

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Castleconnell - Caisleán O gConaing** Ref: **1045**  
County: **Limerick** Mark: **357**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **03/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	48	50
Streetscape & Public Places	80	46	48
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	36	38
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	24	26
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	67	67
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	39	40
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	40	41
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>357</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.

What can be said about a committee of 12 with over a centennial of collective volunteering for Castleconnell Tidy Towns – well done for staying the course. To see such progression over time is reward in itself. A core committee is essential & you are fortunate to be able to call on community members with expertise & willingness to assist in addition to Community Employment Scheme employees. Many a Tidy Town committee would be envious of your resources. It is encouraging to see that the local representatives, local businesses, government agencies and community groups provide the necessary support for your endeavours. The involvement of as many as possible in the community is imperative for the vibrancy of Castleconnell. The existence of a Junior Tidy Towners group is heartening as they are your future & their enjoyment on projects & interest in their locality will engender the type of community spirit Castleconnell needs to continue to thrive. Your active involvement with the National School on SDGs 4 & 6 is heartening.

It is wonderful to see that you are embracing the Ukrainian community & residents at Avista living within your environs & that they are involving themselves in the community through the TLC 23 initiative & gardening.

What a fantastic investment in the future of the village.

Well done on the production of the Community Calendar for a 7th consecutive year. A lot of work is involved behind the scenes in the production of such a publication. What a lovely way to be reminded of the gems in your locality.

May we compliment you too on the cover picture of your submission – the footbridge in nature is a stunning vista.

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

Castleconnell is fortunate to have so many architectural gems that contribute to the streetscape of the village providing wonderful examples of architectural design significance in both public & private buildings. These buildings make a strong impact in the streetscape and the locality's built heritage. It is heartening to see buildings like Shannon House utilized for an alternative purpose from its previous incarnation especially when the outcome is a win-win for the whole community. The building is very well presented & lovely to see the seating area outside well used. The Worralls Inn is obviously currently in a transformative process & it would be hoped that the wrought iron railings would be restored on completion of the project. Are there plans to restore the railings at the former Culhane's Pub, some have been completely removed while others are in a state of significant disrepair? Please do give an update on Stradbally National School, part of which appears to be derelict. Also is PJ Guerins pub in use? It would be worthwhile updating the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage with more recent photographs & updates where there have been changes of use or adaptations etc e.g. Courthouse on Chapel Hill has been

converted into residential use since the list was last updated.

The Parish Hall was looking resplendent with its newly painted façade & what a coup to feature in Dulux's colour brochure. What a difference it has made to the street. The Church & grounds are well maintained – the two containers either side of the door seems lost against such a large backdrop. The businesses in the village take pride in their appearance – Protea Café, St Vincent de Paul Charity shop & the Supervalu complex. The Shannon Stores with its wares out on the footpaths is reminiscent of a different time in Ireland. The Railway Station has had a facelift & is looking splendid.

The Village Garden is a lovely space & the red railings & door tie it in nicely with the Hall's colour palette. There is little need here for containers when you have plenty of raised bedding areas.

The National School obviously had work completed on the boundary wall & footpaths & it looked well on adjudication day. The buildings & complex at All Saints Church are such a visual delight. Even the unoccupied cottages across the road are presented in a spotless condition & to a passing motorist would not be recognized as vacant.

The work completed on the public lighting standards has been done to a very high standard & the heritage colour looks well. It is hard to argue for the removal of the village pump railings when they have been in existence for almost a centennial. How fantastic to have a picture from that era. The coordination of the colour scheme here & elsewhere creates a cohesive streetscape.

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

Well done on trying to hold onto the existing trees at the entrance to Meadowbrook. If a tree surgeon's work could not save them then it seems they were beyond resuscitation. A chat with the Tree Council of Ireland might have provided both yourselves & Limerick City & County Council alternative options for trees with a small root system. The compromise of the large containers planted for year round interest works. Your adjudicator is curious as to why a container was used rather than planting directly into the ground after the removal of the trees as the earth was exposed then.

The containers in front of the newly painted Parish Hall seem redundant now with the brightly painted façade and railings & some of the plants are not doing well. The three containers on the left hand side of the Hall were nicely planted with both perennials & annuals.

