

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Meadowbrook
Corbally-Sruthá na
Cluana** Ref: **2177**

County: **Limerick** Mark: **253**

Category: **B** Date(s): **03/08/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	31	33
Streetscape & Public Places	80	28	30
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	32	34
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	20	22
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	17	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	26	27
TOTAL MARK	550	239	253

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 had a busy year and well done to your committee for your continued work in the various categories.

Congratulations on being awarded Best Residential Area in Limerick in the Going for Gold competition. We were surprised that the win was not highlighted prominently on your social media page. It is fantastic that every avenue is represented and it is heartening to have more residents get involved in specific projects. The provision of funding is a lifeline for many Tidy Towns groups and allows the purchase of equipment that might otherwise be outside the group's purchasing budget. Assistance from Limerick City and County Council is critical especially when managing the cutting of large green areas.

Communication is key within a community in order to inform and encourage involvement. You have both traditional and social media mediums covered. The involvement of your youth is imperative so their active engagement with the annual Team Limerick Cleanup is fantastic. There may be opportunities for your secondary and third level students to undertake projects and projects in particular those doing Transition Year or Sustainable or Environmental college courses.

Please do update the link provided for your social media page, as it is not easily found. Thank you for an easy to follow map and accompanying legend, which were most helpful.

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

We note your ongoing engagement with the owner of the derelict property opposite Meadowbrook's entrance. Having checked Limerick City and County Council's Derelict Site Register there is a site at Mill Road listed there however we noticed another derelict site further back. It was noted that there is a planning notice, dated early June, affixed to the property for its demolition and construction of a new dwelling so we can assume your approaches have resulted in action. The local council is very active in this area and is actively compulsory acquiring derelict properties. It would be hoped that the two pronged approach of the Derelict Site levy and the Vacant Homes Refurbishment grant would ensure there is early progress.

Is the commercial property at the right hand entrance to Meadowbrook currently operating? On adjudication day, a working weekday, the doors and shutters were closed and there were quite a few weeds either side of the entrance. When the area surrounding this business premises was tarmaced, there was a lost opportunity for planting to soften all the hard surfacing.

The drawing power of community notice boards cannot be underestimated and they become a focal point for face-to-face connections for existing and new residents. On adjudication day the large communal notice board in the

green area was not yet erected however the other notice boards were in situ & featured the DeCarbon Project. Accessibility to the community green is not available to all thus it was good to see this was addressed in the mock up structure and is an area that requires consideration whether or not the project goes ahead. Has consideration been given to naming the roads rather than simply numbers? Also a bilingual sign for the estate to match the one in English would add interest.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

As a community, you are fortunate to have such a sizeable green area and several other small and medium areas within the estate. The mature trees are an asset.

The Community Garden is an excellent example of what can be achieved by a small community in a communal space. The range of vegetables and fruit on offer is impressive. A significant body of work is involved in firstly establishing such a project and secondly, in maintaining, sowing, weeding and harvesting through the seasons of spring, summer and autumn. Your decision to include companion planting is a great way to deal with aphids. The sunflowers were putting on a great show despite the rain they have endured. The bed of Cavolo Nero kale and onions will keep the entire estate in colcannon for the autumn. However it was disheartening to see the lettuce past harvesting and peas heading in the same direction. Could you use your community WhatsApp group to offer produce when a glut is forming and if there are no local takers, then make contact with groups like Novas or SVdeP who both either do soup runs or serve lunches at their respective centres. It is hard to countenance wasted food. Alternatively, do share recipes for dishes using the glut e.g. pea soup/pesto/mash.

Most of the fruit trees are due pruning as heavier pruning is recommended in the third year of growth. If you do not feel you have in house expertise or lack confidence to carry out the task, seek advice initially from the Environmental section of the local council or your Local Environmental Officer. If you do receive the assistance of an arborist, perhaps offer residents the chance to interact with them, as some garden trees would benefit from attention. Similarly attention is required for the fruit bushes depending on their variety and fruiting season. Some of the mature trees have suckers that require removal for the health of the trees while others have supports that are no longer required. Some of the newly planted fruit trees need the area underneath kept clear of weeds to allow them to feed in the top soil. Presently, they are competing for nutrients with the grass and other vigorous "weeds". We would recommend a radius of about 2 feet completely weed free. The living willow structure would also benefit from attention as many of the side shoots on the main stems and developing buds need to be cut to keep the overall shape.

The paths cut through the short meadows presents a wonderful vista and encourage one to walk through especially now with the creation of the linear bed. Here is an excellent location for the latter with the brambles also providing fruit in the background. The choice of crocosmia in this bed, while eye catching, may prove problematic in the future due to its invasiveness.

You reference locally grown perennials, are these you yourselves have propagated or are sourced from a local resident?

As one heads further into the estate, who takes responsibility for the green roundabout where one turns right for Siúl na hAbhann and left for another Meadowbrook avenue? Here there is additional tree planting and certainly space for more. Are there plans to replace the felled tree in front of the steel raised bed? There are a number of volunteer led groups focused on tree planting in urban areas and work closely with community groups. Some of those are – Pocket Forests www.pocketforests.ie Trees on the Land www.treesontheland.com Easy Treesie www.easytreesie.com The latter are focused on assisting children to plant trees and some communities have used the opportunity to plant a tree with every child in their respective area.

