

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bruff - Bru na nDeise** Ref: **1077**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **340**
Category: **B** Date(s): **12/07/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	50	52
Streetscape & Public Places	80	40	43
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	45	46
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	43	45
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	24	26
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	61
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	33	34
TOTAL MARK	550	327	340

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.

You are clearly a tight knit committee & what an incentive for weekly meetings – hot beverages & freshly baked scones! Your volunteer base of 59 is significant & with those numbers behind you a lot can be achieved in a short space of time. The strategy of having committee members take responsibility for areas that are of special interest to them is a sensible one. It is fantastic that 25% of newcomers are actively involved in the Tidy Towns, quite an achievement & it is lovely to see you share World Day for Cultural Diversity with the Ukrainian community now living in Bruff. Based on the list supplied you have tremendous community support from other local community groups, sporting organisations, businesses & local & national agencies. As a group, you have been influential right across the community from the hosting of workshops & events to engaging with many other groups on social inclusion. The involvement of Bruff's youth is essential & thus their inclusion on planting & litter initiatives allows them opportunities to participate & understand how they can make a positive contribution whilst still enjoying the experience. It is great to see you are covering all communication mediums from conventional to social media – a necessity today in order to reach all generations. Although your entry to Limerick Going for Gold was not successful last year, there is always this year.

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

It would appear that the twin pronged approach of the Derelict Site levy & the Vacant Property Refurbishment grants has propelled owners into action in Bruff. It is astounding that 12 properties have either undergone extensive refurbishment, had their facades enhanced, and are CPO'd or are waiting plans to convert to community amenities. On adjudication day, there was a lot of construction activity within the village & the old FCJ Convent was having the four-stage tower power washed. Limerick is fortunate to have a local council who is proactive in their approach & is actively compulsorily acquiring derelict properties. It is a problem that is not easily managed by Tidy Towns groups however many Tidy Towns groups, like yourselves, are liaising with the local Council on the appropriate course of action. It is a shame that these properties have detracted from the visual panorama of the town centre.

The establishment of new businesses in the town is indicative of a positive outlook for the future. The conversion of the old Bank of Ireland into a Remote Working Hub is a further positive indicator. The murals of the local sports people & the flight of the earls add interest & colour to the streetscape.

The retention of the old shop fronts with wide display windows for new businesses preserves the character of the streetscape e.g. Country Groomer & Cattery. There are a number of buildings of architectural interest that enhance of composition of the main street e.g. Old Bank & house beside O'Connor's Pharmacy just to mention two.

The Church occupies a prominent position in the town & its environs are very well maintained. A fresh coat of paint on the Old Barracks will provide an improved first impression later in the summer.

One happens upon some interesting information boards & plaques as one walks through the town e.g., driving routes, plaque at O'Donovan's Hall, James Bouchier commemorative plaque, Heritage plaque at the school, etc. The colourful, dual aspect information boards outside the Church of Ireland are both an attractive & interesting focal point.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The Catholic Church graveyard is maintained well & lovely to see the grass is allowed to grow with clover blooms on show. While the natural stonewalls add to the vista, has consideration been given to growing climbers on the block walls to detract from their grey façade – clematis or honeysuckle perhaps? The containers outside the entrance to the church are lost against such a mammoth backdrop & the containers in front of the graveyard are blocked from sight by the cars parked there. As a result, they seem to be surplus to requirements. The same applies to the container under the River Morningstar sign at the bridge & the two containers at the end of the Inglenook terrace. The latter could be planted into the existing bed located alongside.

The Church of Ireland graveyard has some wonderful tree specimens & the short meadow here surrounded by high stonewalls creates a lovely meditative space. The four containers outside the entrance had a stunning coordinated display of pollinator friendly perennials.

The Sean Wall Statue bookends this part of the town with its impressive size & the backdrop of images from the state's inception. The raised green area surrounding the memorial is nicely divided by the flower lined path & raised stone flowerbed. The roses need annual pruning in order to produce healthier & better shaped plants. The French Marigolds chosen certainly put on a show & are long lasting however the blooms are very tight & thus less useful as a food source for pollinators. An alternative choice would be Pot Marigolds with an open face. Once again is there a need here for containers when there is space for planting in the ground?

The Grove is an amazing amenity for the community with the walks, seating & picnic areas in addition to the river running by. An idyllic location for a mini park! The Riverside Park is such a pretty park with the mature trees, pollinator friendly perennial planting, seating & the steps down to the river. Its location between the two stone bridges & facing the old stonewall presents a most charming space. A little tidy up of debris near the compost heap would improve this area as well as the screening of the compost heap. The flowerbed inside the entrance gate could do with some attention before the bindweed takes a firm hold. Once again thank you for including pictures of the Park in other seasons.

It was evident from the time spent in Bruff the amount of work expended on other areas at the Doctors Surgery, Thomas Fitzgerald Centre, Hospital Road to mention just a few locations.

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

The sharing of updates from Biodiversity Ireland in relation to invasive alien species, is very important as we need the public to recognize & report sightings. There appears to be Gunnera between the bridge & The Grove estate. The use of windows in vacant buildings to display the colourful images of Irish butterflies is an excellent use of such a space for biodiversity education.

Well done on sharing The Maigue Rivers Trust event "Discover the Nature of the Maigue River" – the more we know, the more we can do with regard to our water sources & their hinterland. So important when you have The Morningstar running through Bruff/the town & celebrating Water Heritage during Heritage Week with the assistance of LAWP. Also your contribution to the WaterBlitz is so important as the quality of our ground waters is not going in the right direction.

You are the first community your adjudicator has encountered that has encouraged families to complete the Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) – great to see.

