

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Carrick-on-Shannon - Cora Droma Rúisc	Ref: 543
County: Leitrim	Mark: 370
Category: D	Date(s): 29/06/2023 01/08/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	53	55
Streetscape & Public Places	80	52	55
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	49	51
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	38	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	27	28
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	42
TOTAL MARK	550	356	370

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 Super Valu Tidy Towns Competition for 2023. We thank you for your entry, and wish you all the best in all your future work. Good luck.

- Carrick-on-Shannon, Cora Droma Ruisc, a large town with a population of 4062 people, has entered the competition for 40 years and has an active committee of 20 members with support of another 50 volunteers, a very significant level of voluntary commitment.
- The committee meets on a regular basis and held an AGM in January 2023. Your chairperson attends the Carrick on Shannon Chamber of Commerce meetings every month.
- Support is also received from a wide range of different national and local agencies and business organisations including Leitrim County Council, Carrick on Shannon Chamber of Commerce, Roscommon County Council, Breffni Resource Centre, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, St Mary's GAA Club, Carrick on Shannon Rowing Club, Fáilte Ireland and Leitrim Public Participation Network.
- You communicate using Parish Bulletins, Newspaper notes and articles in the Leitrim Observer and Roscommon Herald. Your Facebook page currently has 2890 followers, and the Instagram page currently has 395 followers.
- You issue a newsletter in English to the National School and this is also issued through Irish to the local Gaelscoil. It is noted that many younger children have joined Carrick-on-Shannon Tidy Towns with their parents or guardians, including a majority from Ukraine. You are involved with Gamechangers, a Youth Autism Group whose members join your Sunday morning litter picks once a month.
- It is heartening to read that your committee has made a huge effort to integrate your new Ukrainian friends into the community in Carrick-on-Shannon and these efforts have included the running of mindful arts and crafts groups at the Dock Arts Centre for children and teenagers. Your efforts in this regard are fully acknowledged and the Ukrainian residents are volunteering for litter picks on Sundays and take part in a wide range of local events, including the sowing the seed project and the Carrick Mummies etc. Well done to the Vistamed company and your Ukrainian volunteers for their assistance in the planting of 25 whitebeam trees on the Castlecara Road. The trees have established very well and will make a significant impact on the roadside landscape here, for many years to come. Your fundraising efforts on behalf of the local hospice and assistance in running many events in the town particularly on the run up to Christmas and afterwards is noted very positively. It is great to see that the tradition of the Mummies on St. Stephens day and making straw hats at Christmas time and St. Brigid's crosses in the Spring, remains a very strong element of the cultural heritage of Leitrim, with the able assistance of your Ukrainian volunteers.

The quality of the application form was excellent and the before and after photos were valuable in demonstrating the projects completed over the past year. The emphasis placed on the inclusion of mainly new projects under each category heading, reduced the complexity and overall number of pages on the form, which was immensely helpful. The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the Application Form, which for Carrick-on-Shannon is suitably concise at 44 pages long, including photographs. The blue and red coloured text inserted on the form was clear and easy to read. The number of new projects mentioned under each category was appropriate, averaging 2/3 per category. The adjudicator was very impressed with the professionally produced and comprehensive Carrick-on-Shannon Tidy Towns 5 Year Plan. The plan was prepared based on wide public consultation and the implementation of the proposals will have a very positive impact on the future sustainable development of the town.

The 3D town map/project legend included with your entry form was excellent. Projects were easy to locate on site which greatly assisted the adjudicator in navigating around the town and helped the assessment process considerably - well done.

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

- You have listed a total of 3 new projects under this category this year including the installation of floral displays throughout the town, provision of artistic wall murals and the transformation of the railway parcel office. In relation to the floral displays the adjudicator was interested to read about the sophisticated and energy efficient system employed in Carrick-on-Shannon for watering your planters, railing boxes and hanging baskets. The system, using a mobile tank, battery-fed submersible pump, all controlled remotely - sounds very practical and environmentally friendly and no doubt could be tried in the future by other committees. One wonders whether the plant feed included as part of the regular watering, can be regulated as part of this system?

