

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Castleknock - Caisleán Cnucha**

Ref: **772**

County: **Dublin**

Mark: **265**

Category: **E**

Date(s): **20/07/2022**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	33	34
Streetscape & Public Places	80	31	35
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	30	33
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	27	28
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	20	23
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	48	50
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	30	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	29	30
TOTAL MARK	550	248	265

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

Fáilte chug Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hionrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. We are pleased to welcome Castleknock to this years tidy towns competition and it is great to see that the level of participation in your area is so high with up to 50 volunteers getting involved. Your entry form reveals that your steering committee is very active with regular monthly meetings and strong links have been established with the Department of Community and Rural Development, Fingal County Council, the OPW, the HSE, TDs and local Councillors. There is no doubt that your committee is strongly rooted in the community with numerous connections in place with a host of community based groups that include the Blanchardstown Castleknock History Society, the Castleknock lawn tennis club, the laurel lodge environmental group and the Dublin Swift group among others. The support of many local businesses and professionals (such as Myos public house, the Silver Spoon Café, Supervalu, Bradys Garage, Flynn Auctioneers, Henshaws, the Fixing Company and Breena & Amy Crushell) is also acknowledged. Be sure to maintain these valuable links in the years ahead as they will help you to get your projects completed. We are impressed with your comprehensive communication strategy and based on the links that you have formed and the level of participation in your projects, it is clear that it is working very well. We are pleased to read that focus of your committee over the past year has been on strengthening the partnerships with local schools – so well done on forging strong ties with St Bridgets National School, Castleknock National School, Castleknock Educate Together and Castleknock College. The involvement of schoolchildren and teachers in in your biodiversity restoration projects (specifically sowing wildflower mini meadows on school grounds) is applauded and we urge you to identify further opportunities for collaborations with the schoolchildren and scouts in the years ahead - particularly under the landscaping and green spaces and sustainability categories. Thank you for your completed entry form which was very helpful during adjudication and you are commended on including references to the SDG's. The map was also appreciated but a key to explain the numbers is needed on it to make it more user friendly. Your quick reference action plan was read with interest and it is pleasing to see that future projects have been identified under each of the tidy towns categories. We are thrilled to hear that your participation in the competition so far has been such a positive experience and resulted in a heightened sense of place in Castleknock and generated many positive outcomes for your area and community. We appreciate that this would not have been possible without your hard work and we urge you to keep it up as the progress that you have made is clear for all to see!

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

As adjudicators, we were delighted with the return of in-person adjudication in the tidy towns competition as it provides us with the opportunity to visit lovely areas like Castleknock and see the wonderful work that has been undertaken by your committee and volunteers at first hand. We note from your entry form that your committee has

partnered up with the management companies responsible for the three shopping centres in your area to ensure that all businesses looked their best for adjudication. You will be delighted to hear that Castleknock looked fabulous during our visit and a very high standard of presentation was achieved by businesses, community buildings and public spaces throughout your area. Castleknock village looked particularly good and while many businesses here looked exceptionally well, a number stood out that included; Sherry Fitzgerald, Castello Bruno, the Optician, Flynn's, the Acorn Café, the Village Shoemakers, Myos, Okra Green and the Circle K. We loved seeing the contemporary design of the mixed use development (with Coffee by Day and DNG (among others) at ground floor level) and the Lidl supermarket building. The appealing new plaza here is a delightful space with its attractive paving and stone seats and it is considered to be a wonderful addition to your urban village. We were also very impressed with the modern design of the Castleknock Lawn Tennis Club building and its attractive paved setting adjacent to the underpass. However, the underpass mural was not in place at the time of adjudication. Public and community buildings were no less impressive. St Bridget's Church of Ireland is a lovely natural stone historical building and its grounds are very well maintained, the Castleknock parish centre also looked well but the blue noticeboards here need to be power washed. The modern St Brigid's National School looked lovely and we were interested to see the distinctive design of the Our Lady Mother of the Church building. Your committee is commended on its proactive approach to ensuring vacant properties in your area are returned to productive use by working closely with Fingal County Council and local politicians. We applaud the work completed on the virtual heritage tour and we are delighted to read that there is a proposal to make a walking trail out of the locations that are identified in it. The hard work that has been undertaken by your committee and volunteers on the public realm in Castleknock is appreciated as it is noted that signs have been maintained/upgraded, litter bins have been replaced, bollards have been repaired and the deer sculpture has been illuminated. All of these improvements have significantly enhanced the appearance of your area.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasá agus Tírdhreachú:

