

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ruan - An Ruán** Ref: **86**
County: **Clare** Mark: **358**
Category: **A** Date(s): **08/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	53	54
Streetscape & Public Places	80	43	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	49	51
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	37	38
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	20	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	73	75
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	42
TOTAL MARK	550	346	358

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 Tidy Towns competition and thank you for you completed application form which included photos, a map and a 3Year Plan for Ruan which we look forward to seeing completed /underway when we next return.

Your committee of six has an additional 20 whom you call on when help is needed, including some of your new residents. You list state and semi-state organisations, businesses, community groups and individuals who assist you financially, provide facilities or/and advise you. You have a Facebook page and also communicate with the community through notices in the newspapers, parish newsletters and on the community noticeboard. For the past 26 years you have been involved with the Tidy Towns competition which has encouraged a pride of place amongst the residents, which is the true spirit of TidyTowns.

Please see Concluding Remarks for advice on the map and application form.

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

Your village is located just south of the Burren and is a dispersed rural community with a mix of vernacular single and two-storey buildings and these with the topography of the village and its great vistas across the countryside gives the area its character. The centre of the village is a staggered cross roads with the beautiful St. Mary's RC church, the adjacent wonderful 1784 O'Loughlen mausoleum, a busy shop and a public house (soon to be demolished). You are actively pursuing the development of the old forge site in the centre of the village and will install a new gate along with a backlit silhouette of a blacksmith. Don't clutter this site and therefore detract from the message you want to give. A simple panel telling us about the last blacksmith and a display of some of the tools of his trade. We look forward to seeing these installed. An information sign for the Moinín is also planned – again make this 'tasteful'. The Community Centre renovations have been completed and we commend you for this achievement – the letters of the Ruan NS 1833-1977 plaque need to be painted. We tried to access the imposing Kelly Mausoleum but failed – all we could do was take a photo of it over the wall while being supervised by the beef cattle in the field. The walkway into the mausoleum is fairly well maintained but it hadn't been looked after recently based on the number of cobwebs on the gate and chain. A small information plaque (put it inside, behind the railings and not on the railings, wall or piers facing the road), will be excellent, as this is an important structure in your streetscape. There are some beautiful flat iron gates in the community, including a new red one. You have completed other projects, including the installation of a defibrillator, painting the church etc which you list – well done. Compliments to the artist of the mosaic on the preschool wall.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You have introduced a new grass cutting regime to encourage biodiversity and will now cut a narrow margin along the roads and leave the remaining grass to grow. We admired that you had training for the CE workers with your local ecologist as this will help the understanding of your new grass cutting and weed control regime. Unfortunately, we noted however that a very wide margin was being cut along your approach roads, which was a pity. This message needs to be emphasised again for next year. But do trim around the base of the trees and remove suckers etc. It must have been a shock when all of the trees in the GAA pitch had to be removed due to ash dieback but in their place 150 beech and 80 oak trees have been planted. Within a few years these will begin to form a screen – patience is needed. We loved your sensory garden – community wellness garden. It is beautifully maintained and the painted slates with the plant identification and sensory function are most informative. It's good that you highlight these and many people are unaware of the true benefits of plants and flowers. The tubs in the centre of the village while being beautiful could benefit from some trailing plants to unify the displays. We admired the stone surround planting beds on the outskirts of the village – very colourful and full of pollinators on the day we visited.

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

Located in rural Clare and with an abundance of stone walls, hedgerows, mature trees, fields, and Dromore wood and Ballyteige and Dromore Lakes on your doorstep, your village has wonderful diverse habitats for nature. A 2023-2027 Biodiversity Plan by your local ecologist is being prepared and the whole community has been engaged in this process. We look forward to seeing the plan attached to next year's application. Maybe amend the date to 2024-2028? You have had wildlife walks, guides and lectures at the Moinín, the Riasc, and Dromore woods for both adult and children. These have helped the community to have a better understanding of biodiversity and the benefits of attracting wildlife. In 2022 you planted a section of the green area on the school road with native wildflowers and hopefully you managed to save some of the seed to plant elsewhere this year? The photos in the application form looked good. We looked for swift boxes around the village – are there any? These are easy to install and very important in our towns and villages which now have few locations for the swifts to nest. Contact www.birdwatchireland.ie or www.swiftconservation.org for advice on their installation and maintenance. Commend the pupil on the photos of the red squirrel eating the dandelion – a great shot! We loved An Riasc – the notice will need attention at some stage soon and it's beginning to unravel at the bottom. We stayed for a while in the hideout but didn't spot anything ... maybe it was too warm the day we visited.

