

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Knock - An Cnoc	Ref: 1049
County: Mayo	Mark: 266
Category: B	Date(s): 13/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	32
Streetscape & Public Places	80	34
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	41
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	21
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	27
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35
TOTAL MARK	550	266

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 back 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.

Knock, Cnoc Mhuire - a mid-sized village with a population of 972 people – last entered the competition in 2019 and had done so for many years before that. Your committee has 6 members with the support of another 50 volunteers.

- You have good involvement from stakeholders in the village in terms of attendance of meetings and village tasks.
- Support is received from Knock Shrine, Burkes Bar and Shop, Kilkenny's Bar, Centra Shop and KPS.
- You communicate with the public via Parish Newsletter, Text message using WhatsApp
- You do not have a formal engagement with young people in the Knock community at the moment but your new committee will no doubt initiate contacts on this in the near future.
- Your involvement in the Tidy Towns competition has heightened awareness amongst the local community of the benefits of keeping your village presentable. Knock Shrine attracts a significant number of visitors which is an important aspect to your local economy and the employment of locals. Making progress in the competition will further improve community spirit and will bring tangible economic benefits.

No map or Tidy Towns plan was included with your entry form this year. Despite this the adjudicator found no difficulty navigating around the village and seeing at first hand the work being undertaken by your committee and volunteers. For next year it would be desirable to include a map with your entry form showing the main features of the village on A4 size, and the location and precise description of all the various projects completed over the last year. A 3-5 Year Tidy Towns Plan is also desirable and will enable you to monitor progress on planned improvements. Guidance on these items is available from the Tidy Towns website.

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

- You have not listed any new or maintenance type projects under this category this year, no doubt due to arrangements for the establishment of your new committee. We look forward to some projects and maintenance/improvement type works being included in next year's entry form when your committee has time to prepare for these over the winter months.
- We called to Knock on a bright day in mid-July. We commenced our visit on the Main Street and noted the vibrancy of this area with many visitors to the Shrine, and various restaurants, retail stores and guesthouses. The

street has attractively paved footpaths which are adorned with stone planting beds, hanging baskets, seating, street trees and lamp standards. A striking feature was the large number of cars parked along the length of this street which impacted the quality of the streetscape and general walkability.

- The Shrine complex was visited and for a first-time visitor the experience is outstanding. The standard of maintenance and overall presentation of this entire complex, its grounds, buildings, open spaces, planted areas, trees, hedging and monuments is superb.
- The Pope Francis Plaza looked very well with neat high-quality granite paving and sculpture. This plaza enhanced the area between the Shrine and the Craft Centre. The Bowes Ryan coffee shop was inviting with an attractive outdoor seating area to the front. The commemorative tree planting in this area was also positively noted. The walkway leading to the extensive off road car parking facilities was presented to a good standard where recycled plastic seating was provided. The nearby Craft Centre shops include many vacant premises. Some of which are falling into a state of disrepair. A review of the future use and presentation of this area is suggested. The millennium jubilee monument looked well and could be further enhanced with some general maintenance and the addition of floral displays. The finger post signage in this area has deteriorated in condition and it is recommended that this be renewed. The Garda station, Centra shop and Lennon's coffee shop were all very well presented as were other premises in this area, all of which improved their surroundings.
- There are extensive off street car parking areas in Knock to accommodate the large numbers of visitors it receives throughout the year. One feels that these facilities are not being optimised and that the current level of on street parking could be reduced. The car parks are presented to an excellent standard with good surfaces, markings, and boundary landscaping. They also appear to be free of charge! Consideration should be given to initiating an eBike scheme to provide connectivity between the car parks and the Shrine complex.
- The children's play facilities were noted as were the colourful seating areas nearby. The Bring Centre was in pristine condition. We called to Knock NS and we were very impressed by this facility. This is a newly built school, with multiple play and educational resources. The façade of the building is beautifully painted with a stone boundary wall. The school sign to the front facing the car park was especially admired. The mini bee garden, elevated wildflower meadow, mini orchard, sun flowers, gutter water feature, and play & games area were a joy to behold. The natural hedgerow adjacent to the school added to the overall excellent presentation.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- You have not listed any new or maintenance type projects under this category this year, no doubt due to arrangements for the establishment of your new committee. We look forward to some projects and maintenance/improvement type works being included in next year's entry form when your committee has time to prepare for these over the winter months.
- As previously mentioned, the greenspaces and landscaping associated with the Knock Shrine complex are outstanding. Elsewhere in the village, the open spaces are maintained to a very good standard with extensive tree planting, neatly clipped grass areas and areas reserved for wildflower meadows.
- The adjudicator particularly admired the recent enhancement scheme carried out on the roundabout at the crossroads junction of Main Street/Claremorris/Galway/Ballyhaunis Road. The centre of the roundabout is attractively paved and planted and a central plinth has been retained presumably for the installation of a piece of sculpture in the future. The extensive shrub rose planting on the roadside margins, nicely finished with a gravel mulch greatly enhance the overall visual aspect.
- Reducing Knock Tidy Towns overall use of seasonal bedding plants for your floral displays is an initiative for your committee to consider under this category for the future. Colourful and permanent perennial and pollinator friendly planting e.g., using plants such as *Alstroemeria* spp. can provide a good alternative to the flamboyant but labour/water/feed and energy intensive annuals such as *Lobelias*, *Begonias*, and *Petunias* etc.

