

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Mulranny - An Mhala Raithní	Ref: 501
County: Mayo	Mark: 371
Category: B	Date(s): 20/06/2023 24/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	50	52
Streetscape & Public Places	80	47	48
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	50	52
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	50	52
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	26	28
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	40	42
TOTAL MARK	550	357	371

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.

Mulranny, An Mhala Raithní, a mid-sized village with a population of 300 people has entered the competition since the establishment of Mulranny Tidy Towns in 1992. Mulranny Tidy Towns has a committee of 8 members with support of another 20 volunteers.

- You have a committee which meets monthly during the winter and fortnightly during the spring/summer months and works as an effective team with defined individual roles as part of the Tidy Towns five-year development plan and Mulranny Community Futures five-year plan.
- Support is received from a very wide range of government agencies and local businesses which are too numerous to mention individually.
- You communicate with the public via Volunteer events, social events, Environmental Centre, local print media, text, social media, parish newsletter, two community noticeboards, local national school newsletter, social events e.g., Earth Night, weekly Whist Drive, American Tea Party, Friday night socials, annual raffle, and word of mouth/face to face conversations.
- You have a strong engagement with local children and schools including Mulranny National School – It is good to note that your school liaison officer works closely with the school principal and staff to coordinate the school's annual beach clean-up and assists with the school's progression through the Green Schools programme. The adjudicator was also pleased to note that you have an active Junior Tidy Towns group (JTT) – who are involved in beach clean-ups, litter rotas, An Gaisce and Pope John Paul II awards, biodiversity training and managing social media posts for the TT committee.
- The work undertaken by Mulranny Tidy Towns over the years has been pivotal in helping to integrate new residents into the Mulranny community. This has been particularly important since the recent arrival of your 70 plus Ukrainian Friends following the war in Ukraine. Your new community of friends have been made to feel very welcome in your community by attending an array of locally organised events and are now engaging in Tidy Towns activities, such as beach clean ups etc. The integration of the Ukrainian children of school going age into Mulranny National School has also been very successful. Very well done to all involved who are in these wonderful and very important local initiatives.

The coloured map showing the location of projects 1-59 provided with your Entry Form, showing the main features of the village, was of very good quality. The numbering system on the map relating to the projects included on the application form was very clear. However, for such a small map there are perhaps too many numbers clustered

together, which can make the map more difficult to read. Perhaps for next year it might be good to enlarge sections of the map for the most important projects on a separate page. This will make it easier for the adjudicator to navigate to these projects on site and will aid the assessment process.

The quality of the application form was excellent. It was very useful to include photos highlighting projects carried out under each category – however perhaps consider using less collage-type photos. Use instead a smaller number of larger photos with a specific explanation under each one. Before, during and after photos for projects completed are also very useful. The Mulranny Tidy Towns 5 -Year Plan 2022-2026 has been noted and is impressive –several projects have a target date of 2022. Perhaps these could be removed when they are completed, which would help to further simplify the document.

The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the application form, which is reasonably concise at 44 pages long - well done. The use of bold text for headings and perhaps bullet points instead of long paragraphs of text should be considered for next year.

