

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: Ballymacarbry - Baile Mhic Cairbre	Ref: 534
County: Waterford	Mark: 356
Category: A	Date(s): 28/06/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	43	44
Streetscape & Public Places	80	44	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	44	45
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	67	68
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	38	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	43	44
TOTAL MARK	550	348	356

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. We thank you for compiling and sending us your entry, and wish you every success in your future work. Good luck! Your regular committee of 15 is terrific for a small village – this reflects the clearly obvious fantastic community spirit in Ballymacarbry. It's great to see all the links you have both locally and across the county. It is hugely impressive to see that the impeccable presentation of your village on adjudication day is all down to volunteer hours as you have had no scheme worker since March 2020 – hopefully this will be addressed very soon. Many thanks to Ballymacarbry N.S. for their very comprehensive report. We were particularly delighted to hear about Rg5 visiting a Comeragh Mountains sheep farm – what a terrific way for the children to learn about their local heritage. Congratulations also to Ballymacarbry Montessori on their 3 Green Flags – a very impressive achievement for a pre-school. Your Water Warriors scheme sounds like a great way to spread the word as no doubt the little warriors pass on their knowledge at home too. It is also heartening to hear how glad you were of the help of your local TY student – fair play to her and no doubt she enjoyed the experience and learnt lots too! Your various methods of communication are very valuable, ensuring your important messages get passed around to all. Your facebook pages made for enjoyable reading as did the adventures of Helter and Skelter throughout your entry! We were delighted to see how all your volunteer work is rightly cherished enough to merit a thank you card from Volunteer Ireland. We hope this gave you all the boost that was intended – it has clearly spurred you on to even more projects and future plans.

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

You really have made the most of your one long street in Ballymacarbry. The village looked beautiful in its sylvan setting in the Nire Valley on adjudication day. Both the homes and business premises throughout the village looked well. The dance hall mural was particularly admired – the dancers are nearly jumping off the wall giving hints of the life and vitality of the area in times past. The small carpark area opposite Doocey's makes for a lovely, colourful entrance to the village. The planting here is just beautiful – a terrific example of gorgeous pollinator-friendly herbaceous perennial planting that no doubt gives months and months of colour every year. We did notice some herbicide use at the back of the beds under the fence line. We understand that this is not carried out by TidyTowns but perhaps it needs a gentle reminder that herbicide use in this context is not a good idea for both human health and biodiversity reasons. Ballymacarbry is blessed with murals having not one but three! The mural at the car dealers is very striking and a novel and interesting way of working with an otherwise mundane shed wall – Ballymacarbry is full of artistic surprises for the visitor! We had a peek into the carpark at The Mill factory space. This is a heartening development breathing new life into an old building and all the positive spin offs that brings for a

rural area.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Your new woodland sculpture scene area is a wonderful project – bringing the nature that surrounds you right onto your main street. The naturalistic ‘Special Branch’ sculptures of our native red deer, fox, red squirrel, badger, rabbits and buzzard are all terrific with the stag looking very regal indeed – the Monarch of the Nire Valley! It looks like you are planning a type of rockery garden around the sculptures which is a great idea with lots of potential for easily managed perennial alpine plants that will also be pollinator-friendly crucially. Make sure to check out the plant lists in the Pollinator Planting Code at pollinators.ie for lots of suggestions. The ferns and bluebells here are a nice touch – some crocuses, native primroses and wood anemones will lengthen the flowering period by adding some early spring colour. This may be part of your plans already but we would recommend re-instating the grass verge under the fence and to the front of the space to soften and frame this lovely area. You have some beautiful planting all along the length of the village with plenty of great pollinator-friendly perennials. These are the way forward for garden/formal planted areas in our street landscapes as they are both sustainable and feed our beleaguered pollinator species as well as giving the joy of summer colour to us humans too. All your crocus planting sounds wonderful – please include a photo of the blooms for your 2023 adjudicator to enjoy! The Allium Moly ‘Jeannine’ you planted at the Irish Water site were putting on a terrific show on adjudication day – they were striking companions to the mauve Nepeta, well done on this gorgeous planting show which acts as a lovely welcome on this access road to Ballymacarbry. As mentioned below the two types of natural wildflower meadow here looked wonderful on adjudication day – a gorgeous entrance to your village. The little orchard here is also a lovely touch. The clearance and planting of the beds here must have been a big job of work. A look at your great facebook page revealed the special feature of the ornamental beehive that went in the day after your first adjudication visit! It looks lovely in the photos. We presume by ornamental this means that it won’t house honey bees? As outlined in the new all Ireland Pollinator Plan, our pollinator-friendly work in TidyTowns needs to focus on our 98 wild bee species – one third of whom are in trouble through habitat loss and starvation caused by not enough flowers and sometimes competition from too many honey bees in their neighbourhoods. Beekeeping has become increasingly popular in recent times but it is essentially a type of farming activity and if beekeepers don’t provide enough food for their colonies then their honey bees go out and compete with our wild bee species for food. Food for thought for us in TidyTowns who are trying our best to help our beleaguered wild bee species. Your living mural is a wonderful addition to the street. We wondered how old is it now and how does the moss stay alive and green – does it need a special type of watering?

