

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Murroe - Maigh Rua** Ref: **464**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **311**
Category: **C** Date(s): **07/07/2022**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	44	45
Streetscape & Public Places	80	44	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	45	46
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	32	35
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	16	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	36	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	31	32
TOTAL MARK	550	301	311

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 8 people and you hold a September meeting and another in March and from then on have two evenings per week and individuals undertake specific tasks. Two community workers also deal with tasks year round and the GAA take care of the sports fields. Many public bodies and private business interests support your work as well as individuals. You have a website and also use several other forms of media for communications.

The local scout group help with clean-up projects and planting flower boxes. Beavers and Cubs also do clean-ups and this year you made a 90 second film of them working – and won a prize. Well done on having a 5 year plan – it is a big document, so we suggest you extract from it a few pages of actions that will be much easier to remember.

By that means you can take better ownership of the plan.

Your special project is painting the Muintir na Tire Hall – the first one in Ireland. Murroe has been a participant in the competition for 40 years and the experience has been positive. Thank you for your very nice and detailed map which was very clear, and we liked the legend on the side. A small tip for the future, please arrange the project numbers to be much larger and in a sequence – it makes it easier for us to find a particular one. Your application was well presented.

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

Projects mentioned under this heading include painting the Muintir na Tire Hall and provision of new flower/plant containers on the forecourt of the Hall. We assume that the timber bollards on each side of the pedestrian access are to prevent cars driving across. They are very prominent visually – perhaps because of their dark colour – if they were painted grey, it might help to make them less obtrusive. Another alternative would be a kerb, high enough to prevent cars getting across or an alternative would be a narrow border of perennials on each side of the pathway. The plant containers blend in well with the building, but the plants make little impact. This site needs a more permanent landscape treatment, such as a line of trees on each side that would help to frame and enhance the building.

Other projects included new seating at the Grotto in the church ground; new footpaths on much of the Street by Limerick County Council; painting of the club house at GAA Harty Park; washing pathways around the church and continuing work on Murroe Wood Park. We admired the high cross monument by William Gaffney and unveiled in 1923 to commemorate local men who died in the War of Independence. It is unusual because it is placed on a mound, and we note that children and youths seem to enjoy sitting around it – perhaps they have a safe vantage

point to meet and look around them. The monument is an important feature of Murroe and is well set off with two fine specimens of copper beech.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You have continued planting of bedding schemes in containers at various locations; replacement planting of some beech hedging behind the Muintir na Tíre - only hawthorn and beech have been used in recent years. Please note that beech is not native but has naturalised in Ireland and provides lovely brown foliage in summer. Another plant you should consider is field maple (*Acer campestre*), it has nice autumn colour and is sometimes mixed with beech to add further seasonal colour changes. Well done for screening the high bank opposite the hall. When considering planting spring bulbs, daffodils are most often what are chosen. Remember to also use other bulbs such as Crocus that are good for pollinating insects. You are following the actions of the 5 year plan in regard to maintenance of green areas, maintaining flower beds and some other schemes.

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

You have described the many attributes of Murroe Amenity Park which we visited – although we had much trouble trying to find the entrance. Obviously local people know exactly where it is, but we drove all the way to the gate of Glenstal Abbey grounds and missed the entrance. We realise that it is owned by the Abbey but managed for local enjoyment. While we understand that this woodland has wonderful biodiversity value, we feel that it needs improvements to make it more available for public use and for the visitors to better understand the ecosystem. Some suggestions include an entrance sign on the road and perhaps on the gate. An information sign inside the entrance with a map of the pathways, their length and something about the range of tree species and other flora and fauna that inhabit the woodland. Some of the pathways are difficult to use because they are puddled – we can imagine it being much worse in winter. Therefore, they need to be improved to encourage more visitors to come there. Are clean-ups planned, and are fairy trails that would interest children planned? Can some rudimentary seats be provided? Does the management plan – if there is one – include making some clearings to allow some light into particular spaces and encourage a more diverse flora to develop. These are some of the aspects that we suggest you consider. We note you have installed 20 nest boxes and 6 bat boxes and you manage them throughout the year and you propose to improve them by making them predator proof. Thank you for the information on the activities of the red squirrel and the pine martin and we note that you have used a webcam and plan to improve on that idea for the future.