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

You have adopted an excellent approach in this area by firstly sourcing funding to engage an ecologist through Community Foundation Ireland and secondly, to plan having a local biodiversity action plan created. This plan will map your activities in the short, medium and long term and with the assistance of the workshops will inform your decision making. You can then engage with practical clear ideas on projects to enhance areas within Meadowbrook for wildlife, many of which are simple ideas that can really make a difference to the world around you, enhancing everyone's quality of life. The fact that there is already great community interest in the plan hopefully is indicative of an increased level of involvement when you commence various projects over the next year and into the future. The wetland area at the centre of the green is a great example of utilizing the space instead of trying to mould nature against its natural environment. The wild grasses and flowers here offer a chance to enjoy the natural ecology. The new wildflower area was busy with insect life during the visit and there were several swallows feeding over the wetland area. If you leave your sunflowers in place, you should see finch & tit species visiting to feast on the seeds.

Alongside the workshops, you have the opportunity to conduct surveys and involve all the community especially the children in fun and engaging activities. The National Biodiversity Data Centre is an amazing portal & a great place to start. <https://biodiversityireland.ie/> The Irish Garden Bird Survey commences in November/December annually and is a perfect stepping-stone for beginner ornithologists. <https://birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/surveys-research/research-surveys/irish-garden-bird-survey/> Another one that has proved popular and you are ideally placed to conduct it at your wildflower area is the Flower Timed Insect (FIT) count – a quick 10-minute survey. <https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/fit-counts/>

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

This is an area in which you have achieved a lot in the past year. The Decarbonising Together project was an excellent initiative and a great opportunity to see a concept erected temporarily as a mock up. A week long chance for residents to consider the structure and engage in discussions was worth its weight in gold in terms of

engagement, planning and mining what the community wants from a communal space. The number of potential add-ons to the proposed structure were most interesting – rainwater harvesting, solar panels, solar powered water pump, beehives, bat boxes etc. There is a neat tie in here with your forthcoming biodiversity action plan in relation to some of the suggestions.

Urban travel and accessibility is critical today so well done on utilizing a two pronged approach to this – submissions entered in relation to the Bus Connects Programme as part of the Mill Road development and separate discussions with the Executive Engineer in the Active Travel Department of the local council. It would be hoped that your suggestions would receive an open and positive hearing. We look forward to receiving updates on both next year. As a group you are setting an excellent example, moving from petrol gardening tools to rechargeable battery powered alternatives. Sometimes one needs to see such a tool in use before being convinced of its comparable effectiveness.

The bartering of excess home garden produce between residents is great to see. Some communities use a once weekly “Free to Take, Free to Give” table for this specific purpose. Your Community Garden is a fantastic example of sustainability – shared excess produce, tips on how to keep produce fresher for longer, adding fruit bushes, sharing GIY skills etc. We referred earlier to what we saw on adjudication day. We noticed the Do & Don't sign over the composting bins is partially obscured, best to ensure all those using the facility know what is allowed and what is not wanted.

Once again, you have an opportunity to perform surveys in a number of sectors e.g. Travel – percentage of the estate with reduced commuting due to working from home, interest in a School Walking Bus; Energy – number of homes at the different BER ratings; number of home undertaking energy upgrades; Waste – October Reuse Month and September Second Hand are perfect times to share tips or have a small event. There is no shortage of resources to assist you e.g. Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland www.seai.ie MyWaste Ireland www.mywaste.ie Voice Ireland www.voiceireland.org Your social media platform provides you with a fantastic communication facility to educate and inform on this topic.

ChangeX is a great source of ideas in this category and at times provides funding for projects. www.changex.org

The Tidy Towns Handbook is always there too. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sustainability-Doing-More-with-less.pdf>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The Team Limerick Cleanup (TLC) is an incredible countywide initiative and it must be heartening for you to see a decrease, year on year, in the amount of litter collected. Well done on continuing to participate in the eight year of TLC. The provision of bins and pickers to the local youth is a great strategy for ensuring responsibility and instilling a sense of pride.

An annual audit of street furniture is a good plan e.g. redundant poles, obsolete signage, obscured signage, bollards or lighting standards requiring upgrading etc. You, can then decide what needs to be referred to the local council and what you, as a community, can undertake yourselves. The road markings in some areas are quite faded and need repainting. In view of the numbers of front gardens that are now paved in hard surfacing it is imperative that all gulleys are maintained free of debris to ensure torrential rain has channels to traverse in a speedy manner.

In view of the rainfall in July, weeding has been difficult due to the rapid growth. Where possible, ensure there is no build up of soil that facilitates weed growth and where footpaths have gaps or are broken, liaise with the local council on repairs so that they can be added to their list for attention when they are in the area.

On adjudication day, all avenues were free of litter. Well done as this takes a collective approach to achieve.

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

Meadowbrook estate has a pleasing layout with curved roadways that reduce speeding and adequately wide footpaths for pedestrians and those with limited mobility. The short avenues encourage a sense of community and the number of green areas at intersections soften the hard surfaces.

The vast majority of the houses and gardens are maintained to a high standard and it is obvious the community take pride in their abodes and boundaries. It is obvious there are some talented gardeners in your midst.

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

The entrance to the estate is well maintained with the raised bed on the left hand side awash with Japanese anemones. The mature trees and hedging present a wonderful sylvan setting and welcome.

Concluding Remarks:

For a small community, you have achieved a lot. It proves Andrew Carnegie's quote “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments towards community objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results”. We look forward to seeing your plans come to fruition.