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

As your wooden sculptures show, you are aware of biodiversity in your local area and TidyTowns groups all over Ireland fulfil a hugely important role in increasing awareness of biodiversity in their localities. Indeed the gap that has evolved between many of us humans and our wilder neighbours is a huge contributory factor to our current biodiversity crisis in Ireland. This gap must be closed if we are going to win back a healthy future for us all. The walk down to the picnic area by the river Nire is a beautiful spot away from the road. The mown grass path through the natural wildflower meadow there is beautiful and very inviting. While there we noticed a Japanese knotweed plant growing along the river bank. This noxious weed is a scheduled plant that should be notified to your local authority as it will need to be dealt with by a professional eradicator – this is not a job for TidyTowns volunteers! This dastardly plant will spread even if only the tiniest piece of it is left in soil so it needs special treatment. We noticed a heap of grass cuttings behind a wooden fence but on the river bank. This is not ideal as the rotting grass will leach nitrogen to the river. The ideal would be to set up a compost system if possible nearby – have you come across the New Zealand box system where 3 bays are made out of old pallets? Well done on all your biodiversity recording and awareness of feeding birds through the hungry gap. Your sunflower seed giveaways are a great idea as their flowers provide pollinators with food and then their seeds provide excellent bird food as well as their sunny flowers pleasing us humans too. The use of commercial wildflower seed is not recommended as a biodiversity action for a number of ecological reasons including the unwitting introduction of species that do not belong to a habitat and sometimes areas of valuable grassland habitat can be cleared in order to introduce the said wildflower seeds. The All Ireland Pollinator Plan has lots of guidance and information about this topic on its website. However, the generous gifts of great pollinator-friendly annuals such as sunflower and nasturtium seeds for people to use in their garden flowerbeds or plant pots is a great idea with no unfortunate, unintended ecological consequences! And of course as you know well in Ballymacarbry, simple adjustments made to grass-mowing schedules are the best wildflower meadow creation measures of all! We read your Biodiversity Action Plan table in Attachment 7. Getting advice from a professional ecologist in the form of a comprehensive BAP would be really helpful to Ballymacarbry especially as you live within such an ecologically sensitive area. Consult with your Heritage Officer about funding available for this or have a look at the Community Foundation for Ireland’s website as they are funding many such BAPs annually for community groups all over Ireland.

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

You have a great village-wide knowledge of sustainability topics and are acting sustainably in many different ways – it comes across that living sustainably is integral to the way of life in Ballymacarbry and therefore a great example for the rest of us. Hosting the Nire Valley Drop Mountain Biking event is a big undertaking for your village – and you are very brave hosting it twice within one year! Your sustainable approach re waste management and rainwater usage for washing bikes is brilliant and an example for other bigger communities to follow. Well done on this and we hope this summer’s event is a great success. Your gradual changeover from annual to perennial planting fits in under this category too – it’s all part of the bigger sustainability picture. Be sure to have a read of the new TidyTowns handbook with the different categories written by professionals in the various areas. It has lots of ideas and guidance for helping with future plans.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have been doing trojan work collecting litter. It is always particularly difficult for communities who have busy roads bisecting their towns and villages. The work unfortunately is never-ending. The village was spick and span on adjudication day and your facebook posts illustrate how this work is ongoing all through the year. Take a bow on this work and we hope all the locals appreciate your efforts too! Your no litter bin project is an interesting initiative – it definitely has been successful in other villages too as have poster-free zones. Well done on these, we hope they continue to work for you. Also great to hear about your successful spring clean back in April and yes definitely bring back the much needed tea and buns next time! Your new initiative of 'the sea starts here' notices is a fantastic one – yet another facet where TidyTowns groups can help raise and spread awareness of issues relating to our climate and biodiversity crises.

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

All your residential areas looked well on adjudication day. The flowerbeds at Cluain Cairbre looked absolutely gorgeous – wonderful examples of pollinator-friendly garden planting at it best with big plants of Achillea, Nepeta and Heuchera. We noticed the polytunnel on the green area and wondered if it was used by TidyTowns – you are clearly a very green-fingered group in Ballymacarbry! The central green area at Deerpark View was a lovely short wildflower meadow with lots of clover flowers blooming during our visit – a favourite of many of our pollinators as well as a nitrogen-fixer enriching the soil.

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

As mentioned above the landscaped area near the Irish Water site makes for a beautiful gateway to your village at its northern end. The mix of pollinator-friendly planting in the flower beds combined with areas of both short and tall wildflower meadows is beautiful. Well done on this. The grotto at the southern end of the village makes for a lovely peaceful spot to stop. The planting is lovely there with the deep purple sage and bright daisies very striking. Looking into the woodland behind the grotto one can see the spread of cherry laurel. This is a problem across much of our woodland areas. Laurel, very like Rhododendron ponticum chokes and covers over our native woodland flora and destroy the biodiversity value of these hugely valuable habitats. We noticed the laurel hedging at the grotto – indeed it is one of the most popular hedging plants in Ireland, however, it is actively destroying many of our woodland areas in Ireland in addition to being a poisonous, cyanide-containing plant (hence nothing grows underneath it!). Perhaps a project for the future might be to swap out the laurel hedging here for some native plants such as hawthorn, blackthorn, holly and hazel like the native hedgerows in other parts of Ballymacarbry.

Concluding Remarks:

Having passed through Ballymacarbry before, we really enjoyed stopping and spending time getting to know your beautiful village better. It is clear that your wonderful community spirit is very much alive and boding very well for the future of all the wonderful locality that is the Nire Valley.