

# Tidy Towns Competition 2022

## ***Adjudication Report***

Centre: **Ballycumber - Béal Átha Chomair** Ref: **616**  
County: **Offaly** Mark: **338**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **03/07/2022**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2021</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2022</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	53	53
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	48	49
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	30	32
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	22	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	58	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	40	41
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>338</b>

### **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 hionrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Adh Mór...

Welcome to the 2022 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your entry and for your endeavours and commitment to your improving your community. Best wishes for the future.

Congratulations on rejuvenating your TidyTowns committee in the last year or two – a committee of ten people ably assisted by over 30 volunteers is a great achievement in a largely rural area. The area in which you work is quite spread out so it is indeed a credit to you that you have completed so much work successfully over the years. It is probably one of the very few ‘benefits’ of the COVID19 pandemic that more people have been able to work from home and you have been fortunate that a good number of these have volunteered with your group to keep their own area tidy. You have developed good working relations with the county council, other state bodies and the other community groups active in the area and this can be seen in the projects completed in the area. You have been very successful in drawing down grants for many of your projects and in this regard you would be the envy of many other TidyTowns groups around the country. You are very active in promoting the TidyTowns activities through traditional means and through social media and have been collaborating with the local school, the GAA and the Men’s’ Shed to complete projects in the area. Six green flags for the school must be one of the first in the whole country and the establishment of the Junior TidyTowns group is a great achievement – in years to come we hope that many of these junior members will become members of the main TidyTowns group; even those who move to work elsewhere are much more likely to become involved with TidyTowns wherever they settle.

The latest version of the TidyTowns Handbook is available on the website - it includes plenty of suggestions for suitable projects to consider for future years.

It is noted that you have taken the advice of the previous adjudicator and reduced the application from 75 pages to 37 pages in 2022 – well done and keep going with the good editing work. The application and maps are well laid out and the photos are very helpful as your adjudicators are unlikely to be local or familiar with the layout of the parish.

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

The work completed by your group over the years is evident as soon as one arrives in the village – the main street through the village is well-maintained, tidy and inviting. The business premises have made a great effort to brighten up the village and are commended for that. The seating area at the old barracks will be a useful resource for the community to socialise as we have become more aware of outdoor living (again due to the pandemic!) The renovation work at the Pilgrim statue has been carried out to a high standard and the planting compliments the hard landscaping work very well; the pond-less water fountain provides visual and acoustic interest while being safe, even for toddlers.

The improvement works at the Brosna river amenity area are excellent – good surfaces, robust street furniture and bicycle parking are all complimented by a good range of planting. One point worth considering with the county council for the future might be the addition of a footpath from the village towards the river amenity area; it could be difficult to walk there at present with young children or elderly or infirm persons as the road is quite narrow at the bridge and traffic may still be travelling quite quickly.

The church, school and other buildings are well-maintained and the public places were found tidy and litter-free. The church grounds are neat and tidy and the Granary is a fine looking building and a great asset to the area.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasá agus Tírdhreachú:**

The green spaces are maintained in good condition and the permanent planting that has been completed throughout the village is of a very good standard; perennial plants and shrubs have been used which are less dependent on daily watering during dry spells and will last for many years rather than needing to be replaced annually. The planting at the old barracks is beginning to fill out and will create the desired effect in the next few years. The addition of the fruit garden and the statue of St. Manchan and his cow at Grogan and the seating area nearby will encourage residents and visitors alike to make use of the outdoor space. The cemetery is well maintained and it's good to see some of the area there being allowed to grow; the 'no mow' sign explains the thinking to visitors who might otherwise think it is not being properly maintained.

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

The Community Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-26 is a comprehensive resource for the community to be used as to plan suitable biodiversity enhancements in the coming years. The improvement works at the Brosna River amenity area are further enhanced by allowing the wildflowers to grow along the riverbank and along the area beside the river footpath; this will encourage pollinators, insects and wildlife to use these habitats. The Water Biodiversity Training programme is a great idea as it will educate and encourage the local residents to protect and develop this fine amenity. It will be interesting to hear next year how this training went.

The bug hotel by the seat along the road – probably not the most desirable location - allows the younger members of the community to observe the creatures without having to disturb the habitat around the hotel.

Phase two of the native tree and shrub planting at the GAA pitch to replace the leylandii hedge is a very welcome development for biodiversity; native plants support significantly more species (insects, bees, birds, etc.) than leylandii so this is a very positive step. The no-mow areas and the wildflower meadows also add value to the biodiversity of the area, both at the GAA and around the village itself.

### **Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmhárthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:**

The sculpture of St. Manchan and his cow is an excellent demonstration of the possibilities when recycling and also an important nod to the history and folklore of the area. The refurbishment work on the street furniture carried out by the Men's Shed is very good and extends the life of the materials for another few years. The planters made from repurposed materials at Healy's Pub help to disguise the fact that the premises is now closed and was a good use of leftover materials.

The food grown in the polytunnel is put to excellent use in providing meals for members of the community. You are also in the process of using perennial plants rather than annuals for the village planting schemes; this move should ultimately reduce costs, reduce use of peat-based composts and improve the diversity of flowering plants for pollinators and other insects. Some other groups have begun to propagate their own perennial plants (division/seeds) and this might be a good project for your group going forward as you have space at the community garden and rainwater harvesting and composting already happen there. The use of harvested rainwater for power washing is commended, reducing the wastage of valuable clean drinking water.

The ongoing links with and support of the school's garden and nature activities is commended and the village reaps its rewards through the care and attention of the school children in their and the TidyTowns activities.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhairéacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

The whole area was found to be tidy and practically litter-free on the inspection date. Your litter-picking activities have been a success and your ongoing collaboration with the school helps, with the children participating in litter picks and other activities; their raised awareness of their surroundings will also reap rewards in eliminating littering caused by them. During the visit, the planted areas, footpaths, paving and road edges were found to be largely weed-free; there was no evidence of dog fouling during the visit, probably due to the awareness campaign and the provision of the Mutt Mitts in the village. The bring centre was tidy with no evidence of lazy or illegal dumping at the location.

Painting of walls, fences and gates, cleaning signage and ongoing maintenance of street furniture, the footpaths and green areas all take considerable time and effort and often go unnoticed as locals become used to the overall tidy appearance of the place; well done to those who do this work on an ongoing basis.

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

The residential areas and streets in Ballycumber were found to be very tidy and it is apparent that the majority of the residents take pride in the place where they live. The work carried out on the derelict buildings meant the adjudicator had to search for the buildings in question so credit is due to the committee and residents for their good work there.

Initiatives such as 'no-mow May' and the planting of perennials at entrances and/or within the estates enhances the appearance of the estates; in turn this should encourage the residents to maintain their own areas to a higher standard. Reducing the amount of grass cutting (e.g. no-mow, wildflower areas) frees up time for the committee and

volunteers to undertake other improvements; it also reduces costs such as fuel for lawnmowers, all contributing to a more sustainable environment.

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

Congratulations on your write-up in the Tullamore Tribune! The adjudicator concurs with the article and found the approach roads to the village tidy, well-maintained and generally litter-free. The signage was clean and clearly visible. The ongoing change to perennial planting schemes is commended and enhances the appearance of the roads as you approach the town while improving the habitats for pollinators, insects and other creatures.

**Concluding Remarks:**

The visit to Ballycumber showed the level of care and attention to the area that would be noticed by visitors even if they didn't have the application form and maps to guide them. Your endeavours continue to make good progress each year and it is obvious that you have a very active and engaged committee and volunteers. You are wished well for the future and we look forward to receiving an application from you again in 2023.