

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Athea - Áth an tSléibhe** Ref: **961**  
County: **Limerick** Mark: **334**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **11/07/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	44	46
Streetscape & Public Places	80	44	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	41	43
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	38	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	24	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	62
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	37	38
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>334</b>

### 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.

Thank you for the completed entry form, the excellent heritage trail, 5 year plan and the map of the village. The Sustainable Development Goals are at the heart of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Tidy Towns has now fully integrated them into the competition to ask groups to demonstrate how SDGs impact their activities.

It is noted that you have embraced the SDGs and aligned them with work activities under the different categories of the competition.

Well done on taking this approach.

Last year's report mentioned the actual size of the entry form and suggested that it would have been just as effective if it was half the size.

This year's submission is also a fairly hefty tome with a large number of pictorial records and fairly detailed explanations of work activities.

At this juncture, it is important to point out that the adjudication was done fairly and objectively in line with the guidelines but it is not possible to refer to all headline content in a 3-page document.

The adjudicator does appreciate that with a proactive committee of 12 inputs can be wide and varied and it can be hard to summarise concisely.

That said the adage applies that "less is often more" and this adjudicator has seen National Winners that had between 10 and 15 pages of an entry.

Consider reducing the content for next year's entry form.

The committee of 12 and the volunteer core of 15 has got through an immense amount of work over the last year and it is noteworthy that you can call on additional skill sets within the community for specific tasks that otherwise might have necessitated paying contractors

The monthly meeting structure is similar to many other groups around the country.

You have an impressive list of supporters including the local authority, other public service agencies, and a cohort of business and other community organisations and clubs.

Just wondering about the inclusion of the JP Foundation in your list is it specific to Athea Village or is involvement in the County Clean Up or the Going For Gold Competition?

You have an excellent mix of communication methods and the adjudicator accessed your Facebook page which has over 3.5k followers as well as being bang up-to-date with content,

Well done to those who manage the content and update it regularly – a pretty onerous task for which they deserve great credit.

Good to note also that you have strong involvement with the youth of the parish and indeed from the local GAA

Club.

Involvement with the local National School is a key element in your activities and the benefits are mutual to both the school children and the committee.

The specific project Athea Cares has been outlined in detail and the adjudicator has taken cognizance of this in his overall assessment

Thank you for your endorsement of the competition and what it has meant to the community of Athea since you first entered in 2012.

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

You have listed and detailed a large number of projects under this category and thank you for that.

Just a few comments about some of these.

The excellent and creative mural by Jim Dunn was mentioned in last year's report and the adjudicator just was a little confused as to why it was included this year.

Has there been an addition to the content since last year?

It is an amazing depiction of life down decades in the village and a credit to the artist Jim Dunn.

One does never know as they what talents lie within our communities.

The derelict properties list was noted and it is sad to see the Gables in such a poor state and now subjected to a Local Authority Dereliction notice.

This is a far cry from when it was at the centre of life in the village during a time when Athea even hosted an All-Ireland Motor Cycling Racing event!

The other properties are names synonymous with the commercial life of Athea back through the decades – a sign of the times we live in but Mullaness is up for sale and hopefully be a part of active commercial life in the village shortly. It was refreshing to see the transformation that a simple coat of paint can do to a property or indeed a boundary wall.

The premises featured were noted during the adjudication walkabout.

The following are a few observations captured in short videos during the above process.

The road surfaces and the footpaths were in very good condition and there were some new sections of the latter around different parts of the village.

Overhead wires were not that obtrusive but some of the poles were a little dirty but that is probably something outside the control of a voluntary committee.

The heritage plaques as part of the Athea Heritage Trail give an excellent history of your village and its surroundings.

The adjudicator was particularly interested in the plaque to Jim Woulfe who died in the Spanish Civil War as he was a forgotten figure for quite a long time.

The Village Notice Board seemed to be a little dirty and needs to be revitalized a little and the content within brought up to date.

This might seem a little nit-picky but it's a very nice feature in a central location that would be of interest to visitors maybe more than locals.

The public buildings such as the RC Church St Bartholomew's, the excellent Con Colbert Hall, HSE Centre, and the National School were all presented to a good standard but the latter's boundary wall needed painting.

It looks like the old Esso Petrol Station was out of commission.

Collins XL Shop, Brown Joes or Reidys, Griffins Meats, and Kathleen Ambrose Grauaire all deserve mention for the shop front presentation.

The Community Council Office also seems to be out of commission and looks like it hasn't been used as such since 2013 judging by the contents of the front.

Beautiful mural beside Mullaness featuring the local music tradition including the legendary Donal De Barra.

Some excellent private properties were viewed in the core of the village.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

As was the case a fairly detailed submission under this category with some excellent pictorial records to back it up.

The adjudicator is not going to walk you back through what you have submitted except to say that in general that this is a category that you have excelled in over the last few years.

Last year's adjudicator was probably more familiar with the in depth requirements for good landscaping management judging by the comments in the report.

The advice that was given was very detailed and it is noted that you have taken quite a lot of it on board.

Other elements of the advice given might not be as easy to address as it may require consultation with the local authority and other factors such as cost and resources may come into the equation.

The advice for this year is to manage the excellent communal planting as best as you can and take on new projects when you have the resources to do so.

This adjudicator would concur with the observation on the planting of trees on concrete containers as it restricts the expansion of roots.

The River Walk is a wonderful project and without doubt a major attraction for anyone visiting Athea.

Wonderful colour was observed in the centre of the village.

Whilst there is more promotion of the need for sustainable all year round planting is nice to see clusters of old reliable petunias and lobelia adding a bit of vibrancy to places.

Well done to the volunteers that water the hanging baskets and maintain the permanent shrub beds.

The Green Area at the Bridge needs a little revitalising in the opinion of this adjudicator.

The area has a nice memorial to a local community activist and this needs to be sandblasted and made more prominent.

The side shrub bed is overgrown and needs to be thinned out and the dreaded briar removed if at all possible.

Briars growing through hedges seem to be a very problematic all over the country this year.  
The seating here needs to be painted as well.  
The wildflower area was visited and the beautiful array of roses in the elongated stone bed on the way in from Glin gives a nice first impression of the village.  
As stated last year you have a large number of planting arrangements to maintain and well done in managing all these effectively.

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

The key to this category is knowing what habitats exist in your area and where they are and being able to convey the importance of these habitats to the wider community of Athea.  
It is also important that local groups be aware of the type of protected areas and their significance in the greater scheme of things.  
Rather than relate in detail the adjudicator would advocate ongoing engagement with the excellent section on Nature and Biodiversity in the Tidy Towns Handbook which gives an in-depth insight into special areas of conservation and their importance.  
Communities also need to make themselves aware of the law about biodiversity and also the Wildlife Act before embarking on any work programs.  
The adjudicator feels that as a Committee you have embraced the above judging by the excellent input in the entry form.  
You seem to express disappointment with the wildflower meadow but the adjudicator stopped off on exiting the village and was very impressed with it.  
Well done to the Athea Fishing Club for their ongoing contribution to this category as outlined.  
Your comments on invasive species are noted and of course, you are not alone here as the problems that come with the likes of Japanese Knotweed and Hogweed have exasperated both local authorities and communities all over the Island of Ireland.  
Invasive species know no borders.  
Your Data Collection project necessitates quite a lot of work on monitoring and managing collections so well done to the committee members involved.  
Don't Mow Let it Grow became part of all our lives over the last few years and even people who love pristine lawns allowed little strips of red clover and the like to prosper.  
I would consider the Green Area referred to in the last category as an additional location for some form of Biodiversity Project of what type not sure.  
Maybe one of the committees might come up with a simple idea that could involve the local school.  
It's just an idea and may not be a runner as you probably have enough to contend with.

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

This is a category that has advanced in keeping with the EU and national government policies.  
It supports the need to reduce the use of all resources in communities to lessen our environmental impact.  
It is a wide-ranging category that one might be surprised how many of one's existing community initiatives fall within.  
It created difficulty for many groups initially but gradually committees embraced the ethos and many innovative ideas and projects relating to the "doing more with less" concept came to the fore.  
You have submitted a wide-ranging list of projects some of which are replicated around the country but a few are particular to Athea.  
The adjudicator was impressed with the Athea Craft Group Upcycling Workshop and how it came into being.  
There is more potential for you in this category and rather than list off a raft of web links the adjudicator refers you to the excellent section on Sustainability in the Tidy Towns Handbook where you will find a myriad of ideas, links, and information on the Circular Economy.  
As was recommended in last year's very detailed report do also link to [www.localpervention.ie](http://www.localpervention.ie) for additional advice.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

Clarification on your involvement with Team Limerick Clean-up has been provided in this category submission so ignore my question under the Community Involvement and Planning  
Litter control was very good and one might say that's easy for small villages but communities have to buy into the effort of keeping places as litter free as possible.  
Comhghairdeas to the Committee Member who designed the very effective Anti Fly Tipping Signs as Béarla agus Gaeilge – a brilliant idea.  
From experience in a previous life, I would suggest that you consult the Local Authority before embarking on any part of the Public Realm Project idea!  
Some doggy poo was seen at the kerbside near the Con Colbert Centre where incidentally there was a very enthusiastic fitness class taking places  
One didn't notice too many anti-dog fouling signs around the village so maybe you might consult with Limerick County Council and see if basic footpath stencil signs might be an option.  
A few more waste bins would be welcome and one or two of the existing ones need to be cleaned

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

The local Athea Tidy Towns Competition is a great initiative because as you rightly state it fosters a great community spirit and a bit of a Pride of Place mentality.  
It also generates a bit of competition and healthy local estate rivalry.

The adjudicator visited all 6 housing developments indicated on the map and was impressed with the general presentation of homesteads.

It would be remiss also not to mention Dalton Terrace a fine and well-kept cluster of street houses.

As is always the case there were one or two non-conformists but this problem is everywhere.

A very nice gesture on the part of the local artist to offer advice on house colour choices.

One has to say that Athea has some very well-presented private houses in the core of the village and credit is due to the owners for keeping them in such good condition.

The dereliction issue was dealt with in another category but it was good to see that 3 previously unoccupied houses were made available to new residents in the last year.

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

The adjudicator was impressed with all the entrances into the village particularly the Glin one with an elongated stone bed of red roses.

On this road further out was the fine facility of Athea FC The Vales was admired.

The Athea name signs with the "brand" logo are a big feature of the entrances.

The Abbeyfeale entrance is also good and as one enters the village there is a beautiful thatched house.

The entrance on R523 from Carrickerry/Rathkeale was in the same good condition as the others and the excellent Athea GAA Grounds, where there was plenty of activity taking place, were admired for their tidiness.

Overall the standard was very good.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

It was good to visit Athea after a good few years absence and see how all the positive changes have enhanced the village.

The committee is very proactive and not resting on its laurels.

You are wished well in the years ahead.

And yes I certainly did enjoy my visit.