

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Charlestown - Baile Chathail	Ref: 856
County: Mayo	Mark: 222
Category: C	Date(s): 04/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	37
Streetscape & Public Places	80	31
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	28
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	15
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	10
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	48
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	25
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	28
TOTAL MARK	550	222

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.

Charlestown - Baile Chathail, a small town with a population of 1033 people – from records available Charlestown last entered the competition in 2010. We are delighted to welcome you back and we wish you all the very best. You have a committee of 12 members with support of another 5 volunteers.

- Your members meet regularly and sometimes daily for specific tasks requiring attention. Scheduled monthly meetings with sub-committees are held to monitor progress, draw up plans, consult with members of the community and reach out for guidance and support. You engage with the wider community and are affiliated to other committee in the area.
- Support is received from the Mayo Co. Co., Environment Section throughout the year. From local businesses you receive sponsorship and supports in relation to ongoing projects. You receive support from Mayo County Council municipal office, with advice on financial matters in relation to the administration of the DSP Community Employment Scheme.
- You communicate with the public via social media, Website: charlestown.ie, parish newsletter, open evenings, meetings with the GAA, sports complex, swimming pool, elderly housing, active retirement, Arts Centre, Heritage & Culture society, and business representatives.
- Your engagement with the local schools involves transition year students & local Fóróige Club. Each year youths get involved with Ant-Litter Awareness projects, studies regarding the town's litter-black spots and scheduled litter picks. The primary schools are now participating in an arts project, creating hand held lanterns with the use of bamboo poles.
- Your flagship project this year is the Square Enhancement Plan which involved weed removal, the upgrading of planted areas and installation of floral displays. All work was carried out in consultation with the local authority, local businesses and local residents.

The coloured map with legend provided with your Entry Form, showing the main features of the town and the projects undertaken over the last year, was of good quality. It is recommended for next year that the map can be improved by showing more details within the centre of the town, with clearly identified street names, locations of housing areas, etc. Sample maps providing guidance are available on the Tidy Towns website. A good map makes it easier for the adjudicator to navigate around the town and greatly assists the overall assessment process.

The quality of the application form was very good and the photos highlighting projects carried out under each

category enhanced the document. The 3/5-year Tidy Towns plan has been noted positively. It would be desirable to include some specific target dates on the plan and assign some responsibilities for specific actions. This will allow progress on implementation over the course of the plan period to be more easily monitored.

The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the application form, which is suitably concise at 16 pages long - well done. The blue coloured bold text inserted on the form was also very easy to read. The use of numbered bullet points also worked very well.

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

- The Square landscaping project was your main focus this year under this category. You have cleared the grounds and landscaped the area with decorative stone and attractive flowers & plants displayed in large planters. In relation to improving the streetscape in the town, paved areas and all footpaths in the Square, Main St. Barrack St. and Church St. were maintained and power-washed. In relation to the Children's playground & Town Park your committee undertook litter- control and the grounds located to the rear were maintained.
- We called to Charlestown on a sunny day in early July. We commenced our visit in the central square area of the town. The recently completed square enhancement scheme, including the installation of floral displays, neat gravelled areas, stone sculptured pieces, attractive lighting standards, and well-maintained grass margins was greatly admired and provides a very welcome focal point for your town. The curlew made from willow twigs is a superb artistic feature in this area, complimenting 'the calves' stone sculpture pieces. The floral displays and hanging baskets throughout the town were a delight and considerably enhanced the vibrancy of the streetscape.
- We enjoyed a walk through the town, noting the colourful shop fronts and facades to commercial premises and dwellings within the centre of the town. All of which provided a very welcoming aspect. There were many highlights here, including Walsh's public house, Collieran's pharmacy, Eye Candy, JJ Finan's pub and hardware, Johnny's Bar, Inga's sweet dreams, O'Donnell's pharmacy, Murray's Bar, Capelli Ciara hair studio, The Cornerstone guesthouse, Violet's florist, Mc Loughlin's lounge and The Cosy Restaurant. The list is certainly not exhaustive.
- The site of the Bring Centre beside the old railway platform was presented to a good standard. The information sign here is not secure and is in need of repair or replacement. The old railway platform and tracks may provide an opportunity to develop a greenway in this area the future?
- The natural stone paving was presented to an excellent standard. The power washing has greatly improved the appearance and presentation of footpaths. External seating areas, some of which were enclosed with planters, were a welcome place of rest and opportunity for a chat with friends and socialising.
- St James Church was visited and the Church grounds and nearby Parochial House were admired. It was noted that painting works was underway on the external pillars, walls, and railings along the roadside. St Attracta's NS with its freshly painted school building, raised planters and multi coloured pencil fence, added greatly to the overall appearance of the school grounds.
- On Barrack Street we admired the footpath build outs with attractive tree planting some of which were further enhanced with colourful planters and floral displays. The Charlestown Library and Art Centre presented a bright and smart visual aspect, with a well-maintained car park area to the front.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- It is noted that phase one of a walking trail was approved for construction in 2022. The project commenced in October and will be completed in 2023. The walk is the beginning of a loop walk to extend to the N5 in Phase 2. Phase 3 of the project extends to the Sligo boarder, which is proposed in the future planning for the town.
- We called to the outdoor swimming pool which was a hive of activity and is a major amenity for the town. We also walked the new riverside walkway and enjoyed its peaceful natural setting. Consideration should be given to providing a native hedge planting along the timber post and wire boundary fencing on the field side as the fencing is likely to deteriorate over time. Some additional planting along the swimming pool boundary wall, would also enhance this area.
- The car park adjacent to the road near the entrance to the swimming pool was presented to a very high standard. The wall murals created by Foróige facing the carpark and road, provided a splash of colour here. A distinctive line of Lime trees planted along the road also enhanced this area greatly.
- The town park opposite provides a range of wonderful amenities for the local community, including children's playground, MUGA and additional parking which were all presented and maintained to an excellent standard. The nearby cemetery accessible from the town park was visited. The stone meeting point with altar, seating and perimeter planting was especially admired.
- Reducing further your use of seasonal bedding plants for your floral displays is an important initiative for your committee to consider for the future. Colourful perennial and pollinator friendly plants e.g., *Alstroemeria* spp. can be used to very good effect as an alternative to the flamboyant but labour/water/energy-intensive annuals such as *Begonias* and *Petunias*.

