

# Tidy Towns Competition 2022

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Blackwater - An Abhainn Dubh</b>	Ref: <b>126</b>
County: <b>Wexford</b>	Mark: <b>362</b>
Category: <b>B</b>	Date(s): <b>22/06/2022</b> <b>02/08/2022</b>

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	52	54
Streetscape & Public Places	80	48	50
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	49	52
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	36	38
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	16	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	67	69
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	43
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>362</b>

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

Fáilte go An Abhainn Dubh 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. We welcome Blackwater to the 2022 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your comprehensive entry denoting your recent work – apologies in advance if we don't get to mention every single item within this concise report. It was a pleasure to visit your lovely village for the first time and we already look forward to returning. We are glad to hear that you are back on track with your outdoor meetings and activities after a few challenging years. You appear to have the support of the entire community behind your efforts– other community groups, businesses, residential areas and of course the local school. Wexford County Council and Wexford Local Development assist your local efforts through provision of guidance, funding and in the latter's case, your valuable Tus/CE workers. You are well connected to the wider community through social media (Facebook page) as well as the more traditional means such as notes in your weekly newspaper and notice board. Special congratulations on winning the overall prize in the 'Keep Wexford Beautiful' competition in 2021 – a great boost for the community no doubt as was the community's participation in Wexford Co Co's 'Seeds to Success' series. Well done to all involved in these significant achievements as well as wins in other special categories. Thank you for including your 4 Year Plan as well as your detailed 'Matrix of Areas and Works' – another indication of your commitment to improving your village in an organised and inclusive way. Lean leis an dea-obair. Keep up the great work.

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

The recent refurbishment of Blackwater Community Hall is a major achievement for the community. Well done to all involved in this major project – we like the strong colour scheme. All was in excellent order in the vicinity - playground, car park etc. Hanging baskets add a splash of colour. We are sorry to hear that the hotel hasn't reopened its doors since Covid - hopefully this will happen in the near future. The defunct hanging baskets to the side of vacant building should be removed if possible. Corrigan's looks well. We note you are liaising closely with businesses with regard to the standard of presentation and offering support where possible. We acknowledge your efforts in relation to the derelict Etchingam's Pub - some small wins have been achieved here following your ongoing engagement. Benches, plaques, memorial stones, planters and hanging basket poles have all been refurbished and repainted. Everything is fresh and inviting and indicates your attention to detail. The freshly-painted little house on the river is very charming - the surrounding planting further enhances this lovely little area. We admired the quirky design of the dog-grooming parlour.

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

Where to start! Blackwater has some wonderful pockets of planting such as the Music Garden and the wonderful biodiversity-friendly area along the R744. The colourful bikes are a nice touch here. Larry's garden is a more formal space in which to sit and enjoy the surroundings – all nicely maintained. Other areas such as Josie's bank, the entrance to Hazelwood and several other residential areas further enhance the overall appearance and create an inviting impression for visitors. The planting in front of the neatly presented business (no name) on the Curraclloe road was also admired.

St. Brigid's Garden has been planted with fruit trees and herbs – you might mark this a bit more clearly on the map next time. Another successful collaborative project is between Stepping Stones Day Services and Tidy Towns/Allotments group. It is wonderful to hear that accessibility has been improved even further at the allotments site. Ongoing maintenance of hanging baskets and window boxes is acknowledged – glad to hear they are raised locally from plugs in your polytunnel.

We are impressed with your positivity and enthusiasm to adapt your ways in order to line up with current best practice guidance including the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. There is strong overlap between the Landscaping and Biodiversity categories. It is reassuring to hear that you receive expert advice in terms of suitable and sustainable planting. A most impressive overall presentation.

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

Attending Biodiversity Awareness Training equips your group to evolve as a sustainable and biodiversity-friendly community. You assist Blackwater Parish Hall committee with maintenance on the local walking trails. The employment of a professional ecologist to carry out surveys/workshops and ultimately draw up a Biodiversity Action Plan will serve you well for many years to come, in terms of highlighting, protecting and enhancing your local biodiversity. The grass banks adorned with pollinator-friendly perennials are a joy to behold. The Millrace Walk is a lovely peaceful escape into nature – all appropriately maintained. We commend your efforts to tackle Japanese Knotweed here and wish you success with the exciting Community Park venture.

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

Reusing hanging baskets as bee habitats is a new one on this adjudicator! In the more conventional sense, you are reusing hanging baskets each year for your planting schemes. Other initiatives include reducing fuel and water usage in your daily tasks. You use rainwater harvesting to fill our new watering vehicle which cuts watering time in half and is safer than using ladders. We are delighted to hear you make your own nettle feed and comfrey liquid fertiliser for the hanging baskets.

It is encouraging to hear that your committee took part in the local training and education programme to assist in developing a Climate Action Plan for the village. We look forward to seeing some of your knowledge transformed into future actions! The new energy efficient measures at the refurbished community hall are to be welcomed and will greatly increase the comfort and usability of the building.

