

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: Hospital - An tOspidéal or Ospideal Ghleann Aine	Ref: 456
County: Limerick	Mark: 306
Category: C	Date(s): 05/07/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	42	43
Streetscape & Public Places	80	42	43
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	30	31
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	15	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	37
TOTAL MARK	550	297	306

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.

You have a committee of 10 members and up to 25 more volunteers and some of your members also sit on the Community Council and others are involved with sports groups. You have an impressive list of agencies that support your work, including many voluntary groups, but we were surprised not to see Limerick Co. Co. mentioned – we assume you have contacts with them.

You use the Limerick Leader for communications and also use social media as well as the school because of the wide catchment area for the children. It is great that some young people work with your team – hopefully, some of them will be the future committee and volunteers. Your specific project for this year is the picnic area on the R513. Well done for your participation in the competition for 47 years. The 5-year plan that you attached appears incomplete as the 9 pages just includes an introduction and some information on how the work was done. What is required is a table of proposed projects under each criterion for implementation over the next 5 years. Thank you for your map which has some landmarks shown on the page. To improve on this map, please add a legend and write the name 'Hospital' on the top of the page, with a north point. Also please add landmarks such as street names and the cemetery to the map.

It is important that whatever works you undertake are in accordance with best practice and for that reason we suggest that you download the revised handbook from the Tidy Towns site at the following link <https://www.tidytowns.ie/competition/handbook/>. The handbook contains guidelines on each criteria and we will refer to them again under the respective criteria in this report.

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

You are concerned at the number of unoccupied houses which are becoming derelict in the village and have mentioned five properties where improvements were made in the recent past. This dereliction is upsetting but it seems your efforts are paying some dividends as the owners are working with you. Participating in the historic graves survey was very worthwhile – such cemeteries will become much more important in the following decades. Several shops look well at the junction with the R513 and the R526 – do you have a name for this corner? The FETAC building is in a prominent location and looks very well. O'Sullivan's Centra shop on the other corner also looks well, but it is a pity that shop window displays of the past are no longer used today – instead, it is a big picture of hands around a burger. On the other corner, the Hospital Veterinary Centre is a lovely building that is well-painted. The fountain is the main feature in the town and is well maintained with floral displays of Begonias and

Petunias. What is missing at this junction are some trees that would add enhancement – has the ground at the fountain been surveyed for underground services – if there were space, a few birch trees would make a big difference. On one corner there is a large plant container – if there was a tree at this point it would take up less space on the ground and make a better impact. We advise that a landscape designer be asked to submit proposals that could be the basis of a landscape scheme – after underground services are checked. John the Baptist Community School is a fine big complex on the Knockainey Road, with large sports grounds in front of the school. The large car park is alongside the road. What is missing here is the landscape treatment and we recommend that proposals be prepared and implemented to improve the situation visually. Some trees would also improve the very nice Hospital Family Resource Centre. St John the Baptist church is a large stone building on the R513, Limerick Road beside the Hospital/ Herbertstown GAA Club. A car park alongside the road serves for both the church and the sports grounds. There are two cemeteries here; the older one which is beside the old church ruins and a newer cemetery west of that site. It is interesting to see how much lichen has established on the old headstones and the boundary wall. What a pity the traditional elements of the old cemetery were not continued in the new cemetery in respect of the boundary wall which is a pre-fabricated concrete post and rail instead of a traditional stone wall. Also, of note in the old cemetery, is the excellent specimens of Irish yew trees – which can live for more than 1,600 years. No tree planting was done in the new cemetery. We suggest that there should be place for a few trees before all the grave sites are filled. Scoil Iosagáin Primary School is a large building north of the Presentation Convent. Here again, there is a need for landscape treatment – a landscape plan for the grounds is needed upon which a planting scheme can be implemented.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

It is great that residents in housing estates manage the green spaces through sub-committees formed during the Covid19 pandemic. You focus on the picnic area and the river bridge, and you have worked to improve the stone wall. We note the natural gaps between the stones on the bridge are used as a 'vertical meadow' in line with your pollinator plan. There are large containers here and there throughout the town. These are the largest we have ever seen, and it begs the question why use a container – can the planting be done directly into the ground. In some cases, as already mentioned, choosing trees is a better long term solution than using a container. Guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible; they should not in themselves attract any notice. It is better to have fewer well planted containers than a large number in which the quality of plants is inferior. Empty or poorly planted containers are less effective than no plant container at all. If considering more seasonal flowers the use of permanent planting including herbaceous perennials for floral displays is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Green-Spaces-and-Landscaping.pdf> The rockery at the car park looks very well.

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

Activities under this heading include bug hotels (the one beside the 'Failte' sign is very classy, probably 4 star) and promotion 'don't mow' for grassed areas to encourage wild flowers to develop. You have extensive pollinator/rocky wall planting scheme, and you are working on biodiversity signs for the river /rocky wall planting. To reduce impact, silver poles replaced the red poles at the picnic area have been replaced by silver poles, to minimize the impact, with LED lighting. The area of green space was extended on the R513 Limerick Road and wild flowers sown on the verges. You have grown roses from cuttings each year.

