

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Glounthaune - An Gleanntán	Ref: 130
County: Cork(South)	Mark: 357
Category: C	Date(s): 06/06/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	49	50
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	43	44
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	38	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	38
TOTAL MARK	550	344	357

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 chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amachanseo. Adh Mór... thank you so much for your entry into this year's competition, you are very welcome, and it is fantastic that you are continuing to enter the competition after a spell of being dormant. It is heartening to hear that your involvement in the Tidy Towns initiative has helped foster a sense of pride by the residents of your town and helped enhance the community spirit. You have a committee of 8 people with an additional army of up to 20 volunteers to assist as needed, which is great given the amount of work that you are undertaking. Thank you for providing a very clear and concise entry form with some lovely pictures, a map as well as your document setting out your plans and priorities from 2023 to 2026, greatly appreciated. I note that last year's adjudicator suggested reducing the number of pages in the entry form somewhat, so thank you for taking that on board, it not only assists the adjudicator, but also makes sure that we can focus on the priority work that you have done and nothing is missed. Thank you also for including some handy practical information on parking etc. and the places to stop for coffee or a bite to eat, always useful to know!

You engage with a variety of other organisations, groups and businesses, such as Cork County Council, Glounthane Community Association, Mens Shed and Muintir na Tire, as well as local schools and sports groups. We were very interested to read that you now have two of your volunteers being active on the Public Participation Network which should be a great opportunity for networking and hearing about relevant developments in your area.

A lot of involvement also taking place with the younger members of your community, with activities being undertaken by local schools who do voluntary work to GTT as part of the Gaisce Awards, Scouts doing 'Leave No Trace' cleaning and youth representatives on your Committee, great work!

For a relatively small Committee there is a huge amount of work being done, and judging by the involvement of so many other organisation it looks like your work is appreciated. Apart from the results of the work that you are doing that I saw on adjudication day, there is a plethora of other events going on. These include everything from a vintage car rally, Christmas Craft Fair, Pride in Our Community Awards,, Michael Collins Commemoration, not to mention the Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade, you certainly keep yourselves busy!

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

There were some attractive buildings to be found in the town including. The Community Centre which is a beautiful building has been enhanced even more with the lovely flowers and landscaping in front of it, and the Rising Tide pub with nice splashes of colour provided by its hanging basket and the Flower Power Florist beside the Post Office

was also very eye catching.

The area surrounding the refurbished green water pump was also very charming

There was some excellent signage to be seen throughout the town, the black and white finger signs for the Ashbourne Walkway and Harper's Island were most attractive. Likewise, the board giving information about the heritage of Glounthaune was also very smart, though the poster itself was beginning to look a small bit faded so perhaps this could be replaced in time, but this is a very minor quibble.

The new entrance to Harper's Island SAC/SPA area was admired, and a nice stroll was taken around the area, it looked very smart and was very easy to get parking here and access the area.

The Walled Area looked very attractive, thanks due to Fitzpatrick's Shop for planted this as part of their celebrations for their 70th year in business according to the sign, (though now with an amazing 75 years of service to the community). The roses were in full bloom when we visited and added a lovely splash of colour to this area, and the upgrade works and parking in front of the shop was to a very high standard.

The completion of the Greenway is a great asset to your town and we agree that the landscaping at the Elm Tree Restaurant are very attractive, the redecoration of the Children's Creche was also admired and looked very fresh.

Well done on the Sensory Garden, some fantastic work has taken place to provide this facility, and well done to the Men's Shed and Tidy Towns volunteers for all your work in preparing the ground work for this, whilst Cork County Council completed it, and wonderful to hear that this is being enjoyed by children with autism, amazing work. The other upgrade works were also noted, this is a lovely place to spend some time.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

There is a wealth of green spaces to be enjoyed in Glounthaune and its environs, and a lot of work has been done to make sure that this is looked after so that it can be enjoyed by both locals and visitors alike. The Sensory Garden has already been mentioned, but well done again, a wonderful facility. There was some really lovely landscaping to be found throughout the town, the Ashbourne Walkway is a lovely oasis and is a little haven of tranquillity despite being so close to the main road. I thought the planter with some seating incorporated was a clever idea.

The triangular shaped landscaped area near the Elm Tree looked splendid, and great to see that it included pollinator friendly planting such as lavender and white daisies. It was also good to see that the Pollinator areas were clearly marked out so that people could see that there is a purpose behind these 'wild' areas, and hopefully help raise awareness of the need to do all we can for our butterflies and bees.

The Centenary Garden looked immaculate, well done to GTT as well as the Men's Shed who look after this. It is also impressive to read that the lovely Dry Bridge Garden is being maintained by youth volunteers, kudos to them!. Other great work being done included the development of the new planted area on the Greenway Verge, as well as the upgrading works at the Railway Garden, not to mention the four kilometres of beech hedging (great for biodiversity as you have noted) and the upgrade work to the Cuddies Acre Walk way.

