

# Tidy Towns Competition 2022

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Shillelagh - Síol Éalaigh</b>	Ref: <b>937</b>
County: <b>Wicklow</b>	Mark: <b>248</b>
Category: <b>B</b>	Date(s): <b>06/07/2022</b>

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2022</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	39
Streetscape & Public Places	80	32
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	36
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	21
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	9
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	47
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	32
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>248</b>

### 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.

Welcome back to the competition after your brief sojourn. While your committee is small in number it is heartening you can call on so many volunteers. Your effective engagement with other organizations & agencies is so important from the point of view of sourcing advice, resources & funding streams. Communication with local residents is key & the use of social media is essential today to reach across the community. It was difficult to locate your presence on social media, is it Shilleagh Courthouse? This medium provides a wonderful tool to engage residents on a variety of areas like nature, biodiversity & sustainability through the many active programs from which to draw upon.

The involvement of the local schools in the goals of TidyTowns is essential for Shilleagh's future success. Is the local National School involved in the Green Schools program? Local youth may be partaking in the Gaisce awards or Transition Year & they have skills, energy & ideas to contribute – Instagram set up, promotion of a series on the Junior All Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) etc. They are an untapped resource.

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

Shillelagh has a truly distinctive streetscape & it is no surprise that so many buildings feature in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. The terraced row of former estate workers houses on Main Street & those on Quarry Street have a rustic attraction with their granite exteriors & enclosed gardens as does the Barracks. Your plans for the Old Courthouse renovation are sensible in dividing them up into short, medium & long term. Agreed, a fresh coat of paint in the short term would greatly enhance the exterior façade including the railings. Do engage with your local Heritage Officer on potential sources of funding & professional advice. Many government funding streams are highly competitive thus it is incumbent upon you to establish a sub committee who can drive this particular project. The Old Courthouse & the old Post Office are prominent landmarks whose restoration would add greatly to Shilleagh's streetscape. Many of the commercial premises are maintained quite well. Did any of the businesses apply for funding under the Shop Front Improvement Scheme? It is remarkable how a coat of paint lifts a building from dull to sparkling. Shilleagh Church presents a striking image & both the pedestrian & carriage entrances are distinctive. The grounds are maintained well. There is a significant amount of maintenance involved in gravel paths. The Shilleagh Schools building is imposing however the chain wire fencing does detract from its magnificence although its purpose is understood. Perhaps an edible hedge or espalier fruit trees to soften the fence might be considered?

Unoccupied & vacant buildings are the bane of many a TidyTown group. All you can do is to continue to try to engage with the known owners & ask for their assistance as you have done. Are there plans for the Avalon as it does have a large footprint within the village? The Derelict Property grant & the proposed Derelict Sites levy will act as both an incentive & forewarning for owners of derelict properties.

The Heritage Trail signs at each of the buildings of note presents the visitor with a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Shilleagh's history. Well done on completing this section of the project. Shilleagh birds clearly have a preference for depositing their droppings on the Heritage sign at the playground carpark – not an easy problem to solve. It would be helpful to know where to access an accompanying leaflet on the trail as information like this keeps visitors looking for more.

The brightly painted seats set into the long stone wall heading to Parkview House make one smile with their pops of colourful flowers. The stone shore near the bus shelter is an interesting old structure.

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

The Village Green is a wonderful amenity for the whole community & the location of the childrens playground with the nearby car park makes it very accessible for families. The presentation of the park furniture & railings enhances the overall appearance. The vista of wildflower & wild grass meadows under mature trees with pathways mown through these large swathes was charming. The pebble pathway lined on one side with lavender to the Shilleagh Stick Sculpture was attractive & matching up the other side with a show of lavender would enhance the sweep. It will be truly wonderful to see your plans for the Coollattin walled garden fountain come to fruition with the modern twist of solar power generating its water display now that funding of €3,550 has been sourced.

The landscaping of the granite buildings softens the hard surfaces e.g. gardens of Quarry Street, Main Street & the Barracks. How lovely to see granite used in the creation of new flower beds as outside & to the side of Walkers and inside the playground car park. The rose bed by the Old Courthouse has established rose bushes although they could do with some help as the bindweed has taken hold. On the other side of the Old Courthouse, the lavender & roses theme continues & rather than place containers in front use the space to further infill with more of the same planting scheme as it works well as a contrast to the granite. The roses by the footbridge on the way to the River Walk were blooming. Where you can, choose to plant in the ground or mounded areas rather than containers in order to reduce the maintenance involved & water usage.

