to be maintained to a very high standard with the wall murals adding great interest here. The park is the site of some utility service access chambers, surrounded by a timber fence. Perhaps consider planting a hedge along the timber fence? The adjudicator was pleased to note the quality of the signage in the park and the innovative use of timber barrels acting as water butts. The blue seating and picnic benches in the park are in need of some painting/maintenance.
- Project 3 - Polytunnel Clonakilty – Community Employment Scheme: This is a particularly impressive horticultural facility available to the committee and congratulations to the CE participants who propagate plants using various methods for use in municipal planting schemes. The move to permanent perennial-style planting and away from annual bedding schemes is very positively noted. Reducing reliance on annual bedding schemes for floral displays is important. Colourful perennial and pollinator friendly plants e.g., *Alstroemeria* spp. can be used to very good effect as an alternative to the flamboyant but labour/water/energy intensive annuals such as *Begonias* and *Petunias*.
- Project 4 – Opening of public garden in September 2021 called 'Bennett's Mill Field Biodiversity Garden'. The development of a small park with the objective of increasing biodiversity along the river Feale is a wonderful initiative. The landowners who generously leased the land and those businesses who provided some additional funding towards its development, are to be complemented. This project was visited and the adjudicator was very interested to learn about the history of the site – the information signage provided was to a very high standard. This clearly is a flagship-type project for Clonakilty Tidy Towns and much sweat and toil was expended in bringing it to fruition - well done to all concerned. The installation of the colourful re-cycled plastic park furniture was admired. The adjudicator looks forward to the time when all the circulatory paths are properly surfaced, which will make things easier for wheelchairs and buggies. The strip of mown grass along footpaths should be widened to 1m minimum and this will present a neater more managed appearance. In the long term consider removing the fence along the river to re-establish a connection with the river and historic bridge, which are the most important features of the site.
- Project 5 – Planting 105 blueberry bushes in Joe Walsh greenway Gullane lake. This is a very interesting project and blueberry is not a commonly planted fruit in Ireland, as it requires very specific soil conditions. The adjudicator looked for this planting but alas it was not to be found. You are wished well in your plans to extend the walkway further around Gullane Lake.
- The adjudicator called to a small park located on James P.O'Regan Street. This small pocket park has very good mature trees planted and an internal path system, but the timber sleeper surrounds to paths/seats etc. have now deteriorated. A perimeter wall at the rear of the site has also collapsed. Perhaps this area could be considered for a park re-juvenation scheme in the future.

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

- Project 9 - Commissioned Biodiversity plan for Clonakilty and environs. This is a great initiative funded by the Community Foundation of Ireland because, as you say in your submission, it is crucial to get a clearer knowledge of what wildlife habitats are present in your locality. Without this information one cannot introduce the correct measures to protect local biodiversity into the future.
- Project 10 - Clonakilty Swift Survey – ongoing. It is noted that a number of sites have been identified where swifts have established active nesting sites in the gaps between the stonework and pvc soffits. It would be good in future to include, in conjunction with Birdwatch Ireland, the total no. of swift nest boxes erected in the Town over the years and the percentage occupancy of swifts etc.
- Project 11 - Bennett's Mill Field Biodiversity public garden. As noted above this is a wonderful project and the commitment of the Tidy Towns committee and the local community in carrying out extensive works and making the area accessible to the public is worthy of great praise. It's location close to the river Feale is particularly important from an ecological viewpoint which can be exploited and enhanced in coming years. The ongoing maintenance of this garden will be critical to its future success.
- The committee will be aware that the New All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) 2021-2025 has now been launched and it is particularly concerning that one third of Bee species in Ireland are now threatened with extinction. Useful Guideline Documents are now available to Tidy Towns committees to increase the numbers of pollinators in your local area, including guides which are specific to local communities, farmers, councils, transport corridors, sports clubs, businesses etc. Different 'How to Guides' are also available showing how to establish pollinator friendly planting schemes, pollinator friendly roundabouts, use of 'Managed for Wildlife' signage etc.

- This year the AIPP is focussed on gathering survey data to assess the impact of all the good work groups such as the Tidy Towns are carrying out across the country e.g., at Bennett's Field Biodiversity Garden. The National Biodiversity Data Centre has developed a new app to make this survey work easy for groups through the use of 'Fit Counts'. FIT stands for 'Flower-Insect Timed Count'. FIT Counts are very simple and are 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, it will help track the impact of your actions on insect numbers and diversity as well as providing important data for the National Biodiversity Data Centre (biodiversityireland.ie). Please follow this link for further information Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) - National Biodiversity Data Centre (biodiversityireland.ie)
- Another issue to bring to your attention is the sowing of wildflower seed which has become very popular with Tidy Towns committees in recent years. However, this may not be the best course of action as some of the 'wildflower' seed is imported and may contain invasive species. The preferred approach is the 'Don't Sow let it Grow' principle. In other words, where there is a bare patch of ground or grassed areas let the seed/plants occurring naturally in the soil/sward develop and mature as this will have the best ecologically sound result. Removal of clippings at the end of the season with appropriate machinery will impoverish the soil over time encouraging greater species diversity. More information on this and other items under this category can be found in the updated Tidy Towns Handbook.

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

- Project 12 Cool Clon – next steps in developing a solar farm. The adjudicator is very impressed with this ground-breaking project, involving the development of an extensive 26-acre Solar Farm at Shannonvale. This project fits precisely within the goals and objectives of sustainability under this category of the competition. The fact that it is going to be the first community, 100% owned solar farm in Ireland, with the intention of taking the town of Clonakilty and environs off grid, is very significant and all concerned are to be congratulated, including the Clonakilty Chamber of Commerce. It would be worthwhile knowing the extent of the involvement of Clonakilty Tidy Towns in the project including any support given etc. up to now. The adjudicator is looking forward to the completion of this project in 2024.
- Project 13 - Clonakilty Community College new extension - ECO friendly features. The design features of the Community College extension and upgrade to ensure passive ventilation are indeed impressive. Gone are the days of stuffy classrooms and not before time. It is great that arrangements have been made for rainwater harvesting to reduce the usage of potable water. Perhaps in the future the installation of a green roof and solar panels could be considered.
- Project 14 - Shannonvale Chicken Factory – installation of solar panels on the roof. Shannon Vale Foods are leading the way with their energy conservation project generating power from solar panels to run their factory to supply the bulk of their energy needs. This type of scheme can be replicated successfully across the country on factory roofs, farm buildings, community buildings and domestic dwellings and will help to reduce the pressure on the National Grid caused by the ever-increasing demand for electricity. There are significant grants available for this purpose including the Community Energy Grant, Warmer Homes Scheme, Better Energy Homes, Renewable Energy Support Scheme etc. all administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).
- Other areas worthy of consideration by Clonakilty Tidy Towns Committee for the future under this category, which is in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals, include the development of smaller Solar, Wind, Hydro microgeneration schemes in partnership with the Local Authority and these may also attract suitable Leader funding.
- You might look at the overall availability of bicycle parking facilities and public e-car charge points in the town and where there are deficiencies, suggest suitable locations where these could be provided in the short term.
- The Committee might also consider in the future initiating membership of the Sustainable Energy Communities programme run by the SEAI which includes engaging in learning networks, preparation of energy masterplans and local energy action plans etc. The following are useful links in this regard.
<https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/sustainable-energy-communities/>
<https://www.codema.ie/sec>

- The ongoing management of rainwater in urban areas in the context of climate change is an important topic under this category. This is a particularly critical issue in Clonakilty which has suffered flooding over many years, although the situation no doubt has significantly improved since the completion of the flood relief scheme. The committee should be aware of the nature-based solutions to the management of rainwater and surface water run-off in town areas, water sensitive town design, best practice etc. A recent publication by the Dept. of Housing Local Government and Heritage is available and provides important guidance in this regard.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

- Project 15 - Introduction new Litter Bins. It is noted that you have replaced the old metal litter bins in the town with recycled timber whiskey barrel bins which look much better and are more practical from the point of view of preventing access by birds. This is a big improvement and well done to all concerned.
- Project 16 - The KWD annual Spring Clean. This took place on the 9th of April this year and well done to the 12 volunteers who took part and to the company KWD which supported the crews in removing litter from the western approach to the town.
- Project 17 - Weekly litter picks during winter months. This can be a difficult task particularly during the inclement winter months but hats off to the Clonakilty Volunteers and the Gaisce Award transition year students who achieved their programme accreditation for their service to the local community.
- On the day of adjudication, no issues regarding littering or general tidiness in the town were noted.

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

- Project 19 - Beechmount Residential Social Housing Scheme now complete. This is a particularly attractive development incorporating sensitive building restoration with the provision of much needed homes in the locality – Eastát an Garrán Feá. The design of the scheme and overall finish of the houses is superb and of particular note is the restoration of the existing historic buildings on site. Congratulations to all concerned with this wonderful project.
- Project 20 - New housing developments with Irish signage. The adjudicator is heartened to note that efforts have been made to ensure local place names in the Irish language are not lost and are being celebrated and preserved through the provision of new estate name signs. Many of these names are historically very interesting, date back many centuries and have a strong connection to the local areas and it is important that they are retained for future generations – well done.
- The adjudicator called to Páirc Thiar, Sliabh na mBan (under construction), Cois na hAbhainn, Radharc na Páirce (Park View), Fernhill Drive, Woodbrook and Beechmount estates and all were found to be presented to a very high standard - well done to all the residents living there.

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

o Project 21. - Western road redevelopment following completion housing scheme. The adjudicator notes the future plans to upgrade the road on the western approach to the town, which no doubt will have significant benefits in terms of pedestrian and traffic safety. This approach to the town is characterised by roadside boundaries consisting of mature hedgerow trees, stone walls and natural vegetation with an absence of inappropriate signage. The presentation of the Maxol Service Station is very good. The provision of a sculpture feature on the roundabout here, might be considered for the future.

o Project 22 - N71 approach road maintenance by Clonakilty GAA/Rugby clubs. Well done to Clonakilty Tidy Towns and the many sporting and voluntary groups within the town who maintain and improve the main approach roads to Clonakilty. This type of co-operation to maintain and enhance the appearance of the entrance gateways to the local area is what Tidy Towns is all about. It is noted that local GAA club which is on the western side of the town and the local Rugby club on the eastern side of the town, adopt the sections of the N71 from their clubhouses, in towards the main roundabouts at each end of the town. This is a great commitment by the clubs and the good presentation of both of these roads enhances the main approaches to the town. Be careful to limit temporary commercial signage located on roadside margins, which is becoming a problem on the eastern N71 Cork approach.

o Project 23 – New directional signage for Michael Collins trail. The erection of trail signage to commemorate the centenary of Michael Collin’s death on August 22nd this year is a very worthy project, and particularly so in view of his historical associations with the town of Clonakilty. The signs are well designed and do not adversely add to local visual clutter. It is to be hoped that this will spark a renewed interest in ‘the Big Fella’ and will give rise to significant benefits to local tourism.

Concluding Remarks:

The commitment and enthusiasm of Clonakilty Tidy Towns and volunteers is clearly evident from your submission and the many impressive projects visible on site. All involved can take pride in your achievements, as Clonakilty Town continues to develop and evolve in a historically sensitive and environmentally sustainable manner. We wish you every success with the continued implementation of your ongoing development projects.

Second Round Adjudication:

Congratulations on being selected for a second adjudication. We started by walking along Kent Street where we admired the recently completed flood protection measures on the River Farla. The raised walls, some consisting of glass panels are a great improvement on the streetscape. We note that the old trees were replaced by new specimens of field maple and the paving was renewed. No doubt your community is well pleased with the standard of work done and look forward to enjoying the town without flooding incidents. The unusual, shaped Credit Union building along this route with a connecting bridge from Kent Street looks very well – almost all windows have attractive window box floral displays – well done. The Methodist church further along the street is a fine heritage building. What appears to have been an old mill, is the Library – a lovely 3-storey stone building. At ground level we admired the Entente Florale Europe square plaque for winning a gold medal in 2000 and beside it the round plaque for winning the Tidy Towns National Award in 1999 – congratulations on both achievements. The Parklet is a lovely space where people can sit, relax and enjoy the wonderful art of the 1921 war of independence truce ‘Path to Freedom’ mural which featured Michael Collins. Continuing on past the Fire Brigade Station towards Rossa Street, we found a convenient spot from which to look down into the river. Near here is an information sign on the Fishmarket and Shambles which has become faded and difficult to read. At the junction of Ash Street and Astna Street, we admired the fine horse chestnut tree which thankfully appears to have avoided the recent pests and diseases of that species. Perhaps it is far enough away from other similar trees for the pests to reach. This is an important junction but unfortunately traffic is necessary at this point. The memorial to the men who fought and died at the battle of the Big Cross in 1798 is a significant landmark – it needed cleaning. The main shopping street, Pearse Street has one way traffic, and we say well done to the designers who introduced street trees at intervals along this narrow street. People in other Irish towns with wider streets claim that they have no room for trees – they should visit Clonakilty. Trees look very well here and greatly enhance the streetscape. Some commercial premises have added floral displays, for example, the Bank of Ireland and the building on the corner of Western Road and Patrick Street. The church of the Immaculate Conception is a focal point on Bridge Street; its attractive boundary railings appeared to have been recently painted. Spiller’s Lane with its craft shop and art gallery is across the road

and beside it, the former Presbyterian church which is a post office since 1924.

Before entering the delightful Emmet Square Park, we took some time to study Kevin Holland's fine statue of Michael Collins – who lived nearby in what is now a museum honouring his legacy. This adjudicator was first in this square in June 1981 and there were no trees planted at that time - all the buildings could be seen from any point. Now there are so many trees that they hide the buildings, unless viewed from the side. We favour trees, but in this case, we feel that too many trees were planted too close together. If they were at double the spacing distance, there would still be plenty of trees. If everybody living, there is happy with having that many trees then that is fine.

However, if there is another view, we suggest some alternatives to consider. One option is to open another gap between the trees such as exists at the main entrance. Another is to selectively remove occasional trees to allow more views into the park and a third is to keep all the trees but have them pleached which restricts their growth and prevents overcrowding. However, the latter option would entail costly annual maintenance.

We visited the playground and sports facilities off the N71. The white stemmed birch trees alongside the car park greatly pleased but we wonder why the supporting stakes were not removed a long time ago – they don't serve any purpose, once the trees are established. Established oak trees and whitebeam trees on the open space beside the car park look very well. A Hydrangea shrub is trying to protect itself from an invading Pyracantha. We suggest a horticulturist should visit this site and check on pruning requirements. Outdoor gym equipment here is a great addition. We wish you good luck on the funding to refurbish the playground. However, the trend is moving away from manufactured equipment to developing more opportunities for natural play which encourages more creativity and social skills in children and retains their interest longer.

At Convent Way, we admired the "CLANN" sculpture of by Colm Brennan and at Shannon Vale on the N71, we admired the Grotto and several planting schemes here which include perennial pollinator friendly plants. A small post-box mounted on a pole could do with refreshing. We were surprised however to see the 50 kph signs needed cleaning and at Western Avenue, there was a very dirty pole holding a yield sign. Across the road, we admired the extensive work done at Bennett Way. The use of recycled plastic for outdoor picnic benches is a sensible approach and we noted from the brass plates attached to the benches, that each of them were sponsored. The entrance made with natural stone piers is well done but we assume the farm gate is a temporary measure until you get one fabricated to blend in with the stone walls. The gravel pathways here are fine and the gazebo can be very useful on wet days, or even to step in from a shower. Many things are interesting here, the emphasis on biodiversity and the small allotment and the labelling of trees.

On Inchdoney Road, the West Cork Model Railway Village is an important attraction and beside it, the sensory garden which was added in more recent years is well-maintained. On Long Quay the large stone faced apartment complex caught our eye and beside it the Croppy Acre Park was admired. Just inside the entrance of the park, the single seat is for gentle swingers only. Murals painted on the boundary wall consist of colourful scenes and sayings. The park name written on a piece of timber will soon need replacing. It is a nice feature in front of the wall and established trees help to frame the scenes. Two beds of perennial flowering plants and shrubs are in good condition, but our question is why are they rectangular in shape - defined with timber edging? In this park, these geometrically shaped flower beds would look better without the timber edging – they could then have a more interesting organic shape and would become a feature without looking so rigid. The boundary hedge looks well. On the N71, outside the park, the line of lime trees are excellent. They highlight the importance of the road and as they grow in years to come, they will enhance it even further. The swans and other water birds in the estuary were a delight. Our compliments to your team and its supporters for achieving so much in taking such good care of Clonakilty.