

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Hospital - An tOspidéal or Ospideal Ghleann Aine	Ref:	456
County:	Limerick	Mark:	315
Category:	C	Date(s):	07/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	43	44
Streetscape & Public Places	80	43	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	47	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	31	32
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	16	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	37	38
TOTAL MARK	550	306	315

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 have a sizeable committee & a good volunteer base. As with many communities, the change in the working model from office to working from home has freed up many people to volunteer locally as they now have either eliminated or reduced their commuting times. It is heartening to hear you are seeing the positive impact of that change in how the community reacts to requests for assistance & responses to your work within the community. It is fantastic to see the hands on the ground support you receive from local sporting organizations. Their ability to gather an army of willing hands together to tackle large jobs like an all roads clean up really can break the back on any task. They are all to be commended for their community focus. It is great to see you use traditional media in addition to social media where you certainly are very active & cover all three principal platforms. The various local community groups, local agencies & businesses from whom you receive support in various forms is considerable & speaks highly of the value they place on the work of the Tidy Towns. The appointment of a School Liaison Officer for each school is a great strategy & has reaped mutual benefits. The engagement of the youth in the movement is challenging especially when there are so many distractions. However, the fact that they are happy to lend their assistance for one off projects cannot be dismissed.

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

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. Are the five properties you referenced in your submission the same five referenced last year or five additional ones? The provision of annual updates is most helpful. The impact of the improvements on the streetscape is remarkable as the Main Street appears brighter & more activity taking place. Judging from the size of the skips on Main Street, there are more refurbishments taking place on a number of premises. It would be hoped that the twin pronged Derelict Site levy & Vacant Home Improvement grants would propel more property owners to make decisions on long abandoned premises.

There are some excellent examples in the town of repurposed buildings – the old National School now the Family Resource Centre, old AIB now a café & offices & previous commercial buildings now residences. It is heartening to see so many of the commercial & former commercial buildings retain their cast-iron sill guards, raised lettering, bracketed cornicing & window surrounds. These form distinguishing features within the streetscape. As mentioned, Hospital has fine examples of raised lettering above existing & retired commercial premises. Has any thought been

given to a cohesive commercial signage scheme for the town? Also the use of decals in the windows of some businesses adds nothing to the streetscape. Some similar businesses have used local historical scenes or old pictures that add interest & enhance the vista.

Scoil Íosagáin's appearance has greatly benefitted from a fresh coat of paint & the mural in the large rear window is a lovely wildlife scene. It would be fantastic to use this nature theme on the wooden fencing bordering the car park & have the children paint in pre-sketched drawings. Perhaps there is an opportunity to work with a local artist or make contact with Limerick School of Art & Design TUS with a focus on local biodiversity & wildlife.

Your adjudicator has passed through Hospital often & never noticed the Knight sculpture previously. It is a wonderful art installation however it manages to blend into the background. The accompanying plaque is most informative & attractive to boot.

St John The Baptist Church & Knights Hospitallers' Ruins are prominently sited in the town. The car park shared with St John's GAA is certainly in need of resurfacing. Are there plans to freshen & paint the overhead entrance ironworks & the GAA entrance gates similar to the great job completed on the gates & railing at the Grotto?

The Presentation Convent is an imposing building & we note there are plans sought to refurbish the sash windows & reinstate timber sash windows that were previously replaced by PVC. Additionally, it is hoped to convert the convent into 8 apartments. Will these be part of the voluntary housing association? When is the conversion planned to commence?

Are there any plans for the Handball Club building? It is looking a little unloved. An idea might be a mural worked on by the local community & local children, as has been created at St Mary's Park in the city. Similarly, the Community Hall appears ready for a facelift.

The playground is a great central amenity & the recent power washing has transformed the space. Are there plans to touch up the wall murals?

Accessibility for all within an urban centre is essential & the work undertaken at Knockainey Cross with the two pedestrian crossings & lights creates a safe environment for pedestrians & cyclists.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The Picnic Area is a fantastic amenity & the addition in the past of the toadstools, wishing well & mini cottage are whimsical additions & no doubt well used by children. The rambling roses combined with the freshly painted picnic benches provide wonderful pops of colour. The agricultural machinery operates as art installations although one appeared to require up-righting. A little information plaque beside each one, detailing their function, would provide an interesting footnote. The footpath would benefit from some attention in parts, as it is not easily accessible by those with mobility issues. The addition of more trees is a good strategy however immediate attention needs to be paid to ties & damage at the stem from strimming. In order to allow the new trees to thrive, it would be best to keep the area at the base free from weeds & grass to give them the best survival chances. Also some of the mature trees need suckers removed from their bases.

