

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bagenalstown - Muine Bheag** Ref: **32**  
County: **Carlow** Mark: **348**  
Category: **D** Date(s): **12/03/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	42	43
Streetscape & Public Places	80	46	49
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	50	51
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	38	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	27	28
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	59	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	39	40
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	37
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>348</b>

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2023. 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 2023 Supervalu National Tidy Towns Competition Bagenalstown! Many thanks for your submission and wonderfully easy to navigate map. Also, your 3-Year Plan and how you outlined the clear actionable objectives all aligned to the UN SDGs. For next year's submission see can you align each project per category to the SDGs also. I think there is scope to significantly reduce your submission without losing impact, reducing the amount of text, succinctly describing each project (be it maintained or new) and using photos to help tell your story after each entry. Well done on the excellent levels of engagement with so many groups in the area, no doubt this spirit of partnership and collaboration help to deliver on the variety and scope of projects in your submission.

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

What can I say, I absolutely LOVED my walk around your wonderful town... in no small part to the yarn bombing project. To say it lifted my spirits would be an understatement and the amount of visitors with whom I struck up conversations with as I took photo after photo after photo was amazing. Even as I write my report, a couple of weeks after my visit, I find myself smiling. A huge congratulations to all involved. Your efforts in the Streetscape Shop Fronts grant scheme have once again proven remarkable, as evidenced by improvements made at both parish church and McGrath Hall. The assistance of Carlow County Council is noted, which resulted in many noteworthy projects. The success of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programme and collaboration with the SRTS Infrastructure Officer, the Local Authority and the community will ensure that any safety concerns at school gates or barriers to walking or cycling are quickly addressed, creating a safer and more accessible environment for the public. This is a great example of a Tidy Towns Group using their standing in the community to advocate and champion issues. The town is awash with wonderful examples of architecture, both heritage and newer designs. The Garda Station, Little Shop, O Duinn and Roots n Ends were just some of the stand out examples. The Fire Station and Community Centre were well-presented and well done to the older Nolan's Pharmacy building for showcasing the Community Games Art. I noted the Dolphin sculpture – I would love to know the genesis of this idea in an inland waterway. The Supervalu carpark, bus park and Civil Defense HQ were well presented as was the Train Station though the area beside it needs attention. All the schools looked wonderful, well done to staff and students.

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

BIG has shown dedication and initiative in your efforts to preserve landscaping and green infrastructure within their

town, by acquiring funding from Streetscape Funding for tree guard installation and planting Mountain Ash trees. Collaborating with Carlow Beekeepers Association also demonstrates your proactive nature by creating pollinator-friendly locations – a great example of crossover between formal planting and biodiversity! This involvement with other organisations shows an inclusive spirit while cultivating shared responsibility in maintaining the town. The achievements at Town Park demonstrate your hard work by replacing old rose bushes with 40 new ones, which will maintain the beauty of the park. Some issues that could be addressed here include:

- Some lamps have broken shades
- There was a lot of moss on the cobble lock
- The bin by the granite bench needs freshening up
- Clean up some of the exercise equipment
- The pollinator planting was wonderful but had begun to encroach on the path

Your TUS/CES workers have been instrumental in keeping up and maintaining the gardens, showing their hard work and success with this endeavour. Eamon and Kevin deserve the sincerest congratulations and gratitude for their outstanding contributions to Bagenalstown. The planter at Bevelle Beauty needs attention. The landscaping at Aldi was immaculate – perhaps scope to migrate to more wildlife friendly areas given the size of the cut grassed area? Some of the tree ties on Regent Street can also be removed.