- It is always a great joy to visit Carrick-on-Shannon and its delightful location on the banks of the majestic River Shannon, with the large expanses of shoreline reedbeds and well-presented linear open space areas and boating marinas, always provide a welcoming aspect to the visitor. We commenced our visit at the small public car park located beside the Shannon River near the Tourist office. Proceeding to Bridge Street we admired the upcycled bicycles attached to the trees on the roadside margin here which added a wonderful splash of colour and interest on this town approach. The small Tidy Towns signs attached to the bicycles and the front basket floral displays were an especially pleasing addition here. On the opposite side of the road the adjudicator admired the very neat and tidy paved area with attractive floral displays, seating, tree planting and solar bin.

- The quality and standard of the shopfronts and building facades to commercial and residential premises along Bridge Street, Main Street, George's Terrace and the central part of the town was outstanding. In the report, the adjudicator would normally mention individual properties for special comment and commendation. However, there were so many superbly presented properties in the town, it was simply not possible or feasible to mention all of these. Suffice to say that the efforts of Carrick-on-Shannon Towns, local Chamber of Commerce and Leitrim County Council, in cooperation of local business owners and residents has been a truly exceptional achievement. The town enhancement scheme has improved the walkability and overall safety of this town center for pedestrians and cyclists. Leitrim County Council are to be congratulated for the successful implementation of this expertly-designed scheme. The bi-lingual street name signage placed throughout Carrick-on-Shannon, is also worthy of very positive comment and greatly assists the visitor in navigating around the town.

- Bridge Street, with its wonderfully paved and neat and tidy footpaths, attractive street name signage and beautifully painted, presented shopfronts and building facades, was a joy to behold. The old stone fronted Town Hall building looked especially well with some floral artwork set into the boundary stone walls on the perimeter. The steps leading to the doorway here are a little stained and would benefit from a refresh with paint. The nearby library building was excellently presented with large open window displays making it very inviting to the passerby and certainly encouraged people to enter to browse the shelves and borrow some books. McHugh's Bar looked very well with attractive floral displays and Vitto's nearby restaurant premises also enhanced the streetscape here.

- It was the day of the Farmers Market in Carrick and we called in to the Market Yard Centre which was a hive of activity. The entire outdoor space here exuded a palpable atmosphere of vibrancy and enterprise and people were also enjoying some relaxation and chatting with friends. The many high-quality products on offer made it a joy to stop and browse the stands. To cope with the uncertain weather in Ireland, attractive stretched canopies have been erected to the rear of the site, which do not intrude into the surrounding historic streetscape. The vertical business sign at the entrance to the Market Square has seen better days and could be renewed in the not-too-distant future. The central paved area around the clock feature also provided a welcome rest point and vantage point to observe the hustle and bustle. This area along with other parts of the town, were admired for the use of very high-quality materials and workmanship throughout. This included attractive upstand tree surrounds, bench seating in stone, natural stone paving including blue coloured inserts, parking bays using limestone setts and very attractive floral displays. The post office premises at St George's Terrace looked very well with extensive floral displays along the frontage here.

- The complex of buildings in the vicinity of the County Council Offices provided the impression that new commercial developments in Carrick-on-Shannon have been expertly integrated with the older historic buildings in the town and these have been upgraded and renovated in a very sensitive manner. Many similar properties around the country are falling into disrepair, but this is certainly not the case in Carrick-on-Shannon, where a concerted effort is being made to protect the historic built environment, whilst at the same time allow for modern uses of these buildings.

- The striking and imposing structure of Saint Mary's Catholic Church located in the center of the town towers above the adjoining streetscape and its frontage along the road is enhanced with attractive stone piers and railings and floral displays. The entrance to Church Lane is greatly enhanced by the two new excellent wall murals created by Eloise Gillow depicting the heritage of Leitrim GAA and local literary figures. The entrance to the nearby St. Georges Church and visitor Centre was also a delight. The Swift mural is a wonderful addition to Priest Lane. The Scoil Mhuire national School is greatly enhanced with extensive floral displays erected on the perimeter railing.

