

# Tidy Towns Competition 2022

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Buncrana - Bun Cranncha** Ref: **696**  
County: **Donegal** Mark: **357**  
Category: **E** Date(s): **08/07/2022**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2021</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2022</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	52	53
Streetscape & Public Places	80	49	50
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	49	52
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	46	47
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	18	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	59	61
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35	37
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>357</b>

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

It is with great relief that we are able to visit Buncrana in person and witness the work your committee and teams of volunteers have been carrying out over the past few difficult years. It is clear from your submission that you have adapted your working practices during the restrictions of lockdown to continue with your good works. Your history of advocating for a collaborative approach to your projects has meant that you continue to have a positive impact in the community and the list of agencies and groups you work with is very impressive. The linkages you are making to the wider Inishowen peninsula is also great to see, as although the competition is based on individual centres, how communities interact in a wider area can bring greater benefits and also helps share knowledge. As you say you are extremely proactive in communication and seem to have embraced more digital channels to promote your works, reaching 20,000 people per month through social media is some achievement for any voluntary group. Promoting the breath of your works is so important and you have evolved so far from litter picking and have really focussed on all categories of the competition. But it is great we can now meet up and as you say your regular committee meetings are so important to maintain momentum and moral. Your Youth Liaison officer is being proactive at advocating the benefits of volunteering to the younger generation and well done for this focus. Competition is a great way to garner interest and your garden, pollinator and environmentalist competitions are a great success for you. Your submission this year was concise, well-illustrated and easy to read. There are so many projects in your submission that we can only touch on a few of them in this report, but we read of all your efforts with great admiration. Thank you for the time and thought put into its production. The cover graphic of your historic bridge at night was especially arresting and caught the eye.

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

Many of your projects cover a range of categories but try in your submission to place works in the category the most closely align with. The verge management will be addressed under approach roads and biodiversity. Your Main Street was well presented with the unusual double spacing of street trees noted and admired. Some trees were showing signs of stress and may need attention and more regular watering. The simple palette of street furniture was not intrusive and the fine wide paths allowed good pedestrian comfort. With the wide saucer shaped planters bringing colour to corners where in ground planting could not be achieved. We will further address the towns planting and floral display under the green spaces and landscaping category. The Main Street street lights ,in traditional lantern form, were admired but the red Christmas stickers on them somewhat spoiled their presentation, as seen on a sunny summers day. The 3d window murals at St Orans Road, and the railing planters, were a well thought out and attractive way to deal with this prominent empty building. We know you have been proactive in addressing dereliction in the town and hopefully your submission to Donegal County Council will result in some positive outcomes. The murals in the windows of the building opposite were a fine example of your groups painting projects. The main street square near the Maginn Avenue junction was well presented with the pollinator friendly

summer perennials in full flower. Generally premises were very well kept although the railing to the HSE Centre at Cockhill Road would benefit from a coat of paint.

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

Can we just say that we were blown away by the amenity that has been created at Swan Park. It is a magnificent undertaking and looked stunning on the day of adjudication. Your community led campaign to ensure its restoration after the floods of 2017 has been such a success and you should all be rightly proud of the open space created. A perfect balance has been created between its amenity use, retaining the mature landscape setting and enhancing the natural biodiversity. Accessibly for all, right down to the ramps to the fishing spots, has been designed in. Varied path widths allow for ease of use by all from large family groups to older residents who walk at a slower pace. The attention to detail across the site was clear with for example, creating space for ferns to regenerate to the tops of the new sections of stone wall. The mix of native planting to support biodiversity along with selected exotic feature trees is wonderful. The well-considered and executed planting strategy including trees, hedging and bursts or more ornamental pops of colour is no doubt down to the knowledge and skills of Mr McDermott and his team. You are very lucky to have him. The timber animal sculptures in the wilder path parallel to the main formal route was much enjoyed by younger visitors. One item to consider is bike parking. A teenage fisherman was using one of the riverside stands but there was nowhere to park his bike. The Park was being used as a backdrop to wedding photographs, seating used as a chatting spot for local walkers and families with kids running around the coloured paths by the specimen oak trees. The new blue notice boards were yet to be filled and a map showing how the Swan space links with the town and other open spaces in the area will be very helpful for the visitor. The timber signs at the amazing Grace Viewpoint Open Space could be painted blue to match the similar timber signs in the Swan Park to create a visual linkage between the spaces to reinforce your walking routes and connect the spaces. You all should be rightly proud of what you have achieved as a community in this wonderful park. We hope when we next visit that the stairway to the woods by the new orchard, is open so we can explore the space further. Planting across the town was in excellent condition. Note that eye-catching seasonal planting is an important tool for towns to use to enhance their centres, but it should be considered as one element of a wider planting strategy, even if the judging takes place in the summer and the National Ceremony tends to focus on the most colourful beds in winning centres that look good on the screen! But your approach to more long-term structural planning is what will benefit the setting of Bunrana in the longer term. Your volunteers were seen watering the bridge mounted planters on adjudication day which we note you have targeted and achieved making them pollinator friendly.

