

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilfenora - Cill Fhionnurch** Ref: **1000**
County: **Clare** Mark: **250**
Category: **B** Date(s): **24/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	37	39
Streetscape & Public Places	80	31	33
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	32	34
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	23	24
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	14	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	24	26
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	25	27
TOTAL MARK	550	237	250

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 which included photos and a map. We encourage you to prepare a Five-Year Plan with projects under each category and a timeframe so that you have targets. Don't make it too onerous, one or two projects/activities under each category is sufficient. While it is helpful to get professional advice to prepare a plan, it is important that the community has ownership of it and is familiar with the various action plans that it will contain. Just list what you know is feasible to achieve. You can add partners to this plan who will help with the projects. Ask for advice/help from the Environmental Officer/Heritage Officer in Clare Co Co.

You are a committee of 17 and have enlisted 22 volunteers who help when a project needs additional hands. Like many other groups you are continually seeking new members. You list state and semi-state organisations and agencies, business, community groups and individuals who support your work financially or with advice and help. We see you have a dedicated email address, a Facebook page, a website and an Instagram account and for those not on social media you inform them of your activities in the more traditional way – newspapers, church notes, and public meetings. You have several junior members on the Tidy Towns team helping with little picking, planting etc. Welcome again, your third year, to the Supervalu TidyTowns competition which has resulted not only in improvement of the visual presentation of your village but also in newfound friendships and an increase in community spirit – this is the true value of TidyTowns.

Please see Concluding Remarks for advice on filling out the Application Form and producing the map.

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

Set on the edge of the Burren your village consists of vernacular single and two storey structures, with farmhouses surrounded by well-kept yards, dotted along the approach roads. Your neat, tidy main street gives a very good first impression to the visitor and when we visited the village was extremely busy with tourists and locals rubbing shoulders and enjoying all Kilfenora has to offer. The Burren Visitor Centre and nearby Saint Fachanan's Cofl Cathedral with the iconic high crosses are two of the main tourist sites in the village. Add to these the communal buildings of Saint Fachanan's RC Church and Kilfenora National School to complete the architectural merit of the village. The residences and commercial premises along the street were well presented, some had been freshly painted, and many had floral arrangements which added to the beauty of the street. Due to the nature of the streetscape (its width) visitor parking is very haphazard – this is something that needs to be organised. Draw up a plan of what you feel would work, making hard surfaced public realm areas, tree planting areas, parking areas etc. Get professional help if needed, and then present this to the Clare Co Co area engineer. There are some very

beautiful, well-built, stone gate piers along the entrance roads which we admired. We also spotted some flat iron and wrought iron gates (some in need of painting) which added to the beauty of your streetscape. The modern intervention in the Cathedral was admired - an excellent approach to conservation. Is there any talk of bringing the high cross in the field into the enclosure? Or at least giving it some protection from the elements? Is there a right of way to visit it at present? We visited the Burren interpretative centre and read about Thomas Westropp and Frederick James Foot – interesting facts. The various exhibitions are excellent – compliments to all who are involved. The picnic benches and seats were well used when we visited. We admired that the Moroney name and shop front has been retained after the conversion from shop to residence. Encourage this as it is part of the social/architectural history of your village. Maybe those who have removed the names might reinstate them?

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You have no village park or communal green space in the centre of the village and this might be something you could discuss with Clare Co Co. Is there any field or part of a field that could be purchased to create a small park? Also, could you create a small pocket park at the open space at the junction of the R481 and R476? This could be quite a beautiful feature with a few trees, information board and picnic table set among colourful shrubs and perennial flowers. Look at what other communities have achieved in such small spaces. While the wide, open streetscape is very beautiful but we feel it could be enhanced by tree planting (see above). These to be located in buildouts for protection from parking cars. Engage a landscape architect for this job as it needs to be done professionally. You give spring flowering bulbs to the school children and to those in the creche – is this for planting in the school or to bring home to their own houses to plant with their parents? The planting beds noted in various locations looked good, including those in the village centre and around the church – full of colourful flowers and shrubs and alive with insect life. Please also compliments the many businesses and residents who added colourful flowers in window boxes, hanging baskets etc which enhanced your village. We visited the GAA grounds – it's quite a distance from the village and access is therefore by car for all who use it.

