

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballyhahill - Baile Átha Dhá Thuile** Ref: **1073**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **265**
Category: **A** Date(s): **20/07/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	36	37
Streetscape & Public Places	80	41	42
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	35	35
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	23	23
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	6	6
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	31	32
TOTAL MARK	550	261	265

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.
For a small community you have a remarkably large committee & plenty of volunteers to call upon for projects. It is good to see you are supported by local businesses & local agencies. The communication channels you use cover both the traditional & social media mediums. You have a great opportunity to use your social media platform to share information on a variety of topics from numerous organizations e.g. on biodiversity, check out National Biodiversity Data Centre <https://biodiversityireland.ie/> or on birdlife, check out BirdWatch Ireland <https://birdwatchireland.ie/> or on sustainability, check out Voice Ireland <https://www.voiceireland.org/> in addition to your weekly Split the Bucket event.

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

The former Carnegie library with its two gable fronted porches has retained much of its original fabric & thus adds to the architectural streetscape of Ballyhahill. It was apparent during the visit that repairs need to be attended to on the structure's roof. There is a Built Heritage Investment Scheme for the repair & conservation of structures that are protected & the focus is on small-scale conservation projects. It would be worth checking this out in order to avail of potential funding through your Local Heritage Officer. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/32ae3-financial-assistance-for-architectural-heritage/#built-heritage-investment-scheme-and-historic-structures-fund-2023>
Scoil Naomh Mhuire National School retains many of its original features & the old Irish inscribed plaque is lovely to have in situ. The mural on the perimeter wall adds interest to the school area. Ballyhahill is fortunate to have retained the freestanding cast-iron water pump, as it is a notable addition to the streetscape for what it represents historically & its strong artistic element. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage would be interested in the restoration of the bridge plaque as it is noted on their site as being illegible. <https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/21901806/finnoo-ballyhahill-co-limerick>
The Church & its environs are well presented & well done on your cleaning of the grounds. You are to be commended, as a community, for painting the parish priest's house with paint generously donated by Greenspan. The Parish Hall is very well maintained with very colourful window boxes full of annuals.
As one walks the "line", it was lovely to see many of the former & existing shop fronts & local residences have retained architectural features and decorative stuccowork.
Derelict properties & sites have blighted many villages & towns & detracted from the visual panorama of the centres. This is not easily managed by Tidy Towns groups however many Tidy Towns groups are completing an audit of derelict & vacant properties & then liaising with the local Council on proposals for returning them to residential or

commercial use. Limerick is fortunate to have a local council who is proactive in their approach & is actively compulsorily acquiring derelict properties.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

River View Park is a fantastic amenity to have carved out for a small community. The view from the seating area down to the River Abha Bhán is stunning. The view is further expanded with the horse-jumping arena at the far side of the river.

Have you considered entering Limerick's Going for Gold Community Challenge that is open to local groups carrying out environmental work? This may provide the funding you require to upgrade River View Park.

<https://www.limerick.ie/council/services/environment/campaigns/limerick-going-for-gold/how-to-apply>

You will know from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) that Tidy Towns groups are encouraged to move from annuals in the landscaping schemes to perennial pollinator friendly plants. There are some excellent examples in Ballyhahill however it would be wonderful to see fewer annuals. AIPP released a new free resource listing 24 native & non-native pollinator friendly plants that are suitable for different situations. <https://pollinators.ie/top-10-pollinator-friendly-plants-for-different-situations/>

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

Ballyhahill is so fortunate to be surrounded by nature & have a riverside location.

