

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Shannon - Baile na Sionna** Ref: **88**
County: **Clare** Mark: **351**
Category: **E** Date(s): **28/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	53	55
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	50	52
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	40	42
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	21	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	40	41
TOTAL MARK	550	336	351

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, photos, map, and list of actions you will accomplish in the next few years. We recommend putting a time line on these actions to focus your planning and work. Your committee of fifteen has eight executives, each of whom has a dedicated role, and seven members. You have twenty-four volunteers who have a diverse range of skills and experience and we are delighted to see that your work is acknowledged either in person or on social media. We checked on-line and see you have an active Facebook Page with 1.5K followers (correct the link in next year's application <https://www.facebook.com/ShannonTidyTowns/>), an Instagram Account (although not very active), and a Twitter account (also not very active). We suggest you enlist the help of a young person as your Social Media PRO and ask him/her to keep these accounts active; it'll look good on his/her C.V. later on in life. Your WhatsApp connections with various subcommittees work well for you. You list your involvement with other groups and also list those who support you financially, with advice or with help. This is your 45th continuous year to enter the Tidy Towns competition - well done. In the intervening years Shannon has become a brighter, better place due to the projects undertaken. The town is more environmentally friendly and the community spirit has increased, creating a sense of pride of place.

Please see Concluding Remarks for advice on filling out the application form and producing a map.

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

The town is constructed between the N19, the N18 and the R471. It is a 'new' town – the first one in Ireland – built in 1959 and since then has developed into the large urban area we see today. This is to be further developed and we look forward to visiting when the new amenities (Civic Offices, Arts Venue, Library etc.) are constructed. The recently painted town centre looked good with its floral arrangements and green spaces adding to the streetscape. We admired the sculpture in the graveyard – what a stunning view from here. Although you are a 'New Town' you too like other Irish towns have your share of disused/unoccupied buildings which quickly fall into disrepair and are a blight on the streetscape. All you can really do is keep trying to get the owners to carry out routine maintenance and if results aren't forthcoming contact Clare Co Co for assistance. We note various other improvements/ projects including the installation of 6 new bus shelters, an 'ability' swing in the playground, the work being undertaken around Joe's shop (it took us a while to locate the shop), Slí na Mara pedestrian walkway, new public seats and bike racks etc. The outdoor seating area in the Town Center was well used with people having their lunch – good to see this facility being provided.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

As a new planned town, you have a great variety of green spaces which greatly add to your town. We read that there are 200 acres of green spaces dispersed around the town, which is wonderful. You have identified which sites are suitable for recreational use and natural play. You recently planted 2,000 native Irish saplings to create hedgerows. This will make a considerable change to these areas when they develop. We are delighted that in addition to other community groups you also invited the pupils of the National Schools and Secondary Schools to assist in the planting. In addition, in the last two years 5,600 trees have been planted. You have a management plan in place for tree maintenance. Have you undertaken a survey of the trees so that the removal of the ash due to ash dieback can be planned? New trees will be required in their place so we encourage you to know their location. We admired the wild meadows. There are other locations in the town where native wild flowers could be added – take a walk around, particularly some of the communal open spaces in the housing estates, and identify areas which would benefit from this form of planting. We loved Tullyglass Hill and Tullyvarraga Hil – what wonderful amenities in the centre of residential areas. The Town Park is a superb facility with its bandstand, picnic area, water feature, pump track, bicycle repair station (the pump is damaged), play area, etc. It is in an excellent location near the Town Centre, Library and Town Hall. We admired the corten steel entrance name signs and the modern seating at the entrances.

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

Although a new town you have a great many natural habitats for insects and small mammals – grasslands, parklands, trees, walls, the coastline of the Shannon and the forested lands. To promote biodiversity, we need to manage habitats in such a way that we provide food and shelter for our fauna and a place to grow and thrive for our flora. In conjunction with experts, you produced a biodiversity action plan 2021-2024 entitled Enriching our Public Grasslands. What actions have you undertaken since its publication? Did you become involved in measuring the difference your actions have made for pollinators? Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) from the National Biodiversity Data Centre (biodiversityireland.ie). Being beside an SAC and SPA is very special and the information boards will increase awareness of this area. We love that the Scouts have planted pollinator friendly flowers at their main entrance, and that the Beavers have made a large bug hotel – remind the leaders that this needs to be cleaned to get rid of any residue, debris, and old loose, dry materials to prevent fungus and mites from spreading. As there is planned building taking place, we suggest you consult the document - 'Landscaping and Biodiversity Guide for New Developments'. The Shannon Wetlands were also visited – trim back the nettles so that visitors can use the seats. The sign needs to be cleaned as it's difficult to read.