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

- You have not listed any new or maintenance type projects under this category this year, no doubt due to arrangements for the establishment of your new committee. We look forward to some projects and maintenance/improvement type works being included in next year's entry form when your committee has time to prepare for these over the winter months. Examples of projects which could be considered include, carrying out wildlife surveys in conjunction with local schools, establishing nature walks, erecting of bird nest boxes and bat boxes at suitable locations and the growing of pollinator friendly planting beds to replace seasonal bedding schemes which are of limited value in terms of biodiversity.

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

- You have not listed any new or maintenance type projects under this category this year, no doubt due to arrangements for the establishment of your new committee. We look forward to some projects and maintenance/improvement type works being included in next year's entry form, when your committee has time to prepare for these over the winter months.
- 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 Knock Tidy Towns 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 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:

- You have not listed any new or maintenance type projects under this category this year, no doubt due to arrangements for the establishment of your new committee. We look forward to some projects and maintenance/improvement type works being included in next year's entry form, when your committee has time to prepare for these over the winter months.
- On the day of adjudication, the village area was found to be largely litter free and tidy - well done.

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

- You have not listed any new or maintenance type projects under this category this year, no doubt due to arrangements for the establishment of your new committee. We look forward to some projects and maintenance/improvement type works being included in next year's entry form, when your committee has time to prepare for these over the winter months.
- The adjudicator called to several residential estates in the village including St. Thomas Crescent, Manor Quarter, Carramore Drive, Rosebury Court and Glencarra Estate. The general standard of maintenance and presentation of these housing estates was good. Given the number of estates within Knock Village a Tidy Estates competition can be a useful way to achieve a consistent standard of presentation. This may be an initiative to consider for the future.

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

- You have not listed any new or maintenance type projects under this category this year, no doubt due to arrangements for the establishment of your new committee. We look forward to some projects and maintenance/improvement type works being included in next year's entry form, when your committee has time to prepare for these over the winter months.
- The approach roads to the village were presented to a high standard with neatly clipped roadside margins, trees, fencing and bollards. In relation to bollards, it is the adjudicators view that they create significant visual clutter and in some locations their purpose is not clear. Their presence also obstructs maintenance operations and leads to additional maintenance requirements and costs. Additionally, there were blue coloured planters placed in parking bays along the Kiltimagh approach road and these do not enhance the roadside environment and detract from the wonderful roadside landscape to the rear.
- The approach roads into Knock are adorned with attractive welcoming name signs and floral displays and the many colourful planters provide a positive vista for the road user. Some vegetation is obscuring signage and this is significant where signs for car parking areas are obscured. It is suggested that the presence of free off street car parking should be highlighted to visitors on all approach roads.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a delight to visit Knock Village and Shrine this year. You have great potential to progress well in the competition. We hope you found the adjudicators comments useful and we wish you well with all your future endeavours.