- We called to the Carrick-on-Shannon railway station and noted the recent work undertaken here to upgrade the presentation of the old parcel office. This attractively painted and rather interesting structure, located adjacent to the green pedestrian bridge over the Railway line and the nearby planting beds and seating area, now ensure a very welcoming aspect for visitors disembarking at the Carrick and Shannon station.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- Construction activities as part of the Destination Towns Works were underway at the linear park beside the river, opposite the Landmark Hotel. The traffic safety rail fence erected along the roadside along this part of the linear park, is beginning to deteriorate and perhaps the timbers might be replaced in the not-too-distant future. We were able to make our way along this beautiful Linear Park with walkways constructed using attractively coloured Ballylusk gravel. The footpaths here were presented to an excellent standard. The adjudicator especially admired the views towards the extensive reedbeds and the river beyond. The new low maintenance beds at the Picnic Area Linear Park were noted and these were neatly enclosed and defined using timber sleepers. The colour scheme with the use of purple and yellow foliage plants, including herbaceous perennials, fern and hedge planting worked very well. The nearby free library was in a pristine condition, with a wonderful array of books to choose from. The overflowing pot and old bath floral schemes were superbly presented and added great interest for the visitor in this area. The biodiversity bed also looked very well and we admired the bug hotels here, complete with their very own green roofs.
- The Town Park was visited and the adjudicator noted the new raised planting beds created around the base of the timber pergolas, at the entrance to the park and beside the park seating area. This new planting is growing well and no doubt the various pergolas will be covered by the flowering climbing plants before too long. The seating, grassed areas, paving, tree planting, boundary walls and timber structures in the park were all maintained and presented to a very good standard. One of the oak trees at the entrance has died and could be removed/replaced. This park is clearly a very important amenity for the town and its residents and visitors alike.
- The planting, presentation, and maintenance of the on the Shannon, Attifinlay and Attirory roundabouts on the outskirts of the town looked very well. It was noted that some seasonal bedding plants such as cosmos were used within the timber surrounds on the new Shannon Roundabout enhancement scheme. Perhaps for the future you might consider using more permanent herbaceous perennial type planting and spring bulbs in these areas. Such planting can make a colourful visual impact e.g., *Alstroemeria* spp. is more pollinator-friendly and perhaps will not require as much ongoing maintenance.

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

- The AXA biodiversity garden was visited and the extensive work carried out here by your volunteers including the creation of raised planting beds for fruit trees, internal gravel paths, perimeter hornbeam hedging, native woodland type planting and willow arches etc. were all greatly admired. The location of the garden adjacent to the riverside wetlands enhanced the overall setting of this worthwhile project. The work on the garden does not appear to be fully completed and the adjudicator looks forward to seeing the finished product in due course. The nearby enclosed site, which appears to be a pumping station, is surrounded by green fencing and is visually prominent in this part of the park. It is suggested that a native hedge could be planted outside the fence, with a view to screening this site from the park and the adjoining main road.
- The dieback resistant Ash tree seed saving project is a very good idea and hopefully your success in propagating disease resistant trees will become a source of healthy stock in the country and ongoing feature of your biodiversity garden.