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

It is clear from the submission that this is a category which you in Bunrana have embraced and the range of projects is wonderful. You say in your submission that changed / pollinator friendly grass management has resulted in the emergence of Cuckoo flowers and Dandelions. We were delighted to see several areas of pyramidal orchids in the grass land at Lady's Bay near the car park, whilst walking along the coastal path on adjudication day. They were located in the grass areas where you have changed your mowing regime in line with the Pollinator plan. This is a fantastic result for your group and a great indicator of the success of your approach. Once you start managing an area back into a meadow, these are the kind of gems that may emerge. You might need to adapt your mowing to encourage them. These beautiful orchids are winter green, flower in late June and July and scatter seed about 6 weeks later: they produce leaves from October onwards. The best time to cut verges or grass areas containing this species is early September. Cuts later than this may damage leaves. We would encourage you to log this sighting on The National Biodiversity Data Centre website as you have done with the swift sightings. What a great indicator of the success of your approach to encourage biodiversity! Well, done on promoting the use of spades rather than harmful pesticides. In addition, your collaborative approach to these projects with both the County Council and Wild Inishoewn is much appreciated as is the workshops and talks you do to help spread the effectiveness of this approach to our shared landscapes. As mentioned in last year's report, have you mapped all your works to establish connected town ecological corridors. Some communities are creating pollinator-friendly corridors through their local areas, creating foraging pitstops and safe shelter areas for pollinators. By mapping all the areas, you have done such good work in, such as the Derry Approach Road, the Amazing Grace Park and others, you may be able to identify missing links you can prioritise. The All-Ireland Pollinator website has great information on how to do this. There are many landowners in the town who could also help with this. For example, perhaps you could approach the golf club, so visible on the approach road, to promote the AIPP Pollinator friendly approach to Golf Course management? As the Swan Park matures its impact on biodiversity will also add to your assets. This whole landscape network approach is hugely valuable to biodiversity. The bee planters at the Angling centre were admired

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

You have done a lot of work in this category so that it is not possible to comment on all your activities in this report. The sensitive reuse of materials at Swan Park was great to see including the old stone reused as kerbing at paths. The newly planted apple trees in the Swan Park Orchard were visited and your efforts to make the most of Bunranas seasonal apple yield with the apple sale is a great initiative. The promotion of local food locally produced is great to see. We look forward to hearing about this year's winner of the Young Environmentalist of the year and the Cli-Mates is a catchy way to promote the waste hierarchy. The waste theme was carried through with your school talks by your Youth Liaison Officer. Keep up your advocacy work with local firms to introduce environmentally responsible packaging. Can you also look at opportunities to promote active travel by providing more opportunities for bike parking in the town? On adjudication day we observed bikes locked to roadside sign posts as there were few bike stands provided in your open spaces. The Bio based carbon capture bags project was very interesting to read about and we would encourage you in your promotion of this scheme to other Tidy Towns groups in Donegal.

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

Once again Buncrana presented a very tidy and clutter free vision to the adjudicator on their visit. Well done to each of your daily litter volunteers for all the effort involved. A great team to have. You have made significant progress over the last few years but 7 to 10 bags of rubbish collected daily is still a significant amount. Have you a proactive plan to address specific litter black spots if there are particular problem areas? We can completely understand how the problems increase when visitors flock to your fantastic and scenic open spaces and coastal location. The pride in your beaches is evident and the pooling of resources with the Local Authority to address coastal litter is another example of your groups excellent attitude to collaboration across so many categories of the competition. However, you find alternative ways to overcome issues when support is not readily available as evidenced by securing your own waste segregation service. Some finger posts required sprucing up and the black and gold tourist sign board at the Pier was also looking a little tired. We recognise that this is a working pier but it is dominated by car parking which somewhat spoils the setting. Pay attention to prominent gable walls along the main street which can be very visible and may not get the same care as shop frontages. some required a new coat of paint as at the St Orans Road junction.

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

There are a range of residential types in Buncrana and they were presented to a high standard on adjudication day. The charming terraced townhouses at Millbrae show that you do not need a large garden area to green up the frontage of your homes. Again your residents associations are all to be commended for the high standards seen by the adjudicator on the day. The works at Crana view were admired. The area of biodiversity grassland management behind the fine stone celtic design estate sign at Cluain Muire was wonderful to see. How great to hear that the garden competition will be in full swing this year, good luck to all for the award ceremony in September. While the spade approach is used to control weeds by the group some evidence of spraying was noted to individual residences so this might be a message to add to the award agenda. Ensure local garden owners are asked to keep vegetation from overhanging and restricting access along town paths. The hedge at Swilly Road needed attention. Make sure new residents of any new homes planned are given information about your group and its works to encourage new members. Talk to your local estate agents to see if a sheet on your group and their work in Buncrana can be included in any new resident's welcome pack. Best of luck with the bursary and your approach of offering practical support to resident's committees to enhance their own green areas.

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

You are correct in stating that the approach to biodiversity friendly mowing is very evident on the entries to the town. It is lovely that the raising of the flags at the Bun Crannach gateway is a sign that summer is here. The range of flags shows a welcome from an inclusive community. The Roundabout was beautifully maintained. The planters at the entrance to the Grianan Park car park need filling and a big impact could be made in this sensitive location by removing the hard surfacing from the internal dividing islands and planting them with low maintenance coastal theme planting which could also be retro fitted as sustainable drainage/ rain gardens. Perhaps suggest this to your local area Engineer if upgrades are planned here. The timber fence at the Castle Avenue junction by the Amazing Grace park needs repair or consider replacing with a blue rail to continue the design language used on structural elements in Swan Park. As a visitor walking around your town generally walkability was good however the roundabout at the end of the main street is not very friendly to pedestrians and could benefit from more pedestrian crossings on its arms.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

As a first-time visitor to Buncrana, I was very impressed with the presentation of your town and the work the committee has carried out. The commitment to constantly improving your town is commended and Swan Park is a credit to all involved and a magnificent asset for your community and visitors alike. We thank all of the numerous stakeholders and groups involved in the works which make up this year's submission and continued good luck for all your work in 2023 and beyond.