

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Kilmallock - Cill Mocheallóg	Ref:	121
County:	Limerick	Mark:	349
Category:	C	Date(s):	12/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	49	50
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	48	50
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	38	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	26	28
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	34	35
TOTAL MARK	550	338	349

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.

In light of the size of Kilmallock, you have a relatively small committee however your achievements to date are astonishing. The support you receive from other local community groups, local agencies & businesses is testament to the value of your work for the community. Your close engagement with the youth through the schools & the curriculum is an investment in the town's future. It is so important today to utilize all mediums of communication especially social media, as this is how many people access local news & events. As a group, you are utilizing this platform to good effect.

There is nothing quite like the provision of refreshments after a walk & talk or after completing work so well done to the local hostelry.

It is always great to see the level of camaraderie & helpfulness that Tidy Towns groups demonstrate regularly as in the case of your invitation to all local Tidy Towns groups for a presentation from a recent Tidy Towns winner, Ennis. It cannot be overstated the helpful advice & support that can be gleaned from such a gathering. Congratulations on winning first prize for your sustainable float in the St Patrick's Day parade.

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

The bane of many a Tidy Towns group is the number of derelict properties & sites within their locality that blight the town centre. The two-pronged approach of the Vacant Property Refurbishment grants & the Derelict Site levy seem to be gaining traction. 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 detract from the visual panorama of the town centre. However, well done on your successes to date, the difference & improvements are remarkable as one walks through the town.

It is wonderful to see how former industrial heritage buildings like the former creamery have been refurbished to include residential use combined with a commercial purpose. It will be interesting to see how the former warehouse on Wolf Tone Street, which is presently for sale, is re-imagined by the prospective new owners as it fortunately has retained most of its original form & fabric.

There were some interesting plaques located in various areas throughout the town that provided an insight into Kilmallock's history. Are there plans for Corporal Heffernan's house? The mural at the 1798 monument area provides a great visual image of Kilmallock's past & an ideal location for same. There are some lovely examples of commercial & residential buildings that have retained some of their original form and massing. The architectural heritage of Kilmallock is evident in many of the buildings throughout the town.

It is always interesting how competitive local businesses become when their property's facades & environs are in the spotlight. The competitions for Most Improved Business Premises & Best Kept Business Premises are a great concept. This would be an interesting subject for inclusion in a Tidy Towns newsletter edition, as many towns would benefit from adopting this tactic.

The Playground is ideally located for accessibility & the surrounding green area softens the hard surfacing of the car park to the front. Some tree planting here would work well. There is an excellent publication on how car parks can be managed to help pollinators. <https://pollinators.ie/how-car-parks-can-help-pollinators/>

The plans for the redevelopment of the medieval merchant house are ambitious & would unquestionably improve the view & provide a focal point for visitors. Are there any plans for the large industrial premises across from Coote Hall?

You are one of the few towns addressing the topic of signage & it is remarkable the impact it has on a streetscape. Do let us know next year what the review concluded. SuperValu are to be congratulated for including relevant local decals on their windows that add to rather than detract from the streetscape.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The Famine Memorial Park marks such an important time in Ireland's history & Kilmallock's past. Your considerable work in tackling issues in the park & addressing them to ensure the Park is a living testament to the hundreds of Famine victims buried there is inspiring. The before & after pictures are evidence of the work needed to make the transformation from neglected to cherished. The work that has gone in to restoring the cobblelock is remarkable. It was a pleasure to see new trees planted, diseased & dead trees removed, overgrown & invasive shrubbery removed & seasonal flower beds created. Please do keep a close eye on the tree ties & stakes to ensure they are not impeding the trees growth. The decision to cut the edges of the lawns & leave the remainder in short meadows creates a wonderful vista on entering the Park & walking the perimeter pathway. Unfortunately, some of the mature & maturing ash trees have succumbed to the dreaded ash dieback disease for which there is currently no cure. It is important that you plan now for their replacement rather than wait until they fall or are felled. Is it planned to provide seating in the Park aside from the low stonewall inside the gate? The planned erection of an information board will provide context for the Park & accompanying images complete the picture. It was good to see the framework in place for the information board.

Riverside Park is a wonderful town amenity & certainly the pruning of low overhanging branches on the pathway creates a more accessible & obstruction free walking route for all visitors to the Park. The planned redevelopment of the Park will take time given that funding was announced in 2021 & planning permission is being sought in 2023.

You might let us know, briefly, what the main plans are for the Park.

What a lovely idea along the Memorial & Priory Walkways – a tree planted for each of 30 family members of local families who have died. Trees are more life affirming than other traditional reminders of death & provide beautiful community green canopies everyone can enjoy. It was a delight to amble along these walkways & be immersed in nature with abundant birdlife residing there. There is attention required for some of the trees as the ties are either too tight or have come loose, as is the case with the base protectors. Some of the semi mature trees require pruning to allow main stems to thrive & some mature trees require suckers removed. There are a number of dead trees that need removal. The blend of short & long meadows on the Memorial Walkway creates a wonderful mix of areas for wildlife & varied landscaping sights for walkers. The picnic area is a fantastic amenity for all especially in the summer months.

