

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Feakle - Fiacail**

Ref: **798**

County: **Clare**

Mark: **319**

Category: **A**

Date(s): **07/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	43	44
Streetscape & Public Places	80	43	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	40	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	38	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	16	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	59	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	37
TOTAL MARK	550	309	319

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. Thank you for your completed application form, photos and map. Next year insert the photos and map into the application form – if you don't know how to do this, get a young person to do it for you. It would be good for you to produce a five-year plan. Don't make it too onerous and only include projects/activities that you know you can undertake with the committee and volunteers. A plan helps to focus the work programme of a committee. You are a committee of 15 who have dedicated roles within the community. You also have enlisted the help of 8-10 volunteers who help you when needed. You list state and semi-state organisations and agencies, businesses and community groups who support your work financially or with advice and help. You are active on social media with a Facebook Page with over 360 followers, and you also have a dedicated email address. Your PRO also uses the more traditional methods for those not on social media – parish bulletins, local newspapers, notices on the community notice board and flyers displayed in local businesses. The Meet-and-Greet initiative is good. Welcome again, your fifteenth year, to the Supervalu TidyTowns competition. We are delighted to read that participation in the competition has resulted in the visual improvement of the village due to the projects undertaken for the competition. It has also led to residents taking an interest in their village which has resulted in a great sense of togetherness, pride and community spirit. This is the true spirit of Tidy Towns.

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

You have wonderful views over the Clare landscape from a number of locations in and around the village. The streetscape is a mix of single and two storey vernacular buildings and most were well presented when we visited. Some had been recently painted and gave an added beauty to the streetscape. The whitewashed cottage with the galvanised roof is an important building due to its location in the village – we were delighted to see its condition. But perhaps a coat of a rust colour paint could be applied to the roof. We noted the overhead wires and wonder if you are in line to have these put underground. This work, when completed, will transform your streetscape. Saint Mary's RC church dates to 1826 and was beautiful. The church and community hall were painted in 2022 and presented well. We admired various stone piers and wrought iron entrance gates into some of the properties along the streetscape. We also noted a few flat iron gates and it's wonderful to see that a value has at last been put on these. We read that you cleaned the playground equipment and arranged to have any broken equipment repaired. You have a great many waterways which cross in your area and we see that your PRO is researching the bridges which will make for interesting information for the community. The picnic area at the Feakle Green is very pleasant (but see below under Tidiness and Litter). We also noted the memorial to Johnny Patterson who penned 'The stone outside Dan Murphy's door'. Compliments to the owner of the building which houses the post office. Like the galvanised cottage it is a focal building in the village and it was beautifully presented. Equally Pepper's Bar is at a

focal point and that too was beautifully presented. The Heritage map was noted – we learnt that Biddy Early is interred in your cemetery. An interesting map of Feakle/Baurroe Villages in 1842. We recommend that all new planting beds be built using natural stone and not reconstituted stones as was used beside the graveyard. There is an abundance of natural stone and plenty of good stone masons available. The VR postbox was noted.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You maintain the green areas in the centre of the village, at the church, at the school and along the approach roads. We recommend that you present a semi-wild habitat in the areas along the approach roads and possibly at the school by having a narrow strip of tidily mown grass along the outer edge to show that the wilderness behind is deliberate. We spotted a large number of planters at various locations around the village which had no planting whatsoever – at Feakle Green, the stop sign, etc etc. We strongly recommend you remove ALL planters which are obsolete to your needs as they are most unpleasant when they are void of plants/flowers. The planting at the statue on the village green is overgrown and should be trimmed. The planting beds at the community hall were also full of weeds and void of plants and flowers which was a pity. All these planters and planting beds are very noticeable in the streetscape and hopefully you will address this next year. The wildflowers at the graveyard were in full flower and were quite beautiful. Perhaps this is something to consider for your planting beds. These are pollinator friendly and with the variety they flower during all seasons. But only buy Irish wildflowers or alternatively, and better, collect locally grown wildflower seeds and plant these.

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

With the great number of stone walls, hedgerows, mature trees and the numerous rivers with their banks you have a great variety of habitats for insects and mammals. The hedgerows were very colourful with a variety of wildflowers in bloom and were buzzing with insect life. You designated an area to the rear of the playground as a wildflower garden and planted native Irish wildflower seeds. We encourage you to collect seeds from wildflowers in your area as these will grow best for you. We read that you have changed your grass cutting regime in public areas to allow for the pollen and nectar rich bird's-foot-trefoil, clover, self-heal etc to grow. Cutting is deferred until June and dandelions and other spring flowers are abundant around the village until then. This will ensure that the bees and other pollinators have a constant source of food. It would be wonderful if some creeping plants could be planted along the long, plastered wall of the GAA pitch. Just open tiny pockets in the ground and plant e.g climbing fig, or ivy which will benefit our insects and birds. We also recommend that the grass along the large sloping bank in Cúirt an Mhuilín is allowed to grow long and, as advised elsewhere, to trim just a narrow strip along the roadway

