

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bruff - Bru na nDeise** Ref: **1077**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **327**
Category: **B** Date(s): **05/07/2022**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	48	50
Streetscape & Public Places	80	38	40
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	44	45
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	40	43
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	21	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	33	33
TOTAL MARK	550	313	327

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

Fáilte Chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn. Go raibh maith agaibh as ucht bhur dtacaíocht le linn na paindéime. Lean leis an dea-obair. Welcome to the 2022 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your entry and for your commitment to your place in these difficult times. Keep up the great work.

Ten people of your community of almost 800 people form the committee and we note you have another 9 volunteers. Individual committee members with specific interests take a particular interest in certain categories of the competition. You are a very organised and active group. You have chat groups and avail of social media. Well done on the three-year plan. There are many links with various groups and public bodies, and it is fortunate that there are 3 workers on a CE scheme each of which do 19.5 hours per week. It is not necessary for us to repeat the long list of links which you have outlined in tabular form in the application form. Well done on winning the UN Sustainable Development Goals Special Award in 2021 – it no doubt has inspired you to do even better this year. We admired the bronze statue of JFK by sculptor Seamus Connolly.

It is great that you liaise with the school, and we note it is a two way partnership as you help each other as the need arises – it would be great to have youth representation on your committee, which you aspire to having in the future. The one specific project you mentioned is the Mornington Star project which we viewed as being very successful. Many thanks for the detail provided on this project and the wildlife value. The duck race was a novel idea for fund raising and increasing awareness of the special environment there. We note that prior to 2003, Bruff had participated in the competition and in 2008 the committee reformed and is now active again – well done. Many thanks for your maps which are very clear and included a legend on the same page. However, instead of 3 maps, it is preferable if you have just one map, especially now that the application is a digital format. In reality, we will visit each part of the village once and for that reason, it is best to look at all aspects of a site, rather than finding another map in the application that requires another visit. Your application is very well presented, and we liked the way that projects are set out in tabular form. However, please refrain from providing more information than is necessary – one or two sentences is enough – that will help to limit the size of the application and allow us more time to spend looking at projects on site. About one third of the application was devoted to the first criterion – please reduce this by at least half that amount for next year. Please continue to use pictures as they can save many words, but remember that less is more in terms of size and number.

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

You have provided four pages of information and pictures of projects under this heading. The projects include upgrading footpaths, improvement of the Sean Wall Memorial, solar lighting, installation of seats, the new mural on the Limerick Road, your action on derelict buildings, repairing vandalism at Collin's Well, missing trail signs, painting seats and an impressive 11 buildings, maintaining information signs, improving footpaths and ramps, restoring signs

damaged in storms, a new footpath on the Kilmallock Road.

Scoil Dean Cussen is a nice building with established trees in the garden and attractive wildflower features. The Kirby O'Sullivan Sports and Social Business Park is very impressive. It was an old convent building converted to a new use. We admired the old trees, many of which are very fine specimens. There is great scope to establish wildflower meadows in the ground by changing the mowing regime for part of the lawn area. We liked the Sean Watt's Memorial and could see that it was cleaned recently. We suggest that this feature is best left simple, and you should be careful about adding further embellishment. The background of existing trees is perfect, the low wall enclosure is fine, and the white chain adds that little extra – there is no need to raise the wall. The roses in front on both sides of the pathway looked great and the linear bed of marigolds in front of the entrance was also fine – the idea of more raised beds is not advised. However, the pole near the back of the site with hanging baskets is unnecessary and should be removed to some other location – the Petunias are also out of place against the trees. The addition of seats in front of the low wall would allow people to sit and relax and another few seats on the grassed area around the monument. An information board on the background to the monument would be fine, but not a permanent exhibition that would only add clutter.

The Thomas Fitzgerald Centre seemed to be closed as evidenced by the dead plants in the containers on the front steps, although we didn't try opening the doors – it did not look inviting. This plaque on the side of the wall indicates that as a former court house an important precedent was set regarding rights to representation in court. The Fairgreen finger post sign was confusing as it was not clear if that was the name of the street or a place further on or was it the small estate with houses forming a curve. From consulting Google, we see it is the name of the road, which becomes the R516. At the end of the street, a cherry tree planted in a raised bed is covering a sign – a need to remove low branches. The mural on the R516 was noted. The GAA grounds comprise a large site with buildings forming the road frontage with unfortunately a dull (well-painted) wall which presents a hard appearance. It would be great if this wall was softened with the use of climbing plants such as ivy planted in small pits at the base of the wall – that approach has been successful elsewhere.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

More than a dozen projects are discussed under this heading and again, they are laid out in colourful tabular format which makes it easier for the adjudicator. The projects includes work in the Morningstar Park and the river, wildflower planting in the Grove and daffodil planting on approach roads from Croom and Kilmallock, and tulips in containers. Planting of 5 *Amelanchier lamarckii* in the Grove, weeding and mulching, maintaining flower beds in various locations and maintaining the old church of Ireland graveyard as a wildlife area.

We walked through Morningstar Park which is a wonderful amenity. The elderberry bush at the entrance makes access difficult. It is great to see established and young trees in the park and we note that a mountain ash tree was planted in 2013 by Sydney Lawford, a niece of President Kennedy. What is remarkable is that the text is so clear on just a piece of slate that is standing loose beside the tree – the tree is growing fine. Nearby, a cherry tree is also a memorial that was planted in 2021. We suggest that the supporting stakes and ties on all trees be checked because they should not be required after two years and if left, they can damage the stem. The seats are sturdy, and we noted one that is dedicated to the late Dolores O'Riordan. The information sign by the river bank is very well done. This little park beside the river is a jewel but we advise that you should be careful about introducing more flower beds that may not be in keeping with the ambience of a river park. The planting inside the entrance is fine and a valerian has taken hold in the wall to add enhancement. However, the two square beds do not fit into this space, and we suggest they be removed. What would add to this space would be a section of grass – perhaps a sigmoid shape - that is left unmown for the summer and allow wildflowers to develop. We also wonder why a litter bin is needed here – where there is no source of litter, such as shop – people should be encouraged to take their litter home.

