

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Cooraclare - Cuair an Chláir	Ref:	722
County:	Clare	Mark:	327
Category:	A	Date(s):	06/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	42	44
Streetscape & Public Places	80	46	48
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	44	46
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	39	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	17	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	32	33
TOTAL MARK	550	316	327

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 Tidy Towns 2023 competition and thank you for your application form, photos and map. Next year insert the photos and map into the application form – get a young person to help if you don't know how to do this. We also suggest a hand drawn map would be clearer (more accurate) than the one provided, as the scale was quite incorrect and items/projects were further apart than shown. Your committee of 12 has 55 volunteers, which is wonderful and shows that the villagers hold you in high esteem. We love the request 'Give us 2 Hours' which receives a good response from the community. A great list of state and semi-state organisations, individuals, businesses and community groups assist you. You have a website (under construction) and Facebook Page (566 followers) and also communicate, for those not on social media, through traditional channels – parish notices, in the newspapers and radio. For the past 14 years you have been involved with the Tidy Towns competition which has enlightened the community in biodiversity and sustainability while encouraging pride of place amongst the residents. Please see Concluding Remarks for advice on the map and application form.

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

The variety of building styles and building types, the topography, the winding intersecting roads and the Cooraclare/Doonbeg River all give Cooraclare its architectural character. Adding merit to this character is the RC St. Senan's church, the grotto and beautiful three-arch stone bridge over the river. Being awarded a painting grant has enhanced the village as most buildings have been painted. This has resulted in the village appearance being fresh and welcoming to the visitor. We see that some commercial premises have been converted to residential and we were delighted to see that the name S. Considine has been retained as an historical feature in your streetscape. Perhaps you could encourage those who have removed the names of other commercial premises to reinstate them. The long colourful wall leading into the village was admired. The new mural painted by your new resident is very suited to your village with the river, fish and heron depicted. Remove the planter in front of the fox – it's not required as immediately adjoining it, is a permanent planting bed. Quite a number of the business premises along the street had added window boxes and/or hanging baskets which added colour to the street in addition to being cover and a feeding area for our insects. The grotto area in its prominent location draws the eye. It's good to see that you are pursuing a rationalisation of the overhead cables in the village. We noted areas where this has commenced. There are some very beautiful wrought and flat iron gates, some set between cast iron posts around the village and on the approach roads. Some perhaps could be painted as they were a little the worst for wear.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The central green space in the village is probably the community fruit garden. We walked around it and saw that you have planted a great variety of fruit trees and bushes, flowers and herbs. We see that you are now concentrating on the church grounds but don't neglect this fruit garden. There are five planters in a row at the old creamery wall which are superfluous as there are a group of planters at the road junction which give a much stronger impact to your streetscape. Put planters in groups and put them in a location where the impact is greatest. While we admired the grotto in its location there was a lot going on around the area – these planting beds need to be re-examined and rationalised. Perhaps plant a few trees (mountain ash or silver birch) as a backdrop and then reduce the number of planting beds by removing all loose timber surrounding planters which detract from the area. The beds at the church look good but remove the weed growth along the kerbs. There was a great variety of grasses and flowers in the bed and we see you are following advice on this. We visited the GAA grounds and noted the beds against the perimeter wall.

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

The natural stone walls around the village are a great habitat for insects. You also have a great many hedgerows and tall trees which are wonderful nesting and roosting sites for birds. In addition, you have the Cooraclare/Doonbeg river and its banks. You take the children on nature walks along the river banks. Have you undertaken any projects with them on this? We spotted the insect hotel in your Fruit Garden which was made by the children of fifth class. It's good to have them involved in its construction as it will help them understand that insects and smaller animals need spaces to nest and hibernate. The information sign at the river is clear and informative and so we can see why it has generated a lot of interest. Your main project for 2022/23 had been focused on biodiversity in various locations around the village under the guidance of an expert. You mentioned that a Plan was attached but there was no Biodiversity Plan attached to your submission. Did you become involved in measuring the difference your actions for pollinators have made? We suggest that you follow Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) from the National Biodiversity Data Centre (biodiversityireland.ie).