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

- The adjudicator called to Mulranny on a warm sunny but somewhat showery day in Mid-June. It had been many years since the last visit and it was very pleasing to witness the major and positive transformation which has taken place in the village since then, with the addition of safe public footpaths and attractive paved viewing areas overlooking the very scenic coastline.
- Your flagship project this year under this category was the restoration and relocation of the Marian Shrine from the convent grounds to a site near Mulranny's Church of the Immaculate Conception. Well done to all involved with this very worthwhile and impressive project. The adjudicator called to the Church grounds to see the relocated shrine at first hand. This project is a credit to all who were involved and the newly painted statue, with a neat gravel area to the front complete with granite seat, really does enhance the prayerful setting of the Church. The nearby public toilets were found to be in a pristine condition. The Mulranny Arts Centre (former Convent) located adjacent to the Church, is a building of considerable architectural merit and has been re-painted a deep blue colour. The entrance here was superbly presented and maintained.
- It was heartening to witness the children playing on the new all-weather pitch adjacent to the Mulranny National school. The environs of the school, including the presentation of the car park and perimeter planting etc. were greatly admired. The small planted area surrounding the water pump at the roadside junction here, was also maintained to a very good standard and enhanced this area.
- The public car parking area adjacent to the Applegreen garage premises provides stunning views across the coastline and towards Trawoughter Bay. It is no wonder that visitors and tourists flock to this beautifully scenic area, particularly during the warm summer months. The recycling facility nearby was found to be very neat and tidy and the adjacent timber picnic bench was well maintained and presented. The provision of bicycle parking facilities in this area was excellent. A redundant galvanized pole with no sign on it, could be removed if it is not required for future signage, as it adds somewhat to visual clutter. The low galvanized electrical junction box also needs to be returned to an upright position. Perhaps consider introducing some herbaceous pollinator friendly planting in the two small gravel areas located between the car park and the perimeter fence, overlooking the coast. In addition, a sapling sycamore tree growing at a lower level than the car park is restricting views towards the coast and perhaps this could be removed in the short medium term.
- The Taste of Mulranny Pizza premises and the adjoining thatched cottage were particular highlights in this part of the village. The attractively designed outdoor seating area at Doherty's bar, also added to the overall quality of the streetscape here. The forecourts of the nearby Applegreen and Costcutter premises were very neatly presented, but one feels the introduction of some beds or plant containers would enhance the presentation here, as long as they do not restrict vehicle movements in this area
- The paved seating and picnic areas overlooking the coast adjacent to the main road are very well designed and it was noted that the colours of the paving and fencing reflect the colours found in the wider coastal landscape. However, one feels that the area is dominated too much by hard surfaces and perhaps the introduction of landscape elements, which do not restrict views from the road towards the coast, could be introduced. For example, low hedging might be used to enclose and shelter the picnic areas or perhaps introduce some raised beds provided with pollinator friendly planting.
- You are wished well with the programme of continued restoration and improvement of village shopfronts and vernacular wrought iron gates which are an important feature of the Mulranny area which should be preserved for the future.
- Well done to the newly formed History and Heritage group created for people to share their history, old photos, and memories of Mulranny and to preserve these shared experiences for generations to come.
- The installation of new cycle infrastructure at the beach and along the walkway from Mulranny Arts Centre and Church to the National School is commendable.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- The adjudicator acknowledges efforts made by Mulranny Tidy Towns to respond to the comments in last year's report in relation to the covering of the Christmas tree in the Centenary Garden. The structure now looks very well and does not detract from the general area.
- The overall quality of the planting schemes provided in Mulranny village and on approach roads was excellent and the standard of maintenance, noted by the adjudicator was second to none. The many floral displays enhanced building facades at several locations and this added greatly to the quality and presentation of the village streetscape.
- The adjudicator was particularly impressed with the significant impact of the beautiful pink shrub rose beds on the eastern approach to the village. The extensive pruning, feeding mulching, plant replacement and ongoing

maintenance works carried out here by Mulranny Tidy Towns, has done much to rejuvenate this planting for the benefit of the wider community.

- Reducing reliance on annual bedding schemes for your floral displays is an initiative to consider by your committee in future years, in the interest of sustainability and biodiversity. It should be noted in this regard that 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:

- The wetlands, salt marsh and the Mulranny Machair provide a very important habitat for migratory birds and other local waterfowl as confirmed in your 2022/23 Birdwatch Survey carried out in the area, following recorded sightings by local farmers and villagers. Your committee clearly recognises the importance of this area and the need to protect this unique habitat. We wish you well with your plans to roll out a further social media bird watch survey later this summer.