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

Your daily vigilance ensures Blackwater is looking its best at all times. We are fascinated by your analysis of the amounts collected from the bottle banks. We assume any commercial premises have their own recycling collection and aren't using the community one? Yes, first impressions are very important we commend your efforts to tackle approach roads every 4 – 6 weeks so that litter doesn't get a chance to accumulate. Due to the number of tourists and holiday homes in the area, street bins and abuse of same have to be closely monitored. You are working in close co-operation with Wexford County Council in this regard and in relation to illegal dumping generally. We are impressed by your efforts to overcome challenges and find workable solutions to issues as they arise – well done. Another local issue is the sand spilling from delivery trucks – again your efforts to engage with the company and with Wexford County Council are commended. There was just some minor littering on the laneway between Spar and the Blackwater hotel so keep an eye on this area.

Efforts by the scout groups and individual volunteers to litter pick the forest area and local beach, are also commended. We are glad to hear that you have significantly reduced your use of pesticide to little or no use. Ongoing efforts in relation to cleaning of signs are acknowledged. Bottle banks at the community hall were spotless, with some pretty planting to improve the aesthetic.

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

We are highly impressed with the standard of residential areas in Blackwater – there is obviously a strong sense of pride and a willingness for everyone to show their areas at their very best. Thank you for the specific breakdown on what each area has been doing. Support offered by BTT is further encouraging these efforts. The planting in many residential areas is some of the best we've seen this adjudication period, including Cois Abhainn, Hazelwood, Carrig Dubh and the estate with the upcycled hub caps – to mention but a few! We admired the beautiful thatched and the more modern 'Rose Cottage' nearby. Well done to all of your proud residents.

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

Following lobbying by BTT, Wexford County Council recently erected three speed signs on all approach roads. We are reassured to read of your knowledge and awareness of the historical significance of the village bridge and the importance of protecting it for future generations.

On the Curraclloe Road, persistence has prevailed in that a section of missing path between the village and the GAA carpark has finally (May 2022) been installed allowing a continuous safe passage for pedestrians including school children. Well done. We are delighted to hear that you are engaging with local farmers in relation to roadside trees

and hedgerows. Your vigilance in relation to the condition and cleanliness of signage is appreciated as are your efforts to lobby for improved road surfaces and markings.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

There is no doubt that the Tidy Towns competition is driving local improvements and instilling a sense of pride across the entire Blackwater community. You tell us that your goal is to 'incrementally improve the village for residents, businesses and visitors whilst raising awareness about biodiversity and sustainability for future generations'- you are certainly doing this and more. Blackwater village has the potential to go far in this competition. We wish you well with future projects. Keep up the great work.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

Congratulations to the Blackwater Tidy Towns group for this year's submission to the SuperValu National Tidy Towns Competition with its 'Global' three-pronged focus and well organised structure; the Matrix Summary of Projects was especially helpful to your second adjudicator also. Another feature that was appreciated, this time on the ground, was the information panel on the Nature Walks with details of distance, accessibility and of course species that may be spotted; thank you!

Well done again on works to Blackwater's 'Built Environment' most premises looked wonderful; hopefully the old school premises on the Curracloe Road will be painted as an interim measure pending its redevelopment. Street furniture looked very well and all involved are to be thanked. The service pole located across the street from the Ruby Rose premises looks dreadful with its cables radiating in several directions, perhaps these could be rerouted to run parallel to buildings if ducting is not possible anyway soon.

All of Blackwater's green areas looked superbly managed both for visual amenity and for wildlife; a good balance has been achieved in this respect. We anticipate a successful outcome for the development of a Community Park and look forward to adjudicating it in the future. Congratulations to the Carrig Dubh residents for their achievements and award in the presentation of their estate

Participation in the Biodiversity Training Programme is laudable and an invaluable investment in the future of the Blackwater community; the preparation of the Biodiversity Action Plan will guide actions for years to come. Everything from Bats to Bees, Marram Grass and Wind Erosion and more has been covered which is most impressive. A Wild Flower Garden on an entrance to the village was admired as was St Brigid's Garden and the nearby graveyard. The way Blackwater's Nature Walks / Trails from the village centre connect to the Ballyconnigar Beach Road is excellent.

Your commitment to sustainability and in particular to the Global Sustainable Development Goals is also admired and we look forward to reviewing future projects under the Communities for Climate Change initiative. The recycling point was beautifully maintained at the time of our second visit.

Blackwater was litter, dumping and graffiti free on our second visit which reflects the community's commitment to their home place; weed control was good too. Cognisance is taken of participation in the National Spring Clean, the Beach Clean and your regular litter picking activities; well done also on arrangements made with Wexford County Council for improved collections and maintenance during the peak summer visiting months.

The standard of presentation achieved for residential developments was excellent and to know that all the work had been achieved by residents themselves is applauded.

The new footpath to the GAA grounds is an invaluable pedestrian safety feature as are the digital driver speed feedback installations. The car park at the GAA grounds badly needs resurfacing; those at the Playground / Recycling point and the graveyard look well. Well done on discussions with landowners regarding the management of roadside hedgerow, no doubt there will be a successful outcome.

Thank you for an enjoyable and illuminating adjudication experience in Blackwater this year and the best of luck for the future.