

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Newmarket-on-Fergus - Cora Chaitlín** Ref: **83**
County: **Clare** Mark: **356**
Category: **C** Date(s): **28/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	46	48
Streetscape & Public Places	80	49	52
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	50	52
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	35	37
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	61	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	36	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	39	41
TOTAL MARK	550	339	356

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 we thank you for your completed application form which included photos and various maps of future project locations. You also attached a Biodiversity Plan and a Draft Master Plan for Newmarket-on-Fergus. And lastly a map of the projects you undertook since 2022. Your Biodiversity Plan and Draft Master Plan are very impressive and we wish you well, as the actions contained in them are implemented. Your committee of 8, which have dedicated roles, has the help of 30 volunteers who have a diverse range of skills and experience and we are delighted to see that young residents of the town are part of this group. You have an excellent social media presence which will gain credence from the younger members of the town – a dedicated email address, a Facebook Page with 1.1K followers, and a twitter feed (here we see the last entry was mid-May so this needs to be kept up to date). You have entered the SuperValu Tidy Towns competition for in excess of 25 years and have seen physical improvements in the town due to the projects undertaken for the competition. It has also resulted in the community taking an interest in their town which has resulted in a great sense of togetherness, pride and community spirit. We read that you have been successful in 'obtaining significant funding for the town down through the years which has been spent on infrastructure upgrade, the provision of facilities and amenities for those that work in, live in and visit the town'. We commend your dedication to your community and well done on implementing the new 'partnership for goals' approach which will benefit the whole community even more.

What a spectacular photo on the cover of your application!

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

Vernacular single, two and three storey properties line the main street in the town. These were well presented and gave a very good first impression when we entered. Add to these the modern Our Lady of the Rosary RC church, Kilnasoolagh CofI church, Scoil na Maighdine Mhuire, The Library, and the beautiful single arch stone bridges at the entrance to O'Regan Park to complete the architectural merit of the town. Like many rural towns in Ireland, you have dereliction/unoccupied buildings which detracts from the streetscape and we see that you and others are trying to resolve this problem. It is wonderful that the Tradaree Arms building was repurposed by Obair into a social enterprise hub, now the Tradaree Centre. We parked here and explored on foot, taking in the various sights and visiting your nearby projects. We admired the mural on gable offering 'Real Quality, Real Value' but it needs to be 'touched up'. The Cora Chaitlín 2001 sign at O'Regan Park is virtually impossible to read – remove it or carefully paint the letters. Weed growth here was quite bad – cobblelock unfortunately is difficult/almost impossible to keep weed free. Remove the four plastic signs and put them on the rear of the O'Regan Park post – they detract from it.

Overhead service cables diminish the visual amenity of the streetscape especially where they feature several cables radiating from a single pole; the local engineer should be approached regarding a possible date for ducting starting with the most unsightly poles first. The picnic area on the entrance road from the south with the adjoining beds and mature planting along the stone wall is very pleasant. Could the bollards be removed to allow a space for parking on the old road?

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You have a variety of green spaces which greatly add to your town. We read that the Fairgreen was the subject of the Strategic Development Plan and following this major works have been ongoing over a few years – planting trees, provision of information signs, mobility access points, LED lighting, etc. leading it to be now identified as the 'Primary Civic Space' in the town. This is a wonderful achievement in the space of a few years. We read that you also planted bulbs to give spring colour and food for our early pollinators. Hanging basket give great colour to a streetscape and you select community buildings for their location. We are delighted that the GAA have engaged with you and planted a flowering hedge at their property. From your application we see that you value your trees – we also do. 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. We encourage you to do a survey of the town and see if there are other locations where trees could be added to enhance the area. O'Regan Park is very special and it too has been the subject of development over a number of years with the addition of a playground (very nice), sensory garden, nature trail and storytelling area and information panels. We loved the meandering path and saw, when we visited, that it is well used (some seats need staining/painting). The maintenance regime of the town has been amended following advice in the Biodiversity Plan and now areas are allowed to grow producing native wildflowers – lots of daises and clover were noticed in the Fairgreen area. Your planting beds were full of colourful flowers, plants and tall grasses which we admired, but remove the sponsor notices – they can be thanked/applauded on Facebook.

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

There are a range of habitats in Newmarket-on-Fergus which have been classified in your Biodiversity Plan. Mature trees, hedgerows, grasslands, stone walls, etc are all around you and add to these the open fields and turlough of Lough Gash for a complete picture. Your motto 'Making Space for Nature' is perfect and we hope the community appreciate what you are doing for biodiversity. The internal looped 2km walk taking in the SAC Lough Gash and also O'Regan Park will be a great asset to the town. We see that it is intended to be 'made in a way that protects and enhances biodiversity, acts as an educational resource, and is fully accessible'. Leaving grass uncut so as to allow native wildflowers to grow is commendable and especially important for our early waking pollinators. You have been by-passed by the N18 which must have had a significant environmental impact on the town by reducing the vast amounts of Ennis to Limerick through traffic. We noted the posting on Invasive Species on your Facebook page – well done on bringing this to the attention of the community. As you have such a diverse environment it would be good to have a few expert- led nature walks around the town where you have different specialists taking the lead and which are aimed at adults. The school children we see are well catered for. We liked the idea of the Ecological Corridor.