The landscaping work at the footbridge is significant although some of the plants appeared to be struggling. Did you seek advice when planning the planting scheme? The All Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) is an excellent resource for TidyTown groups & an important reference when choosing plants. <https://biodiversityireland.ie/projects/all-ireland-pollinator-plan/>

Compliments to Kerry Group on the landscaping project they undertook at their entrance gates. It really does create a positive impression & delighted to see the perennial planting.

Taking a whole of village approach to perennial planting & landscaping in general works best in order to create a flow through the village & enhance the appearance.

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

It is encouraging to see you have adopted many good practices to encourage local biodiversity – wildflower & wild grass meadows, short cut green areas, perennial planting to mention a few. Wicklow Libraries have a Community Seed Bank from which communities may take native seeds for planting, make use of these free resources.

You are so fortunate to have a specimen Cork Oak tree within the village & it was quite an experience for your adjudicator to admire such a unique tree. Is there a Tree Preservation Order in place? The continued addition of saplings to the park is good to hear. Do you partake each year in National Tree Week? There are now many sources for trees aside from the local county council as the focus is on planting native varieties. Check out Teagasc's NeighbourWood Scheme & Easy Treesie. It was noted a significant number of notices were affixed to the trees at the entrance to the River Walk. This practice is discouraged as these can act as entry points for disease.

Your focus on the Derry River is important & liaising with the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) is critical. Their communities team work to combine local & expert knowledge to understand best what is happening in a local river ecosystem. Another point of contact is the Slaney River Trust whose goal is the protection of river habitats including Derry River. [www.slaneyrivertrust.ie](http://www.slaneyrivertrust.ie)

There is so much potential for Shilleagh to excel in this area. There are many organizations to assist you & once again the updated TidyTown handbook will act as a guide.

It was a shame to see extensive herbicide use around many areas in Shilleagh & it would be worth using social media to highlight the dangers of its use on the land & its impact on the river ecosystem.

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

Your reuse of materials that could have ended up in landfill & instead were used for flower planters is a perfect example of the circular economy at work. There is no doubting that many residents are sustainable in many ways &

an idea might be to gather ideas together that could be shared amongst the community. Older generations were well equipped to make much from little.

Your adjudicator could not locate the water butts at the Old Courthouse despite circling the building.

With the number of hospitality businesses in Shilleagh, the Green Hospitality program may be something to consider presenting to them & it would tie in well with this goal.

This area is ripe for improvement & the wealth of ideas in the handbook will provide no shortage of inspiration.

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

It was encouraging to hear that regular litter picks take place. Are you participants in the PURE Mile Project – an excellent Wicklow initiative? If not, do try to get involved. [www.pureproject.ie](http://www.pureproject.ie) The segregation of collected waste is important in order to divert as much as possible from landfill to recycling or compost. Some communities have found almost 85% of the litter they collected could be diverted!

You are to be congratulated on keeping pathways & kerbsides predominantly weed free & no litter was seen whilst walking through Shilleagh. No mean feat today.

A survey of 'vacant' poles within the village limits would be advised & the results dispatched to the council with a request to remove those that are no longer required – less clutter.

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

You are fortunate to have a majority of residents who take great pride in their abodes & gardens. Many too are clearly avid gardeners & there were some spectacular gardens on show.

The active engagement of estate residential associations has a direct impact on the standard of collective presentation. Oakridge Manor has some lovely flowering shrubs at their entrance & a lovely sweep in to a clover short cut meadow. Coolattin Gardens with their green boundaries, mature trees & shrub planted entrance was looking well. The crumbling stone wall by the footpath there would, if restored, improve the aspect. The residents of Main Street terrace & Quarry Street are so fortunate to have architecture on their side.

Perhaps some residential areas might consider a mini orchard or edible hedge in some of their green areas. DC for Bees is an initiative to create mini orchards <https://www.hostinireland.com/dc-s-for-bees>

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

The bed at the R725 approach road is simply stunning with once again your landscaping theme of roses, lavender & heathers & an Irish welcome sign. The large area on the approach road from Tinahely with the Coolattin Estate entrances creates quite an impact with the long granite low wall to the fore. The village signage on all the approach roads was presented well with verges maintained well whilst allowing nature to thrive inside.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Shilleagh has the winning combination of a tight knot community & architectural heritage. It may seem you have a mountain to climb with all the projects you would wish to complete however take your time & break each project into short, medium & long term goals & then break each project down again into manageable chunks. As the author Alan Lakein said "Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now".

Do chat to your neighbours in Tinahely & Carnew's TidyTowns groups – there is much to be garnered from sharing experiences & knowledge. They can assist you in the creation of your map to ensure your adjudicator does not overlook work projects or areas of significance.

Well done & the best of luck in your future endeavours.