

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Aughagower - Achadh Ghobhair</b>	Ref: <b>503</b>
County: <b>Mayo</b>	Mark: <b>276</b>
Category: <b>A</b>	Date(s): <b>12/07/2023</b>

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2023</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	46
Streetscape & Public Places	80	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	41
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	21
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	32
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>276</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.

Welcome to the Super Valu Tidy Towns Competition for 2023. We thank you for your entry, and wish you all the best in all your future work. Good luck.

Aughagower, Achadh Ghobhair - a small village with a population of less than 200 people – has entered the competition for 30 years approx. and has a committee of 12 members with support of another 65 volunteers.

- The Aughagower Tidy Towns & Heritage Village committee holds a total of 10 meetings per year.
- Support is received from Mayo Co. Co., Pobal, South West Mayo Development Company CLG.
- You communicate with the public via Newsletter, social media and text messages.
- You are in email contact with the parents' association of 3 local schools. You have a very active Foróige (youth club) Group in the village.
- Your involvement in the Tidy Towns competition has brought your community together as well involving other groups within community. It has enhanced our village and given your community pride in the place where you live.

The coloured map provided with your Entry Form showing the main features of the village was of very good quality and made it easy for the adjudicator to navigate around the village and helped the assessment process. The comprehensive Aughagower Tidy Towns & Heritage Village 3-5year plan has identified a number of very worthwhile projects for your village. The addition of some timelines within the plan would enable you to monitor progress on its implementation.

The quality of the application form was very good and the inclusion of photos showing the various tidy towns works and projects was very helpful. The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the application form, which is suitably concise at 21 pages long including photos - well done. The text inserted on the form was also very easy to read.

At the outset, the adjudicator has taken on board your requests for advice under the various categories and has therefore included in each section, recommendations for your committee to consider in your future plans. The suggestions both general and specific are designed to assist and are constructive in nature.

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

- It is noted that as a group you have applied for funding for additional signage in the village. Your plan is to have a map at the end of the village beside the old phone box, showing the location of the numerous heritage monuments and local amenities e.g., Playground, Community Centre, and Hand ball Alley etc. Signs are also to be

located on the entrance to the village from Westport and beside the Marian Shrine in the heart of the village. Work is to be completed by Autumn. This project will be a most beneficial addition to your village and for residents and visitors alike.

- It is particularly interesting to read that Aughagower is part of the Joyce Country & Western Lakes Geo Park project combining geology, environment, culture, and heritage in your region. We wish you well with your Unesco Geopark assessment, with results due in early Spring of 2024. You mention 2 derelict houses in the Village, Carneys Cottage and the old dispensary and your renewed plans to acquire a property for a village heritage centre.
- We called to Aughagower Village on a day in mid-July. Aughagower is a village with unique charm. The wonderful stone wall boundaries throughout the village and the approach roads, and the many natural and heritage features, including those associated with our Patron Saint, St Patrick, provide a delightful setting. The Tober na n'Deochain, Dabhach Padraig and Leaba Padraig are impressive examples of the wonderful heritage of your village. Be mindful of the encroachment of ivy and other vegetation on some of these features.
- The first stop in the village was the car park behind the Church to the side of the Handball Club. The famine memorial bed located here was well presented and the area is enhanced by views towards the Church, Cemetery and Round Tower. The bottle banks located to the side were in pristine order. However, the information sign was somewhat faded and should be replaced. Whitewashed buildings to the rear of Scott's Bar are visually prominent and would benefit from a refresh with paint. The village pump looked very well and was painted a vibrant red colour, set in a stone planter with floral display.
- Scott's Bar and Grocery premises were well presented and this is a busy spot. Overall, the quality of buildings in the centre of the village was to a very high standard. It is recommended that on an annual basis your committee assess the quality of the streetscape to ensure the highest standards of tidiness and attractiveness is achieved. This review can include an examination all signage and building facades, and areas adjoining the road to ensure the accumulation of on-street items is minimised and where necessary undertake cleaning and re-painting schemes.
- The land located opposite Scott's Bar situated along the Aughagower river at the rear of the Shrine, could be acquired and developed as a village heritage park. This proposal could be further considered by your committee. The Shrine erected for the Marian year 1954 was beautifully presented with attractive stonework and ornamental planting to the front. The nearby St Patrick's RC Church assumes a prominent position in the village. The grounds were found to be maintained to a very good standard. The public lighting standards in the centre of the village are an attractive feature. The upper portions of these poles would benefit from a refresh with paint. In general road surfaces in the centre of Aughagower and at the large car park behind the Church, require additional investment to bring them up to a good standard.
- The site of the Graveyard, Round Tower, and Abbey Grounds were visited and found to be presented to a very good standard. We noted the stone sign at the front gate entrance providing historical information on the village. However, unfortunately the script has faded over time making it difficult to read. There is great interest in local history and therefore, it is suggested that this stone be refurbished. The external presentation of the old telephone box is very good and is a great addition to your streetscape. It is recommended that this be further restored to reflect its former use as a local telephone box.
- We called to Carney's Cottage, the premises has been over grown and derelict for some time. There is great potential to restore this property to become a heritage centre for the village. The asbestos roof could be replaced with the original thatch, as part of the restoration works. We are aware that over recent years various attempts have been made to acquire the property without success. In this regard there is a government policy at national level to tackle dereliction and to rejuvenate village centres. There are many funding opportunities available as well as powers to acquire properties by CPO under the Derelict Sites Act. It is strongly recommended that you could make further contact Mayo Co.Co. who have been very proactive over the years with regard to these issues. They may have a dedicated property activation unit or Vacant Homes Officer/Regeneration Officer who will be best placed to assist you with this.
- The Community Centre is presented to a very good standard with a freshly painted exterior and extensive car parking. Here too the resurfacing and marking of the car park would be desirable, where funds are available. The playschool located in the old school property nearby looked well. The orchard garden along the frontage of the playschool was especially admired.