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

Harper's Island wetlands area is a wonderful amenity to not only your village, but the wider community as well as visitors, being both a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Special Protection Area (SPA) and is a home to a wide variety of flora and fauna such as the Godwit, Shelduck, Teal, Redshank amongst many others. It is a great testament to Glounthaune Tidy Towns, along with the Men's Shed and Cork County Council that you have ensured that this is an accessible place that people can observe, learn and enjoy the nature and environment here. Facilities that you have helped provide here includes the two bird hides, information signage, the nature trail comprising of a looped footpath as well as an outdoor classroom area. As part of your education and awareness campaign you have included some on site talks by your resident Ecologist, and we note that you hope to develop the observations hides in the future as well.

The Wildflower Meadow at Johnstown Park was admired, and is a part of your biodiversity plan, and you have done an impressive amount of work on this in a relatively short time, with over 5000 pollinator friendly bulbs planted to include crocus, daffodil, dacia and others, it must look a beautiful sight in Spring when in full bloom and due to your no mow policy you have seen plants such as cowslip and bluebell to thrive. Other work that you are carrying out in this category includes your participation in National Tree Week with the planting of native trees such as Birch, Ash and Alder, and also in a hedge restoration project in collaboration with a local farmer in order to increase biodiversity, and participation in the National pollinator Awards Scheme, well done!.

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

Again, a lot being done in this category, you are very conscious of the need to be sustainable and to adhere to the principles of 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle'. It was with interest we read about the workshops that you undertook in conjunction with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) which focussed on ways in which homeowners could reduce their energy usage, important at this time not only for the environment, but also the pocket. The SEAI is a great source of information in relation to energy efficiency as well as grants. A really fascinating case study was also provided by you outlining how one resident decided to carry out a deep retrofit of his own 1980's property. It was really interesting to read how such a dramatic improvement in a BER rating could be achieved, with the house going from a D1 rating to an impressive A2. This is definitely an exemplar, which not only makes a difference to the environment and contributes to the reduction in energy wastage but must have also resulted in a really warm and welcoming home.

Other measures also include rainwater harvesting at the Community Centre which is used for watering the new village garden and flower boxes.

The sale of second hand books in the Post Office was also noticed, a great way to raise some funds whilst also allowing people to give their books a second life to be enjoyed by someone else. Other initiatives in the area of sustainability include the recycling of drink cans, which were decorated as bees to highlight their importance for diversity, and these looked absolutely charming. Also, the use of natural pesticide is being trialled, the promotion of solar panels for the heating of domestic water, and great to see that your work with the SEAI has led to an increase in the uptake of these, as well as electric vehicles. The picnic tables made from fallen trees were also noticed and looked great.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Overall, there was a very high standard of tidiness and litter control to be seen throughout Glounthaune. The majority of areas seen to be litter free, clean and tidy, and this is something you obviously put a lot of work into with frequent litter pick ups, involvement in the national Spring Clean Day as well as participation in Cork County Council's Anti Litter Campaign, well done.

There were a few bits of litter to be found in the woods unfortunately, and also there was a black trash bag abandoned just beside one of the benches beside this area, and an abandoned shopping trolley near the picnic area at the Ashbourne Walkway, but other than these few anomalies, the town was nearly spotless.

There were signs posted to deter dog fouling also showing the fine for this, and hopefully this has acted as a bit of a deterrent, and the humorous 'Pick up or Pay up' stencils of a dog owner picking up after their pooch was a good way of getting the message across.

There was a lovely sign saying reminding people to take their litter with them 'Stopaigi Ansin And Bin Everything'. It was great to read that you also get a lot of assistance from Transition Year students as well as the CE Scheme to help with your litter picking, bulb planting, pruning and weeding

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

All houses and residential areas looked to be maintained and cared for to a very high standard, from the newer modern estates to the more traditional homes to be found in the town, particularly some of the wonderful old stone faced houses which add a tremendous amount of character. It is great to read that part of your ethos is to ensure that every effort is made to preserve and protect the unique character of the village street.

The Woods Estate had a lovely slate sign inlaid into the stone wall which looked very smart, a nice way of reducing the need for external signs and poles etc., and the estate itself looked very well maintained. The new Harper's Creek development looked attractive with some good landscaping which will look even better when matured somewhat. Other estates visited included Cois Chuain and Gort Fada, and all looked well maintained.

The village green looked fantastic with great maintenance work being done here, a really attractive area. It is also good to hear that you also make efforts to help assistance to the local community through the supply of plants and advice to help the village look as well as it can for all.

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

No matter which approach you take into Glounthaune, you are greeted with a smart vista, with the planting by the 'dry bridge' looking great (and well done to the youth volunteers involved in this) or the replicas of the dry bridge as you approach from the West or East. These features are not only very attractive, but also create a cohesive sense of place.

The improved access to Harper's Island has already been commented on, but this has surely increased the accessibility and enjoyment for those who wish to visit the area, and the road resurfacing looks very well. There were very clear markings for the separate lanes for cyclists and pedestrians which was great as I noticed how busy the through traffic was on the day that I adjudicated, and this helps keep non car users safe. Good work on the roadside park development with its no mow policy to allow wildflowers to develop, great work being done on pollinator friendly plants, to take this up a level perhaps look into doing some work on pollinator 'corridors'.

Concluding Remarks: