

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre:	<b>Miltown Malbay - Sráid na Cathrach</b>	Ref:	<b>861</b>
County:	<b>Clare</b>	Mark:	<b>296</b>
Category:	<b>B</b>	Date(s):	<b>24/06/2023</b>

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2022</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2023</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	39	41
Streetscape & Public Places	80	39	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	34	36
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	27	28
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	19	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	58
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	31	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	37	39
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>296</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 TidyTowns competition and thank you for your application form, photos, map and legend of the projects new, maintained and future. We liked your three-minute little video which showed many of the projects which you undertook in the past year. The drone aerial photo was particularly informative as it gave a great view over the whole village. Next year insert the photos into the relevant categories in the application form which makes it clearer for the adjudicator. You have an email address and Facebook page and we encourage you to open an Instagram account so you will then target the whole community, young and old. You are a small committee of 4 who get help from a further 10 when a project needs extra hands. We feel you need additional committee members who will take ownership of an individual project/task as truthfully, they're needed in a community of your size. You get help and advice from state and semi-state organisations, individuals, and local businesses. This is your eight year entering the TidyTowns competition and we are delighted to read that you have found the adjudicators comments beneficial and a help to plan your work. TidyTowns brings communities together, friendships are formed and communities develop a sense of pride in their locality.

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

Located in the windswept landscape of west Clare your village consists of vernacular single and two storey structures with some farmhouses surrounded by well-kept yards along approach roads. There is a great variety of architectural styles in your built environment which adds great character and interest to the town. With its mix of single storey to three storey and one-bay to five-bay the streetscape is an interesting mix which gives it its beauty. We particularly admired the modest, yet beautiful, shopfronts of D Mac Cruitín, M. Crowe, Tom Malone, M. Lynch, A Talty, and S Murrihy to name a few. All were beautifully maintained and some had floral displays adding to their beauty. To these we add The RC church of Saint Joseph's, the old railway station building, the community centre, library and the school to complete the architectural merit of your town. Your wonderful murals on the gable walls add addition colour to the streets – Three Brave Blacksmiths, the Selfie Butterflies, the West Clare train, Willie Clancy (with Séamus Ennis), the Musicians and your recently completed one of Charles Steward Parnell adds to these. We also admired the mosaic at the FETC centre and 'Midnight in Miltown' sponsored by LCETB – remove the ivy which is beginning to grow across it. We loved the little elves – the building needs attention. We were delighted to see that shops which have been converted to residences have retained their shop fascia and name. This is excellent as the shop name is part of the architectural and social history of your town. If you could convince those who have removed them to reinstate them it would be great, as otherwise the information is lost for future generations, which is a pity. We noted the plaques erected by the Mid Clare Brigade Committee. Have you a

streetscape/historical trail? As you have such a variety of structures and excellent shopfronts, we are sure this is achievable. Use small QR codes attached to the buildings to give the information and a map in a central position in the village giving the route and the length of time it should take the visitor.

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

While there is no official public park within the town close by is the GAA pitch, Páirc Mac Aonghusa, which is used by the community. The blank concrete block wall is quite unpleasant along this road. We suggest opening small sections of the footpath, perhaps every two bays, and planting a clinging creeper (ivy or Virginia Creeper are suggested) which will make the wall more presentable and also be a food source for insects. But they will require a little maintenance so be prepared to undertake this. Other green spaces are found at the FETC centre and opposite the National School. It might be worthwhile to develop one of these as a public park and to employ a landscape architect to design it.

The community scheme to plant over sixty window boxes along the main street is admirable and truthfully, they added greatly to the beauty of your streetscape. We appreciate that you want the town to look its best for the Willie Clancy Festival in July and so hold on placing these in-situ until late June. We read that fifty trees were planted in the church grounds last year which in time will add to this area of the village. The main structural elements in the landscape and one of the main structural elements in a streetscape are trees. So, we are in favour of tree planting as they are known to have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing and in addition they reduce pollution, increase the value of a property, provide shade for humans, food for insects and food roosting sites and nesting sites for birds. We suggest there are many places in Miltown Malbay where trees would enhance the buildings and streetscape. Do a walk about and identify these. Build-outs might be needed in some locations to protect the trees when planted.

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

In October 2000, Julie Fossitt of the National Parks and Wildlife Service published A Guide to the Habitats of Ireland which provides a standard scheme for identifying, describing, and classifying habitats in Ireland. It covers natural, semi-natural, and artificial habitats of land and freshwater environments, and it remains the most important habitat classification system in Ireland to date. It might be advisable to examine this and to classify the habitats that are in your village and surrounding area. You have wonderful habitats around you - stone walls, hedgerows, mature trees all of which are habitats for insects and mammals and feeding and roosting sites for birds. The hedge rows were very colourful when we visited with a variety of wildflowers in bloom which had a multitude of insects visiting. With your wildflower meadow did you become involved in measuring the difference your actions for pollinators have made? Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) from the National Biodiversity Data Centre ([biodiversityireland.ie](http://biodiversityireland.ie)). We read that the teachers regularly take the children for nature walks and release their butterflies in summer – what not take photos and show us? It's disappointing to read that Japanese Knotweed was identified in eleven sites but the good news is that you've successfully treated this invasive plant species over the past five years. It's a long arduous task to fully eradicate it so be patient and keep treating it. The fruit bushes and apple trees have continued to grow well for you and provide food for wildlife and also humans! You have taken advice from Dr. Fran Giaquinto and Phoebe O'Brien with regards to your biodiversity improvement works.