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

This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a category where many communities struggle and truthfully it is one which they are probably doing in their day to day lives without realising it. You mention a Community Garden and a Fruit Garden – are these the same place? The Fruit Garden has a great variety of fruit trees, fruit bushes, herbs and some flowers and we thoroughly enjoyed walking around as seeing all it has to offer. We noted a domestic water butt on one of the rain water pipes of the church – perhaps install one more suited for a large roof or at least link three or four domestic ones together. Good to see that compost is made including using leaf mould and horse manure. We spotted a very overgrown compost area in the church grounds – we assume this is not the one you refer to in your submission. But where is it? You have undertaken a lot of work with the school children and they have grown vegetables and herbs in raised beds and in the polytunnel which is great. We looked for the hot composter bin at the school but didn't see it. The plastic in the polytunnel door needs to be replaced as it's badly torn. Hopefully your application for a new sewage treatment scheme will shortly be granted funding – this is something that all villages should have so as not to pollute our rivers and lakes.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You didn't mention that you took part in the Nationwide Clean-Up in April but we're assuming you did. This is an event that we advise all Tidy Towns groups to participate in as it focuses the attention of the community on the need to be vigilant about litter, fly-tipping and weed growth. When we visited the centre of the village was virtually litter free but unfortunately weed growth was noticed at kerbs, the base of walls and in open gravel areas which gave an unkempt feel. We suggest that the litter pick up volunteers also become weed removal volunteers and ask them to bring a hoe/spade and wire brush and to also remove weed growth. The gravel areas can be sprayed with organic weed killer or a mix of vinegar, salt and washing up liquid. We note that you use a strimmer and a kerosene weed flame burner to help control the weeds – perhaps we arrived before you had completed this job. The plastic weed control layer is popping through the gravel in a number of your planting beds making them untidy – this needs to be cut back or additional gravel added. The bring banks located at the old creamery had rubbish in between the bins – a common occurrence if the bins are not tightly placed one against the other. The black and yellow sections on the stone bridge and adjacent paving stones need to be repainted as does the seat at the grotto. If there's any paint still available from the grant scheme you should make it available to the GAA members to help upgrade the perimeter wall at the GAA grounds.

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

The standard of presentation of individual houses within the village environs, on the approach roads and in the residential areas we visited was generally very good and we applaud the many home owners and occupiers who clearly take pride in their place and keep their front facades, road frontage, gardens and boundary walls well-presented and neatly maintained in support of your work. Many of the on-street houses had planters, window boxes and some had hanging baskets all full of colourful flowers which had a collection of visiting insects. We admired the painted kerb and planting bed at the road junction south of the bridge but remove the tyre as it's not required. The anthuriums, nasturtiums, pansies and lobelia in this bed and in another bed gave great colour to the streetscape in front of these houses.

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

The grass margins were neatly trimmed on the approach roads giving good visibility to the motorists and also

warning them that they are entering a built-up area. We see you would prefer that the margins and hedgerows weren't cut but truthfully, they must be maintained for safety. We suggest a compromise - the roadside frontage is a great example of how to effectively present a semi-wild habitat while it is being maintained. Ask the Council to cut a narrow strip of tidily mown grass along the outer edge to show that the wilderness behind is deliberate. We admired the new stone village name signs but we suggest that the name be picked out in white paint (a job you'll do annually) so that it is clear to the passing motorists. Don't be tempted to put planting around the signs which would quickly encroach on them as they are quite low signs. We were delighted to see that footpaths (tarmacadam) extend to the houses on the outskirts of the village making it safe for the residents to walk into the village. New concrete footpaths have been constructed in the village itself. Road surfaces and road markings need attention – the pedestrian crossing is almost completely worn away. Previous repairs are ravelling and edge breakup was noted. Make contact with the area engineer and see when this urgent work will be carried out.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your village, which was our first in a long time. It was good to see the progress made in the intervening time. Below are suggestions/recommendations regarding filling out the application form and producing the map.

We requested that applicants would number their projects as, new (N), or improved/ maintained (M) and each action/project should receive a number as New (N1, N2, N3 etc.) or Maintained (M1, M2, M3 etc) which is then transferred onto the map. This is to help the adjudicators to negotiate their way around your town and see the various projects or locations of projects. We wish to state that this is not a criticism of your work but to explain to you that as adjudicators we rely on a clear application form and accompanying map to inform us of your projects and make our visit rewarding.

We also request that you don't put the same project in various categories – select the one that is most relevant to the project and only add it there (there was a lot of duplication in your form this year).

We need you to make reference to the Sustainable Development Goals. Tidy Towns in conjunction with Limerick City and County Council ran a webinar on the SDGs in 2021 and the presentation is worth reading as it will be helpful for your application next year.

The link is: [https://www.limerick.](https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/media/documents/2021-03/sustainable-development-goals-helpful-hints.pdf)

[ie/sites/default/files/media/documents/2021-03/sustainable-development-goals-helpful-hints.pdf](https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/media/documents/2021-03/sustainable-development-goals-helpful-hints.pdf)

Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2023 competition.