

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballycroy** Ref: **505**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **263**
Category: **B** Date(s): **01/08/2022**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	40
Streetscape & Public Places	80	37
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	30
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	28
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	25
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	34
TOTAL MARK	550	263

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

Fáilte Chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachrmhara Super Valu 2021. 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.

We are delighted to welcome you back to the competition – the last time you entered was in 2016. Your entry was thorough with 'before and after' pictures, a long-term plan, and a detailed map. We particularly liked the fact that you consulted across the community to get ideas to incorporate into your long-term plan. This is important as it gives people ownership on projects, ensures that you are transparent in your activities and hopefully, it will encourage more volunteers to help you.

You have taken advice from the Council and met with other Tidy Towns groups across the county. Importantly you have registered with the PPN which ensures community groups are updated on grants and events of relevance to them. Communication is important and you have noticeboards and a Facebook page. You could try to post two entries each month and increase the number of your followers. Church bulletins and local newsletters are also used to effectively share details of your activities. Importantly you have strong links with both local national schools.

We wonder if your long-term plan could be expanded to cover the newer categories of the competition. A few actions on sustainability would be good to add.

Despite the horrendous pandemic that we endured there have been some benefits for the community with people relocating to Ballycroy. This brings potential new recruits and volunteers. Have you conducted a skills audit to see what talent your volunteers may have? You never know there might be some landscape gardeners, architects, or green fingered volunteers. Or even someone who's a good cook to make a cake to share with volunteers at the end of a hard day's work.

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

We love the fact that the railings at The Health Centre were painted a lovely dark purple. The premises, including the outbuildings and gates posts at Cleary's were nicely painted red and white.

One area in which you put a lot of work was to enhance the walkway between the Community Centre and the Church. We also liked the landscaping at the rear (front?) of the Community Centre where cars are parked. The window boxes at the Community Centre looked nice

The Garda station was freshly painted and looked well.

There is a great road, parking, and floodlights at the Community Field. There also were the makings of solar panels on the roof of the GAA clubhouse but there appears to be a lot of work ongoing, and your adjudicator was a bit concerned that all the doors were open. Hopefully this was work in progress and it will be quickly completed.

The restoration of an old school building into the Dark Skies centre is commended and perhaps a notice could be erected here.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Whilst only a newly formed group, you have done a lot of work on landscaping which has made a big impact. Well done. If you need more ideas for planting – there are a lot of free leaflets available to download at www.pollinators.ie on the resources page. There are lists of plants that are hardy, suitable for our Irish climate and good for wildlife.

One of your main projects this year was the Scoil Naomh Bhríde front garden and flower beds. Your pictures provided show the extent of hard work carried out here. You are also practical and reduced the size of the beds to ones that are more manageable. The flower bed at Cleary's public house also looked really well, as did the fourth bed up by the playground. Overall you have put a lot of work into this category of the competition.

The playground and the bottle banks were tidy and presented well. We liked the boat / picnic table – what a clever design! The newly planted floral beds beside the boat looked great and we admired the painted stones explaining the work was by your volunteers. The pavement could do with some hand-weeding between the bricks.

Travelling through Ballycroy on the N59, the street trees were nicely spaced and emphasise that you have arrived somewhere of note. Colourful bunting is strung between trees and pollinator friendly flowers were noticed on the planters underneath all the trees. You have a lot of planters here and we would worry that you would make too much work for yourselves. Don't be afraid to reduce the number of planters. How do you water them all?

Landscaping in the grounds of the Church was lovely, as was the fresh painting of the building itself. Perhaps a couple of your planters could be relocated to the front of the Church to draw the eye across the car park. They could also protect the building, and the cross once repaired. New trees have been planted in the Church grounds but the cable ties supporting them are actually damaging the bark of these growing trees and should be removed.

The large grass area in front of the community centre was tightly mown. We suggest you could adopt a more bee-friendly mowing regime. For example a tight circle of long grass here with a replica wooden rabbit sculpture would benefit wildlife, save time – and could be a good advert for the National Park.

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

Well done to your volunteers who have attended a number of workshops on enhancing the biodiversity of your area. By changing how often you mow the grass at the picnic site, wild primroses have been enjoyed.

The National Park car park contains some nice wooden sculptures of wild animals, and the car park was nicely landscaped with native trees and shrubs. The free exhibition and café were busy, and we applauded the cheerful welcome given by the man at the front desk who was very knowledgeable about the wonderful habitats of the area and explaining that this is one of the largest expanse of peatlands in Europe. Your adjudicator feels there should be more links in the centre of the village with the Visitor Centre to create more of a joint identity. For example – as mentioned, could some more wooden wildlife sculptures be erected in the grounds of the Community Centre? Drumgallagh National School is very environmentally conscious and proactive in encouraging biodiversity within their school grounds. They have installed nesting boxes and bird feeders, created a bug hotel, and were involved in tree planting earlier this year with one of our Tidy Town volunteers. We loved seeing the photo of the swallows nesting in the school shelter.

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

We love the fact that you re-used most of the plants that were already in place in your flower beds – you only composted plants no longer viable. You are also planning to grow on more plants and are saving pots and seed trays.

Solar powered warning lights remind drivers to slow down approaching the school.

We know there is a bus service to the visitor centre. Is it used by locals – are they aware of the times and fares?

Since you last joined the competition, there is a new handbook available on the Tidy Towns website. It contains a lot of proposed actions for this category of the competition.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

There was a big gang of you who helped out for your Spring Clean. And together you collected over 50 bags of rubbish! Many hands make light work. Thanks to the CE scheme workers for their ongoing maintenance of planters and verges at Ballycroy.

Beside the bottle banks there was an old metal display sign. It was so faded there was no writing on it. Could this

be removed or converted into a community notice board? The walls at the wastewater treatment works need to be repaired. The galvanised gates, and signs fixed to them, were not attractive. Could a nicer sign be provided here? Or could the gates be enhanced by painting or with some nice children's pictures?

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

As mentioned, we really like the flower bed which you have rejuvenated by the homes and playground. A deep clean was completed of the playground and some issues have been raised with the council to be addressed.

Have you shared any tips on energy saving with residents? You could share recipes for leftovers to reduce food waste and save money too.

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

The landscaping and floral bed in front of Keane's Post Office and Garage was attractive. We liked the mix of planters at these premises...someone enjoys gardening here. As you get more to the centre of the village, Cafferkey's Public House was presented nicely. The commanding position of the National Park Visitor Centre means that the eye is drawn here as you approach Ballycroy.

The road as you turn up to the Church off the N59 was in a poor condition and could be resurfaced. But the work you have completed here at the flower bed, and the enhancement of the words on the stone here, make a difference. Footpaths were clean also around the community.

As a community you are fortunate to have streetlights which were clean and attractive. It is assumed the light levels are directed low so as not to impact on your 'Dark Skies' reservation.

Ballycroy benefits from a lot of stone walls in and around its centre. If any new walls are to be built, it would tie in nicely with locality to follow the drystone build technique.

Concluding Remarks:

Welcome back to the competition. You are off to a flying start and had made some great improvements to the community already. Well done to all your hard-working volunteers and scheme workers for making Ballycroy look so well on adjudication.