

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Murroe - Maigh Rua** Ref: **464**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **320**
Category: **C** Date(s): **03/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	45	46
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	46
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	35	37
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	16	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	32	33
TOTAL MARK	550	311	320

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

You are one of the few communities who share on their website the results of the annual adjudication report under the separate headings. It makes for very interesting reading to see your progression since 2017. This is a great resource for the community & a reminder to you all of the rewards of your hard work & how much you have achieved to date. A committee of 11 is a good size in order to get things done with general agreement. Although you do not specify the number of volunteers it is clear you have volunteers coming from local housing estates in addition to the GAA. Many a community will envy your access to Community Workers, an increasingly elusive assistance these days. They provide wonderful support for Tidy towns groups & make the weekly To Do Lists less daunting. Well done to you on organizing fund raising events. These are time consuming however it is great to see how well supported they are by both the community & local businesses. It takes time & resources to apply for funding from agencies so congratulations on securing Pobal funding. Your modes of communication are certainly wide reaching & active, the best combination.

The involvement of the younger generation is essential for momentum of action in the community. Their perspective on future plans is very helpful so it is fantastic one representative has been co-opted onto the committee. The involvement of the scouts in your work & your work with the National School are all excellent strategies. Your new hi viz safety vests will have you all appearing very well turned out.

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

Murroe is fortunate to have so many historical buildings within its environs, residential, commercial & community. As has been referenced in many reports over the years, the replica Celtic Cross "The Monument" has quite the visual impact on the arriving visitor especially as there are no distractions. The spectacular copper beech trees located close by lends it gravitas. Your adjudicator has a grá for the old agricultural buildings & the old forge with its horseshoe profiled door & sandstone walls is a delight although it was not possible to locate the plaque. As it is a working yard, machinery was parked close by & perhaps it was located there. There was a Heritage Council GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings grant scheme last year for the conservation of old buildings that served agricultural purposes in the past. The owner may be interested if funding could be ring fenced for a restoration.

The Muintir na Tire Hall was looking resplendent on adjudication day with its newly painted façade – the three colour combination is very attractive. A coordinated colour palette with the building & bollards will in time complete a picture perfect vista. The old Butcher's Shop with its facelift & window mural is a delight. Whoever makes the decision on colour palettes has a great artistic eye.

The old Post office was looking very smart with its lovely Kelly green windows & lovely to see the old post box sparkling in green & gold. Are there future plans for this building? The seating at the grotto in the Church grounds creates a lovely oasis of calm for those who wish to enjoy some tranquility.

Rua Restaurant was very well presented with an arresting colour combination. The Credit Union & Spar buildings

were smart in their appearance. The National School is quite striking with its wall featuring murals of local scenes. With regard to derelict buildings, it was heartening to see planning sought for the vacant Daybreak premises to reuse it as a childcare facility. Now that Limerick City & County Council are actively involved in tackling dereliction it may encourage property owners to upgrade the buildings or dispose of them. The other option left to them of compulsory acquisition may be less palatable. Next year, do include an update on buildings that are vacant or derelict.

Murroe is very fortunate to have lovely old stonewalls through the village. It is then quite obvious when block walls break the seamless vista & it does detract from the streetscape.

The Murroe Wood Park is quite the achievement for the whole community & what an amazing selection of activities to avail of when visiting. The completion of the Hub this year & hopefully the landscaping of the entrance will impact in a positive way on the streetscape. Your adjudicator could not locate signposting for the Park within the village & it took quite some time to locate the entrance. It would be interesting to see if this is the experience of other new visitors. Perhaps your adjudicator is location challenged.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The pictures you included in your submission of the green area at the Monument with crouses in bloom is a stunning vista. With each passing year they will proliferate in this area.

The containers at the Hall were nicely planted with Heuchera etc. Would the inclusion of blue flowers attractive to pollinators add that extra coordination – perhaps phacelia, cornflowers, nepeta (catmint) or verbenas. As a gardener, many of these plants are easily subdivided or seeds saved – a local gardener may be able to assist if this suggestion is considered.

The raised bed in front of the Garda Station is an excellent example of perennial planting with healthy examples of hypericum, pieris, creeping thyme & many more. It presents a wonderful softening to an area that has many hard surfaces, as does the raised bed at The Forge.