The planting scheme surrounding the Mick Mackey statue was stunning on adjudication day – the oxalis was blooming in pink & white, the floral bouquet of the elderflower was breathtaking & the variety of shrubs including a large hypericum created a wonderful backdrop. The planting on the top of the stonewall surrounding the Supervalu complex with the pops of erigeron growing on the sides creates a wonderful picture & softens all the hard surfacing. The planting at the Village Pump is new & hopefully the very hot weather will not stress the plants too much & prevent them from thriving. The Chapel Hill Boat display was suffering a little in the heat & once the rains return no doubt the floral display will be striking.

Not many groups would take on a raised bed at a very busy junction as you have at Daly's Cross. The painted kerbing adds to the visual impact as do the oxeye daisies, verbena & other perennials you have added. As the bed fills in the impact will be striking.

You choose an opportune time to replace trees that had died during National Tree Week. Well done. With the newly planted tree on the triangular site at Stadbally North, are the square containers surplus to requirements as the plants could be placed in the ground there?

The St Flannan's Terrace beds are now enclosed with timber surrounds. Have you given yourselves additional work when mounded beds would suffice? The rose bed was flourishing & the other beds had not benefitted from completed planting. The round wooden planters are due for retirement & the lovely sweet Williams could be transplanted into either of the two existing beds. There were other containers near the playground there that too have reached the end of their time.

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

What a delight to see you share on social media the awakening of insect life & the responses highlight the wealth of knowledge within the community. The next step would be to encourage the community to avail of the resources of the National Biodiversity Data Centre & also to start recording those sightings.

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/start-recording>

Well done on transitioning from annuals to pollinator friendly plants – the bees & other insects will be most grateful.

Your adjudicator came upon a Mock Orange tree while walking in the laneway by PJ Guerins. It was buzzing with Red Tailed bumblebees & many other bees & insects. It was quite an amazing sight & oral experience.

The Riverside Park is a wonderful introduction to the biodiversity of Castleconnell. The information panel is well placed. Your adjudicator enjoyed immensely the nature trail with the 14 information panels – very interesting reading. The mature specimen trees one encounters along the trail are a joy to see & priceless given their size & maturity. Have Tree Protection Orders (TPO) even been considered?

The river was busy with nesting swans, cormorants drying their feathers & mallards begging for food from all passers by. It was a feast for the eyes & wonderful that all the community can enjoy nature whilst using the playground, picnicking in the circular bays or lounging on the green areas.

Bird watching is a great introduction to wildlife for many children. With the new bird feeders you created for the National School's junior classes, you might encourage them to participate in Birdwatch Ireland's Irish Garden Bird survey that commences annually in December. Sunflowers were the flower of 2022 & how generous of your volunteers to donate the whole kit & caboodle for growing sunflowers to the National School. The photos do not lie, very impressive results. Your education of the next generation is to be admired. Their involvement in June 2022 with obtaining kick samples from the Ferry stream as well as the biodiversity workshop & field trip allowed them to try out citizen science in their own locality.

The Hermitage Stream assessment was most interesting as was the accompanying report. The number & size of

the blockages was significant & the manual work carried out impressive. The number of cattle access points was surprising. As the baseline has been established it will be interesting to receive annual updates. The Local Authority Waters programme (LAWPRO) is a wonderful initiative. What an excellent opportunity to avail of on World Water Day, March 22nd – a talk & networking event. We have so much to learn from one another around the protection of a vital & valuable resource & tying this in with the SDG goals was an ideal opportunity. It will be interesting to hear what plans or projects this has inspired.

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

The installation of a reconditioned water fountain in the National School in conjunction with the donation of reusable water bottles was an excellent initiative. Congratulations on winning a Limerick Going for Gold ReUse Award for this initiative. Your partnership with the school is mutually beneficial & the focus on a sustainable practice sets a fantastic practical example for generations to come.

The reimagining of a tree on the Nature Trail into a seated owl is simply stunning. Your adjudicator felt the owl was staring intently at one such was the standard of craftsmanship. It is a remarkable sculpture in a perfect location. It is great to receive updates on projects & good news is even more welcomed. Good water quality in the three local streams in 2022 is heartening even if there is room for improvement.