Your joint plans with the local clergy to upgrade the planting in the Church car park are an excellent proposal. It is a vast hard surface area with very little visual relief. The addition of rockery plants, whilst retaining native plants already existing there, is a good idea & would add colour & soften the panorama. A tidy up of the existing shrubs on the boundary wall with the GAA grounds would assist this strategy in addition to the planting of more pollinator shrubs or climbers to fill in the gaps there.

The Church lawns to the front have tremendous potential for either linear beds with pollinator friendly planting like lavender or nepeta or a scented hedge of rosemary. Once again, it would help soften the man made environment & add colour.

Hospital is fortunate to have large green areas at the GAA grounds, Community School campus, the Quarry & Scoil Íosagáin & there is potential in each of these for additional tree planting around the perimeters. Each year, on National Tree Day, Limerick City & County Council offer trees for free to communities once they apply in advance. It might be worth considering & drawing up plans for their use on an annual basis.

It is great to see you are introducing perennial plants into your landscaping schemes as seen in the flowerbeds across from Scoil Íosagáin. Hospital clearly has gifted gardeners with the county runner up in the Most Beautiful Front Garden competition one of your residents.

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

It is great to see the activities of Birdwatch Ireland Limerick branch; Irish Wildlife Trust; Irish Peatland Conservation Council; Biodiversity Ireland; Irish Environmental Network and others featuring regularly on your social media feeds. Well done on hosting the Mague Rivers Trust walk & talk during Heritage Week – a greater appreciation of our local waterways is essential for their continued health. Are there any volunteers within the community conducting regular water sampling in the Mahore River as part of the Freshwater Watch project? If not, it would be great to be part of this initiative through Mague River Trust. The active education & involvement of the children in the 3 schools in this area bodes well for the safe future of Hospital's environment.

Well done to the Community School for planting 100 native Irish trees & creating a woodland habitat. However, on adjudication day it was difficult to determine where on the school campus these were located. There was a large meadow behind & to the side of the Presentation Park astro pitches in addition to the Wildlife Area at the front entrance. At neither location could new tree planting be seen. The meadows were awash with colour & it was great to see paths mown around to allow walkers access & still have the area designated for nature – the swallows were availing of the food source. The planting scheme around the astro pitches looked well where weeding had taken place & there are a great variety of pollinator friendly shrubs like heathers. The designated Wildlife Area's signage at the front of the campus needs some attention & upgrading. Were the trees branches here cut due to visibility or overhanging issues? A general tidy up here would create a better first impression.

Some of the Hospital 800 trees need to be replaced, as they are either dead or dying. It would appear stakes & ties were not removed whilst the trees were maturing.

The new information board at the Picnic Area outlining the plants growing inside the stonewall boundary provides so much information for the visitor & the colour pictures are a worthwhile addition. The swathe of wild flowers at the Picnic Area was flourishing on adjudication day, as were the raspberries.

There is no doubt you are adding significantly to your collective knowledge base with modules on local bird life, Irish honeybee & biodiversity. Additionally, the new information boards at the Picnic Area & at the bridge are excellent guides & provide a learning & identification opportunity for all.

The GAA has launched its new Green Club Toolkit that ties in nicely with the SDGs. You might bring it to their attention & it would be hoped that they would look to put in place initiatives in the areas of biodiversity & sustainability. <https://learning.gaa.ie/greenclub>

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

Energy usage & its associated high costs have been to the fore for all households this year. Therefore, your involvement in the replacement of the heating system at the voluntary housing in Presentation Close was opportune – a move from electric to air to water heating. Have these houses had their insulation upgraded previously to maximize the heating efficiency? The replacement by the Tennis Club of their court lighting to LED is an excellent first step.

Well done on sharing some excellent reuse or repurposing ideas on your social media feed. The circular economy is alive & well with your continued use of spent coffee grounds & tea leaves for inclusion in your compost. A win-win for all.

The establishment of a Facebook page dedicated to sharing, swapping & offering items for free is a great initiative. We will be interested to hear next year the level of traffic on the page.

The stitching in of the topic of sustainability within the educational syllabus & day-to-day activities within the schools are an excellent strategy. These ensure the ethos is founded in reality rather than aspirational.

Given the number of containers within the town, have you rainwater harvesting in place to meet their water demands? Last year's adjudicator referenced the number of containers you have to maintain & we wonder are you considering a reduction? For example, the two square white planters outside the gates of the Picnic Area could have their contents planted into the ground. The increasingly longer warm spells, droughts & monsoon showers are demanding from a people & water viewpoint.

You reference a campaign to promote reusable cups – are you doing this in conjunction with the Conscious Cup campaign & are all retailers in Hospital taking part? We saw no evidence of this on adjudication day & so assume it is planned for later this year. Also are Centra's proposed bottle recycling & refund units the Reverse Vending Units – similar to Garveys Supermarket in Dungarvan? Dungarvan's Tidy Towns have been the financial beneficiary of the system there this year.