Please do liaise closely with Murroe Wood Park CLG in relation to their planting schemes & place in their hands the All Ireland Pollinator Plan in addition to the guide “Pollinator Friendly Management of Sports Clubs”

<https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Sports-Clubs-Pollinator-Guidelines-2022-WEB.pdf> As the Park is located within the village it can play a vital role in the conservation of your existing biodiversity if they decide to adopt a pollinator friendly management approach.

You have taken on quite a task with the number of containers you have placed throughout the village. This summer so far has been exceptionally demanding from a water & people resource viewpoint. Many communities like to see flowering containers however in country villages & towns there is so much nature in the vicinity that the containers are sometimes excess to requirements.

As you are aware given the fine specimen trees within the village centre & in the environs, trees offer a myriad of significant benefits for the environment & for communities. There is a fantastic initiative “Pocket Forests” that works with local communities to create mini forests <https://www.pocketforests.ie/>. This idea is very similar to what you created at the Primary School with the two triangles of trees & wild flowers underneath. It might be worth investigating further in order to add more trees. Your plan to audit the health of the existing trees with the assistance of an arborist is well thought through.

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

This is an area where you have been very busy & productive. Well done to your committee member on undertaking the bat survey. What a delight to find that all bat species are residing in Murroe. We look forward to hearing the results of this year's survey within the village environs. Have you had the opportunity to present the information to the community or to have bat walks/talks? Well done too to your local scouts group for undertaking training as part of the wider Water Programme CWDF project. Well on their way to being Citizen Scientists.

Technology has played such a role in our understanding of local wildlife. How amazing to have seen on the webcam both red squirrels & pine martins at the squirrel feeder. A healthy ecosystem exists. You referenced that 10 of the nest boxes were occupied in 2022 – do tell us which species moved in & raised young.

Interaction with experts is the best strategy & your engagement with Birdwatch Ireland on the erection of a Barn Owl box is an excellent example. Are you planning to use the trail camera here too? We will be most interested to hear if one decides to make it its residence.

How fortunate you are to have areas where Early-purple orchids flourish in addition to other wildflowers. Perhaps a greater focus on these stunning native orchids may educate the community on their importance. “Ireland's Wild Orchids – A Field Guide” is a superb book on the subject. We just saw your new profile picture on FB, the Common Spotted Orchid – stunning. Your Managed for Wildlife signs seems to be doing the job for you this year & dissuading those inclined to cut early. Your requests & education have paid dividends, well done.

Well done too on highlighting through social media how to assist the insect population through delayed lawn mowing & non use of herbicides. It was a delight to see wild flowers in estate greens.

Your adjudicator has not seen such a well-placed Herb Garden, beside a restaurant who avail of the bounty. It was buzzing with insect life on adjudication day with particular perchance for the flowering sage. The backdrop of the clematis & wisteria is stunning & both are insect-friendly. Perhaps the two additional planters at the end could be used elsewhere, they appeared surplus to requirements. It was a little alarming though to see herbicide use on the edges of the two green areas in front of the Herb Garden. Perhaps a word to those undertaking this work might be a good first approach.

Your adjudicator too had trouble locating the Amenity Park, as there is no identifier on the gate at the entrance. It is noted that you have plans to rectify this situation. As a new visitor, your adjudicator was concerned they might be trespassing on private property. It is excellent news that you have secured funding for resurfacing the pathway. It is a truly wonderful facility within easy reach of the village and on adjudication day the foxgloves were starting to reveal themselves. It was noted there are rhododendrons in existence there, a non-native invasive species.

The information boards at the Hall featuring local wildlife are most informative & eye catching.

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

The Herb Garden beside the Rua Restaurant is a wonderful example of how a small space can be put to productive use for both the human & the insect population. The wooden markers provide a learning opportunity for novice gardeners & budding chefs. The restaurant's use of the fresh herbs reduces their carbon footprint and all these small steps help & educate.

Do let us know next year what type of energy efficient heating was installed in the Hall & what the savings have been. The planned replacement of the doors & windows will increase the building's energy efficiency. Will it be possible to replace the front windows with a similar design as they do add character to the building due to their unique style?

What a great place to celebrate Bike Week in May at the bicycle rack in Murroe Wood Park. A focus on sustainable transport & bike maintenance is an excellent combination. It was great to see the bank racks outside the school too in a prominent position.

