

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Cloone - Cluain** Ref: **425**
County: **Leitrim** Mark: **332**
Category: **A** Date(s): **21/06/2022**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	42	43
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46	46
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	28	29
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	26	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	37	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	37
TOTAL MARK	550	325	332

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. Ádh Mór oraibh! Many thanks for your application form, complete with map, a new 5-Year Plan and photographs. I must compliment you on your plans for 2016-2020 and 2021-2026, which are clear, concise and practical. Many of the actions of the 2016-2020 plan have been met, it seems, and you are working towards achieving those in the new plan now. Despite being a small village, you have a strong committee and a good support network of volunteers to help with projects. I am glad to hear you have resumed your monthly meetings which should help re-motivate everyone following COVID restrictions. The variety of activities and events you organise is quite impressive and helps build on community spirit. I see you also have support from a range of groups locally, e.g. ICA, Cloone Community Centre and Youth Club. Communications are spread across both social media platforms like Facebook and more traditional methods like the parish newsletter and local newspaper. There also seems to be a good relationship with the local national school and youth club. Your community seems to gain a lot from Tidy Towns, which I am delighted to hear, and you have deservedly done well to date in the competition. Well done and keep up the great work!

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

I was privileged to be (I believe) the first judge to view the new Remembrance Garden, fully completed, in person. I was very impressed with what you have achieved here. It is a striking addition to the village, with beautiful views over the surrounding drumlins and very informative signage that pays homage to the area's culture and heritage. Yours is a quiet little village with a few empty premises and shops on the main street such as O'Higgins's former shop and post office, although there is little sign of dereliction. One or two buildings may benefit from a fresh coat of paint in the near future. Ó Creagáin's Pub is presented well, as is McKeon's. The area leading up to the old Church of Ireland is especially lovely, with colourful flower displays. I spotted some pleasant window boxes and pots throughout the village also, with a neat bench or two to sit at. The community centre area was spotless with some pretty window boxes and trees. The planted round, stone planters look especially well, with cute Pansies. Great work on Bóthar na Naomh Recreational, Sports, Heritage and Nature Park. I was very tempted to walk the trail but could only venture in for a quick look. I see you have been planting more native trees along the trail and in the Remembrance Garden, which will enhance them further. Sorry to hear you were not successful with CLÁR funding for a pathway extension, etc, but hopefully it will happen for you in the next round. A linear play area would also be a great addition for local children and visitors, as per your 5-Year Plan. The old national school does require repair works but I note you are maintaining it as best you can and refer to it in your Plan. The herb boxes to the front are a positive addition too!

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Some of the points under this category in your form overlap with Nature & Biodiversity, so I will focus on these in the next section mostly. The photograph of Daffodils at the Garden of Remembrance demonstrates how great it looked in spring. A few of the young trees were struggling a bit in the new Garden, perhaps due to water stress. I do note with pleasure that you are gradually changing previously tightly mown areas to 'low-mow' ones. The neat and tidy mindset is difficult to change, but the new focus on a switch to embracing our natural wildflowers (not weeds!) is fantastic and I'm glad you are moving in this direction. I noted the new pollinator friendly raised bed at Esker Hill on the way into Cloone from the main R201 road. This provides a bright welcome on the way into your village. I also noted bunches of beautiful Ox-Eye Daisies along the verges into the village, so it was heartening to see these hadn't been cut back. I note you have earmarked a section of Esker Hill, allowing regeneration of wildflowers including Hawkbit, Ox-Eye Daisy and Orchids, so fair play.

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

Delighted to hear you have embraced 'Low-Mow May' this year, as well as the addition of pollinator friendly plants in the raised beds. I noted the attractive wildlife signs at the Bóthar na Naomh trail. The proposed 120-acre wildlife sanctuary along the trail sounds impressive and I commend you for liaising with local groups to try and organise this. The log pile for hedgehogs is a nice addition to the wild garden and hopefully you will spot a few in the next National Hedgehog Survey! The refurbished Bug Hotel should entice in more insects, while the herbs at the old school will be attractive to bees. Taking part in citizen science and NBDC recording is a great way to raise awareness of biodiversity locally, which you are doing. You are also building up knowledge of the topic by attending and helping to organise local nature walks, as well as recording for the 'Dawn Chorus'. I am glad you have also been addressing the Japanese Knotweed issue locally, which can become a serious problem. For more inspiration under this category, check out the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and related resources at pollinators.ie. Free AIPP 'Managed for Pollinators' signage is also available to download from this website.