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

Thanks for the information on the Grove - a lovely walk alongside the river near the school where we saw many youths having fun in the river. This is a wonderful environment with established trees. The access path is quite elaborate near the bridge – because of the difference in levels. This little riverside park is very well done with good quality pathways and is well maintained. The signage is of good quality but is hard to read because it needed cleaning. We suggest that the black film beneath the signs – to prevent weed growth - should be removed as it is untidy. The circular feature around the old water pump is unusual and we assume that the pump was moved to there from elsewhere as they were usually placed closer to where they were used (and of course where there was a spring). The low hedge and trees enhances the circular feature. The park seems a little enclosed and uninviting because there are many low branches that are hiding the space. If these are removed (back to the main stem) it will allow more light into the spaces and encourage more wildflowers to develop. This would require advice from an arborist as it is important to know the exact point near the stem from where branches should be removed. There is need for an extension of the pathway to the rest of the site, but we suggest that the extension when done does not need to be as elaborate as the existing section. For example, bull-nosed kerbing as a path edge is not necessary in this environment where pathways can just merge with the soil.

Other projects mentioned under this heading include the Heritage Week River Event and Bat Event and we see that the Grove is a wonderful resource for those activities. We saw the product of the willow workshop in the school grounds – a willow dome. You are on the alert for giant hogweed along the river banks, so it hasn't much of a chance! Other information you provided about cowslips and nettles indicate to us that you are well aware of many aspects of this criterion and are working with the National Biodiversity Data Centre and Limerick Co. Co. on developing an ecological corridor. Monitoring of bumble bees has been ongoing in Bruff for several years and you use WhatsApp to spread the news. Other activities include wildflower areas, bug hotels and honey bees. The synopsis on the Bee Report made very interesting reading. Should you be interested in developing more projects

under this heading please consult the revised handbook which is available at <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Nature-and-Biodiversity-in-your-locality.pdf>

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

Under this heading you have listed about 17 projects in tabular form and we will comment on some of these. Your sustainable energy community is working hard on awareness and activities and have 210 followers on Instagram. Your focus on the 17 UN goals has used artistic talents through children's illustrations. The use of workshops, sales of tote bags and crafts all contributed to the community effort. On the ground you have a sensory garden and solar-powered lights outside the church of Ireland. You have your own compost, use buy and sell events to reuse products, men's shed group make bird boxes and Christmas cribs and you intend to become a fairtrade town. The recycling banks are prominently displayed at the GAA grounds. Now that people are familiar with using such facilities, there is no need for them to be so prominent, especially because they are not visually attractive. Perhaps you would discuss this matter with the county council and see if a more suitable, less prominent location can be found in the town and if necessary, they can be screened.

For more helpful tips and case studies from other Tidy Towns entrants please take a look at <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/> For more information on this criteria, we suggest you consult the revised handbook which is available at the following link. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sustainability-Doing-More-with-less.pdf>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Eleven items are mentioned under this heading. We note your success of using Mutt Mitt dispensers for dog fouling and the use of stencils instead of posters to discourage dog owners. Well done on cleaning the Maigue River and for other areas – the cup of tea was well earned. Maintaining litter bins is an onerous task – one in Main Street needed cleaning - it is disappointing to see that people use them for their domestic waste – that is one reason why in some places, committees decided not to have litter bins. We were pleased to see so many places in Bruff were neat and tidy.

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

In Brackvoan estate we saw just a few specimens of trees which are poor specimens and contribute very little to the environment. We suggest that the taller trees be pruned by removing the suckers from the base of the stems and allow the rest of the trees to grow more. In regard to the smaller trees on the open space, they would best be removed and a new planting scheme of at least 20 trees (maples or lime trees) be planted there. The hard appearance of the concrete block wall along the entrance could be softened by planting climbing plants such as ivy at the wall base about 2 metres apart and allowing them to cover the walls. There is great scope for planting shrubs or hedges in private gardens. Sycamore Drive estate has nice trees at the entrance. Should the landscape of private gardens and open spaces in residential estates be improved it would have a positive impact on the whole community.

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

We noted the new footpaths along the Kilmallock Road but wondered why large strips of tarmacadam were laid between the footpaths and the private garden walls for several houses. A green strip of grass or wildflowers would be a more attractive approach.

We noted the breach in the wall on the bend of the R512 at Morningstar Park, which was caused by a HGV truck, and it is good to know that no one was injured. That curved wall which is higher than the level of the park is obviously a health and safety concern - but the railings on top of the wall are visually unattractive. Then there is a railing on the footpath edge across the road, which we assume is for the safety of school children especially. All of these railings take from the character of this area which is one of pleasant stone walls. Therefore, we wonder how many options were considered before the railings were installed on that section of the R512. For example, if the curved road section of the R512 was closed to traffic and vehicles diverted by the L1413 and around Mornington Park - would that work – and then remove all the railings. Alternatively, would a one way system work - by reducing the traffic flow on the curved road (R512). Also was there a reason why crash barriers were not used outside the R512 wall instead of the railings on top of the wall. To this adjudicator, a better solution than the present one is required.

Concluding Remarks:

This was our first visit to Bruff and we were very impressed. Congratulations to all team members for your efforts to make your town look its best. We look forward to receiving your application in 2023.