Well done on working with the school to refurbish their raised beds. On adjudication day, there was very little evidence of any planting with the exception of rhubarb & broad beans, the latter appeared to have gone rogue. It would be hoped that come next semester the school will plan for a bounty. It would also appear they need assistance in managing their compost bins as items such as tinfoil were visible at the opening & they appeared unattended for some time.

Delighted to see the planting of the beds at St Flannan's Terrace has been done in situ rather than adding planters/containers – more sustainable approach for watering & less use of additional materials. Good to see you supporting a local business.

There are lots of further ideas in the Tidy Towns Handbook. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sustainability-Doing-More-with-less.pdf>

The platform, ChangeX is an excellent source of inspiration & also at times a source of funding. <https://www.changex.org/>

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

It is encouraging to note that year on year you are noticing a reduction in rubbish collected during your cleaning events. The collaborative efforts of community groups in tackling the problem are the best strategy - well done to yourselves & the ACM team.

The presentation of your lighting standards is top notch; a fresh coat of paint is always transformative. This high standard was also on display at the village pump area & at the public seating. It is good practice to perform an annual audit of street furniture e.g. orphan poles; poles with obsolete signage; obscured signage; temporary safety material left unused; bollards requiring attention etc. This presents you with an opportunity to engage with the local council & determine what can be removed or attended to in a timely fashion. A resurfacing of the car park at the playground could also be added to that list.

Cobblelock looks wonderful when first laid however the maintenance work involved in presenting it to its best is quite intense & labour intensive. The area that has been completed in front of the village garden & hall is impressive & once the remainder is complete, it will allow the area to shine.

The street name signs really do pop after their thorough cleaning. The picnic table & benches in the village garden could do with a power hose to bring them back to a cleaner state.

Unfortunately, the Bottle Bank was the scene of a significant amount of dumping in front of the clothes bin & there was a lot of litter on the ground. It is very unfortunate that when a facility is provided it is not used correctly.

An audit of the village footpaths would be advisable as there are quite a few areas where new meets old & there are level differences & gaps resulting in debris & vegetation in addition to a safety risk & an unsmooth surface for anyone with mobility issues.

There is a lot of signage through the village in particular signage relating to dog fouling. Have you considered using the stencils on the paths for this purpose where a problem persists rather than the plethora of temporary signs?

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

Maple Grove's naming is obvious & the mature trees & hedging present a lovely entrance avenue. There are further opportunities along the avenue to add more maples. It would be lovely to see some of the green areas out front in short meadows.

Coolbawn Meadows are fortunate to have a wonderful green hedge & mature trees as their individual frontages are with hedging as partitions. The entrance has some lovely planting & in the hedge it would be advisable to remove the rogue sycamore saplings before they become entrenched. The green area outside the boundary wall running parallel to the road has tremendous potential, as do the smaller green patches within. The new development currently in building mode should provide willing participants in a residents association.

Castle Rock was a revelation in size. The pedestrian access to the village is fantastic & a lovely walk. There are a lot of green areas to be maintained within the estate & there does not appear to be a co-ordinated approach presently. Is there a residents association in place?

The residences within the village are generally presented well & there are some lovely gardens that are well tended.

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

The future is bright for your approach from Daly's Cross with the compulsory purchase of the former public house & surrounding lands by Limerick City & County Council. Are there plans for the formerly thatched residential dwelling located perpendicular to said property?

The traffic calming measures from the Montpelier side certainly adds to the safety of both pedestrians & motorists. This is a lovely road with mature trees, pastureland & well-tended properties. The back road from Limerick has some lovely stone walls & wild verges & hedgerows. The availability of footpaths from all directions ensures that the village is accessible to most although some paths do need some attention as referenced earlier.

**Concluding Remarks:**

Well done on presenting a succinct, informative & visually appealing submission. The format is one that could be adopted by other centres. Your map was very easy to follow & the legends were so helpful during the walk about. It was a pleasure to visit Castleconnell & its environs, as there truly is a lot to occupy both the visitor & resident. Your plans for the future are well organized & considered & we look forward to the progression of these over time.