

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Lacken - An Leacain** Ref: **2233**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **267**
Category: **A** Date(s): **21/07/2022**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	40	42
Streetscape & Public Places	80	35	37
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	34	36
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	19	22
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	9	10
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	28	29
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	33	35
TOTAL MARK	550	253	267

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 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 keep up the great work.

Lacken may be small however it certainly punches well above its size. It is fantastic to see what a community can achieve for itself & its environs once plans are put in place & everyone comes together to make them happen. Your active engagement with outside agencies & businesses provides wonderful support. Many communities will envy you the services of your TUS & CE workers who carry out vital work & lighten the burden for the community. For communities without a local shop or post office, communication is key. Lacken is certainly very active on social media regarding biodiversity & your website once completed will be an additional source of reference.

The close ties between your group & the local school is great to hear & so important. It provides you with the opportunity to provide additional resources to the existing curriculum in the area of biodiversity & nature. The school is clearly active in the Green Schools programme. It would be interesting to receive a short update in each year's submission on what flag they are working towards, the work they have completed during the year & their plans for the next academic year.

How charming in the depths of winter to celebrate Christmas with lots of lights & the erection of a giant Christmas tree in the village. Christmas lights provide that feel good factor & togetherness.

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

There was so much to see in Lacken & it goes without saying the views are spectacular. You are so fortunate to have intact stonewalls both exposed & ivy clad that line the roads within the village. The Community Centre with its kelly green doors, granite walls & immaculately maintained exterior space is a gem. A local shop is a great loss however Richardson's shop was spotlessly presented in its new colour scheme of blue & brown. Are there any plans for its future? The stone seating area beside the interpretative panel is a lovely spot to sit & take in one's surroundings. The modern seating as one heads down to the church offers incredible views.

Lacken Church tucked away as it is in a sylvan setting is so well preserved. It was fascinating to learn about the baptismal font & granite trough. The grounds were looking lovely with a beautiful display of red roses. It was interesting to note the 2 steps in the stonewall of the car park – for access or another purpose your adjudicator wondered. The graveyard at Templeboden has such history & it was a pleasure to wander about & see your forbearers' names & family histories. The visit to the cillín was poignant & heartening to see it restored & discernible.

The school was a pleasant surprise with its contemporary design. Its mono pitch roof design & grey aluminum windows & doors complement the landscape & those extensive views of the lake are spectacular. The outside spaces are well looked after. What an amazing place to spend one's early school years.

You have a wealth of history to share with visitors & locals alike during Heritage Week. Do you plan to hold events during Heritage Week in August? <https://www.heritageweek.ie/about/heritage-week> Many Wicklow communities have created Heritage Trails & Lacken certainly has fine examples of built, cultural & natural heritage to share. Check out Wicklow Town's new Heritage Trail <https://wicklowtown.ie/heritage-trail> You have quite a bit of groundwork already completed judging from the Wicklow Uplands Council video of 2020 & previous guided walks. Your local Heritage Officer will provide a good sounding board.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The Mass Path was a revelation. The stone walled breen & the forest walk were a delight with stunning views yet again. You are to be commended for initiating, completing & maintaining the 3 km walk. It is such a bonus that the walk provides an access route to the walks within Wicklow Mountains National Park.

Thank you for including pictures of the spring bulbs in bloom. As adjudicators we only have an opportunity to see summer blooms so it is always a delight to see your spring planting scheme. If you have space, introduce some additional spring bulbs that provide food for pollinators – crocus, muscari, snowdrops to mention just a few. Unfortunately, many daffodils & tulips provide little or no pollen.

The landscaping area at the new & existing stonewall was thriving with glorious roses, herbs and flowering shrubs. The green verge in front & the hedge behind set it off beautifully. The planted up boat is a wonderful installation. The wild flower meadow behind & to the left of the planted boat with its mowed verges & hillside location was a lovely sight. The island planter provided plenty of interest with a wide variety of plants of various textures, heights & flowering stages. The use of roses in the various planted areas presents a lovely interconnecting schema.

The new planters at Zellers soften the hard surfaces & provide a good contrast.

It would be worth conducting a survey of the containers around the village & deciding if there is a need for them all & if some of the plants could be placed in the ground or in mounded areas. There is a lot of maintenance involved & water usage.

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

Lacken is to the forefront in having a very active social media page dedicated to biodiversity. It is fantastic to see that you are educating the community through the sharing of resources, updates & videos. In doing this work you are helping to change perceptions, encourage wildlife friendly actions & showing the community the wealth of nature within close proximity. Well done. It was a delight to peruse Biodiverse Lacken's Facebook feeds.

What an eye catching & informative leaflet you created on the topic of herbicide use. Your strategy of informing & offering alternatives is a great approach to bringing people with you rather than admonishing for existing behaviour. This deserves to be shared with others. If you have not done so already, consider an article for the Tidy Towns newsletter.