The Abha Bhán River Walk with its accompanying information panel is a great amenity to have within the village environs & a wonderful opportunity to see, at close hand, your riparian wildlife. It is a fantastic resource for the local school & great to hear they use it as an outdoor classroom. We noted from your river wildlife information panel otters are one of the species sighted locally. It would be worth making contact with your local Community Water Officer who actively works with communities on local water quality through knowledge, funding & training. Grants can be applied for from the Community Water Development Fund. <https://lawaters.ie/funding/>

You might be interested to know that there is presently a National Otter Survey taking place to assess the status of the species. All that is required is to note any sighting of their droppings or footprints, as it is unlikely you will be fortunate enough to see these elusive mammals. <https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/national-otter-survey/>

All the community can participate in the annual Irish Garden Bird survey that commences each year in December. It is a fun & engaging activity for all especially children. <https://birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/surveys-research/research-surveys/irish-garden-bird-survey/>

It was noted at the school boundary that a number of ash trees are suffering from ash dieback disease for which there is currently no cure. A decision will need to be reached on how to address the problem & what trees to plant before they fall or are felled.

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

It is hard to believe the community is not involved in some element of sustainability – rainwater harvesting; reuse of materials for other projects; car-pooling; plant & seed swaps; home composting etc. These are just some real life examples of living sustainability.

There is an excellent platform, ChangeX, who provide both ideas & funding for communities & would be worth checking out. <https://www.changex.org/ie>

There are a lot of volunteer groups active in this area e.g. Voice Ireland <https://www.voiceireland.org/> run a lot of campaigns & workshops; Rediscovery Centre shares tips online via video e.g. bicycle maintenance tricks, furniture upcycling techniques etc. <http://www.rediscoverycentre.ie/news/rediscover-home-series/>

As recommended by last year's adjudicator, the Tidy Towns Handbook provides an excellent guide to this area. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sustainability-Doing-More-with-less.pdf> It seems a lost opportunity to leave this section empty of content each year.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Are you involved in the annual Team Limerick Cleanup – a fantastic county initiative that rallies a lot of people to get involved & bring the issue of littering to the public's consciousness? The village was spotless on adjudication day. Well done to you all & your RSS workers.

An annual audit of street furniture is a good strategy – redundant poles, obscured signage, obsolete signage, discarded safety equipment, blocked gulleys, etc. Once completed, it can be revised each year & you can decide which items need to be referred to the local council & items you can address yourselves & resolve as a community. The removal or repair of street furniture dispenses with clutter & creates a tidier streetscape.

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

Fortfield has a sweeping entrance & a sizeable communal green space. We note the removal of the overgrown hedge here. Are there plans for a replacement e.g. an edible hedge or climbers like honeysuckle or clematis? Meadowlea has a lovely entrance with shrubs lining the green areas.

The estate of the curved terrace is well maintained & lovely to see some trees & hedging here maturing nicely. Unfortunately we could see no name signage here.

Are there any plans for a cohesive signage scheme for all housing estates? There was funding of between €1,000 and €4,000 for active Tidy Towns groups through Pobal this year. It would be an ideal opportunity for you to bring this funding to the attention of the residents associations in order for them to purchase signage or communal garden equipment.

It was suggested by last year's adjudicator that there is plenty of scope for trees in the estates. Each year, on National Tree Day, Limerick City & County Council provide trees, free of charge, to communities & estates that

register their interest. It may be worth engaging with the residents associations & planning, over a number of years, to use this free annual gift, to create mini forests. Some communities have used the day to plant trees for every child born in the past year with their name & date marked by a wooden plaque in front of the tree.

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

The bilingual heritage style signage on the approaches to Ballyhahill is elegant & easily seen from a distance. On the Shanagolden side, has the landowner, where there is the black timber fencing, plans to plant a hedge behind? There is significant work involved in maintaining this fencing to its present high standard. The two whitewashed buildings have benefitted from your attention & present a lovely picture of vernacular rural buildings. From Glin, the long straight stretch into Ballyhahill is enhanced with your planting at the crossroads. The unique S shaped box hedging creates a lovely panorama & sweet spot for the bench with the perennial plants & orange colour theme. The minimally maintained grass verges with the hedgerow backdrop add to the vista.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a pleasure to visit Ballyhahill and it is clearly evident the pride you take in your village. You are indeed fortunate to live in such a verdant landscape surrounded by nature. As a small community, you have achieved a lot to date & there is tremendous potential to build on that strong base.

A minor suggestion, when you are completing your next application, a different colour font on your answers would make your application much easier to differentiate from the section headings.