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

You list a variety of projects under sustainability, recycling/upcycling, transport, energy saving all of which are commendable. You mentioned that some of the committee attended a course in Gardening for Biodiversity/ Sustainability which is excellent. How did you inform the community of what you learnt? We read that the window boxes along the street are maintained by a group of volunteers and are watered with the water harvested via guttering at the back of the houses.

The products of vegetable garden are enjoyed and shared by those in the community who participate and enjoy growing fruit and vegetables. We read with interest about the iECO camp park and then went online to see it – very interesting. It advertises that it has a micro renewable energy system. Perhaps you could arrange a talk to the community on this topic? Within the town there are a large number of business and commercial properties, what are local shops /businesses doing with food waste, packaging etc? Do you know of other community groups/businesses and their approach to Sustainability? Let us know what others are doing and how you've interacted with them. Are there many people in the town who carry out repairs – shoe repairs, dressmakers, electrical repairs, washing machine repairs, phone repairs etc. Make out a list of those in Miltown Malbay or further afield who repair items and circulate it. It is something that new people to your town won't know and indeed those living there all their lives might also not be aware of. Put the list on your website and in doctors' and dentists' waiting rooms, hair salons etc.

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

You took part in the An Taisce National Spring Clean-Up which is commendable and for this you have a separate large volunteer commitment. This annual event focuses the attention of all on the need to be vigilant on litter, fly-tipping and weed growth. Miltown Malbay was extremely clean when we visited including streets and back lanes so, please commend your litter pick-up team for their attention. The boundary wall of the Garda Barracks was extremely dirty as too were the piers – not a large wall to repaint. The wall at 'Looking Back in Time' was also a little dirty – this probably needs to be painted annually to keep it fresh. Interesting that in 1841 Miltown Malbay had a population of 1425 whereas now it's 829. At least it's an increase from 2002 when you had just 562. Trim the grass margins along the entrance roads from the 50km signs. This does two things, firstly it lets people know they are entering a settlement and so to reduce speed and secondly this is a great example of how to effectively present a semi-wild habitat in this type of setting with a narrow strip of tidily mown grass along the outer edge to show that the

wilderness behind is deliberate. We too advise that the overhead service cables diminish the visual amenity of the streetscape especially where they feature several cables radiating from a single pole. Keep in contact with your area engineer regarding having them put into underground ducts as this will transform your streetscape when completed.

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

There are many well-kept houses in the centre of the town along your streets and we loved where a shop has been converted to a residence and the shop front, fascia and name has been retained in recognition/honour of the previous use of the building. Many of these had been freshly painted and presented very well and some boasted hanging baskets, and window boxes full of colourful flowers adding greatly to the beauty of the street. The row of 14 flat roofed terraced houses in a semi-circle are interesting – is there a history behind them? Trees could be planted in the communal green space in some of the housing estates which would greatly add to them e.g. Meadowlands Drive, in the flat roofed houses green space (it would be nice if these houses had a name at the entrance), Ballard Road etc. Elm is a species which is quite hardy so perhaps this could be planted in estates where trees are lacking. The name sign of Cuain Uilinn was completely covered. Trim the grass around all signs as all signs should be visible to the passerby. Quite a number of boundary walls in numerous estates were dirty and need to be repainted as they detracted from the overall appearance of the estates. There was a considerable amount of weed growth along the kerbs in some of the estates. We suggest that you tackle this and put up a sign in advance stating that there's a litter pick-up /weed removal evening and hopefully one or perhaps two residents will join you. Names are missing for some housing estates/areas – does every area/estate have a name? Perhaps arrange to have a name cut into a large stone and placed at the entrance to these. We noticed the trees in Slí Leag Árd estate – hopefully they will survive your windswept conditions. We admired the planting beds at Lus Na Sí. Trim a narrow strip of grass along the path edge of the open space opposite the school so that we and others see that it is an area managed for wildlife as not as it appears now - unloved.

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

In addition to being able to walk safely along a footpath to Spanish Point and the beach from Miltown Malbay we now see that the footpath has been extended along the Ennis Road which is excellent. In the centre of the town (near M. Fox) the road is marked for the pedestrian and dipped rumble pavements provided but there are no pedestrian lights provided to accommodate their safe crossing. We suggest that you contact the area engineer and see if pedestrian lights could be installed similar to that at M. Lynch. Road surfaces are generally good and road markings and signage clear giving good information to the motorists. The road surface in some areas needs attention. We admire the recently installed pavements with the rumble strip and dipped kerbs at the junctions making it easier for those using mobility scooters and those pushing buggies to cross the roads. The village name structures along the approach roads are quite distinctive and were admired but don't plant in front of them as the plants obscured the information.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your village/town and enjoyed meandering around your streets and roads. We've visited many times before as tourists so it was interesting to visit this time with more critical eyes. A few suggestions for filling out the application form and producing a map. You will see that we request applicants to identify their projects as new projects (N), or improved/maintained projects (M) and all 'future' projects should only be included in a 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. Please update your map as some of the projects weren't indicated and it took a while to find them. The Community Garden map was illegible – we tried to increase the size on the computer but it didn't improve it. A new map of Miltown Malbay is needed and we suggest that you rotate it if necessary and fill the complete A4 page with the map, adding the projects undertaken as requested above. 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 would appreciate it if these points could be taken into consideration when preparing your 2024 application.