The installation of a bike rack at the Tennis Courts makes sense although on adjudication day it was not used despite the courts being in use. It would be interesting to log the use it receives from club members. Do any of the schools encourage walking or cycling e.g. Walk on Wednesdays (WOW)?

Well done to the committee member on continuing to avail of short dated food & using it to create meals for distribution to Limerick's homeless thrice weekly. The level of food waste in Ireland is shocking especially when people are going hungry. It would be great to share this skill with others & provide suggestions & ideas.

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

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It is heartening to hear you noted a reduction, year on year, in the amount of litter collected during the annual TLC8 event. Certainly, judging from your photos you had an excellent turnout for the event & the wide sharing of the event is key for a high participation rate on the day.

You are the first community this adjudicator has come across where residents are requesting the application of dog fouling stencils to address the issue in their locality. It clearly works, as there was none to be seen in those areas where the stencils were provided. The application of the stencils at either entrance to the Picnic Area is a timely & polite reminder to all entering with canine companions. Your work is clearly appreciated & obviously works.

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. It is great to see footpaths replaced where required although there are some outstanding areas for improvement.

Cobblelock looks wonderful when initially laid however the maintenance involved in keeping it well presented is onerous. The circular cobblelock areas across from Scoil Íosagáin need some attention to improve their presentation.

It is to your credit that the town was relatively free of litter despite two gigantic skips full of debris on the Main Street & a very windy spell of weather. The Bring Bank receptacles were pristine with no unwanted litter left in their vicinity – well done to the whole community for valuing this amenity. We note you are searching for an alternative site & we would recommend looking at what other centres have done to ensure the facility is accessible yet attractively camouflaged.

Well done to the Community School students on their proactive approach to involvement in the TLC8 & the appointment of class litter wardens. It would be worth seeing a brief synopsis of their waste & recycling monitored results, year on year to determine any changes in behaviour.

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

Presentation Close is a wonderful example of voluntary housing accessible to the town in a garden environment. The convent gardens create a lovely communal space with the grove of cherry trees. A power hosing of the cobblelock & a sanding & repainting of the benches would enhance this space for all. Bank Place similarly has a

lovely entrance with the art feature, seating, flowerbeds, mature trees & hedging.

The combined entrance at Glenview Drive & Galtee View has an attractive sweeping tree lined entrance & the pastoral scene of calves grazing on adjudication day was serene. The colourful bench adds a whimsical yet practical installation. The green space in the centre is a fantastic amenity for the children as we saw goal posts in place. The rambling roses at the end wall offer a pop of colour. The road surface here could do with some attention. Clúain Foinse is fortunate to have mini groves of trees, ideal places to let the grass grow long underneath for wildlife. The pollinator friendly bed at the stone entrance sign was full of colour & insect activity during the visit. There appears to have been herbicide use around the green area perimeter, this poses a threat to both wildlife & human health & is strongly discouraged. The road surface here requires attention. The green area outside the estate boundary & facing the road has a lot of containers. Have you considered planting in mounded areas to reduce the person hours required to water & maintain the containers?

Hospital residents, in the main, have beautifully presented gardens & abodes & take immense pride in the presentation of both.

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

Arriving into Hospital from the Limerick side affords one a wonderful vista of old stonewalls, mature specimen trees, well tended gardens & houses & verdant hedgerows. There are some unusual, striking & colourful planting containers – red bicycle & black & gold churn – as one nears the town.

The approach from Knockainey has examples of well-preserved, dry stonewalls with original farm gates. Trees, as suggested by last year's adjudicator, planted at the Community School's boundary with the road would soften the linear view on this approach.

The stone signage in addition to the bilingual sign on the road from Cork presents a lovely picture with the backdrop of the oxeye daisies, the planted in situ stone beds & the line of trees. Three signs here does seem like one too many. Are there plans to resurface this road in the near future as there are some very uneven sections? When that is planned, it would be great to ensure the road neatly meets the kerbing near the signage, as quite a gap exists presently with a resulting build up of silt & vegetation. We noted the poles erected for the forthcoming public lighting. The Emly Road is a busy stretch with commercial premises on the right & it was noted that the entrances in general are well maintained.

The Bruff Road benefits from the line of trees & the grassy margin backed by stonewalls & hedgerows on one side & the pastureland fronted by vibrant hedgerows on the other.

Concluding Remarks:

Your adjudicator has passed through Hospital quite frequently in the past & on our recent adjudication visit there was a noticeable uplift in the appearance of the streetscape. The backing of the whole community for the enhancement of Hospital is noteworthy & the development & completion of projects is testament to this collective spirit.

A few suggestions for next year's submission – provide a summary of your 3/5 year action plan as the one attached had 9 pages with no actionable points & a legend for the accompanying map would have been most helpful as your adjudicator was back & forth through the application locating the various references.