The newly planted native whitethorn hedge on the church grounds is flourishing & will be a glorious sight in years to come when in flower & berries. Delighted to see you mark National Tree Week & what better way than with the next generation. Next year, if you make a request to Wicklow County Council early for native saplings you may be able to offer one to each household to join the native berry producing trees they received from you this year. There are so many projects now where it is possible to source native trees e.g. Easy Treesie www.easytreesie.com; Reforest Nation www.reforestnation.ie; NeighbourWood Scheme run by the Forest Service <https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/grants/management-grants/neighbourwood-scheme/>

The school has taken tree planting to heart & the mini orchard is presently producing plenty of apples & the native tree saplings are doing well. The verges & green areas were awash with catsear & ribwort plantain. Their work in the area of biodiversity for their green flag will be interesting to hear about & we may be seeing the next Lacken Citizen Scientists appearing. There is so much material on National Biodiversity Data Centre for schools e.g. spotter sheets, Flower Timed Insect (FIT) Count; Garden Butterfly surveys etc.

Well done on taking on board the advice of last year's adjudicator in relation to the area behind the church. There is an excellent guide for faith communities on actions to help pollinators in church grounds & graveyards. https://pollinators.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Faith-Communities_actions-to-help-pollinators-2018-WEB.pdf

The creation of your wildlife corridor along the village verges up to the Mass Path is coming along nicely & the existing planting scheme presents a lovely vista. In view of our climate crisis, your choice of drought resistant plants is wise. The residents are to be congratulated for taking on board an alternative approach to the presentation of the roadside bank. Once again, thank you for including pictures of the spring bulbs in flower. With the passing of each year, this area will provide wonderful colour.

We look forward to the realization of your plans for two biodiversity information panels. With your work & those of the school children you will have no shortage of raw material.

We wish you the best of luck with your entry for a special award in this category.

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

This is an area where you have so much potential & your adjudicator feels you are hiding your talents. In other sections, you have indicated you are composting your leaf mould & then, when ready, using it as compost for plants & shrubs; the local school children created the insect hotels with appropriate recycled materials from home; provision of a herb garden for culinary uses and repurposing of the lake boat as a planter. Lacken's Little Library is a wonderful resource & obviously in regular use.

This is an area where the updated Tidy Towns handbook is an amazing resource for ideas. You will find that you as individuals & members of the community are already engaged in many sustainable practices so let us know. Many Wicklow communities have kicked off by using existing campaigns e.g. Plastic Free July; We Choose Reuse; Stop Food Waste, etc. The medium of social media where you have an active presence is an ideal way to communicate this message to the community, use your Lacken Community Centre Facebook.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The Pure Mile is a remarkable Wicklow initiative & your responsibility for 17 kilometres of road is commendable. What a thrill to have your group photo displayed in pride of place on the 2022 Pure Mile calendar & best of all to see that the younger generation out numbered the adults.

The village's main thoroughfare was litter free. Unfortunately, the car park across from Zellers & the church had quite a bit of rubbish strewn about & judging from its appearance some was there for quite some time. Some of the kerbsides appear to have a gap between the path & the kerb thus facilitating the growth of weeds. While weed free paths & kerbsides is a significant maintenance programme, the results are instantly apparent & worthwhile. Some of the drains were clogged with debris & weeds & need attention to prevent unnecessary flooding.

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

It was evident on adjudication day that the majority of residents take pride in their abodes, gardens & boundary areas. So many residences are fortunate to enjoy scenic lake views. There is no doubt that when your neighbours are maintaining their places to a high standard, one feel compelled, in time, to not let the side down. As referenced earlier, it is heartening to see residents opt out of herbicide use & avail of a new planting regime or alternative weedkiller options.

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

The approach road from Blessington presented a lovely vista with the stone signage & the new monochrome signage planted underneath with a flowering show of oxeye daisies. The low mow verges, natural hedging & stonewalls create a wonderful landscape. The road at the back of the Community Centre has a road sign before the ramp that needs to be faced in the correct direction. Lake Drive Road has such an outstanding picturesque vista of the lake that it is hard to look elsewhere. Your approach to verge maintenance is excellent & this takes a significant amount of work, well done.

Concluding Remarks:

This was your adjudicator's first visit to Lacken & the results of your work to date are impressive especially considering you are recent entrants. There is no disputing the natural advantages you possess however you are building upon these with such determination that any project you set your minds to will be a success. As stated previously, there are untapped areas for potential improvement & by availing of the resources available to you via the Tidy Towns website, your local Environmental Awareness Officer & local expertise within the community you can & will be in contention for a medal.

It was a pleasure to visit Lacken & there will be a return visit to explore more.