

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Clarecastle - Droichead an Chláir	Ref:	1082
County:	Clare	Mark:	359
Category:	C	Date(s):	15/06/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	48	50
Streetscape & Public Places	80	47	49
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	49	51
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	42	43
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	39	41
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35	36
TOTAL MARK	550	345	359

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 TidyTowns competition. Thanks for your completed application form including photos, and for your map with legend. We loved the yellow key logo for the 'key projects' but we question why did you not include more projects on your map to help the adjudicators negotiate their way around? You also attached your Clarecastle Tidy Towns 5 Year Plan where you list details of your Goals under each category in the Tidy Towns competition.

Your committee of 12, including two new members who have come to live in Clarecastle, has the help of 20-25 volunteers. The residents' groups are also a huge asset to you as they do much of the work in their own areas. You have an excellent social media presence which nowadays is vital particularly if you want to get the young people interested – a new website, a Facebook Page with 760 followers, and a dedicated email address. Have you considered an Instagram or Twitter account? You also maintain the more traditional methods of communication which are necessary for those not active on social media – parish newsletter, radio and newspaper notices. Congratulations to Hanan for his Gaisce Award for his voluntary contribution to your group. You have a long list of agencies and individuals who assist and advise you. Working together as a community for 60 years is wonderful and we see from the community led activities in the application form that Clarecastle has gone from strength to strength and that the benefits to the community are numerous for which we are delighted. We congratulate you on your success to date.

See concluding remarks for advice on the application form and map.

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

Although very close to the large town of Ennis, your community feels like a rural village with its mix of vernacular single and two-storey buildings and these with the topography of the village, its climbing roads, quay area and open green area in the centre, gives your village its character. The dominant buildings in the village are the large imposing Clarecastle Barracks and the RC church. We are delighted to see the success of the Streetscape Rejuvenation Plan with the improvements to Patrick Street – pavements, removal of unnecessary poles, undergrounding of cables etc. The undergrounding of cables has added greatly to the streetscape and now the beauty of the buildings can be seen unimpeded. Dereliction is a problem in every village and town and we read that in Clarecastle the number has decreased and that there are now only two remaining. Well done on your initiative in progressing this. The large (four/five storey?) building (Scott's Corn Store) as we entered the Quay area is very impressive – wouldn't it make a great youth hostel? What are the plans for this building which really should be

reused? The painted scenes by Clarecastle NS greeted us – we loved the reminder to shop local. We look forward to returning and seeing Clarecastle Heritage Trail with plaques and map installed. The Poor Law Inspector's comments of December 1846 were read goodness what a scene he describes! Business and commercial premisses presented very well, some having freshly painted the façades – please commend the owners. The Lawrence collection of photos were interesting

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

We loved the wide, open green area with its mature trees giving an air of opulence to the village as we entered. We also admired the Memorial Park along the quayside – a very peaceful area where we met walkers while others were sitting and enjoying the stunning view across the river. We note that one of your goals in your Development Plan is to 'utilise Clarecastle Tree Survey' and we are delighted to see that you have undertaken this survey which will be a great asset to you to plant suitable trees for their specific location. We read that this has started and we saw some in the garden beside the Scout's Hall – trim back the long grass around the base of the trees. The grotto area (Ballaghafadda West) and had a great display of flowers along the wall which were in bloom when we visited. The tractor tyre as a planting surround at the grotto is out of context and unpleasant – if you want a surround, we recommend a stone built one instead. The newly planted trees in this area are doing well – keep an eye on the stakes and ties. The flower baskets along the streets added colour and with the great displays of flowers were attracting our pollinators the day we visited. We encourage you to rationalise the location of the black and white tubs – some were unnecessary and didn't add anything to the area. These should be put in areas where you cannot plant into the ground and should only be used for impact. Plant large upright and trailing plants/flowers in these. The tiered planters at the monument at the R458/ Old Road junction obscure it somewhat, which is a pity. Similar to the black and white tubs, carefully select the location of tiered planters and only use them where they are the feature. The planted boat here was perfect. Great work is being undertaken at the GAA grounds and we hope that the whole community will get to enjoy these facilities when they have been completed.

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

You have a diversity of habitats all around you – old stone walls, long grasses, a great variety of trees, the great River Fergus and the large expanse of countryside on your door step. The first section of your planned River Fergus walk has been completed. This will be a great success story when it is complete and having approximately 50% now done the impetus to continue it is there. We admire that you only trim a narrow strip of grass along your entrance roads and allow wildflowers and grasses to grow which gives food for insects and shelter for small mammals. Well done on your Clarecastle Biodiversity Plan and revisiting it and upgrading it on a regular basis is commendable. We see you call on experts to assist this ongoing advancement. The new signage at the Port of Clare was noted – birds, fish, plants and historical images and information. The photo of the salmon nets being dried shows a busy working quay. You have joined the many other communities across Ireland for the Dawn Chorus – something to be celebrated. We note that you will include signage into the park when work is completed. Take care in the size of the signs and their location and don't detract from this area.