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

Sustainability is a broad topic, but it boils down to actions such as conserving water, minimising waste and recycling, encouraging walking/cycling and public transport, as well as saving energy and using renewable energy where possible. I note that you reference the SDGs throughout and seem to have a strong grasp of the subject. I acknowledge you have suffered much from rural depopulation but by making your village more liveable and attractive and arranging a variety of activities, you are already seeing the benefits with new families moving in. The LED lighting for your Garden of Remembrance signs, along with the PIR sensor for the new water fountain there will certainly help to save energy and water. The continued rainwater harvesting at the old school is very positive and the reduction of raised beds and planters means you are conserving water too. The flowerbeds you do have provide plenty of welcome colour, however. In addition, planting pollinator friendly perennials not only helps the bees but means you don't have to purchase and plant new annual bedding plants every spring/summer. Great news that local people have provided their own plants and advice to the community and the collection of native wildflower seed for sowing elsewhere is probably the most sustainable way of planting. The recycling days for old uniforms of local children is a great initiative too. As noted under the previous category, I am delighted you have begun to embrace the 'Low-mow' method in certain areas. For more information on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, you can visit irelandsdg.geohive.ie.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The streets of Cloone were litter-free on my visit, a testament to your hard and diligent work in this category. I note that you take part in the annual National Spring Clean too. The 'Leave no Trace' ethos among young and old seems to be having a positive impact. Footpaths were clean and mostly weed-free. There were no messy overhead wires across the streetscape and signage was kept clean. I note you have a policy on signage, which is good, to keep consistency. I did note that at the beginning of the equestrian trail the signage looks a bit cluttered, meaning it is difficult to know where to look as you enter. Could any be removed or at least placed in just one or two locations here perhaps? Overall though, a strong category for Cloone.

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

As mentioned before, you have an issue with a few vacant houses and retail spaces locally, but this may be gradually changing for the better. Most residents seem to live in or around the village which is nice to see, and as yet you don't have a sprawl of housing estates on the outskirts, which can be hard to manage and can create traffic congestion in the village centre. The exposed stone house in the village centre with Ivy on the gable is quite striking. I wondered would it be a nice touch to paint the original names over the old shop fronts, adding some heritage and colour to the main terraces? The old iron gate and pillars between the church and wildlife garden are worth maintaining and could be a nice heritage feature, but I think this is a point of your previous 5-Year Plan? The footpaths, private window boxes and hanging baskets are well maintained. A few planters at the Catholic Church looked quite dry on my visit. Some of the houses at Lake View and one or two others in the village would benefit from a little sprucing up where possible. In addition to the Remembrance Garden, the little Wildlife Garden is very pleasant for both residents and visitors to Cloone.

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

The signage on each of your approach roads is well maintained with pleasant flower displays. This creates a sense of place and a welcome as you enter the village. The entrances to the Bóthar Naomh path each look inviting and caught my eye as I drove along the road. Dillon's Pub on the approach off the R201 road looks like it is now

occupied. It has great potential to be nicely restored with its lovely old features. As referred to previously, the raised beds along the Esker Hill opposite this approach road are attractive focal points before the turn-off. The verges are partly mown, leaving long grasses and wildflowers – so more space for nature! The resurfacing and new stone bridge at the L1553 are welcome developments. The wooden fencing along the road opposite the school would benefit from painting/mending – though I do see in your application that you intend to replace this. The flower display along the wall by the school here is beautiful, however. The lighting at both the church's tower and at the Garden of Remembrance will certainly enhance the view when entering the village at night. Well done on your efforts in this category.

Concluding Remarks:

While Cloone seems like a quiet, sleepy village, there is a lot going on underneath the surface! There is a reason you do well in the Tidy Towns competition each year – you put in the effort and consistently strive to improve under each category. There are some lovely heritage features around and the new Garden of Remembrance has really enhanced the streetscape. I wish you well in the years ahead!