

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Whitegate - An Geata Bán** Ref: **1128**
County: **Clare** Mark: **312**
Category: **A** Date(s): **06/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	38	41
Streetscape & Public Places	80	38	40
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	38	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	39	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	19	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	33	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	32	33
TOTAL MARK	550	299	312

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 application form, map and photos. Next year insert the photos into the application form in the relevant category – ask some youth/teenager to help if you don't know how to do it. Your committee of 10 has the help of an additional 8 when needed. You list state and semi-state organisations, and community groups who help and advise you. We see that you have a dedicated email address and a Facebook Page (1.2K followers). In addition, you inform the community of your activities through meetings, newspapers, parish newsletters, notices/posters in shops, and local radio. This is your 12th year entering the TidyTowns competition which is wonderful. The competition has encouraged people to keep their houses and gardens neat and tidy and to take pride in their environment with an aspiration to make the village a better place for all.

We encourage you to prepare a Five-Year Plan with projects under each category and a timeframe so that you have targets. Don't make it too onerous, one or two projects/activities under each category is sufficient. Just list what you know is feasible to achieve. You can add partners to this plan who will help with the projects. Ask for advice/help from the Environmental Officer/Heritage Officer in Clare Co Co.

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

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

Your built environment has a great variety of architectural styles which give character to your village. Add to this its layout on a road junction, the general topography and the great view across the Clare countryside to realize its full character. Like many rural towns in Ireland, you have your share of dereliction. Have you addressed this? Make contact with the owners of the properties and if results aren't forthcoming contact Clare Co Co for assistance. The little replica cottage was freshly painted and presented well – keep the surrounding planting well-trimmed back to that it is always visible. The ingenuity of the adaptation of the pallets as planter containers was admired – three attached to a wall displaying great colourful petunias. We are delighted that you received grant funding for restoration works on the monastic ruins at Clonrush Cemetery and that the work has been successful. The panel gives very interesting information on the 12th Century complex. We loved the stone steps, beside the gates, giving access across the wall into the cemetery. The SE (Saorstát Éireann) post-box was admired - this needs to be painted. The many freshly painted commercial properties looked good – please commend the owners. The farm machinery display is very pleasant and a reminder of our rural past. The mosaic at the school is quite beautiful flowers, a rabbit, music, a cross, the boat, hurls etc. - so many symbols contained in it. Compliments to the artist.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

While there are no major public green spaces within the village close by you have the Meelick Bay picnic area, Dromaan Harbour, Clonrush Cemetery (and adjacent lake area) and Ash Tree crossroads which are all wonderful amenity spaces for the community. We loved that the GAA facilities at Cumann Geata Bán are located close to the village so that it is accessed on foot by the players and others. We admired the stone surround planting beds which had colourful flowers. Next year add some ornamental grasses (height and movement) and also trailing plants/flowers for added interest and greater impact. The hanging baskets on the public lighting were noted; they need trailing plants to hide the black plastic containers. Many of the items you mentioned here belong in other categories – please take care in filling out the application form. (We see this was mentioned in previous reports). The boat at Ash Tree Cross is in need of repair and painting – or remove it. Equally the concrete post and rail fence is damaged in a few locations – repair this.

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

You have a great number of stone walls, hedgerows, mature trees, and fields in addition to Cregg Lough and the surrounding woodlands, all of which support our flora and fauna. 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. We see that you use the annual 'bio-diversity week' to engage the whole community to highlight the natural beauty of our area which must be preserved for future generations. Do you arrange talks, bird watching events, walks, visiting experts? Let us know what you do during this week. We see that the teachers have seasonal nature tables in their classrooms which must arouse great interest in the pupils. There was a lovely display of wildflowers along the post and wire fence on one of the smaller roads. This is something you should encourage other landowners and those with gardens to do.

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

You mention that you make your own compost for use in the flowerbeds. Have you a communal compost area? Locate this in next year's application form so that we can visit it. Great that you have access to manure from farmers and stables – great for roses. You mentioned the bottle tops competition in the local school – will they make a mosaic from these? Something you could encourage/assist with? You mention walks in nature – how are these advertised? Who is the leader/expert? Put the posters into next year's application form. We looked for rainwater harvesters and saw one water butt on a house. Are they all privately owned? Maybe encourage the school to install a large tank for your use. We look forward to reading about the success of the infra-red heating system in the clubhouse. Have many households installed solar panels? This is something you could advise on – find out about grants, different systems etc and hold a workshop inviting SEI experts and different installers etc.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You took part in the An Taisce National Spring Clean-Up – this focuses the attention of a community on the need to be vigilant on litter, fly-tipping and weed growth and we encourage all communities to take part. There was a small amount of fresh litter on the streets which we have no doubt was collected by you as soon as you saw it. Weed growth was also noticed at kerbs, base of walls etc. which gave a slightly unkempt feel. Remind the litter pick up team to also remove weed growth. Ask them to bring a hoe/spade and to also remove weed growth along kerbs and walls. The gravel areas can be sprayed with organic weed killer or a mix of vinegar, salt and washing up liquid. The bring banks were neat and tidy although the sign beside them was very dirty and needs to be cleaned. While ivy is a wonderful habitat for insect life it should be removed from natural stone wall, bridges, etc as the roots cause damage to these structures. Natural stone constructions are in themselves great habitats for insect life and also very beautiful in the streetscape. There are a number of walls in the village where ivy needs to be removed. The black poles of the flower baskets in the church grounds need to be painted. We admire the residents (and businesses) have adopted areas and are willing to keep these clean – remind them about keeping them weed free too.

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

Single and two storey vernacular houses interspersed with farmhouse and neatly kept yards line the approach roads to Whitegate. These, on individual sites, were generally well maintained and had neatly trimmed hedges, and well-kept gardens. Houses in the village itself were also well presented and many had great displays of colourful flowers in planters, window boxes or hanging baskets in support of your work. We are delighted to see that you provide assistance to residents if they need help. What type of assistance do you provide? Give us examples and photos in next year's application form. Lakyle Park was well presented – freshly painted houses, boundary walls and gates and the communal spaces at the entrance neatly displayed. Perhaps a tree could be planted in the buildout at the cul-de-sac (near the red gate). Don't forget to encourage the residents to grow pollinator friendly flowers from now on. Have a look at the website <https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Garden-Pollinator-Guidelines-2022-WEB.pdf> for ideas for the garden.

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

Trees line the roadside as we entered from the north which are very pleasant. The name sign, however, was almost hidden behind tall grasses and branches. We recommend that a narrow strip is cut along the grass margin of the entrance roads from in front of the name signs which will do two things. Firstly, this roadside frontage is a great example of how to effectively present a semi-wild habitat with a narrow strip of tidily mown grass along the outer edge to show that the wilderness behind is deliberate and secondly it will warn motorists to reduce speed as they are entering a settlement. We admired that a footpath extends to houses on the outskirts of the village giving

pedestrians a safe route into the village. The surface of the R352 was good but road markings in the village are slightly worn including those of the parking bays at the church.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a pleasure to visit Whitegate a village we've visited before but as a tourist. We enjoyed going to the many areas you featured in your application form.

In terms of your Tidy Town's application form 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 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 if these points could be taken into consideration when preparing your 2024 application.

You also need to refer 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.