Numerous good quality landscaping schemes were spotted during adjudication in Castleknock and we regret that it is not possible to review them all in this short report. However, a number stood out which had a clear focus on pollinator friendly varieties. They included the linear barklined bed at the entrance to Oak Park (close to the Phoenix Park entrance) where a range of interesting and diverse pollen rich plant species were visible (that included scarlet bee balm, salvia and cardoon). The beds at the pedestrian entrance to Pecks Lane were lovely and Hypericum, buddleia, agapanthus and sedum could be observed here. We note that pollinator planting has also taken place along College Road, at White's Road and at the entrance to Park Drive. The broad range of species that were on display in the large and mature beds outside the Our Lady Mother of the Church provided a highlight and they included hollyhocks, Achillea and red valerian while the beds at the entrance to St Brigid's National School were also impressive. In Castleknock village (close to the entrance of Oak Lodge) the bank of roses in bloom were lovely and the freshly planted raised brick beds outside the Circle K garage looked great. Praise is due to individual businesses in Castleknock for their contribution to this category. Attractive planters were spotted outside the Acorn Café, colourful planter boxes and hanging baskets could be seen at Myos and nice mature perimeter shrub beds were visible in the car park of Lidl. We also enjoyed seeing the tiered planters at the junction of College Road and Castleknock Road as they looked nice with their cascading floral displays. We are glad to see that there is such a strong focus on treeplanting in your entry form and the planting of 1000 native trees (comprising Whitethorn, Blackthorn, Holly, Alder, Hazel and Birch) on both public and private lands in Castleknock is a hugely impressive project. As trees make very positive contributions to biodiversity, carbon removal, air quality, habitats and visual amenity, the benefits of your work will be seen now and for generations to come. We urge you to continue to seek new locations for tree planting and we wondered if the schools could assist you in this task? We note from your entry form that your committee and volunteers place a strong focus on maintaining open spaces and that residents associations are encouraged to take care of these areas themselves. We are pleased to report that everyone appears to be playing their part as virtually all of the open spaces that were visited during adjudication were in good condition. We applaud your decision to plant open orchards at Park Avenue and at the Auburn Avenue open space and we are glad to hear that the response to these projects has been very positive. Perhaps the schoolchildren could help you to identify additional locations for urban orchards? The addition of an extra 4 seating benches is warmly welcomed and we look forward to more seats being provided in the future.

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

We would like to begin by complimenting your committee and volunteers for embracing the recommendations of the All Ireland Pollinator Action Plan when choosing plant species for your landscaping schemes. This commitment is demonstrated by the many fine planting schemes which were seen in a range of locations during our visit which included the large mature beds of shrubs and pollen rich plant species that were spotted in Beech Park Lawn, outside the Our Lady Mother of the Church and outside Oak Park. We were also delighted to see that the 'don't mow let it grow' approach to managing your grassed areas is firmly embedded with plenty of grassland meadows visible. The most notable examples were spotted along the Castleknock Road (notably at the deer sculpture and at the Pecks Lane sign), along Auburn Avenue and at the junction of the Navan Road, Auburn Avenue and Castleknock Manor. We welcome your decision to engage in pollinator friendly bulb planting along grass verges as this will further boost pollen sources in your area. It is great to see that there are good collaborations in place between your committee and the school and well done for helping the schoolchildren to grow fruits, vegetables and seeds in the school grounds. It is also noted that wildflower seed have been harvested by the school and spread on Auburn Avenue and Whites Road. While these areas looked well during adjudication, please note that it is now recommended that wildflower patches should be grown naturally. This can be achieved by leaving grass uncut and watching to see what wildflowers pop up. We are glad to hear that the third class in Castleknock national school have taken part in a series of webinars on insects as this is a great way to raise awareness and well done to the students in Scoil Thomais, Laurel Lodge for planting a herb bed in their community garden. We are delighted to hear

that a biodiversity action plan is being prepared and we recommend that a summary of this document is submitted with your entry form next year (if it is available). The provision of composters / leaf bays is considered under the sustainability category.

