

# Tidy Towns Competition 2022

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Shannonbridge - Rachra** Ref: **850**  
County: **Offaly** Mark: **311**  
Category: **A** Date(s): **07/07/2022**

|   | Maximum<br>Mark | Mark<br>Awarded 2021 | Mark<br>Awarded 2022 |
|---|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Community – Your Planning and Involvement | 80              | 44                   | 45                   |
| Streetscape & Public Places               | 80              | 45                   | 47                   |
| Green Spaces and Landscaping              | 80              | 43                   | 45                   |
| Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality  | 55              | 32                   | 33                   |
| Sustainability – Doing more with less     | 55              | 12                   | 14                   |
| Tidiness and Litter Control               | 90              | 51                   | 52                   |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas       | 55              | 35                   | 36                   |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes           | 55              | 38                   | 39                   |
| <b>TOTAL MARK</b>                         | <b>550</b>      | <b>300</b>           | <b>311</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 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.

Shannonbridge has a rich historical past with the bridge that crosses the Shannon giving the village its name and linking the fine buildings along both sides of the river. Your TidyTowns group has been recently re-activated after a short break due to flooding and an aged population in the village. It is great to see you active again and the efforts and work achieved is immediately obvious when arriving in the village. The dozen volunteers who help the committee of ten to complete the various projects shows a strong commitment to maintaining the local area, especially in a village with a relatively small population; you also get extra help when completing particular projects where people might not be willing to join in fulltime. You are fortunate that many volunteers are from the younger age groups as well. The links that you have developed with local, statutory, and national bodies have all reaped rewards for the community through support for the work that you have carried out in the past. The link with Offaly Local Development Company providing workers under the TUS scheme is particularly valuable as the workers are available to complete projects throughout the year in conjunction with the committee and the volunteers, especially as the committee members and the volunteers may not always be available due to other commitments.

Your recently published Community developed “Shannonbridge Development Strategy 2021 – 2031” shows ambition for the future and provides a template to guide your efforts over the next decade or so. 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:

Shannonbridge as a village is dominated by the river, the bridge and the fortified buildings on both sides of the river; it is a village with some fine examples of historic buildings combined with more modern architecture. The village is largely linear with an interesting mixture of house and building styles along the street. Luckily, the majority of the buildings are in good condition with the owners demonstrating pride in the area; there are a few buildings that are not being as well maintained as they might be so hopefully you will be successful in tackling this issue; it is not always an easy task as the owners often don't place the same value on tidy or well-maintained buildings as your committee does. The village has a small marina and there are several fine cruisers moored there. The quay crane and the swivel bridge are a nod to the area's rich past heritage and are well maintained. Your group currently maintain the railings and front yard of the old school; you hope to repurpose this building and bring back to everyday use, subject to suitable funding. The local playground is owned by the community and maintained by the TidyTowns group, even roping in the local teenagers to help with maintenance during their holidays – an achievement on its

own!!

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

The village doesn't have green space or a public park but there are pockets of green spaces here and there which are now being planted and managed in more sustainable ways, with less emphasis on annual bedding plants and more emphasis on bulbs and shrubs which don't need to be replaced every few months. Much of the village is surrounded by farmland, and locals and visitors can walk around the old fortifications where the grass is generally allowed to grow throughout the season with irregular mowing. The TUS scheme workers maintain the grassed and planted areas around the village, with some residents volunteering to look after areas close to their own homes.

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

Native tree planting has taken place at the Monastery to promote biodiversity; the area is already quite naturally diverse and this planting will increase the range of habitats found there. Some of the residents have reduced the frequency of the grass mowing they do and are planting suitable species to support pollinators. Some grass areas have been growing wild for five years or more and species such as wild orchids and wild thyme have reappeared. Native hedging has been planted in the village as well. Eighteen species were observed living in the esker vegetation and further sympathetic management is planned for the area. There are eskers and callows near the village which are quite specialised habitats, and the village is fortunate to have many different species of birds living in the area; all sightings are recorded and reported to BirdWatch Ireland; swift boxes have been located under the bridge and are actively in use during the season.

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

Your group campaigned hard and successfully to be included in the Athlone-Galway Greenway. This will increase visitor numbers in time but as most will be travelling by bike or walking, the impact on the area will be less than if they were travelling by car or other such modes of transport. You are also examining the possibility of linking with the Monastic Greenway at a future date. These longer-term projects should be visible on the ground in the next few years but many of the tangible effects will take some time to become measurable; a good idea of the current baseline (i.e. visitor numbers) will allow you to measure your success in the future. Your group are adopting many of the ideas from the National Pollinator Plan such as reducing mowing of grass and stopping the use of herbicides – the reduced time for grass cutting can sometimes be balanced out by the need for extra weeding time. Where it is not feasible to weed by hand, you are using an organic homemade mixture of vinegar, Epsom Salts and washing up liquid. The tourist office operates as a community run visitor centre selling local arts and crafts and employing two local people. Rainwater harvesting and conservation is also practised, and homemade compost is being used in the planting schemes to reduce peat usage. The Christmas lights are being upgraded to LEDs to reduce electricity usage.

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

The village was found to be very tidy during the adjudicator's visit, even though it was evident that there were a good number of visitors to the area enjoying the local amenities. The regular litter picks by the committee, volunteers, and the scheme workers, appear to be working very well. The public recycling bins at the Marina and the extra bins in the village are clearly helping as locals and visitors make use of these facilities to dispose of their litter. There was no evidence of littering or dumping at the bring centre and the footpaths were pleasantly free of signs of dog fouling, so your hard work and publicity techniques have been paying dividends for the overall tidiness of the area. The footpaths and along the kerbs were largely weed-free so well done on that, especially as you are no longer using registered herbicides for weed control.

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

As mentioned above, the village itself was found to be very tidy and this was also observed in the residential streets and the housing areas around the village; all the areas visited were found to be tidy and most properties were well-maintained, demonstrating a strong pride in both their residential area and the village itself by the residents. Many of the gardens were maintained to a very high standard as well at the common areas which enhances the village further. It must be heartening for the group to see plans and progress being made towards restoring the old school building that has been vacant for some years; these works combined with some of the obvious recent improvements to other buildings will improve the appearance of the village and no doubt harvest extra points in future years.

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

The approach roads to Shannonbridge are well-maintained and in keeping with up-to-date agreement on pollinator and wildlife-friendly methods; there are areas which are allowed to grow longer, and the wildflowers provide food for the bees and insects; other areas which are maintained more frequently. The use of pollinator-friendly and longer-lived planting is a welcome addition and recommended when new planting is being considered. Planting native hedge species along some of the approach roads is a welcome development. The recent improvements to the footpaths and the painting of some of the buildings in the village has definitely improved the ambiance in the village.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

It is clear that the Tidy Towns committee and the residents of Shannonbridge have great enthusiasm and have

already completed a lot of work to enhance the village. Your ambitious ten years' plan to develop a range of amenities around the village available to locals and visitors alike is commended, although some will take much more effort than others. Well done and we look forward to seeing your progress again in 2023!