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

- There are a total of 4 different projects presented under this category this year ranging from the upcycling initiatives to organizing a Fair-Trade parade in the town. It is noted that all material used for your displays are either recycled or upcycled goods and these are reused over and over again e.g., seasonal message boards, upcycled bicycles, wreaths for window displays etc. You highlight the importance of disposing of cigarette butts correctly which was a theme for your St Patrick's day float this year.
- The 5 old disused bicycles attached to the trees near the Shannon bridge were transformed into objects of beauty with baskets filled with perennial, pollinator friendly plants and flowers and a backdrop for seasonal messages from the tidy towns team. You also upcycle old pallets and convert them into signage for cheerful seasonal messages along the waterfront and seasonal window displays are made using recycled and upcycled items.
- In relation to your floral displays these are produced in a very sustainable and environmentally friendly way. It is noted that all plants are home grown in Carrick-on-Shannon, from seeds germinated under glass by your horticulturist. This provides you with two crops of flowers for your beds at the Linear Park and at various other locations in the town.
- It is noted that the local company Vista Med is one of Carrick-on-Shannon's main employers and they work closely with your Tidy Towns committee in looking at green energy and energy conservation in general. The adjudicator is pleased to read that the company is certified to ISO 50001:2018 Energy Management Systems since 2020 and therefore have action plans in place in relation to improving energy performance and reducing energy consumption. They have also won the Freudenberg 'We all take care' Awards for their Energy Monitoring System, which allows them to monitor in real time the energy consumption in their plant. Congratulations to all involved with these very worthwhile initiatives.
- Your committee has joined the towns Fair Trade committee and it is noted that your town is the only Fair-Trade Town in County Leitrim. You were involved in a Fair-Trade parade and made signage using upcycled boards and other items to highlight the Fair-Trade fortnight earlier this year. These were placed in strategic locations

around the town and in a window display in the Tidy Towns office.

- In relation to new projects under this category the information provided in the Tidy Towns newsletters and the Tidy Towns Handbook is very informative in this regard. Some areas worthy of consideration by Carrick-on-Shannon's Tidy Towns committee for the future under this category, in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals, could include the development of small electric microgeneration schemes for Wind, Solar and Hydro in partnership with the Local Authority - these may also attract suitable SEAI or Leader funding.
- You might also look at advocating for the development of further dedicated off road cycle and pedestrian routes (greenways and blueways) along the River Shannon linking in to the town centre.
- If not already in hand, the Committee might also consider in the future initiating membership of the Sustainable Energy Communities programme run by the SEAI which includes engaging in learning networks, preparation of energy masterplans and local energy action plans etc. The following are useful links in this regard. <https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/sustainable-energy-communities/><https://www.codema.ie/sec>
- The ongoing management of rainwater and floodwaters near rivers and in urban areas in the context of climate change is an important topic under this category. Are the committee aware of the nature-based solutions to the management of rainwater and surface water run-off in town areas, water sensitive town design, best practice etc? A recent publication on Sustainable Urban Development (SUDs) by the Dept. of Housing Local Government and Heritage is available and provides important guidance in this regard.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

- It is noted that Carrick-on-Shannon Tidy Towns volunteers meet every Sunday morning year-round to pick litter and on Tuesday evenings to undertake weeding, cleaning, and painting areas that require attention. All collected rubbish is segregated. It is pleasing to read that your volunteer numbers have swelled this year because your friends from Ukraine are joining in with your work. The great work of the committee and volunteers in Carrick-on-Shannon ensures a high standard of presentation of the town is always maintained. This is the key to enhancing the overall attractiveness and continued economic success of the town for residents and as a tourist destination.
- Your volunteers put a lot of effort into the 'bin the butt' campaign as part of the St. Patrick's Day celebrations, which seems to have been a great success.
- The row of cottages on the Leitrim Road have been transformed by your committee by painting the properties to the extent that at first glance they appear to be occupied and do not detract from the approach to the town – well done for all your efforts here.
- On the day of adjudication, no issues regarding littering or the general tidiness in the town or on the outskirts were noted. The town was very busy on adjudication day with the Farmers Market and footpaths and public spaces were generally found to be in a pristine condition.

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

- Your Tidy Towns volunteers help and encourage residents to look after and maintain the areas where they live. You assist in cleaning, weeding, hedge cutting and planting pollinator plants and shrubs and you continue to litter pick in the estates as part of the Sunday morning litter picks.
- The adjudicator called to several housing estates in the town, including the Shannon Lodge estate, Shannon Court, Leitir Gheal, Oaklands Estate, the Paddocks, Cluain Sí, and the Lis Cara estate. The standard of presentation in these housing areas was generally found to be very good with the attractive name stones at the road entrances, very well maintained internal roadside margins and open space areas, good tree planting and attractively presented private homes and gardens.
- The holding of an annual Tidy Estates competition in Carrick-on-Shannon could be considered for the future and over time this will further enhance the standard of presentation of all the housing areas within the town.

