

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: Bennettsbridge - Droichead Binéid	Ref: 997
County: Kilkenny	Mark: 305
Category: B	Date(s): 13/07/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	45	46
Streetscape & Public Places	80	40	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	40	41
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	29	30
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	21	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	39	40
TOTAL MARK	550	298	305

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 2022 Tidy Towns Competition Bennettsbridge. I must say my heart did lift at your statement about us adjudicators having a demanding job and how you factored this into your submission! Indeed, your report on progress over the last 12 months was very detailed. However, I think you can save some time and effort by listing each project (with No and Map Ref), 5-6 lines (max) description and then before and after photos with them. It means the adjudicator has everything right in front of them and doesn't need to flip between pages and to a separate document with photos and then a map. You make use of the SDGs which is wonderful, see can you extend this to aligning each project to the relevant Goals. Your map was wonderfully colourful; for next year see about leaving a space at the bottom for a legend so you are not writing over the map. You have a wide network of support (schools, businesses, agencies) and you generously give major credit to your TUS participants. TUS and CE Schemes are invaluable supports to Tidy Towns groups throughout the country. Well done on preparing your 5 Year Plan. I found your SWOT analysis both honest and very insightful. Many of the items you list are similar to other towns and village I imagine. Keep this as a living document. You have identified projects you wish to undertake, but not who will lead on them. This is understandable and means your Plan may change and enhance as you deliver action items. Overall though it provides a good roadmap of where you want to be. Your last photo summed it all up for me; there is cross-generational support for Tidy Towns and a love for Bennettsbridge. With these foundations blocks nothing is outside your reach.

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

As mentioned above, listing projects with their descriptions would be a good approach for next year. Having them in tabular format and then listed again (like here) is adding to the size of your application. Also, as this is one category; there is no real need to sub divide it again into Civic Amenity & Heritage, Commercial Improvements, etc. You have a wonderful built environment (including your magnificent bridge) and it is clear from all the work you have undertaken in the last 12 months that you are a driving force in the community. The buildings on Main Street were all maintained to a high standard with lovely additions like your creamery cans and old town water pump. Could the parking area between the Credit Union and Eric Phillips be improved – depends on the ownership and the understandable associated cost. The seated area outside Crafted was wonderful with benches and planters. Nicholas Mosse was very well maintained with its new seating area. Stitchcraft on the road towards Mosse also looked well. I admire your approach to keeping the riverside walk as natural as possible and that you are cognizant of the SAC designation. Some tree maintenance was needed, and this was left stockpiled for nature – great idea and saves on disposal of material that has a beneficial reuse. The Grotto, graveyard and playground were

maintained to a high standard. I note you have received a grant to renew finger post signage – congratulations. As part of this project consider rationalizing some of the existing signing such as at the bridge/water pump – 10 locations were signposted, along with the Rover Nore and Slí sign! Special mention to the Nore Cavern and Credit Union for their well-maintained premises.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The village centre had a wonderful array of planters and window boxes. You are utilizing the pollinator plan guidance on reduced mowing and bee-friendly flowers which is great. The Green Area adjacent Moth to a Flame could benefit from less intrusive management by extending the pollinator area; same for the park area beside the playground and sections of the GAA grounds not needed as playing areas. There was a wonderful, shaded bench here to sit and take some notes. You mention growing of annuals, consider moving to perennials or at least a mix. This is a more sustainable landscaping practice and will save you both time and money in the long term. Your flagship project is from this category and to maintain such a wide area of green space and trees is a huge undertaking – well done. You have evolved your cutting regime to reflect the biodiversity crisis. This is laudable. Make sure you communicate the positives of this message locally. It may be worth engaging with a local botanist or wildlife enthusiast to scientifically monitor the change in diversity over time. The bulb planting project was wonderful, many thanks for the photos so I could see them in bloom. Also well done on entering the Tree Special Award – you have done much in this area from the native tree arboretum to maintaining your existing stock of mature trees. Keep up the great work in this category!

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

You have invested in long-term training in this area. This is a wonderful approach and by embedding knowledge of biodiversity issues within your group this will definitely stand to you in all aspects of the competition. You support citizen science in your involvement with Nore Vision and the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Involving the community in removing invasive species is assisting the entire Nore catchment downstream of your location – excellent! It can be a long and laborious process, keep with it. You are also showing the connection between biodiversity and the edible landscapes movement with your hazelnut tree project. I look forward to seeing your biodiversity sign the next time I pass through.

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

Is there a way to quantify the power being saved through the hydroelectric generation and LED lights? It is important, and necessary under the National Climate Action Plan, to reduce emissions and improve efficiencies. In Bennettsbridge much has already been done. See if you can document this, year on year. Water Butts are a simple yet highly effective initiative as this saves on wasting treated water. The sustainable approach to landscaping is complemented by the training your volunteers undertook from Kilkenny County Council. For the coming 12 months speak with your Environmental Awareness Officer to see what projects or grant aid is available to advance in this category. Also look to other towns and villages to see what they are doing as well as winners of the Special Awards. Tidy Towns groups are wonderful at knowledge sharing.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You strive to be a zero-litter community, congratulations – on the day of adjudication this was the case. Well done on segregating your litterpicks and ensuring the minimum amount goes to landfill. Your bottle bank was very well presented – though a good idea to monitor it on an ongoing basis and notify the local authority when its full. In this category you include the entire community which is wonderful; including those who kayak to remove litter from the river – amazing! Some small issues that could be addressed before your next submission:

- The outdoor signs at Moth a Flame could be upgraded.
- Clean the paving at the Food & Trail Craft Trails sign at the adjacent green space.
- The Yard on Main Street could be tidier.
- There is a redundant pole on the Gowran Road near the playground

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

The whole village looked very well during my visit from the well-maintained homes on main street to the various houses and estates on the Approach Roads. Well done on having a prize for the Best Kept Garden. To have zero dereliction is amazing and well done in reaching out to the vacant property owner. They are very lucky to have you paint their house. Marian Place looked very well, the owner of the corner house (No. 8) in Woodlawn had a tremendous wildflower verge on display. Further down in Woodlawn there was a green space which may have potential for more biodiversity style maintenance. Also, a tree here looks as though it has died and will need replacing. Further on there is a magnificent Willow tree and a bench – I wondered why the bench faced a busy road as opposed to this tree? Perhaps a project the local authority could assist with?

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

All approach roads were maintained to a high standard and it was wonderful to walk over the multi-arch bridge into the village. Your R700 flagship project is considered here as well as under Green Space and Landscaping. You invest much time here in portraying an attractive entrance to the village, whilst at the same time incorporating more sustainable landscaping practices. Weed removal by hand is labour intensive but the best approach in the long-term as it stops chemical use and removes roots and seeds. You are also reaching out to groups to form a type of 'Adopt a Patch' scheme on the Danesfort Road. This will encourage new volunteers to assist as well as

fostering a sense of pride in one's place. Consider rolling this out to more areas over time.

Concluding Remarks:

There was a break in you entering the competition but you are back since 2014 with renewed energy and enthusiasm, this adjudicator loves your positive outlook on your work and overall ethos of the Tidy Towns movement – as you say ' Our village is pulling together!'