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

It is heartening to read that a range of good practical actions are being undertaken by your committee and volunteers to conserve energy, reduce resource use and avoid the generation of waste in your day-to-day activities. We applaud your decision to make your own compost and leaf mould as this is a very effective way of avoiding the use of commercially produced peat-based soil supplements. We are also glad to learn that you obtain a high proportion of the plants that you need for landscaping schemes from your own sources and from donations. Given that these fine projects are now underway, we strongly encourage you to set targets that will assist you in adopting more sustainable behaviours. For example, why aim to be 100% self-sufficient in compost and plants in the near future? We note that your committee and volunteers have promoted the use of water butts (for rainwater harvesting) but we are not clear if your committee are doing this or not. Perhaps you could let us know next year? We applaud the switch that you have undertaken from plastic litter collection bags to reusable tonne sacks and well done for continuing to separate general litter into recyclable and compostable materials (the tonne sacks were visible on Auburn Drive during adjudication!). Consider monitoring the amount of litter that you collect as a means of tracking whether litter volumes are reducing or rising. You are commended on promoting the shop local campaign in Castleknock and for sharing locally grown fruit, tree saplings and plants among residents. We were pleased to read that you are working with St Bridgets national school to recycle their sensory garden and we encourage you to find other projects under this category to collaborate with the schoolchildren on. Well done on your fine work promoting the conscious cup campaign and we would be interested to hear about what percentage of local businesses accept reusable cups next year. Don't forget to tell us about any activities that you have undertaken to raise awareness among the wider community about the need to conserve energy, reduce resource use and the generation of waste in your entry form next year.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhairreacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

An exceptionally high standard of litter control could be seen in Castleknock on adjudication day. We are delighted to report that your urban village was virtually litter free with almost all areas appearing neat and tidy. Aside from a small number of items that could be seen on the approach to Castleknock from the Phoenix Park gates, at the green space in Beech Park and beside the church, no litter could be seen anywhere. This is an excellent performance and we would like to compliment the committee, volunteers, residents and all others who are responsible for this great result. It is clear that your litter strategy is working very well and we urge you to keep it up. The standard of tidiness was also considered to be very high with all kerbs and roadsides weed free and footpaths neatly swept. However, and as always, improvements can still be made. While we note that improvements have been made to signage, a number of untidy examples could be seen during your visit. In Deer Park, an untidy 30kmph sign was visible and a stop sign in need of attention was observed at the Georgian Villas. A bus lane sign on the Castleknock road would benefit from power washing while a yield sign opposite the Our Lady Mother of the Church is faded and in poor condition. Two rusty and tired looking lamp posts were in position on the Castleknock road between Deer Park and the Phoenix Park entrance gate and some ESB substation boxes in poor condition were seen at the Georgian villas and on Auburn Drive. Aside from these minor points, the standard of tidiness was high.

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

Your committee, volunteers and residents associations will be glad to hear that the standard of presentation of residential areas in Castleknock during adjudication was notably high and we would like to commend you all on the hard work that you have undertaken to achieve this. Many good examples of residential areas could be seen during our visit and while it is not possible to refer to them all, we were particularly impressed by the appearance of Chesterfield (with its lovely mature trees, attractive name sign, entrance planting and trimmed grass margins) and Fairhaven nearby also looked very well. We admired the modern and well kept dwellings at Castleknock Cross where attractive and well maintained shrub beds, mature trees and grass margins were visible. The Auburn Park apartment scheme looked nice while the mature trees and attractive amenity areas in Wood Park drew positive attention. Recent entrance planting was observed at the entrance to the Heathers and we look forward to seeing this mature in the years ahead.

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

In general, approach roads looked particularly well during our visit. The entrance to your area from the Phoenix Park gates (along the Castleknock Road) looked particularly well with its place name sign, pollinator friendly beds (beside Oak Park) and well maintained grass margins. The approach to Castleknock from the Navan Road (along Auburn road) is similarly impressive with mature trees, trimmed grass strips and a bilingual entrance name stone to be seen. We note from your entry form that a number of future projects are proposed under this category that include the painting of a mural on the underpass of the N3 Navan Road (which had not been undertaken at the time of our visit) and the installation of new bus shelters. Please ensure that all proposed projects are indicated as FP (for future projects) and completed projects are labelled as N (for new projects) in your entry form next year as this will avoid confusion during adjudication.

Concluding Remarks:

Castleknock was tremendously impressive this year with notably high standards achieved in respect of the presentation of its buildings, the landscaping schemes completed and its neat and tidy appearance. We would like

to congratulate the committee, volunteers and all others who were involved in delivering this excellent performance and we look forward to returning again in 2023 when further progress is anticipated.