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

- o The main approach to Carrick-on-Shannon from the Dublin direction is characterized by an impressive double line of mature poplar trees, which were planted on both sides of the road fronting extensive areas of uncultivated grassland and natural vegetation. There is an attractive name sign on the roadside margin entering the town, with a floral planting scheme located underneath. The adjudicator admired the new planting scheme consisting of 30 Liquidambar trees on the roadside margins here, which are establishing very well. These trees have a particularly attractive and distinctive autumn leaf colour and when fully established will provide a striking feature around autumn time on the approaches to the town.
- o On the Leitrim approach to the town the main feature along the roadside here is the old timber post and rail fencing, located on both sides of the road, sections of which are now in poor condition. The adjudicator is aware that this issue has been raised previously in reports and as part of your future plans for the area. A suggestion has been made to provide a new boundary fence on both sides of the road – Key Project 7. As a more cost-effective shorter-term solution, perhaps consider planting a native hedge along the existing fence on both sides of the road, which will establish within a short period of years and will effectively screen this boundary from public view.
- o The main roads into and on the outskirts of Carrick-on-Shannon are well presented, the roadside margins are generally very neat and tidy with an absence of clutter or inappropriate signage.

Concluding Remarks:

The adjudicator was very impressed with this year's submission from Carrick-on-Shannon Tidy Towns committee and the excellent projects noted on the entry form were matched by what was seen on the ground. The ongoing commitment and enthusiasm of your committee and volunteers including your Ukrainian friends is clear. We wish you well in the competition this year and in the implementation of the Key Projects set out in your 5-Year Plan. All

involved can take pride in your achievements and the progress made this year.

Second Round Adjudication:

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The busy town of Carrick-on-Shannon, with the great river front presence, is always a joy to visit and we were delighted when we were asked to be the 2nd round adjudicators. Before we begin a few suggestions for next year's entry. We ask that you 'Briefly identify ONE specific project...etc' Please observe this request and write a few lines on ONE project. The other projects to be inserted into the relevant categories. In addition, rather than long essay type information please be precise and if possible, use bullet format to convey the information which will help the adjudicators appreciate your actions/ efforts.

Your town, with the River Shannon as a major feature, also has a very interesting topography which adds to its attractiveness. Your old town streetscape with its single, two and three-storey vernacular structures is quite beautiful and these, with the topography of the town, gives the area its character. To these we add St. Mary's RC church, St George's Cofl church, Saint Patrick's Hospital (the Workhouse buildings), The Dock (the old courthouse), Áras an Chontae (the old prison governor's house), the Costello Memorial Chapel, Hatley Manor, the beautiful five-arch road bridge etc. to demonstrate the architectural merits of Carrick-on-Shannon. The main town is situated on the banks of a bend in the River Shannon, with one bridge-crossing over the river along which the very busy N4 passes. This is a challenge to the town which you have embraced, as best you can, with the insertion of strategically positioned roundabouts. Carrick-on-Shannon was extremely clean and the litter we saw had been recently dropped. We have no doubt that it would have been quickly removed. Some weed growth was noticed in gravel areas around trees and in some of the housing estates – but nothing too much.

The public realm /street renewal work is very beautiful – compliments to Leitrim Co Co and the design team. The one-way system works well and the wide footpaths are a joy to walk along and see the architecture of your streetscapes. The selection of paving materials and the installation is excellent and we loved the green paviour which adds a little colour along the footpath. The brass pavours directing us to the workhouse works well and were admired. The information panels with the colour coding for buildings and green spaces were noted and we liked that they are located at various points around the town highlighting the features in their immediate vicinity.

