

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Louisburgh - Cluain Cearbán	Ref: 564
County: Mayo	Mark: 335
Category: B	Date(s): 23/06/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	51	53
Streetscape & Public Places	80	46	48
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	41	42
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	35	36
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	20	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	37
TOTAL MARK	550	325	335

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.

Louisburgh - Cluain Cearbán, a mid-sized village with a population of 434 people – has entered the competition since 2005 and has a committee of 4 members with support of another 4 volunteers. This is quite a small number for a village the size of Louisburgh and perhaps a renewed campaign is needed to attract more volunteers to join in Louisburgh Tidy Town's activities.

- It is interesting to note that Louisburgh Tidy Towns is the base and parent organisation, from which a number of other local community groups who meet regularly have grown, such as Louisburgh Community Futures, the Polytunnel Group, the Freecycling Group, Sustainable Energy Group, the Men's Shed, and Clean Coasts.
- Support is received from Rural Social Scheme, TUS, and POBAL.
- You communicate with the public via social media, Mayo News, Church newsletter and a once yearly public meeting.
- You engage with Foróige, the local youth club, which has an active membership and they are eager to help. Your main project this year is the installation of solar panels throughout the area as part of a Meitheal organised by the Sustainable Energy Group.

The hand drawn map provided with your Entry Form showing the main features of the village was of good quality. However, as indicated in last year's adjudicators report, it would be helpful to indicate the locations of specific projects directly on the map, as this allows for easier navigation around the village and aids the overall assessment process.

The quality of the application form was good. However, it is always beneficial to include photos highlighting any projects carried out each year under each category. It is noted that a 3-year Tidy Towns plan has again not been included. It is always good to plan projects and works in advance with defined timescales, so that a village, local community, and its environment can be progressively improved over time.

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 text inserted on the form was also quite easy to read. The use of italics helped to distinguish the text added to the form, from that already on the form itself.

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

- A wide range of different and very interesting projects have been listed under this category this year. The Granuaile Centre and Famine Museum is a large undertaking, involving many local groups working together towards a common goal.
- The adjudicator called to Louisburgh on a cloudy day in late June. There was a pleasant hustle and bustle in the village, due to the Friday market held at the community centre. Residential and commercial properties in the village were generally well presented. Several properties appeared to be unoccupied. There is extensive car parking provision along the streets in the village. One wonders whether there is potential to provide some off - street parking nearby. This would enable the removal of some of these spaces and to introduce footpath build-outs or traffic Islands. This would make the streets more walkable and pedestrian/cycle friendly, encourage traffic calming and enable some tree planting or other landscape elements to be introduced to enhance the overall quality of the streetscape. The quality of the road surfaces and markings in the village was good and the natural limestone kerbing along footpaths was particularly admired.
- Some of the streetscape highlights in Louisburgh included the following; Uí Dufaigh (Teach Tabhairne), FM Auctioneers, Mc Namara's, and Derrylahan Licensed Premises, Gala Supermarket, Durkan Butchers, by the river, Books at One, Art at One, Staunton's Pharmacy, Seven Wanters Café and J&L McNamara's Café - to name but a few. The wall mural and 'open book' seat at 'Books at One' greatly enhanced this facade.
- The new stone wall along Church Street added positively to this area. The planted area opposite the Granuaile Centre is somewhat overgrown and needs ongoing care and attention. The adjudicator visited the Granuaile Centre and Famine Museum and watched the video made by Anne Chambers on the life of the famous 'Pirate Queen'. This Museum is a significant resource in the village, but is currently staffed by volunteers. In the longer-term additional funding is likely to be necessary, to ensure its continued upkeep and development.
- In the center of the village the natural stone paving outside the All Care Pharmacy, which was originally a Market House, looked very well and the adjudicator was particularly interested in the large steel plate/trapdoor which exists here, originally manufactured by H.Pooley and Son, Liverpool – an interesting piece of industrial archaeology in the centre of the village. The tree planting at the village crossroads enhanced this area as did the seating, floral displays and cycle parking facilities. It would be beneficial to power wash the seats and paving here, as they were showing the effects of a long winter.
- The Garda station and the adjoining private residences were extremely well presented, as was the nearby Sancta Maria College and Health Centre. This very impressive modern complex of buildings integrates very well with the adjoining Church buildings. The trees and planting beds along the boundary wall and railings fronting the Church, including the floral cart and the attractive name stone, significantly enhanced this area.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- It is noted that the landscaping of the village is attended to on an ongoing basis by the Rural Social Scheme staff who do a wonderful job. The Bunowen river at the end of Bridge Street is traversed by an impressive modern style road bridge, with footpaths on both sides and we admired the views up and downstream from the bridge. There exists some potential to create a Riverside Park and river walk on both sides of the river here. A large standing stone is located beside a copse of trees, close to the river and perhaps this has some historical significance in the area. Power washing the white painted steel structure of the bridge, would enhance its overall appearance and presentation.
- We called to the open space along the Bunowen river and noted the flora and fauna sign erected here. The grassed areas are maintained to a very high standard. The free library has seen better days and perhaps needs to be refreshed or replaced. The two red painted timber bridges over the mill race also need refurbishment and re-painting. Consider providing a viewing area over the weir, as views from the roadside here have great scenic value.
- The Carrowmore Beach has wonderful visitor facilities, with a large car park, well surfaced and marked. Consider planting a native hedge along the timber fencing on the boundary of the car park here, as the fencing will deteriorate over time. The picnic and toilet facilities were in good order and it is noted that the toilet block is to be replaced with a state of the art for facility in due course. Signage including details of local wildlife in the area was to a very good standard.
- Reducing the further use of seasonal bedding plants for your floral displays is an important initiative for your committee to consider in future years. 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:

- A total of four native woodland projects have been undertaken in Louisburgh and listed under this category this year. These are aimed at enhancing biodiversity and the mitigating the effects of climate change i.e., the Collacocon Woodland Project, the Furmoyle Woodland Project, the Furmoyle Re-wilding scheme and the Mullagh Woodland planting, extending over 20 acres.
- It is pleasing to read that the Community Polytunnel and garden beside the old convent has become an important local resource which has encouraged local residents to share ideas, knowledge, seeds, plants, excess produce with the overall objective of 'to grow in strength'.
- Well done to the two local landowners who have given over some acreage to re-wilding to attract the nowadays, very rarely sighted Corncrake. It is wonderful to note that success has been achieved and sightings of the corncrake have been documented already this year.

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

- It is good to note that the Clean Coasts Team in Louisburgh are very active along beaches in your area removing plastic and other debris on a regular basis, for collection by Mayo County Council.
- The local Sustainable Energy Community Group are making great strides and householders are now fully engaged in progressing the installation of insulation and other energy saving measures for their homes.
- The Louisburgh Free Market system is working well with 266 active participants. This system facilitates the recycling and re-use of goods within the community which would otherwise be simply disposed of.
- 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 Louisburgh 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 public e-car charge points and additional bicycle parking or off-road cycle tracks from the village, and where there are deficiencies, suggest suitable locations where these could be provided in the short term.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

- The use of physical/mechanical means to remove weeds from kerbsides is a wonderful initiative, as we move away from the use of herbicides, which can be damaging to the biodiversity and the environment. It is noted that regular litter picks are carried out by your TÚS volunteer, supplemented by students from the local secondary school. Your annual Spring Clean is well attended and it is pleasing to note the involvement of Foróige.
- The small car park and Bring Centre at Chapel Street was visited and was found to be in good order, although there was some evidence of littering here. On the day of adjudication, the village area was found to be largely litter free.

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

- Your committee organises the maintenance of the children's playground in the village including the painting of play items, when the weather is suitable.
- Ard Caher estate was visited - this is an attractive infill development consisting of single storey and two-story properties. The open spaces areas are well maintained, as are the private gardens. An attractive sculpture feature is located on an internal open space and the entrance to this estate is enhanced with attractive shrub rose planting.
- The Glebe Estate consisting of dormer style bungalows, has attractive open space areas and tree planting and a tidy well-kept entrance and name stone. Knocknashee, the Beeches, and the Chimes estates, were also visited and were found to be maintained and presented to a very good standard.

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

- It is noted that the maintenance of roadside verges and hedges on approach roads is carried out by your RSS staff. A future project is the development of a Boardwalk at Carramore Beach, which is a very worthwhile proposal.
- On the approach from Roonah, the attractive private residences and gardens were positively noted, as was the old cart filled with turf on this approach. From Leenane, hedge planting could be provided on the timber/concrete fencing which runs along the boundary of the GAA grounds. The GAA Club which has a range of grass and astroturf pitches, provides important recreational facilities for the local community. The stone wall along the frontage of the Club enhances the road environs at this location.
- The approach from Westport looks well with good road surfaces and well-maintained grass margins. Perhaps consider removing the concrete bollards located in the vicinity of the name sign, as these can create maintenance difficulties. The name sign would also benefit from power washing and cleaning. The stone planter beneath the sign looked very well on the day of adjudication.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a great to visit Louisburgh for the first time this Summer. Your committee is working hard with a a number of groups, across the community to improve your standing under the various competition category headings. You have unique natural amenities, which have the potential to be sensitively developed for the benefit of your community and tourists alike. We wish every future success in the competition.