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

I was delighted to see your strategic approach to biodiversity through the development of a Biodiversity Action Plan. This plan provides a detailed account of your commitment to protecting and restoring Bagenalstown's natural heritage. Through documenting and acknowledging this rich biodiversity, such as river Barrow, Dunleckney Graveyard and Ballymoon Esker you are now able to make informed decisions. These actions have the potential to enhance biodiversity, offering transformative benefits to both communities and ecosystems alike. Your inclusive approach, engaging as many community members as possible to maximise its full potential is laudable. I was especially impressed by the collaborative environmental project conducted by BIG, Leighlinbridge Improvement Group and Carlow Tidy Towns to address the Himalayan Balsam infestation along the Barrow, through a Balsam Bash. By undertaking the systematic eradication of Himalayan Balsam, you are actively mitigating one of the biggest threats to biodiversity: invasive species. The WaterBlitz 2022 event looked great. Your participation in collecting samples from both rivers demonstrates a dedication to citizen science, one which Tidy Towns groups are wonderful at participating in. By uploading collected data, you are contributing to a global project which will enable individuals and communities to assess and enhance water quality. Another great project is the successful initiative to save swift populations. Through joint efforts with local schools and ecologist Padraig Webb, this project has created an impressive network of nesting boxes for swifts. Now offering 41 nest sites, this project provides crucial habitats for these protected bird species. Monitoring is important and great to see this is happening. Though mentioned in Sustainability: Doing More with Less I am referencing your pollinator work here, such as at the courthouse and the Queen of the Universe NS. I commend efforts in your pollinator planting program. The collaboration with primary schools, BEAM members, gardens and public spaces demonstrates a joint effort in expanding pollinator beds. Herbicide use was noted, if not by you please use your powers of persuasion to stop those using it!

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

I was very impressed by the Bagenalstown AFC Solar Panel/Floodlighting Project. This dedication to improving floodlighting while taking environmental responsibility seriously is admirable. By installing solar panels and storage batteries to ensure sustainability as well as carbon neutrality, this project set an incredible example for other organizations by normalizing green economies while increasing environmental and sustainability issues awareness within both club membership and the local community. In terms of timing and seasonality, was light impacts to wildlife considered? If not, it might be worthwhile engaging with one of the consultants you worked with for advice. The collaboration between Bagenalstown Sustainable Energy Community Network (BSECN) and County Carlow Development Partnership in creating an Energy Management Plan (EMP) for Bagenalstown is also another highlight for this adjudicator. The EMPs mission to foster an energy efficient and eco-friendly community is an integral step towards reducing Carbon Footprint of the town. Your Energy Expo showcased the community commitment to upgrading energy infrastructure - featuring experts, exhibitors and financial institutions all together under one roof for individuals to make informed choices. Sustainable practices such as growing peat-free plants in polytunnels and decreasing herbicide usage further demonstrate your dedication to sustainable management.

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

The town was litter and weed free on the day of adjudication – no small feat so well done to all involved. Your active involvement in public consultation meetings demonstrates their dedication to meeting community concerns; furthermore, reaching an agreement with them whereby all bins in Town Centre and approach roads would be emptied on Friday evenings is commendable as this effectively minimises litter problems over the weekend. The joint venture between BIG and Carlow County Council showcases how community engagement can bring tangible results. Your involvement with schools (Picker Pals), businesses, and various organisations exemplifies your dedication to maintaining a clean environment. The partnership with Waterways Ireland and Bagenalstown Fishing Club to conduct river clean-ups is another example of how together we are stronger and can affect more positive change. Some Tidiness issues in the park are mentioned earlier in my report.

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

Establishing individual estate management plans and rotas, with activities like litter picking and grass cutting, has contributed significantly to maintaining the numerous estates in the town. It is a two-way street as you also offer

expert advice and helping with the proper disposal of litter and grass cuttings – win-win. This enhanced communication has resulted in an increase in applications for community grants from the Council; right there is a measurable result for BIG. Congratulations on your impressive successes in Pride of Place. Productive meetings with your local engineer has resulted in new equipment to address longstanding housing estate issues where long grass needed initial cutting assistance. This could not have been accomplished with your community spirit and sense of shared endeavour – well done! The biodiverse area at St. Brigids Crescent was wonderful as were the houses on Barrow Lane (the mural opposite could be upgraded), Church Road (could the green wooden fronted building be attended to?), Fairgreen and the beautiful cottage beside the Red Lion.

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

Well done on the extraordinary efforts in maintaining your approach roads. The dedication to litter picking, grass cutting, fence painting, wall cleaning and fence painting was noted. Through essential maintenance work and using resources provided by the local council, BIG has ensured that the R705 stands out as the crown jewel in Bagenalstown. The longstanding issue of a derelict site on the R724 has finally been addressed thanks to local developer involvement. Purchase of the site and future plans for houses, children's creche, and filling station will not only promote community growth but will be an enormous feat of Tidy Towns efforts as well. You've taken a proactive approach in meeting the need for improved road markings, engaging local councillors and the Municipal District office with regards to prioritising street resurfacing throughout Bagenalstown town.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Overall, the initiatives of Bagenalstown Improvement Group are truly outstanding; not only do you address key environmental concerns but also foster awareness, collaboration, and sustainable practices that serve as an inspirations and catalyst for positive change.