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

This is probably the category where most communities struggle but it's just about cutting down on how we use the resources of the planet and so as to reduce waste. Having a talk on Sustainability is good to see – hopefully you will follow this up with further events. Do you grow your own pollinator friendly plants and harvest your own seeds? This is not only money saving but also cuts down on the waste associated with shop bought varieties. You are a large community so encourage the gardeners to collect seeds, take slips of plants and share with others. Or you could sell them at an annual 'Plant Fair' and make some needed money for your organisation. The allotments are a great success story and when we visited, we saw all that was taking place – individual well-tended numbered large plots, fruit trees, poly tunnels, composting, mulching, rain water collection, etc. We liked the idea of your pop-up shop to raise funds which you held in May where members donated good condition clothing and unwanted items which were subsequently sold. Tell us about this in next year's application. St Aidan's NS with its Green Flag flying had very pleasant floral beds in the area in front of the school and behind we came up wonderful raised beds in the yard – full of vegetables, fruit bushes and colourful flowers and buzzing with bees and other insects. Please commend the teachers and pupils for this wonderful display. The fruit trees were also noted – remove the tyre from the base on one of these. We were also delighted to see the large collection of bicycles in the bike shed. The Shannon Loop walks are excellent – these must wait for another visit.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Like most communities in Ireland, Shannon took part in the An Taisce's National Spring Clean and also, due to your location, you took part in An Taisce's Clean Coast. These are big occasions for you and the volunteers and at the end of the day you gathered as a community for a cuppa. This annual event has the added advantage of focusing a 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. You also have children involved in your litter pick-up days and this year you were accompanied by the pupils of both national and secondary schools. We read that you no longer use pesticides to remove weed growth and that it is done manually. We are aware that this is time-consuming but it is better for the environment. Just ask your litter pick volunteers to also bring a hoe/spade with them and remove weeds when spotted. We read that the residents' associations in the various housing estates take care of litter and weed growth in their areas. Some of these need your help as there was considerable weed growth along footpaths and road edges. It's wonderful that you have students taking part in your work as part of their Gaisce Award – this will be something they'll remember and hopefully will encourage them to become part of a Tidy Towns group wherever they live. We looked for a skateboard park in the town but didn't spot one – this could be a location where the graffiti 'artists' could decorate. We have seen this in other locations and some of the work is quite beautiful!

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

Housing within Shannon is in housing estates and we visited quite a number of these. Generally, houses were well

presented and we noted that some had solar panels installed. Gardens were well kept, had colourful flowers and some had large plantations of shrubs giving great cover to insects and small mammals. The houses in Aidan Park and Finian Park have the advantage of having rear access to their houses to facilitate bins and deliveries. We walked along part of the footpath up Tullyvarraga Hill but unfortunately didn't have time to completely explore this amenity. We admired the name plaque at Dún na Rí – very legible from a distance. The white paint will probably need painting every year to keep it legible. The stone name sign for Killian Park was admired but it cannot be read – we suggest this name is painted white, as white paint is better on limestone. While the estates themselves are 'contained' we liked that pedestrian linkages exist so that children and indeed adults can walk from one estate to the next. We love the idea of the 'Best Kept Area' award, and suggest you have another 'Best Kept Garden' or perhaps 'Best Nature Friendly Garden' award. Gentle rivalry is fine! We see that 100 houses were awarded grants for paint under the Town and Village Streetscape Enhancement Scheme 2022'. Don't forget to encourage the residents to grow pollinator-friendly flowers from now on. Have a look at the website <https://pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie/> for ideas for the garden and for residents' association for their communal areas.

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

Neatly trimmed grass margins, some lined with trees and hedgerows give a natural appearance and are aesthetically pleasing on the approach roads to Shannon. Bóthar Mór had great mature and was particularly pleasant, giving an air of opulence on arrival. We recommend that where ground planters can be installed along the road margins this should be undertaken instead of loose plant containers. The guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible and where planting for impact is required. Bóthar na Luachra is a main access route and is very pleasant with double rows of mature trees giving a great canopy and helping to segregate the housing estates on either side. Four new pedestrian crossings making it safe for pedestrians have been installed as part of the Active Travel Project. We read that you also planted roadside margins with spring flowers – daffodils and tulips - which not only look good but also feed our early waking pollinators.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your town, which we've visited before, although this time with more critical eyes as adjudicators. It was good to see the various projects undertaken by you and others. In terms of your Tidy Town's application form you will see that we request that applicants number their projects 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 had a large number of projects which are in the 'planning stage' in your form. Unless a project is completed/maintained it is NOT to be included 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 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. We were delighted to see you referencing the Sustainable Development Goals. Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2023 competition.