Many schools have significant green areas surrounding their campuses. Coláiste Iósaef Post Primary School has certainly maximized theirs with the expansion of the existing orchard, creation of mini forests with native trees, additional planted areas & an outdoor classroom. However, as one walked at the back of the school, it was very difficult to determine where the trees were as it was so overgrown similarly with the planted areas. The planted area by the playing pitches needs to have the overgrowth cut back especially under the newly planted trees to allow them space to grow. The picnic area here is ideally located.

The single tier & three-tier flower containers add colour to the streetscape. The inclusion of perennial pollinator friendly planting in the low containers is welcomed & a similar approach to the larger containers would be preferable. Petunias are certainly showy however that is at the expense of both pollen & nectar. A useful recent publication can assist your choices for next year. <https://pollinators.ie/top-10-pollinator-friendly-plants-for-different-situations/>

The planted beds on the island across from Coote Hall were awash with colour from the flowering roses & scabious.

The pedestrian pathway to the Courthouse is crying out for colour along the narrow strip boundary of the stonewall.

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

What a wonderful way to connect in the next generation of Kilmallock's youth in learning about wildlife than in partnering with them on the maintenance & expansion of the Wildlife Garden. Well done to the local Brownies/Girl Guides. The involvement of the community at St Josephs in creating biodiversity beds at their campus is most welcome. It is vital to engage all cohorts of the community who can then participate in areas that interest them. Congratulations on your successful application for a Community Foundation grant. The use of this grant to engage an ecologist/environmental consultant in order to establish a baseline survey of Kilmallock's biodiversity will pay dividends. Their recommendations will provide a template for future projects in this area. Your plan to have public engagement on the report findings & recommendations is the best strategy. When a community have a forum within which to participate, connect & feel their opinions count, the outcome is a high level of engagement. We certainly look forward to seeing the implementation of your plan in subsequent years.

The separate study you are carrying out on local birdlife will tie in neatly with your plans. There are a number of volunteer led organisations that provide walks & talks in this area – BirdWatch Ireland Limerick branch are very active & helpful Home Page - BirdWatch Ireland The Barn Owl Project The Barn Owl Project Bat Conservation Ireland Irish Bats - Bat Conservation Ireland It was lovely to see in the surrounds of SS. Peter & Paul's Church of

Ireland, families of rabbits making their home there.

The wildflower area inside the entrance to Priory Walk was blooming on the day of the visit especially the white buddleia. However, is there a need for all the containers, as it would seem all the plants could be placed in the ground with the addition of more soil, compost & grit? It would then look a lot less cluttered.

We noted while traversing the Memorial Walkway, an outlet under the pathway emitting grey water into the river. It is important that this is investigated as soon as possible & its source determined to prevent any potential problems.

There is a large tree felled across the river here that could potentially cause problems once the winter rains arrive. The information plaques & notices on nature & biodiversity provide reference points for the community & add interest on the various walks around the town.

The location of the compost area at Priory Walk is not ideal, located as it is alongside the river. The runoff from the decaying vegetation here will have a high nutrient content that will seep into the river. A more suitable location would be best found away from the river's edge.

The incidence of what appears to be the invasive plant, Gunnera/Chilean Rhubarb, along both sides of sections of the Priory Walkway is significant. Are there plans by the local council to take action? We noted the warnings about the Giant Hogweed although we did not see any on the day of the visit.

It was disappointing to note hedge cutting taking place around the courthouse in contravention of the Wildlife Act.

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

This is a category that has created more than a little consternation for many communities therefore it is great to see that both Limerick City & County Council & Ballyhoura Development have run courses in upcycling & sustainable gardening. What better way to determine a course's usefulness than how practically its learning outcomes can be applied! Well done on using the learning to create an upcycled St Patrick's Day float for your Tidy Towns group & a fantastic way to get your sustainable message out to the community. Your plans to work with the local recycling centre to set aside good quality furniture for reuse & recycling by your group should pique a lot of local interest. We look forward to seeing the before & after photos on social media & in next year's submission. There are some excellent online videos from the Rediscovery Centre in this area. <http://www.rediscoverycentre.ie/news/rediscover-home-series/>

As has been demonstrated over the decades, Tidy Towns groups are delighted to share their learning with other groups. How fortunate to be able to learn from Emily Tidy Towns how to harvest, save & store wildflower seeds & put it into practice in the wildflower gardens. The coming together of Tidy Towns within a county provides wonderful opportunities for sharing of information & knowledge, creating new networks & a forum for discussions on areas of difficulty or areas requiring clarification. It is an initiative in which local councils have a central role to play as it is to their benefit to have engaged communities.

