

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

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| Centre: Castlebellingham/Kilsara n - Baile AN Ghearanaigh | Ref: 1036 |
| County: Louth | Mark: 327 |
| Category: C | Date(s): 24/06/2022 |

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2021 | Mark Awarded 2022 |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Community – Your Planning and Involvement | 80 | 51 | 51 |
| Streetscape & Public Places | 80 | 41 | 43 |
| Green Spaces and Landscaping | 80 | 43 | 44 |
| Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality | 55 | 28 | 29 |
| Sustainability – Doing more with less | 55 | 19 | 20 |
| Tidiness and Litter Control | 90 | 62 | 63 |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas | 55 | 38 | 39 |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes | 55 | 37 | 38 |
| TOTAL MARK | 550 | 319 | 327 |

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... Thank you for your 2022 entry to the Tidy Towns Competition and well done for your excellent record of competing for 51 years. It is obvious that your committee of 7 together with another 11 volunteers work very hard on behalf of their community. Unfortunately your map was not user friendly as it came on four separate pages which were very disjointed. Projects were not noted on the entry form as maintained or new. Please do number projects sequentially in the entry form, without repeating the projects in different categories and then number them on the map, with a legend to make it easier for the adjudicator to follow. Only one project is requested as a specific project where particular effort was applied. The other projects can be included under their specific categories. Please also identify, where applicable, under each category where your projects or initiatives aim to address one or more of the sustainable development goals. Although you have entered in the correct category, the population noted is not correct per the Central Statistics Office. Your many links to agencies, bodies and businesses as well as clubs and schools are a vital part of the Tidy Towns work in the community. Congratulations on your successful funding application for your new playground project.

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

As your projects were not marked as new or maintained and many have been commented on before by previous adjudicators, it was difficult for this adjudicator to know what work had been carried out during the last year. Comments will therefore be general in nature but please be assured that all works noted on the entry form have been taken into account. The town was very well presented on adjudication day. The variety of buildings, many of historical interest are impressive and Bellingham Castle stands proud having been beautifully restored. St Mary's Church of Ireland is looking splendid and although there is no sign of any work as yet on The Widows House, it is hoped that progress might be made to restore it to its former glory in the near future. Do keep us updated. The garden and grounds at the back of the church are an excellent example of mature landscaping with very little human intervention and are a wonderful example of biodiversity at its best. The newly painted mural outside Foley's tea rooms is just lovely and the little 'ragwort' verse to the side is delightful. This really cheers up a visually important area. Planting and general maintenance around the World War I monument was excellent. Mention should also be made of the two house next door to the mural that are very nicely maintained with colourful planters in front.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The new seating, planters and insect hotel at the Stabannon Junction are a treat. I hope someone is picking the sweetpea and making good use of them to encourage further flowering. The two square containers at the base of the arbour seem superfluous when planting could be put directly into the ground. There are wide expanses of cut grass here. It might be an idea to leave some of the grass towards the back uncut. This would help provide cover and security for insects thus encouraging them to use the bee hotel.

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

It is excellent news to hear that you use zero weedkilling in your green spaces – you are justifiably proud and it is highly commendable so well done indeed.

The Biodiversity Management Plan is a wonderful plan upon which to structure your work to improve biodiversity. It might be good to update this and review your action plan to date, successes, failures, work in progress and future actions.

Have you carried out a habitat map? This may be a project you could work on jointly with the local school. There are some excellent guides including Conserving and Enhancing Wildlife in Towns and Villages (<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/publications>) that are well worth investigating.

Whilst reading the new information sign at the Crescent, this adjudicator took a peek over the wall where there is some wonderful wildlife amongst extensive trees and greenery. There was, at some distance, a plant that looked suspiciously like *Heracleum mantegazzianum* (giant hogweed). It is suggested that the owners of the land be approached and actual identification of the plant ascertained, with a word of caution not to touch the plant. It is an invasive species in Ireland and should be reported to the National Biodiversity Data Centre who will also be able to advise on its eradication www.invasives.ie.

The planting in the front gardens of the house beside the Crescent deserves special mention as it was stunning.

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

The zero use of weed killer on your green spaces has already been mentioned but deserves a second mention and credit in this category. So too the fact that you grow almost all your plants from seed or by propagation.

Reusing plastic pots, a mulching lawnmower and harvesting rainwater for your watering needs are excellent projects in this category. Making leaf mould as well as creating your own compost is to be commended.

It might be a good exercise for you to divide this category into the four headings of waste, water, energy and food and list your achievements and aims under each category. This enables a committee to identify the gaps, and work on each one. As well as initiating projects, it is also helpful to quantify the savings, the reductions and the amounts diverted from general waste streams.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The area around the bring banks was clean and well presented with some lovely planting of roses along the pavement. The notice was clean and very easy to read.

There were little or no signs of litter on adjudication day and this is testament to your extensive anti-litter campaign. Congratulations on retaining your gold medal for 2021 in the Litter League.

Your recent beach clean up in conjunction with Dromiskin TidyTowns certainly resulted in an enormous amount of litter being removed. One wonders how much of the litter was recyclable.

There were some isolated examples of weeds, along the pavement outside Gort Nua for example but in general Castlebellingham and Kilsaran were weed free.

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

In general the residential areas and housing estates were all of a high standard of presentation. Gort Nua housing estate was nicely kept with mature shrubs and planting about the sign. There are some plastic containers on the grass verges and although nicely planted, they seem unnecessary and not very sustainable when it is possible to plant directly into the ground. Bellingham Green was also very well presented and the Virginia Creeper planted on the walls will provide great food and shelter for wildlife once established. St Mary's Villas was excellent. The planting, especially the roses and mature shrubs were of a high standard. Some of the trees looked like they might have been damaged by a strimmer so do try to keep a 1 metre radius clear around the base of each tree to avoid any damage to the trunks of the trees. The converted seat on the main green could do with a little upgrade.

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

The approach road from Annagassan very well presented with lovely planting around the welcome sign.

The speed and other road signs appeared to be in need of refurbishment. At Kilsaran the 50kms speed limit sign is very green and almost totally obliterated by overgrown branches. It would be a good idea to carry out a survey of all road signs to ensure consistency and quality of signs throughout the area.

You quite rightly say that you have some very long approach roads into the town and it is clear that you work very hard to ensure they are well maintained and litter free. Well done.

Concluding Remarks:

Castlebellingham – Kilsaran was a lovely town to visit and to see the excellent work that your Tidy Towns committee is doing on behalf of and with the community. Well done and good luck in the Tidy Towns competition.

