

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: Athenry - Baile Átha An Rí	Ref: 189
County: Galway	Mark: 325
Category: E	Date(s): 19/06/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	52	52
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	46
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	44	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	37	38
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	49	50
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	33	33
TOTAL MARK	550	318	325

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. Thank you very much for your application to this year's competition and for providing a map, your Five Year Plan, as well as the audit of social media presences, something I have not yet come across from other applications, and made for very interesting reading. Good engagement with other organisations such as Galway County Council, sporting and other community groups, as well as local businesses, and a few of the sponsorship cards were spotted around the town on the day that I visited, a really good idea that also helps raise your profile and awareness of the great work that you are doing.

It is great to hear that after the difficulties caused by the Pandemic and the reducing number of members that you have been able to turn things around with your concerted efforts and are beginning to get more people involved in the cause. An idea that I have seen work very well elsewhere is to have ad hoc one off cleans or 'speed cleans' for those that do not have the time to commit on a regular basis but would still like to get involved, like a mini national Spring Clean day.

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

A lot of great work in this category, the improvements that have been made under the Street Enhancement Scheme have really enhanced the streetscape of the town. Some of the premises that particularly stood out were Athenry Antiques with its bold red paintwork, Church Street Barbers, and The Nook, as well as the Old Barrack's restaurant. The Credit Union building looked very smart and spruce, (and the bench/sculpture celebrating 50 years, complete with little people holding it up was charming) the Church and surrounding grounds were spotless, and the Garda Station was also very clean and tidy looking (though a splash of colour here would really set off the building well). Great work on the cleaning of the river Clarin dam for the Blueway, and we are interested to hear how the plans for the cycleway progress. We also look forward to seeing the culmination of the Market Square Public Realm Enhancement, which should bring about even more improvements to the work that you are already doing. I was also very interested to read about the feasibility study to develop a walk around your Medieval Town Walls, something I imagine a lot of people would be fascinated to do, both locals and visitors alike.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Some excellent work as well here, some really nice landscaping was to be found. I particularly liked the flower beds at Prospect, and the Millennium Corner is absolutely charming, and I admired the planting around the library as well. It is a pity that adjudication is out of daffodil season, the picture that you provided of the daffodils at the Church Wall

must lift the spirits on a Spring day. Well done on making sure to include pollinator and biodiversity friendly plants and also make sure to include as much perennials as you can which work out not only more economical, but also more sustainable. Well done on the work with the crab apple trees, and we hope that your requests to have additional trees planted in the town get granted. The new barrel planters will look great once they are installed, but perhaps you could talk to other TidyTowns groups and Men's Sheds about ways in which they have recycle various items to 'upcycle' into planters.

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

Well done on all the work that you are doing to ensure the planting of pollinator friendly plants and shrubs for our bee and butterfly populations, the wildflower area on the embankment is laudable and provides plenty of pollen. You are doing some fantastic work on planting native trees throughout the town and roads, with 2,000 native trees received from the 'Trees on the Land' organization. Good to see the younger population getting involved as well, with some great initiatives by the Chroí Naofa National School with their bulb planting, and the 'biodiversity' trail by the Boys National School. Great work also on the rewilding project at Cluain Rí estate and for your biodiversity awareness raising on social media.

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

There are a lot of different initiatives taking place around sustainability. These include the 'Active Travel' project to increase connectivity and make the town an easier place for pedestrians to negotiate. Some energy saving work includes 18 houses having solar panels installed as well as air to heat systems put in place and old sodium lights in the town are being gradually replaced with energy efficient LED bulbs and electric car charging ports are in the process of being connected. Also noted is the rainwater harvesting as well as the community allotments. Good to see the younger members of the community also being involved with your local schools being active in this category also. They are participating in such activities as vegetable plots, 'Walking Wednesday', as well as 'cash for clobber'. We will be very interested to see your work in the future on an Energy Master Plan for Athenry as part of your work with Amicitia.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The Bring Bank centre was very clean and tidy on the day that I visited, with no litter to be seen. There was some litter unfortunately to be seen around the town, but this was fairly isolated, the odd can or cigarette packet. The park and playground area were free from litter which is great as was the Castle area, and none to be seen on the Main Street. Well done to all your volunteers for all that they do to keep Athenry as clean and litter free as possible, especially those, young and old that persevered, even during Covid, and a big shout out to your star volunteer Gary. The smart new solar powered bins were spotted, along with the bins with the separate cigarette butt units, hopefully this will make your work a bit easier. Well done on your recognition by Athenry AC, great to hear that all that you do is being appreciated by your community.

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

There are some lovely houses and residential areas to be found in the town, many individual houses looked very attractive with smart paintwork, window boxes, and hanging baskets. The stone entrance sign/planter at Ard Aoibhinn looked beautifully maintained with some lovely pops of colour provided by red and pink cyclamen. We note from your entry form that there are over 30 residential housing estates in the town, and that these are mostly managed by companies. Well done on your efforts to engage with them to try and get them involved with the ethos and work of the TidyTowns, as well as your work to try and get as many of these as possible to participate in the annual An Taisce Spring Clean. One way to encourage participation would be to maybe have a competition for the best estate, or focus on one particular area such as biodiversity, a wildflower garden etc. and this might also generate interest following on from the work you have done with the Cluain Rí estate.
Great work

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

Ahenry is a busy town, and you have doing a lot of work in order to improve the accessibility for pedestrians, as well as cyclists, especially with the replacement and extension of footpaths, as well the new pedestrian crossing near the playground and the installation of a new cycle lane near the Baunmore Roundabout and the new bike shelter in Northgate carpark, it is important to improve the aesthetics of a place, but also vital that it works for those that live there. The various Welcome to Athenry signs with the flowerbeds around them all look very well, and good work on the tree planting and landscaping to be found around the many new roads around the town.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a pleasure to visit Athenry, it has been a while since I have last been here, and it is obvious how much work that you have been doing, with many improvements to be seen, particularly in the town centre and enhancement of the streetscape and shops. We wish you the best of luck in this year's competition and your future projects.