You have a rich natural area surrounding your community and it is important to promote an awareness of its many traits and to map these habitats. Appreciating your local wildlife resources is vital in order to achieve under this category. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. Try to list the plants and animals to be found there and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). This information can be fun to gather and can involve the schools or other interested parties. Raise awareness through holding events such as hedgerow walks or bat walks. Contact the Irish Wildlife Trust for more information. <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:

You pay attention to the sheltered housing in your parish and help to comfort them by various means. Solar powered lights at the picnic area is a good innovation. You take waste coffee from the Frank and Honest franchise for composting. Is there a similar arrangement for tea leaves/bags. Meat, fruit and vegetables (short-dated) are donated by the shops for the homeless. Members also prepare meals for distribution to the homeless in Limerick City – well done on all of these activities. Members are participating in Zoom meetings on climate change. The recycling banks are very clean and tidy but in too prominent a location in the front car park of a building (Crusaders AFC?) which is not identified on site or on your map. When these facilities were first placed for public use, it was important that they be easily seen. Now that people make good use of them, they can be relocated to places where they are not so conspicuous and can in many situations be screened to improve their appearance. In this case, they could be moved to the side or rear of the building and then plant some trees inside the footpath line to soften the hard appearance of the car park.

This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a global and a local problem. To save the Earth we need to move quickly to a zero-waste society. Your town can play its part by first looking at the volume of waste that is generated. The emphasis here really needs to be on reducing the volume of waste produced rather than recycling (which is taken for granted). At this level of the contest the adjudicator wants to see innovation in tackling bigger issues of food waste, plastic disposal and energy use. What are homes and businesses doing to tackle these?

There are several other measures that your town can take in regard to sustainability. Contact your waste contractors and try to find out what is being thrown away and armed with this information you can start to think about how waste can be reduced. Examine the waste pyramid and note the recycling is only the fourth most preferred option after avoidance, reducing and re-using. One third of our waste is organic in nature, such as grass clippings. You can avoid collecting mown grass by more frequent cutting and using mulching mowers which shred the clippings and facilitate faster decomposition. Regarding water usage, self-watering hanging baskets are a help in reducing the amount of water used and also the task of watering. Other waste minimisation projects might include working with retailers to cut down on packaging, reminding people to re-use shopping bags, discouraging junk mail, encouraging the re-use of water bottles and coffee mugs at school and at work. In response to an overuse of chemicals for weed control, many useful products of the past are no longer available and therefore communities are encouraged to use other means such as hoeing to maintain weeds. In some cases, allowing wildflowers to develop is an acceptable alternative. These activities will highlight the fact that you are focussing on this category and when you develop more projects in the future your marks will increase.

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 project ideas for this criterion, we advise consulting 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:

The Team Limerick Clean-up is a popular event all over Limerick on Good Friday each year and is well supported by the Hospital team. It embraces litter and rubbish collection, graffiti removal, weeds. You also monitor the town and approach roads on a regular basis and have groups working together on Tuesday evenings. The car park at John the Baptist Community School looked untidy with some kerbside weeds.

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

We note the new housing estate under construction. There should be planning conditions for landscape treatment, including trees, shrubs etc. We suggest you check with the local planning officer to see what conditions are attached to the permission regarding tree planting etc.

The terraced houses on Marian Terrace are well-maintained, and some have fine hedges in their gardens. At Bank Place, we admired the line of terraced one-storey buildings with a railed off open space and three trees planted there – it is most unusual and looks well. Compare that scene with the adjacent community hall – a large building with two flower beds in the paving in front of the building. They are totally out of scale with the building. We suggest that two oak trees be planted in these positions that in time will be in scale with the building and add enhancement. Presentation Close appears to be a sheltered housing scheme which looks very nice. We can imagine the scene in spring when the cherry trees on the open space are in flower. This estate is in the grounds of the presentation Convent – a large building on a high part of the site. The entire site is well-maintained.

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

It is a pity that the street names on corners or streets are not always present. It is important especially for visitors – too often local people who are familiar with the street names, don't think about them. The roadside wall on the R513 was replaced and with railings, it is now safer for walkers. On the approach from Knockainey, solar powered radar signs were installed. The old stone wall adjacent to Hospital Tennis Club is unfinished because the team was moved to another location in greater need of repairing. The junction of the R513 and the R526 is a very busy part of the town and since the interesting fountain feature at this point has two age friendly seats, we wonder why there is no pedestrian crossings to help the aged get across the road to sit on the seats. Hospital is well announced with 'Failte' stones ahead of the statutory name sign on the approach roads. On the approach from Bruff, the statutory sign is partly concealed by vegetation – we liked the trees and the timber 'Failte' sign here. Some communities like the idea of displaying farm machinery and equipment which has become redundant but has nostalgic value. The idea has merit but in this adjudicator's view, roadside margins on the approach is not the most suitable because more often than not the items appear abandoned. Also, for those who may be interested or others who would like to take a closer look, it cannot be done in safety. Nostalgic items should be placed together as some form of exhibition in a place where they can be easily seen and better maintained. Suitable places would include a park, open space or even a field attached to the village – perhaps in association with a wildflower meadow – something that would highlight one reason why they are redundant. Signposts at the fountain are in good condition except for the brown one on the top which has faded. The stone wall on Knockainey Road opposite John the Baptist Community School is very impressive.

Concluding Remarks:

This was our first visit to Hospital, and we were impressed by its size. You have some wonderful features, and you are trying to improve areas which are derelict and have the town looking its best. We look forward to receiving your application in 2023.