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

This is a category where many communities struggle but it's just about cutting down on how we use the resources of the planet and so as to reduce waste. We see that you are slowly guiding Newmarket-on-Fergus towards a sustainable future and that you plan to improve the quality of life and promote key sustainable achievements. We commend you on the information we see on your Facebook page. You worked with SEI to develop an information pack on energy efficiency etc which is being distributed to local businesses. Add a weblink to this in next year's application. You mention the upcycling but perhaps aim slightly higher. We suggest you produce an information booklet 'Newmarket-on-Fergus: Where can I get it Repaired'. Add repair shops, dressmakers, furniture restorers, etc etc to this with addresses not only in your town, but also in Ennis and Limerick. It's good to see that a 950-litre rainwater harvester will be installed at the Community Centre (following renovation works), which you will use to water plants and vegetable plots. You mention other community groups and businesses who have undertaken measures to reduce their impact on the environment, which is heartening. We admired the raised Urban Garden at the Tradaree Arms with its ornamental plants, fruit, vegetables and herbs, and which was buzzing with bees and other insects when we visited – compliments to the creators. Have many residents installed solar panels? This is another piece of information for you to gather regarding grants etc. and perhaps invite someone from SEI to talk to the community on the subject.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Like many communities in Ireland, Newmarket-on-Fergus Tidy Towns participated in the An Taisce Spring Clean-Up campaign in April. This year it was on a large scale with the local national schools assisting with cleaning outside their respective school yards and the very successful U15 camogie team participating, which is excellent. This annual event focuses the community on the need for vigilance on litter, weed growth and fly-tipping and as a result the volunteers are more conscious of removing litter etc and reporting fly-tipping as soon as it is seen. The town was virtually litter free but weed growth was noticed in quite a few places which gives an unkempt feel to that area. We were delighted to read in the biodiversity report that you have been advised to remove plants from stone walls which we have been advocating for years. While ivy, buddleia etc. are wonderful for insect life and are acceptable/good on rendered (plastered) walls they are 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 were also delighted to read that you resolved your signage and removed unnecessary signs. Remember, signage is clutter and detracts from the streetscape. If dog fouling is a problem, we recommend you paint 'Clean up after Your Dog' on the footpaths where it is a regular occurrence. We have seen this in other communities and have been told it works better than signage on poles. We also recommend that you approach Clare Co Co and request that a 2.4m x 2.4m, community noticeboard (painted black) is installed on all approach roads. Here community groups can post information on upcoming events etc and so all other posters, notices etc that are installed around the town can be removed, eliminating the clutter we witnessed. Lots of rubbish and bottles were littered at the brink banks at Killnasoolagh Park.

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

The main street/road of Newmarket-on-Fergus has vernacular single and two storey houses interspersed with businesses and commercial units. Some had planters and window boxes or hanging baskets and had been freshly painted and presented well. We like that you sell hanging baskets/window boxes as residents are not always able to grow these and so are delighted to purchase them, particularly from a voluntary organisation. Due to your close proximity to Ennis and to Shannon you have a large number of housing estates in the town. We visited these and found that they were generally well presented with houses neatly maintained and displaying neatly cut grass, flowers and colourful shrubs. We loved that some residents had planted specimen trees which gave an air of grandeur to the estate. Boheraroan has tree lined entrance roads which were very pleasant – some are leaning and need to be re-staked with longer timbers. Please advise the residents association in Killnasoolagh Park to trim the suckers from the trees in the communal open space. One house here stood out and should be mentioned – an end of terrace house with two well-constructed pergolas and with a great display of pollinator friendly flowers and a bird bath/ drinking fountain. Please commend the owner. We also visited Avondale and admired the wonderful mature tree at the entrance and also those around the communal green area. The Grotto and planting bed with grasses and pollinator flowers were well presented – but we have a preference for the removal of the plastic flowers. The medicinal garden sounds great – we look forward to its creation and we'll visit it next time we adjudicate your town. The communal green space at Lough Gash will be very pleasant – something for the next adjudicators to visit. We are delighted that residents' groups and associations are invited to your monthly public meetings, where they can discuss various concerns and get advice. Newmarket on Fergus has a number of new estates and these will be occupied shortly. You will need to approach them, probably door to door, to encourage them to form Resident Associations. Have you a 'Best Kept Garden' or 'Best Kept Estate' competition? There's nothing like a little friendly rivalry! A certificate could be presented to the winners at a social event where the press and local elected representatives are invited. Free publicity for you, honour for the winners and a pleasant social evening for the whole community.

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

Your tree lined entrances to the town are quite beautiful and give an air of opulence on arrival. They are well maintained and were in full leaf when we visited. The various roundabouts on the approach road were well presented – neatly mown grass and rounded cobble stone surrounds. The town name sign with the photo of the gazebo? is very pleasant and we were delighted to see that you didn't feel the need to adorn them with flowers. But trim the few branches that are beginning to encroach on the one at the southern entrance. A major tree pruning project was undertaken by Clare Co. Co and the ESB and you too carried out some 'formative shaping' which is crucial in tree management. Have you undertaken a survey of your trees in public spaces? Now with ash dieback trees will be removed and so you should plan for this. While sections of new footpaths have been installed, generally, footpaths along the main street are narrow and some were in a very poor state of repair. We noted dipped kerbs in some areas which facilitate those with mobility issues and those pushing buggies. Some of the roads in the housing estates had potholes, ravelling and edge break-up and are in need of repair e.g. Killnasoolagh Park.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your town and meandering around looking at the various projects undertaken by you and also visiting the town in general. This was our first time and we look forward to visiting again.

There's an interesting map of 1874 in the church showing the owners of the various plots of land around Clare Castle/Newmarket-on-Fergus.

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.