

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Belmont - An Lios Dearg** Ref: **522**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **296**
Category: **B** Date(s): **09/07/2022**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	41	41
Streetscape & Public Places	80	40	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	40	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	23	23
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	20	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	47	47
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	36	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	47	48
TOTAL MARK	550	294	296

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.

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.

As one approaches Belmont, it is immediately apparent that considerable effort has been put in by the TidyTowns group and the local community. Having a committee and volunteers numbering forty-three people in a relatively small village surely makes you the envy of many groups around the country! Having students from the local school on your committee will help to raise awareness of your work both in the school and in the children's homes; liaising with the school and engaging with them on projects will pay dividends long into the future. You have developed good working relationships with the local authority and other local and national bodies to the benefit of your community through support for the work you are undertaking. You communicate with the residents and meet regularly to discuss and plan projects for the future, getting buy-in from the community to support and participate in your endeavours. Are you able to avail of workers under the TUS or Rural Social Scheme? Many TidyTowns groups find this extra help invaluable.

Perhaps you could include a map with future applications to give a better sense of the area and its amenities; there is a good map near the Heritage Stone and a copy of this with the main projects for the year highlighted would be very useful for the adjudicator to ensure that nothing was missed during the visit.

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.

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

Even though Belmont is a relatively small village, the buildings in the centre of the village are very well presented, giving a welcoming feel to the area. The features around the Heritage Stone offers an insight into the area's rich history and the nearby map of the area shows visitors what amenities they might visit when in the area. The church and school looked very well and the cemetery was found to be well maintained. The old water pump nearby is an attractive nod to the past. The roses planted along the fence at the ESB site are establishing nicely and will add considerably to the visual amenity there. This adjudicator hadn't encountered a country road called 'High Street' before and would be interested in finding out how it came to be named so – perhaps you could enlighten us next year!

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Belmont is a village that borrows and benefits from the lovely rural hinterland surrounding the village; the nearby

canal crossing at lock 33 provides a lovely setting also and might offer opportunities for tourist activities in the future. It is apparent that some considerable thought and work was put into the seating area at the entrance to Beechgrove in the past, with beds of roses, stone sculptures, brick paving and some grassed areas; unfortunately, it was found to be somewhat overgrown with weeds and other vegetation during the adjudication visit and some of the benches were in need of repair, cleaning and repainting/varnishing. Perhaps this has already been completed, but if not, it could be a project for next year that would definitely improve the appearance of this fine community space.

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

The planting of roses along the stone walls on the approach roads are a very attractive feature and a good variety of more pollinator-friendly plants are used in the brick planters around some of the road signs around the village. There is ample space along the margins of some of the approach roads that could be planted with wildflowers or maintained less often to allow native wildflowers to establish; not only would this be beneficial for wildlife, it would also reduce the amount of labour and resources required for regular grass cutting. The aforementioned natural stone walls can be a very valuable resource providing shelter and safety for a wide range of creatures and insects.

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

You note in your application that you do not use fossil fuels and that electric vehicles are used where available; this is a considerable step to take in a rural community so well done. Does this also extend to the equipment used to cut the grassed areas, strim, etc.? Previous adjudicators suggested some more information on how the committee manages the area since herbicides are no longer used to control weeds and it would make interesting reading in next year's application. Many groups are struggling to cope with weeds since deciding to withdraw the use of herbicides as this usually results in considerable additional labour requirements.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The village was found to be very tidy during the visit and apart from one black bag left beside the clothing bank, the bring centre and the area around it were found to be clean and tidy. Perhaps the signs warning of CCTV recording are very effective and dissuade would-be offenders. While deciding to stop the application of herbicides is commendable, it does create the problem of weeds becoming more difficult to control; there was some evidence of weeds in the cobble lock paving at the Heritage stone area and the green space at the entrance to Beechgrove was significantly overgrown with weeds and other vegetation. Perhaps these issues have been rectified in the meantime.

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

The rural nature of Belmont means that there are few streets and housing areas as most people live along the various approach roads to the village; it was noted that many of the residents maintain their properties and gardens to a very high standard and the properties observed at Beechgrove estate were similarly well-maintained.

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

As previously mentioned, the approach roads and the various planting schemes create a sense of expectation as you drive towards the village. Many of the roadside verges are regularly cut and are very tidy; perhaps there is an opportunity here to allow the grass and wildflowers to grow along the ditches/walls and only mow one trip along the roadside to maintain a safe walking place for people to use when vehicles approach. The National Pollinator Plan website offers lots of advice and practical information in easily accessible form so it may be useful to revisit this information.

Concluding Remarks:

Belmont is found in a lovely peaceful rural location and the village presents its own charm to the visitors; the buildings around the main crossroads are well maintained and retain many of their original features. I feel that I may have missed much of the work being carried out by your large team of committee members and volunteers as the application form could have provided more information on the projects; the inclusion of a map showing the location of the features would have been very useful also. Perhaps one or two committee members could be asked to help with the submission in future years to lessen the workload on one or two individuals. That being said, it was a very enjoyable experience to visit Belmont and we look forward to your entry in 2023!