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

- We visited the picnic area in the heart of the village beside the river. It was presented to an excellent standard with well-tended grassed areas and wonderful trees, stone planters and floral displays. The river channel bounded by attractive stone walls was a joy to behold. The stone plinth located in the centre of the picnic area provides historical information. However, unfortunately here too the script has faded over time, making it difficult to read and again it is suggested that this be refurbished. In relation to the path and your comments regarding safety, a cost-effective minimal intervention could be the installation of a gravel surface over the existing stone paving. In relation to the trees and the picnic benches, no urgent action is considered necessary. A refresh of the picnic benches would be suitable next year.
- The Fair Green located beside the handball club is an important open space and perhaps you would consider creating wildflower meadows under the perimeter trees, where grass maintenance is difficult. This area may be suitable for the installation of a perimeter path and adult exercise equipment. The Castania tree is a particular feature here. There is a dead tree near the lamppost which could be removed.
- The children's playground opposite the Community Centre and the Playschool is a wonderful facility, maintained to an excellent standard. On the day of our visit, it was being enjoyed by children. There is an area adjacent which looks to be in the process of development.

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

- It is noted that you currently have a village nature walk, developed many years ago behind the Community Centre and a sign providing information on this is located on the community centre wall. The area has an abundance of wild flowers, insects, and wild fauna, such as hares and frogs. On the day of adjudication, we walked this route and enjoyed the wonderful scenic views across the landscape and admired the many wildflowers and wildlife in their natural habitat. It is the view of the adjudicator that this nature walk could be enhanced by some further signage at the entrance. However, there is no immediate need for additional work which could negatively impact on the natural fauna and flora in this area.

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

- Your glass and can recycling banks are situated in the car park at the Church. You also have a clothes bank from the Cancer fund for Children in the same car park plus one from Western Care. You liaise with waste companies in relation to agreeing arrangements for emptying these units on a regular basis.
- Well done on arranging to reuse your planters and flower tubs located along the river which enhance this area. You have a very active Youth Club which meets every month to pick litter with us and arrange disposal of same.
- When considering new projects under this category it is worthwhile first of all considering how the proposed project will align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The information provided in the Tidy Towns newsletters and handbook is very informative in this regard.
- You might in the future consider installing a community composter in the village. These are useful and provide a quantity of mulch to use on your planted areas, which will ensure rapid establishment of the plantings.
- Other areas worthy of consideration by the Aughagower Tidy Towns & Heritage Village committee for the future under this category, which is in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals, include the development of small electric microgeneration schemes for Wind, Solar and Hydro in partnership with the Local Authority - these may also attract suitable SEAI or Leader funding.
- You might look at the provision of public e-car charge points and additional bicycle parking/off road cycle tracks and other facilities in the village, and where there are deficiencies, suggest suitable locations where these could be provided in the short term.
- The Committee might also consider in the future initiating membership of the Sustainable Energy Communities programme run by the SEAI which includes engaging in learning networks, preparation of energy masterplans and local energy action plans etc. The following are useful links in this regard.  
<https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/sustainable-energy-communities/><https://www.codema.ie/sec>

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

- Your committee organises a litter clean up twice a week with a schedule for volunteers. At least 4 times a year you arrange a big clean-up on all approach roads into the village. The support of Mayo County Council in relation to these clean ups is acknowledged. Weed removal takes place once a month from May to October to maintain the street and flower beds clear and colourful.
- On the day of adjudication, the village area was found to be tidy and litter free - well done.

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

- Under this category you mention the fact that the housing estate in the Village is called 'Pilgrims Way' which contains 10 dwelling houses. The large green area in this estate is maintained by Mayo Co. Co. during summer months. During our visit we called to this housing scheme and noted the attractively designed dwellings with well-presented gardens and stone wall boundaries. The open space is adorned with good tree planting and a hedge along the roadside boundary. Some recent pruning works have been carried out and the brushwood remains have not yet been removed from the open space. No doubt this is a task on your 'to do list' and will be completed soon.
- Those residences which are occupied in the village are maintained and presented to a very good standard. In relation to the 3 unoccupied houses which have fallen into disrepair, it is advised to further liaise with Mayo Co.Co. on this matter.

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

- Your village is a busy thoroughfare for trucks from the nearby stone quarry and you are liaising with Mayo Co.Co. in relation to the provision of speed signage on all approach roads.
- The adjudicator inspected approach roads into Aughagower from Tourmakeady, Leenane, Westport and Castlebar. The natural vegetation coupled with attractive stone walls are the predominant features experienced along these roads. The input of your committee in terms of the installation of stone name signs and floral displays provide a welcoming aspect here. Road surfaces on the road next to the round tower graveyard, beside the carpark at the ball alley and community centre are now in poor condition and require resurfacing. You continue to liaise with Mayo Co. Co. on this and you have plans to plant a hedge along the farm fence at the car park of the Community Centre.
- We called to the site adjacent to the Tourmakeady Road known as Caileach and note your committee's plans for a new viewing area here. Proposals for this site could include the installation of kerbing, tarmacadam surfacing and car park marking. Wonderful scenic views are available from the site, so picnic benches and seating would also be appropriate. It is recommended that the existing rock outcrops and natural vegetation should be protected as part of the proposed works.

**Concluding Remarks:**

Your new committee is approaching the competition in a proactive and enterprising manner and it is evident that you remain very active in your community. Auhagower Heritage Village is a charming and historic place and has therefore, great potential to progress further in the competition. It has been a pleasure to adjudicate your village this year. We hope you find the advice provided under each category helpful and we wish you well with all your future endeavours.