

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Scariff - An Scairbh** Ref: **87**
County: **Clare** Mark: **330**
Category: **B** Date(s): **07/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	45	46
Streetscape & Public Places	80	44	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	43	45
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	34	35
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	24	26
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	37	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	34	35
TOTAL MARK	550	317	330

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 including photos, and for your map, Biodiversity Study of Riverside Park and your 3-year plan. Your committee of 10, whom you list, has the assistance of an additional 20 who help during various initiatives/projects. You are an active group with regular meetings liaising with other community groups, businesses, residential estates and the local schools. You list state and semi-state organisations, and community groups who help and advise you. We see that you have a dedicated email address, a website and a Facebook Page (350 followers). The last posting on the Facebook page was in March 2023 and the one before in October 2022 – it needs to be more active. Get a teenager to be your social media PRO – it'll look good on their C.V. In addition, you inform the community of your activities through meetings, newspapers, parish newsletters, notices/posters in shops, and local radio. You have entered the TidyTowns competition since 1992, which is wonderful. The competition has instilled a sense of pride amongst the residents and has encouraged all to keep their commercial premises, houses and gardens well presented for the improvement of the town.

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

The undulating nature of the town adds interest to the streetscape. From the high point of the centre, the roads, lined with a variety of vernacular single and two-storey properties descend towards the R352 and the river. It's always good news when vacant properties in a town are renovated and open with new businesses. We were delighted to see that two new businesses have opened in Scariff and that, in addition to the businesses being a boost to the economy and footfall in the town, the streetscape has improved. The centre of the town is quite unique with the beautiful old weighbridge/weigh house as a central focus. We were delighted to see that the weighing mechanism to weigh 3 ton was retained. The mosaic sundial support, the copper surrounds to the pole and the clock art work were also admired. The RC church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Scariff Public Library and Scariff National School add to the architectural merit of the town. We also admired the old six storey high water tower. Are there any plans for this beautiful structure? It seems a pity not to see it used, if only as a tourist attraction as a lookout tower. We noted some new street lighting but also poles with a multitude of wiring – are there plans to remove these and put the wiring underground? Overhead service cables diminish the visual amenity of the streetscape especially where they feature several cables radiating from a single pole. There are quite a number of buildings / retail premises unoccupied – hopefully this will not continue for much longer. We note that one building is being developed as a Digital Hub and Enterprise Centre by Clare Co. Co. which will bring additional life into the main streets.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Riverside Park, located on the edge of the town on the banks of the River Scariff, is a fine asset to the town and its proximity to the centre ensures its continual usage. While we didn't visit at a time to witness your new lighting, we did note their existence – a great benefit to the Park. We walked around the path and noted the new trees – make sure to trim around them to give them space to grow. The new all-year-round pollinator friendly planting borders will also be an asset to the Park and to the pollinators. It's always good to plant for year-round colour and this year you undertook this additional work at the planters and beds around the Square and also the baskets on Scariff Bridge. Seeing colourful shrubs and flowers during winter/spring is wonderful and gives us all some joy, in addition to being a great food source for our early pollinators. We noted the trees with their guarding which have been planted on the buildouts along the streetscape in the last few years and were delighted to see that they are maturing nicely. 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 and so we encourage you to see if there are other places along the streets (and residential areas) which would benefit from tree planting.

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

The aim of this category is to encourage people to recognise, engage and celebrate the biodiversity and richness of the wildlife habitats in their surroundings. You have concentrated your efforts on your Riverside Park. The Biodiversity Study commissioned by Clare Co Co (in 2020) of Riverside Park with 8 areas identified and studied is an excellent document for you to follow and so manage the site correctly. This year you have planted, under guidance, 30 native trees saplings, including oak, ash, hazel, birch, and Scots pine. In order to rewild the Park you now mow/cut the riparian margin and the meadow twice a year. Since the management of the native hedge row, you have noticed more solitary bees. Did you become involved in measuring the difference your actions for pollinators have made? This is a worthwhile activity and something tangible for you to undertake and see the difference. Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) from the National Biodiversity Data Centre (biodiversityireland.ie). Have you thought about undertaking projects with the local school children? There are many activities that the different age groups would love – something for you to explore with the teachers. We noticed Lough O'Grady ... is this on private land or could you organise a walking route to this lake?

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

This is a category where many communities struggle but truthfully it is just about being aware of how we use the resources of the planet so that we cut down on our waste. Educating both young and old in Sustainability – doing more with less is crucial so that we advance our knowledge to move quickly to a zero-waste society. The grass margin along the footpath in Riverside Park 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 note that the grass is cut twice a year cutting down on manpower and fuel used. What a great idea to bale the cut grass from the Park in September for animal feed. We have no doubt that the farmer is delighted. 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. What are local shops doing with food waste, packaging etc? Do you make your own compost for use in your landscaping schemes avoiding 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. We admired the community garden at Connacht Road estate – well tended and displaying varieties of herbs, vegetables, fruit bushes and flowers. We visited the East Clare Community Co-Op Café and Gairdín – very impressive. Are you involved?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We noted your invitation to join the Clean-Up Day on your Facebook page add photos of those involved etc. (See Community Involvement and Planning above). Twenty-five volunteers would make a huge impact on cleanliness and tidiness in one day so please commend those who took part. We note that Sunday morning clean-ups are your most challenging as socialising on Saturday night brings the most litter for you. Do you need more Big Belly bins from Clare Co Co? This might alleviate the problem somewhat for you in the blackspots. Adopt a Patch works – make out a list of those who've committed and put it on your Facebook page. When we visited the town was virtually litter free and weed growth was minimal along the main streets, base of walls and kerbs. A small amount of weed growth was noticed along the walls of unoccupied buildings – which detracted a little from the streets. Poles were freshly painted and signs recently washed. Well done to your volunteers for keeping the town looking so well.

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

There are many wonderful well-kept houses in the centre of the town. 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. You have some interesting rows of terraced houses varying in architectural styles which gives additional character to your streets. The standard of presentation of individual houses in the town centre was generally very good and we applaud the many home owners and occupiers who clearly take pride in their place and keep their front facades well-presented in support of your work. A few had floral arrangements – window boxes and baskets which added vitality and colour to the streets. Dergview, Connacht Road and Fossabeg estates were visited and here too the majority of houses were well presented with road frontage, gardens and boundary walls neatly maintained. A small number of boundary walls need attention /cleaning/ painting where walls have become weather stained. The picnic benches and seats in the communal spaces in Connacht Road added to the estate as did the

row of mature trees along the L4016 (Church Street). The communal space in Fossabeg estate main communal area needs trees.

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

We approached Scariff from the west across the bridge and the topography from this direction gives a good view of the town. Other approach roads are tree lined with neatly trimmed hedgerows. Being bypassed by the busy R352 ensures that the centre is saved from through traffic, which is always a benefit to a town. The one-way system in the town works well and the parking area in the centre was very busy with those using the surrounding retail outlets. We admired the buildouts with the trees, which added to the streetscape, and made for a safe crossing area. Perhaps a different paint colour on the road at these crossings would assist pedestrians and motorists? The road surface in the town was reasonable but road markings were quite worn, particularly at junctions, which need attention at some stage in the future. Road surfaces along Church Street have edge break-up and potholes and marking were completely worn. Some stones (cobblestones) need to be replaced near the central carpark. The new GAA wall brightens the approach road from the north – it will need regular painting to maintain this. We admired the approach to the church with seats inserted into the stone walls.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a pleasure to adjudicate Scariff, a town we've visited before but not as an adjudicator. Hopefully our paths will cross again.

Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2023 competition.