How fortunate to have Sand Martins visiting Bruff. It will be interesting to see if your planned nesting box is occupied next year as the species tends to prefer nesting in numbers from a dozen to many hundred pairs. A Kilkenny farmer built a nesting wall for sand martins close to a man-made lake

The wildflower area at the Grove had borage starting to bloom – an excellent source of nectar for bees. The tiered stone beds inside the boundary wall could be planted with more shade loving plants like the common foxglove or campanula.

The raised stone flowerbed at the signpost to Collins Well was a riot of colour with rose champions, oxeye daisies, geum etc in full bloom. Thank you for including photos of the display here in other months. There is no doubting the attraction we humans have to daffodils & tulips however they offer little in the way of food to early insect life in spring. When you are next adding spring bulbs, plant muscari, crocuses & snowdrops.

Great to see Scoil Dean Cussen use the sensory garden as an outdoors classroom & it was interesting to see the cereal crops growing there on adjudication day. What are the plans for these crops once they are ready for harvesting? Their celebration of Earth Day with the planting of pollinator friendly plants was a lovely idea.

It is clear from your social media feeds that you are eagle eyed in spotting bird life & insect life. Are you logging these sightings on the National Biodiversity Data Centre? <https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/> Your appreciation of the eco systems living on your stonewalls is heartening & again do log the various plant species noted.

Well done on actively engaging in workshops, surveys & the celebration of days with an emphasis on nature. The involvement of the youth in some of these events presents a fun & engaging way to educate.

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

It is good to see you share gardening & rainwater harvesting options from Enniscorthy Tidy Towns group in addition to reasons on Why to Repair?, from Repair My Stuff. These tips & tricks provide food for thought & a gentle push to change behaviour. Building on this information with the Reuse Event held in October - Reuse Month - in conjunction with Men's Shed, puts the theory into practice. Most people want to be sustainable however may lack the skills or forethought to make those changes. The number of practical examples of your sustainable ethos is inspiring in

addition to your collaboration with other organizations like Cloughjordan Eco Village, Seed Savers, Ballyhoura Development & others. An item on this topic for inclusion in the Tidy Towns newsletter would make an interesting read for all Tidy Towns groups.

Congratulations on making Bruff a Fairtrade Town & what better way to celebrating it than on International Tea Day. This is a significant body of work involved in getting to this stage & building on the progress to date.

A public transport system is essential & great to see your bus schedule to & from Limerick has been expanded. It will be worthy of note to see if the service is increasingly used as the times may suit more commuters.

Well done on continuing to collect coffee grounds from Centra & Europar to add to the compost – the circular economy in action. It is great to see businesses support your endeavours in addition to taking action themselves to reduce their carbon footprint.

The Tidy Towns Handbook has a wealth of knowledge in this area. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sustainability-Doing-More-with-less.pdf>

The platform, ChangeX is also a source of ideas in addition to potential funding. <https://www.changex.org/ie>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The TLC8 is a fantastic countywide initiative & well done on participating in it in addition to World Clean Up Day & the National Spring Clean. Bruff's youth are to be commended for covering litter patrols whilst the Community Employment workers were on leave as are the members of St Joseph's Foundation for their regular litter picks. The two additional bins in the Grove, built by the local Men's Shed blend in well at their new location at the Grove. Regular litter picks definitely do deter more littering & it is interesting this is evident both in estates & on approach roads.

The use of dog fouling stencils appears to be working well for you as on adjudication day no dog poo was sighted. The stencils are preferable to the addition of posters adding to visual clutter.

An annual audit of street furniture is a good strategy e.g., redundant poles, obsolete signage, neglected lighting standards, blocked gulleys, discarded safety equipment etc., as they add to the clutter & detract from the vista. The white benches inside the graveyard could do with some attention in order to enhance their appearance, as could the River Morningstar sign at the bridge. The hedge at the pathway across from the Church of Ireland needs to be cut back as this pathway is no longer accessible for any pedestrian between the hedge & the bollards.

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

Sean Wall Court behind the Old Barracks is tucked away & has a well-maintained small green area. The relocation of the refuse bins & the disposal of redundant safety equipment would improve one's first impression.

Sycamore Drive benefits from a lovely entrance with the mature trees, the colourful pharmacy façade & the stone flowerbed under the estate sign. There are a number of green areas within the estate with some tree planting although room for more.

The terrace at Inglenook is a very elegant proportioned building. The refurbishment of one of the three gives one an idea of how the terrace could be brought back to its former glory in time.

The Grove is fortunate to have a mature green boundary & plenty of amenity space. Clearly one of the residents has a green finger judging from the abundant & blooming containers.

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

The R516 to Croom requires some attention to the road edges along by the Sean Wall Statue as the gap is attracting a build up of silt & resulting vegetation. The stonewalls lining the approach with mature trees & beech hedging presents an attractive vista for the visitor.

Arriving into Bruff from the Limerick side presents one with a long stretch of well-maintained old stonewalls fronted by trees & a green strip. The extent of the footpaths in this direction fronted in some areas by bollards is an additional amenity for the community. There is a lot of signage of various forms on this approach road & a more cohesive use of signs would be best. The murals on the wall present a lovely distraction from what would otherwise be a drab vista.

Concluding Remarks:

Well done on incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) into your work & educating the community in relatable ways on many of the goals. Your adjudicator enjoyed their visit to Bruff & it was heartening to see the general uplift in the town with the prospect of more enhancements in the pipeline. We commend the community on what has been achieved to date & trust the future for Bruff is overwhelmingly positive. You are fortunate to have new members in the community from other countries who are & who can contribute significantly to Bruff's present & future.