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

The Men's Shed is contributing greatly to your committee and is in the process of restoring vintage machinery – we look forward to these being on display around the town. Commend them on the work they have contributed to date. The new bike repair stand was noted – these are a wonderful idea. Who is in charge of maintaining them? We noted one in another community with a broken pump. The Roche Remedial Project is an enormous project for the company which appears to be proceeding smoothly and according to plan, this following 2 years of protracted negotiation with the EPA. The Green Skills for Life programme was successful but showed you that this needs to be targeted to the local situation rather than a general programme and so, from this, you developed Circular Clarecastle. Keep us informed of the progress in this. Well done in engaging the community on the SGDs – and now you have a different SGD: 'Someone Doing Good'. We commend your school for their success to date regarding the Green School achievements – we read with interest the information you submitted. The Heritage Projects with 5th class was well attended.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have the benefit of having been bypassed by the M18/N18 linking Galway to Limerick so you have less through traffic than before. Nonetheless the village was busy and we are delighted to report that there was only a small amount of litter on the streets when we visited – we commend the litter pick-up team. Equally there was only a small amount of weed growth along the main streets of the town, so this too you are dealing with. Weed growth was noticed in a few housing estates – it would be good if residents removed these to make their estate more presentable. We have seen with other communities that the residents come to help the Tidy Towns volunteers when they know that their estate is being cleaned up. Erect a temporary sign on the entrance – 'Clean up in your estate' and add the date. Maybe worth a try? We noticed a few community (and other) notices around the town. We recommend that you approach CCC and ask that they install 2.4m x 2.4m Community Notice Boards, painted black, on the main entrance roads to the village. All community posters are restricted to these boards and then all 'illegal' posters which are attached to posts, fences etc around the village are removed as soon as they are noticed. Flag poles, pedestrian crossing poles and other road signs are in need of painting. There appears to be an inordinate number of signs at the children's playground are they all needed? To what does the 'Local Access Only' sign beside the pump refer? Remove it. Remember that signage is clutter which detracts from an area, so all unnecessary poles and signs should be removed. We were delighted to read that you have put together a Database on this and we encourage you to contact CCC regularly with regards to progress. The graveyard had plastic and vegetation dumped together – this needs to be resolved. With regards to dog fouling - the provision of

bags at key locations helps. We also recommend painting 'Clean up after your Dog' on the footpaths in the areas where dog fouling is a problem. Ask the Men's shed to make a stencil which you can reuse

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

In the centre of Clarecastle businesses and residences sit side by side and were very well presented. The freshly painted walls along the R458 at St. Joseph's Terrace, Madden's Terrace and St. Michael's Terrace, gave a very good impression of what was to come. We loved the black and white freshly painted seats in the green space of St. Michael's Terrace and we have no doubt that they are well used. The curved wall entrance to the pedestrian walkway at St. Michael's Terrace is a lovely feature. The houses in these three terraces were well presented – many had great displays of colourful flowers in their gardens. Due to its proximity to Ennis housing estates have been built in Clarecastle to serve this large town. We visited a few of these (Orchard Drive, Park View, Garden Vale, Meadow View etc) and found that, generally, houses were well maintained and those who had gardens kept them well with displays of colourful flowers and shrubs. Some had trees for added interest. The roadway which separates the housing areas to the west of the church is particularly pleasant with the metal boundaries and rows of trees making the pathways supervised for those walking. Compliments to the artist for the mural on one of the walls – the butterflies. Unfortunately, this is now partially hidden from view. The communal green spaces in all of the estates were well cared for – compliments to the various resident groups for undertaking this task (but don't's forget the weed growth along the roads). Most had small coppices of trees and some had beds of colourful flowers and seats provided so that neighbours can meet and chat. We were delighted to read that the Lissane residents had planted directly into the soil and had removed the containers – this is a much better approach and if they wish at some stage, they can surround the beds with stone to contain the planting areas.

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

We enter Clarecastle from the north as soon as we have passed through the roundabout on the N85. We admired your Clarecastle Fáilte sign which is clear and informative. We see that you trim a narrow strip of grass along the grass margins of the entrance roads which we admire. Main road surfaces were good and road marking clear. This however cannot be sad of link roads where we saw, poor repairs which were ravelling and worn road markings. We suggest you bring these to the attention of the Area Engineer and see if you are in line for repair works. We noted a number of new paths with dipped kerbs have been recently installed making it easier for those with mobility issues, and those pushing buggies to negotiate their way along the footpaths. We also admired the narrow pedestrian walkways across the road – the one from the playground car park and the one beside The Castle coffee shop. This difference in road surface warns the motorists of pedestrians. The surface of the church car park is in a poor state of repair: while we know this is beyond your control it would be good to see it resurfaced. The wheelchair parking bay at the playground car park was noted.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your community and we look forward to returning again and seeing the projects, which are in the development stage, being completed.

The application form asks for New (N) and Maintained (M) projects so please only include these. All future projects are included in your Development Plan/Future Plan so please don't put them into the application form. This aspect of the application form was changed a few years ago. Don't forget to show the location of more projects on the map ... this helps the adjudicators.

The Roche site closure was in progress and traffic management was working very well when we visited. This closure will present new opportunities for your community and we wish you well in this.

Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2023 competition.