Residences intermingle with businesses along many of the streets which ensures a vibrant town in the daytime and in the evening. Many of the properties had been freshly painted in support of your work and had great displays of colourful flowers in window boxes or hanging baskets which added to the vitality of the streets. Please commend the many residents and business owners for their contribution to making the streetscape attractive. The murals are beautifully executed – compliments to the artists. In addition to your two new murals, we also admired the mosaics near Áras and Chontae and the bottle top mural on the Chamber of Commerce building. Street banners telling us of various attractions in Co Leitrim hang high and also add to the vitality of the streetscape. We suggest removing the 'No Parking' signs from the gates into Hatley Manor as they detract from these very beautiful gates – would a double yellow line on the street suffice? We noted quite a number of utility boxes had some painting on them with little messages for the passerby – 'The road to a friend's house is never long' and 'Difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations' etc. Is it your intention to continue this theme? Perhaps the large utility structures could also be decorated in a similar manner so that they become a feature in the town?

The planting of the two roundabouts was admired – compliments to Leitrim Co Co and to your volunteers. Equally the planting along the streets was admired – strategically located large displays of colourful flowers for maximum impact. We read of your new portable water container which you use when needed and we're delighted that you have invested in this as it will be very useful from time to time. The Town Park is very beautiful and tranquil and we admired the tree lined entrance with the pergola and the array of pollinator friendly colourful shrubs and flowers planted in various locations around the park. The beds had a great variety of contented insects visiting when we were there. Along the Shannon you have a very beautiful green space – Riverfront Amenity Park - which has a great variety of individually designed spaces. The walkway out over the river had a group of boys fishing while a family picnicked on nearby seating. The signage located along this area tells of wildlife, wildflowers, etc. The area around Naomh Eidín is particularly well designed and the large curved seat was well used on the day we visited. We didn't like the blue bath and feel it's unsuitable for this location – truthfully, we're not sure where in your town is a suitable location. The little Biodiversity Garden near Naomh Eidín had great varieties of native flowers and the numerous bug hotels must be a great source of amusement and intrigue for children. Further along the Riverfront Amenity Park we noted the ash tree conservation project and the plumb orchard. Some trees in the apple orchard area need to be re-staked with strong vertical stakes, as at present they are leaning very badly, which is a pity. They need to be 'pulled back' slowly into an upright position. The sensory garden, herb garden and biodiversity garden were noted. Did you become involved in measuring the difference your actions for pollinators have made? Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) from the National Biodiversity Data Centre (biodiversityireland.ie).

We felt there was a lack of trees along both the old town streets and the new town centre area. The main structural elements in the landscape are trees and there are many places in Carrick-on-Shannon where trees would enhance the buildings and streetscape. We suggest that you look at each street/area critically and see where trees could be planted – perhaps in build-outs if these are needed. Some trees in the new town area need to have their stakes/ties adjusted. The raised surrounds of the newly planted trees in the recently completed public realm works were admired and hopefully these will help to protect them as they mature. We also admired the new trees you've planted along the entrance road from the east – these will add greatly to the entrance in a couple of years.

We admired your very clear map which had pictograms of structures of importance, tree planting, river activities etc. – very distinctive and very informative. Compliments to the artist. Your main projects indicated with a numbered star made visiting them an easy task. We'd suggest maybe a slightly lighter colour for the star as the numbers were a little lost when the map was printed. Your Facebook page is active and we saw some very beautiful photos on the Instagram account. Your 5-year plan has a number of actions under the various categories but let us know of progress. A few projects had a date of 2021-2022 and we wonder if these were completed. Make out a spreadsheet with the projects listed and a time frame after each with a progress report section.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to Carrick-on-Shannon and we look forward to a revisit – hopefully soon. Please commend the volunteers, residents and business owners for their work in making your town such a beautiful place to visit. Your achievements in this competition are a result of your energy, determination and hard work by you and your volunteers. Keep up the good work which is reaping its just rewards.