Once again, Coláiste Iosaef Post Primary School are walking the walk on sustainability – repurposing materials for the garden; food waste for the wormeries; salad leaves & herbs for the canteen & home economics classes; wood waste for insect wood piles; etc. With regard to sustainable transport, do many of the school's student body walk or cycle to school? Perhaps an interesting project for a Transition Year student/s to investigate the whys & why nots! The Tidy Towns Handbook is a fantastic reference resource in this area. Sustainability-Doing-More-with-less.pdf (tidytowns.ie) ChangeX is a platform with oodles of ideas & funding. ChangeX: The Best Ideas for Your Community

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The presentation of street furniture has a visual impact on a town thus well done on auditing the bollards, identifying those requiring repair or replacement & providing the details to the local Council. 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. Have you a policy on the erection of posters in the town? There were some very large ones in prominent positions.

The mechanical weeder should reduce the amount of people power required in maintaining pathways & kerbsides weed free. Your positive posters on tidiness are well positioned & delivered. It is heartening to see you use the dog fouling stencils & they appear to be working effectively as no dog poo was seen during the visit.

TLC8 is an incredible countywide initiative & it is great to see Kilmallock take part annually with a noticeable increase in volunteers. As you establish your boundaries, it will be interesting to note whether you are seeing an increase or decrease in the amount of litter collected, year on year. You are to be commended for segregating your litter, not an insignificant task especially during TCL8.

Kilmallock's community spirit is very much in evidence with volunteer litter pickers in every residential area, well done to each & everyone. Where would Tidy Towns groups be without their Local Community Employment Scheme workers? They significantly reduce the burden of jobs to be completed & make the attainment of weekly goals achievable.

Coláiste Iosaef Post Primary School certainly is the poster school. They are very proactive on identifying alternative avenues for what could potentially end up in landfill e.g. batteries for the charity Barretstown; food waste from cooking classes heading to wormeries etc.

At the entrance to Priory Walk & across from the wildflower garden, there are several signs on the post & railings. We would recommend taking a look at these & determining what is required & what is redundant now. Whoever attends to the cobblelock at the town entrance to Priory Walk is to be commended for the standard of its presentation – it is an onerous task to keep it looking this well.

What are the plans for the fenced off area beside the Community Mental Health Centre? The amount of litter inside the boundary wall was staggering, clearly a magnet for dumping.

At the Bulgaden exit out of town, the pedestrian walkway there has sections that require one to walk on the road as the hedges are overhanging. Are there plans for the vacant house & site across the road from here, on the corner?

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

Cois Abhainn has a lovely strip of wild flowers planted on part of the verge boundary separating the front row of houses from the road. The communal green area at the centre provides a great amenity & could benefit from more tree planting.

Gortboy is fortunate to have a large planted area at the entrance to the estate. It appeared that work is taking place here on removing some of the large shrubs. The communal green has lovely mini groves of mature trees with seating & a great view of the Famine Memorial Park. Some of the road surfaces in the estate would benefit from remedial works.

There are a number of courtyard residential developments, Baalbec Court & one off of Lord Edward Street that would benefit from some softening of the hard surfacing with landscaping treatments.

Glengrove has a lovely stone entrance & boundary walls. The expansive green areas to the front are ideal for the creation of mini forests, edible hedges & pathways mown through meadows. The strip left for wildflowers & grasses inside the boundary wall on the left hand side is good to see, as were the clover sections of lawns.

Ash Hill Manor's entrance is very austere with the black fencing on the right hand side. Are there plans for the green area on the left of the entrance?

There are some lovely examples of terraces displaying vernacular character – single storey houses on Wolfe Tone Street, two storey limestone houses on Sheares Street.

There are a number of volunteer led organizations working with communities & residential associations to create mini forests & increased tree planting who can also assist with funding. Check out Easy Treesie <https://easytreesie.com/> Trees on the Land <https://www.treesontheland.com/> Additionally, for National Tree Week, Limerick City & County Council provides trees, free of charge, to communities who register their interest. It would be worth working with the various residents associations & planning out a planting regime over the next few years.

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

The R515 long stretch into Kilmallock has a lovely vista of stonewalls, mature trees, old estate grand entrances & closer to the town, a green stretch with planted areas with pollinator friendly perennials & vernacular buildings. Are there plans for the presently redundant service station at this end of the town?

The R512 again has well maintained stonewalls with some lovely examples of traditional gates. The hedges behind the walls combined with mature trees soften the numerous residential entrances. The rose beds here present a stunning pop of red to the panorama. It appeared the paths here had been swept but the swept piles had been left against the wall.

The Limerick road with its low stonewalls & pasturelands present a lovely entrance to the town. However, you might consider the amount of signage erected in this direction & perhaps minimizes it. The sweep of the stone bridge & the green areas beyond with the rose beds & shrubberies creates a welcome entrance. Is there a need for the tyres surrounding some of the trees? Perhaps create mounds & plant them in the ground. Also some of the shrubberies on this stretch of road are becoming encroached with grasses that need to be dealt with before they become endemic.

Concluding Remarks:

Thank you for providing an excellent map that was easy to follow & made the visit to Kilmallock a seamless exercise. A good map is a balm for every adjudicator & is an excellent start to each visit. Kilmallock, for a town of its size, has the most walkways this adjudicator has had the pleasure to traverse. What you have accomplished as a community is commendable & your plans for the future will make Kilmallock an even better location to live, work & enjoy life.