Well done on deciding not to use herbicides – although we understand that it will make your task more difficult. However, there has been serious over use of herbicides in Ireland and the weeds look much worse when they are dead. The benefit is of course greater biodiversity, as you have mentioned. Thanks for the information on the range of wildflowers that have emerged in the roadside margins (including orchids) since you changed your policy. We also note your experimenting on collecting seed, germinating it and introducing the seedlings to the margins.

Thanks for the information on Murroe Wood Park, although it seems that a name change might be in order to better relate to your plans which seems to be more a wildlife park. We assume the herb garden is available for anyone who wants to take some herbs home with them. You have many interesting items in Murroe under this criterion and we can see that you benefit greatly from having the chairman of the Limerick branch of the Irish Wildlife Trust living in Murroe as well as members of Birdwatch Ireland as well as other knowledgeable people.

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

You are harvesting rainwater for plant containers and using compost as a weed suppressant. Lights at the hall are sensor activated which saves on electricity and you plan to install a bicycle rack in the Wood Park to encourage people to make more use of their bicycles.

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:

Murroe has been involved in Team Limerick Clean-up again in 2022, with volunteers from Tidy Towns collecting Litter on the day and it kick starts your spring and summer works programme. You have regular litter pick patrols at which the scouts help and keep a constant eye on litter all the time. LCC maintain the litter bins and your group does sweeping operations on evenings. The GAA organises scrap metal collections twice yearly and you have recycling bins for cans, bottles and clothing which are maintained at regular intervals. In regard to dog fouling, stencils are placed on footpaths elsewhere in Limerick – they are better than posters which can add to clutter. Well done on these various activities – we found Murroe very clean and tidy.

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

It is great that you have some committee members from the residential estates of which you have many. We admired the flanking stone wall entrance at Garanbawn with trees behind the wall. It is a large open plan estate, and we see plenty of scope for adding plants to front gardens and planting more trees in the open spaces to enhance the estate overall. Gilmartin Park is a large estate which has access onto two roads. There are several planting schemes on the open spaces, and we admired the established trees in roadside margins and in groups on the open spaces. In Ros Fearna estate, where we saw several fine specimens of trees, we were disappointed to see that birch trees on the open space for house numbers 15 – 39 were badly pruned. These trees looked well in Google street view images and we are mystified as to why the tops were removed – something that is a very bad practice that leads to the decline of the trees and in the short term extensive branching at lower levels. We suggest the badly pruned trees be removed and replaced next winter. Just around the corner, we observed five plant containers sitting beside a wall. They contribute nothing in terms of enhancement and the plants are very poor quality.

Guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible. In this case, we advise the planting of climbing plants such as ivy which in time will soften the impact of the wall. It only requires small planting pits to be made into the footpath about 2 metres apart, fill them with soil and the plants will do the rest. Containers should not in themselves attract any notice – instead, the plants should grow over the sides. 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. In Glenstal Gate estate, we noted the damaged piers that you have asked Limerick County Council to repair. What surprised us here was the two lines of established trees – hornbeams in the front gardens and Crimson King maple trees on the open space. It is most unusual to plant a line of trees with copper coloured foliage – usually one or two such specimens are used as a focal point in a design. The hornbeams are growing very well and have a pyramidal habit which to some extent will restrict them from spreading. However, these trees which are sometimes used as hedges respond very well to trimming the side branches to prevent them from spreading further. We have seen this done very successfully elsewhere where they resemble vertical hedges, and suggest you might like to try it out on one or two trees to see the effect

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

We liked the statutory sign for Murroe, sitting in the grass margin with a background of trees and no floral embellishment. That is very appropriate for the environment. We also noted the kerbs freshly painted at what you call the 5 roads freshly painted. The verges on all entrance roads to Murroe are left to grow to encourage Wildflowers and you have found the joy of having lesser spotted orchid emerge. Well done on all these initiatives.

Concluding Remarks:

We were very pleased to visit Murroe for our first time and to see the great efforts being made by your team in having it looking its best. We hope the few comments in this report will provide guidance for future projects. We look forward to receiving your much reduced application in 2023.