The series of water butts positioned to capture rainwater from the Muintir na Tire Hall roof is an excellent example of harvesting. Please do consider doing an article on it detailing what it captures & the use you get from it for the Tidy Towns newsletter. Many communities would be interested in your connected system.

You referenced the creation of your own leaf mould & its location in the Amenity Park. Perhaps when the pathways have been resurfaced, you could mark the area, as it could not be located on adjudication day.

If any of your youth are doing Transition Year they might be interested for their Gaisce Award in creating tips for tackling waste, reducing what goes into household bins & thus lessening corresponding refuse bills. These could then be shared on your social media feed. Check out <https://www.mywaste.ie>

This is an area, sustainability, where there are lots of ideas that can be undertaken – you are demonstrating by example – rainwater harvesting; creation of compost; herb garden for community use; promotion of cycling & installation of energy efficient heating. As you are active on social media, you have an excellent forum for sharing ideas in this space. Check out Community Reuse network <https://crni.ie/> <https://localprevention.ie/topics/> & <https://www.mywaste.ie>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

On entering Murroe, there is an air of care & the village looked clean & tidy on adjudication day. Well done on working with Limerick City & County Council in painting on stencils re dog fouling rather than using posters. The Bottle Bank at the Hall was clean & tidy on adjudication day as were the two clothes bank near the Monument. It is so encouraging for you as a group to have the physical support of Spar who have their staff engage in litter collection. This is a testament to civil pride.

Well done on your continued involvement in the annual TLC8 Limerick event. The pictures on social media of the amount of litter collected are eye opening. Was the total amount collected up or down on last year's collection? Unfortunately, there was litter strewn about in the green area beside the Spar. What was most frustrating about the scene was that there was a litterbin located alongside. These sights make one wonder about the mindset of the litter bugs! Some large pieces of litter were also found in the Church grounds, the aftermath of a fast food meal. The Amenity Park obviously attracts groups given its secluded location & the detritus of a party was seen in the vegetation in one area while enjoying the circular walk. The sign on the gate unfortunately did not deter their behaviour. There was a significant amount of litter on the roadway as one turned right into Garrahbawn Estate.

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

Cois na Coille has the most attractive entrance with the green, planted beds & mature trees. Gilmartin Park was a delight to walk through with the green areas well planted with clusters of trees & shrubs thus presenting mini oases for wildlife & a stunning display of roses softening the long block wall. Both of these estates should showcase their landscaping to the newer estates to demonstrate what can be achieved over time.

Ros Fearna residents should be very proud of the presentation of their estate. There is significant work involved in maintaining cobble & kerb edging.

The mature birch trees & well-maintained green spaces soften the built environment.

The entrance to Glenstal Gate Estate would benefit from attention. From previous reports, it seems that the residents are waiting for the damaged piers to be repaired by Limerick County Council. Has there been any update provided by the council? The natural meadow with the verges cut alongside the paths presents the most stunning picture to any visitor to the estate. One can imagine how much fun children would have with paths mown through for play!

Garrahbawn estate has a wonderful green area bordering the public road. Some of the shrubs in the beds on the right hand side would benefit from pruning & weeding to present them to their best.

With the amount of green space available to many of the new estates, it may be worthwhile introducing them to the concept of Pocket Forests as referenced earlier.

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

The pictures you supplied of the spring bulbs in bloom at the 5 Roads & on the Cappamore Road are a welcome sight. It would be hoped that your plans for the Pobal grant would include other varieties of spring flowers that provide a food source for early pollinators & other insects. The picture of the vibrant dandelions at the 5 Roads must be a wonderful vista for the passing motorist & any intrepid walkers.

It was heartening to see that hedgerows were not cut back but instead allowed to flourish as could be seen with the bramble & elderflower blossoms. Some of the approach roads have wonderful specimens of mature trees & wonderful tracts of pasturelands – some lovely pastoral scenes.

Concluding Remarks:

Thank you for commenting on last year's adjudicator's report. It is always appreciated when you update us on some aspects raised while clarifying others. At all times, your adjudicator wishes to acknowledge progress made & provide food for thought. You are most fortunate to live in a picturesque location surrounded by outstanding scenery. What the community has achieved as a whole is quite remarkable & there is no doubting your plans for the future will be successful. We wish you the very best in all your endeavours.