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

- It is pleasing to read that Charlestown Organic Community Garden continues to progress well providing an opportunity for the local community to integrate and interact. It is noted that members share their skills and all members of the community are welcome and a wide range of vegetables are grown as well as flowers. The schools are also involved in cultivation of plants particularly during the spring season.
- For next year it would be worthwhile consulting the Tidy Towns Handbook which provides good guidance on potential projects to be carried out under this aspect of the competition

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

- You are fortunate in Charlestown to have an outdoor swimming pool in the town. It is noted that to enhance

the current facility, the provision of filtration and heating systems with new dressing rooms, have recently been installed. We wish you well with your plans for the provision of a sustainable heating system which is being drawn up for the installation of solar energy. The Charlestown community garden was visited and the adjudicator noted the polytunnels and raised beds for the cultivation of vegetables and a range of other plants. The wall murals in this area added to the general presentation of this amenity.

- Other areas worthy of consideration by Charlestown & District Development Association 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 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:

- It is good to note that the tidy towns group in association with the community employment scheme, Fóroige Club and Transition year students undertake litter surveys on the streets and back roads in the town each year. Based on this litter control strategies to include litter patrols, litter collections and clean-ups are then promoted.
- You also undertook an education programme with school and local youths on controlling dog fouling in the town and provided dog MuttMitt waste dispensers, bins, and waste bags. An education programme with school and local young people on controlling dog fouling in the town was also initiated. We noted the MuttMitt waste dispensers provided throughout the town and you are to be commended on this project. For the future and where possible signage should not be attached to trees as it compromises their future viability.
- On the day of adjudication, the town area was found to be tidy and largely litter free - well done.

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

- The adjudicator called to several residential estates in the town including Fair Greens Estate, Sarsfield Manor and Crescent, Parkview Estate, Lavey Manor and Lavey Heights, and Kilbeagh Village Estate. The general standard of maintenance and presentation of these housing estates was very good. Tidy Estates competitions are a useful way to ensure a consistent standard of presentation between individual estates in the town can be achieved. The adjudicator positively noted the well screened ESB substation set in to a natural stone wall in the Lavey Estate

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

- Your committee places great emphasis on the management and maintenance of green spaces and approach roads at the entrance to the town. All edging and kerbs are maintained, hedge trimming carried out and the two roundabouts are also maintained. You give specific attention to the town, streetscape, and public areas.
- It is noted that your committee organises the installation of hanging baskets on Barrack St., Main St., Church St. and at the square. Flower Planters are also displayed at several locations in the town.
- On the Culmore approach to the town the road is characterised by attractive natural vegetation adjoining the roadside. The tree planting provided along the boundary of the GAA club softens the impact of the boundary walls at this location.
- On the N17 approach we admired the low maintenance roundabout with box hedge planting and gravel surround. The separate Fáilte feature in box hedging provides a warm welcome to the town. Perhaps in the future there may be an opportunity to provide a suitable sculpture feature on this roundabout.
- The signage, maintenance of roadside margins, tree planting, litter control and overall high-quality road surfaces and markings provide high quality approach roads to Charlestown.

Concluding Remarks:

The visit to Charlestown was greatly enjoyed. The colourful, creative, and expansive spaces in the central part of the town create a unique visual aspect to Charlestown. Well done on your comeback and we look forward to your continued participation in Tidy Towns. The benefits to community and economic development are well recognised. We wish you the very best with your future endeavours and hope you found the comments in this report helpful.