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

The roof-water harvesting mechanism at the community centre which is used to water your plants in the summer seems to work well. This building is well used and you have succeeded in reducing the energy usage by 40%, which is wonderful. Here too you no longer use plastic kitchenware - commendable. Is the compost area in the Moinín still in use? We weren't too sure when we examined it it seems a little overgrown/unkept. It was good to read about the plants in the Community Wellness Garden and informing the visitor of their uses is excellent – fennel, rosemary, thyme, etc. This in addition to those planted to attract the pollinators. You provide information on water conservation to the wider community and planting guidelines to support water conservation. In addition, you advise the community on planting regimes and recommend pollinator attracting flowers. Have you a list for this – put it on your Facebook page as a link. We read that Ruan community preschool plants raised beds with pollinator friendly plants. We hope they also plant vegetables and herbs so that the children will learn about our food source. We looked for the food tins painted as bees on the school road but didn't see any. Did we miss them? We look forward to the school becoming involved in An Taisce Green Flag Programme – it's very educational for children and we encourage you to assist the teachers and pupils to begin participating.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You undertake an annual spring clean which involves the whole parish, including school children, business people, housing estate residents, scouts, camogie players and all other community committees. Well done on achieving this amount of commitment. We suggest a hard surface be put around the cow and milkman/woman sculpture or alternatively keep the grass very short as this sculpture should be on display. The recycling facilities were neat and tidy. A considerable amount of rubble and 804 stone has been deposited behind the graveyard wall which needs to be removed as it has already attracted dumping. On the entrance to the Community Wellness Garden the plastic sheeting is almost a trip hazard – this needs attention. The edges of some of the estate roads were a little overgrown with weeds which gave the area an unkempt look. Could you introduce a 'Clean-Up Day' and put a temporary notice at the entrance to the estates giving a date and time (we suggest an hour) and perhaps residents will come and join you in this work. After a few weeks the weeds will all be removed.... The trees also need attention – remove suckers, remove ivy and trim the grass around the bases of the trees. At the moment they are quite unsightly. When signs are installed, it seems a pity not to maintain them - we saw one in need of cleaning and another in need of repainting. We suggest you make a list of the stone signs (Urban and Village Renewal etc.), clean them and paint the lettering of the ones which are illegible.

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

The village is elongated and the houses on the approach roads are a mix of single and two storey traditional houses and farmhouses with yards and outbuildings. All were well maintained and those with garden had trees, shrubs and colourful floral displays with great varieties of pollinator friendly planting. There are a few houses in the centre and we see that some of these are unoccupied at present. There are two small housing estates one close to the church while the other is a short walk from the centre. Toormore estate has its name proudly displayed and is surrounded by colourful flowers and shrubs. This will have to be maintained as some will become quite large. Don't let the

heather in from of the name sign block the name – which we've seen in many, many estates. We wondered about the stepped stone wall with stepped capping – was this area part of an historical garden? If so, perhaps a small plaque on the history of the area is a project you could add to your list? We also visited Hazelgrove where here too residents maintained their houses and many had freshly painted boundary walls which presented well. Gardens had great floral displays – catmint, lupins, foxgloves, marigolds, lavender etc. which were attracting the pollinators. We suggest that paths be cut through the grass areas in communal spaces where ball play doesn't occur and the remaining areas be allowed to grow to produce native wildflowers and grasses. Needless to say, mow a wide path around all planting beds so that they are visible.

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

We liked that footpaths extend out along the approach roads making it safe for walkers to access the centre of the village. We noticed a lot of the children walking toward the village from the national School, which we were delighted to see. A new pedestrian crossing with new pavements each side and with dipped kerbs has been installed in the centre of the village. This too will add greatly to the safety of the pedestrians. The village name sign as we entered from the south and its surrounding stone planting bed was quite beautiful. On the other approach roads stone surround beds also highlight the village name. The timber fencing on the Corofin road is quite long and is a huge asset to the entrance to the village from the north. We question the logic of putting two small planters with flowers on the road junction to Dromore Nature Reserve. We strongly recommend that these be removed and that wildflowers are planted in the wide grass margins and that the grass be trimmed just enough to ensure a safe road junction.

Concluding Remarks:

When we printed the map to bring with us when we visited it was difficult to read. Make the drawing of the village more pronounced for next year.

We encourage 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)

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your village. We enjoyed our picnic at the stone picnic bench and table near Dromore Wood and afterwards we visited the Lake and Woodland – a beautiful natural amenity on your doorstep. Another time we'll do the Red walk.

Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2023 competition.