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

This category is one where many communities struggle but it's just about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a global and a local problem. Tidy towns committees are encouraged to try and prevent the generation of waste when carrying out their day-to-day activities. For example, you could make your own compost for use in your landscaping schemes as this avoids all of the associated packaging and other waste that comes with shop bought fertilisers. Growing your own pollinator friendly plants, harvesting your own seeds or sourcing donations of plants from keen local gardeners is recommended as this also avoids the waste associated with shop bought varieties. Consider harvesting rainwater in order to avoid using treated water when maintaining your planters. This is a simple process which involves placing a water butt on a downpipe to capture rainwater. Using waste or surplus products (like timber) to make planters are other items like bird boxes and seating benches is also encouraged. The bottle banks were clean and tidy when we visited. We see that LED lights are being installed in the village. We visited the school and saw the disused/overgrown planting beds. Could you offer your help to undertake growing vegetables and flowers with the pupils? We have no doubt that the teachers would be grateful for your help. We noted the solar panels on a few buildings. This is another project that you could become involved with – find out about grants etc and advise the residents on the benefits of solar power. Well done on the sale of the playground mats – you received some money and the mats were reused.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We are delighted that you register with An Taisce for the annual spring clean and that you get gloves, bags and a free pass to Scariff Recycling Centre. We read that your volunteers are responsible for an area and this responsibility ensures that the areas are kept litter free. While there was very little litter on the streets and roads weed growth was noted at kerbs, steps to the church, base of walls and in open 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 or 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. The sign to Feakle on the R468 has been damaged by a passing vehicle and should be straightened. We loved the cartoon on your Facebook Page inviting the community to take part in a clean-up. Add a cartoon sketch about the weeds to remind them that weeds too must be removed. We particularly admired the tiered area (Feakle Green) in the centre of the village but unfortunately it too was full of weeds when we visited. We appreciate that cobble lock has many many joints and that it's difficult to keep weed free. But a power wash in spring followed by regular brushing (and a repeat power wash when needed) would transform this area. The surrounds to the information boards need painting and the glass cleaning - we couldn't read the information. Also trim back the overhanging branches which hide these signs. We noted ivy on some stone walls. While ivy is a wonderful for insect life and is acceptable/good on rendered (plastered) walls it is not acceptable on stone structures as the roots penetrate between the joints in the stones, making the walls unstable and leading to their collapse. Natural stone constructions are in themselves great habitats for insect life and also very beautiful in the streetscape.

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

Vernacular single and two storey houses adorn your main street and these were, in the main, neatly presented and gave a good first impression. The modern thatched cottages on the road from the north are quite beautiful and we're delighted to see the thatch still remains. We admired the modern estate of Cúirt an Mhuilinn with its mix of single and two storey bungalows and terraced houses. The communal area here looked good and had a number of trees planted. These will add greatly to the beauty of this estate when they mature. In the meantime, check stakes and ties and remove suckers. The concrete brick faced planting bed at the back of the estate was overgrown with nettles. This bed is quite small so hopefully residents can be encouraged to take care of this bed. The houses in the rural housing estate (it's a pity it doesn't have a different name), were well presented and many had beautiful flowers and colourful shrubs in their gardens.

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

We entered Feakle from the south along the R468 and were met by a neatly trimmed grass margin, a planting bed and a seat overlooking the countryside – we're guessing this is for walkers as there is nowhere to park. We found it difficult to read the beautiful limestone sign and we recommend that you pick out the letters and drawing of the hurlers in white paint as this will stand out from the grey limestone. We advise this for all of your limestone village name signs which are difficult to read by the passing motorists. We are delighted to see that you have a 5km looped walk – we looked for information on this but couldn't find any. Is there a map with information that the local community and visitors can access? We see that the footpath extends beyond the 50km sign on the access from the north which we were delighted to see. Elsewhere new pavements have been installed which add to the streetscape. We question is there a plan for a pavement to be extended to the thatched cottages so that these residents could access the village safely on foot? Take our advice, above in Landscaping, on the presentation of the approach roads where this mowing regime could apply. Repair work has been carried out on some of the bridges, which is excellent, and we look forward to seeing the bridge guide in due course. You have undertaken considerable improvements to the road from the graveyard which were noted. We saw the memorial to the Famine Victims ... is there a famine graveyard nearby?

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your village – our first. Keep up the good work and we hope the comments above will help you.

Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2023 competition.