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 church and cathedral you have a great variety of habitats for insects, mammals and birds - the stone walls are a great habitat for insects and the many hedgerows and tall trees are wonderful nesting and roosting sites for birds. The hedgerows were very colourful with a variety of wildflowers in bloom and were buzzing with insect life when we visited. We loved the area at St. Fachtnan's well and your biodiversity trail but put a 'walking distance/time' on the sign in the village so that people don't drive to it – there was a slight traffic jam there when we visited. A narrow path meandering through the grass down to the seating area beside the well would improve the visitor experience, as on the day we visited, it had been raining, and we witnessed two elderly visitors turning back because there was no path. We see you have funding for an ecology study of the cathedral which will inform you of the wildlife using the building and surrounding graveyard. We were delighted to read that you will have an information talk to the school children based on this. Perhaps also have one for the adult population? We had a look at your Facebook page and also saw in the church porch that you're having a Wildflower Competition – don't forget to tell us about it in next year's application form.

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. Tidy towns committees are encouraged to try and prevent the generation of waste when carrying out their day-to-day activities thus leading by example. 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. Do you know what does the coffee shop do with the waste it generates? Could the coffee grounds be distributed to those who have compost bins/areas? The raised planting beds at the school were noted – we're delighted to see that the children are involved in this activity. You mentioned you give talks to the school children on a range of subjects but why not offer these to the adult population? Besides being informative they are also a social occasion for the community which is always beneficial. We spotted the solar lights at the village name sign as we entered along the R476 from the north – needless to say we didn't see them lighting. We also noted solar lights in other locations in flower beds which must give a pleasant glow in the evening. We look forward to your walking trail which you are investigating with the Geopark.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

For a village busy with tourists, 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. Weed growth, however, was noticed along the main street and in residential areas which gave an unkempt feel. We are aware that cobble lock is difficult to keep weed free but a brushing every week or so needs to be scheduled into your work programme. 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. We also recommend the removal of ivy from the two-storey unoccupied building which has engulfed the gable and is now growing on the façade and under the slates. This will cause enormous damage to the roof structure. The recycle bins had some litter around them. Is the green one in use? Paint it or remove it as it is very unsightly. We noticed a few signs around the village, advertising events which detracted from the streetscape. One telling us of events in April 2023 which should DEFINITELY be removed! We recommend that you request that the area engineer installs 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 walls, posts, fences etc around the village are removed as soon as they are noticed. This will also keep posters up-to-date. Remove the signage from the weighbridge building as they detract from this pretty stone built structure.

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

There are many wonderful well-kept houses in the centre of the village. They are generally terraced and are either single or two-storey. It was good to see that the majority were occupied as vacancy leads to dereliction in a very short space of time. There are numerous areas in the housing estates where trees could enhance them. The main structural elements in the landscape and one of the main structural elements in a streetscape are trees. Trees are known to have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. By planting and caring for trees, you help reduce pollution, improve your surroundings, improve the appearance of your community and increase the value of your property. In addition, they provide shade for humans, food for insects and food roosting sites and nesting sites for birds. As you are a large committee with an equally large number of volunteers, we suggest you divide the village into zones and tackle them on a rota basis which would include the residential areas. Put up a sign in advance saying that weeding/tidying will be carried out and hopefully some of the residents will venture out and help on the evening.

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

Stone walls and hedgerows with some trees line the entrance roads to Kilfenora. Trim back the grass margin along the entrance roads from the 50km sign. This does two things – firstly it warns the motorists that they are entering a settlement and so need to reduce speed and secondly trimming a narrow strip of grass along the roadside is a great example of how to effectively present a semi-wild habitat in this type of setting with its narrow strip of tidily mown grass along the outer edge to show that the wilderness behind is deliberate. We suggest you build a stone surround flower bed along the road edge of the triangular green space near the village name sign (on the R476), making sure not to block the sign with planting. This would add importance to the entry to your village from the north. We admired your name signs with the Celtic cross as a backdrop to the information. The main road was in good condition but those in the housing estates were poor with edge breakup, potholes and poor road markings – something for you to bring to the attention of the engineer. We admired the grotto – a pity there's no footpath to access it or area to park nearby. We also noted that there is no footpath to the school from the village centre. This should be resolved so that pupils living in the village can access it safely on foot.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to 'Kilfenora, city of the crosses, home of the céilí music' as it was a few years since our last visit, and that time as a tourist.

A few recommendations for next year's application.

Rotate the map and completely fill an A4 size page with it – this makes it larger and easier to follow for the adjudicators.

You will have seen that we requested that applicants would number their projects in the Application Form as, new projects (N), or improved/maintained projects (M) and all 'future' projects should only be included in your 5-Year Plan and NOT in the Application Form. You are to give each action/project a number as New (N1, N2, N3 etc.) or Maintained (M1, M2, M3 etc). This same numbering system to be used to indicate the locations of these projects on a map – N1, N2, N3 etc and M1, M2, M3 etc. This is to help the adjudicators to negotiate their way around your village 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 would appreciate it if these points could be taken into consideration when preparing your 2024 application.

Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2023 competition and keep up the good work which is reaping its just rewards.