- The adjudicator called to the Mulranny beach area and was very interested to read the signage providing detailed information on the Mulranny Machair Plains, loop walk and local flora and fauna. The entrance to the beach was well presented and the new cycle parking stands were positively noted. The beach itself was walked and was found to be in a pristine condition with not a paper or piece of plastic to be seen anywhere - well done. The public toilets here, complete with an attractive mosaic on the front wall and the adjoining bottle banks were very neat and tidy. The causeway path extending from the steep steps through the wooded area from the main road was inspected and the work carried out by Mayo County Council to improve the surface here for walkers was noted positively.

- It is noted positively that Mulranny Tidy Towns continue to engage in training and research with a view to increasing biodiversity awareness and understanding. Well done on your plans to host workshops later in the year and these will be central to creating further awareness of the amazing habitats to be enjoyed on your doorstep.

- It is commendable that you are gradually reducing chemical weedkiller use and have adopted more environmentally friendly solutions (Vinegar Weed Killer) to maintain your seasonal planting areas.

- A more environmentally friendly grass mowing regime which you have implemented also encourages pollinators and other wildlife and we note you are reducing the width of cut verges to allow wildflower meadows to develop. Ensuring that no mowing takes place each year until the dandelions have died back is an important way to encourage foraging by early bees-well done. Regarding low frequency mowing regimes, it is particularly important to maintain all edges to meadow areas to a high standard and a 1/2 m grass strip along roads and footpaths should be mown on a regular basis.

- The adjudicator commends the initiatives taken in relation to the development of Mulranny Honey products (raised on Mediterranean Heather) and the protection of the Old Irish Goat as a native rare breed, together with the creation of a visitor centre and community resource to engage and inspire visitors to the area.

- It is reassuring to read that you are taking steps to replace the dead street trees referred to in last year's report in conjunction with Mayo County Council.

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

- You have presented a total of 8 different projects under this category ranging from the RIAI Town Challenge incorporating the Mulranny Smarter Travel Proposal and developments at the Community Centre, Mulranny Solar Meitheal which aims to reduce the cost of the installation of solar panels by customers grouping together, the Bunnahowna River Corridor Study, the establishment of a Mulranny Decarbonising Zone Committee and the installation of electric car charge points in the village. Together these projects demonstrate that sustainability issues remain very high on the agenda for Mulranny Tidy Towns and are important to the people living in Mulranny. You continue to progress and make positive strides under this category of the competition.

- The adjudicator enjoyed the walk along a section of the Greenway to access St. Brendan's Community Garden and Horticulture Project, where good crops of potatoes and spring onions in raised beds were in cultivation. No doubt these crops will be harvested very soon. It was not possible to visit the polytunnels, but from the photographs contained in the application form, there is no doubt that this is a very important and sustainable resource allowing for a continuum of care of the elderly and the wider community in Mulranny Village.

- The Greenway itself was very impressive with stunning views to the coast and it has a very smooth tarmac surface ideal for cycling. The environs of the Greenway are maintained in a very environmentally sensitive manner with the grass margins adjacent to the route regularly cut, whilst the natural vegetation nearby is allowed to grow and flourish. Signage along the Greenway in the vicinity of Mulranny village is presented to an excellent standard.

- If not already in train, your committee or the Mulranny Decarbonising Zone Committee might 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](https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/sustainable-energy-communities)

<https://www.codema.ie/sec>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

- You are fortunate that Mulranny generally does not have a litter problem. This is not by chance. Your Annual Community Spring Clean was successful and the clean-up of approach roads and implementation of the litter control rotas are working well. It is good to note the recycling of litter collected is standard practice and the weekly Spring/Summer meet-ups are well attended. The Mulranny National School – Annual Beach Clean-Up and Coastal Clean-up held in December 2022 removed a huge amount of waste from the beach area and thanks are due to Costcutters and Mayo County Council for their support.

- On the day of adjudication, the village and beach areas were found to be very neat and tidy and largely

litter free - well done.

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

- Mulranny tidy towns has been active under this category in providing floral displays at several locations in the village and offering window boxes at reduced rates to residents. Historic buildings in the village have been enhanced in conjunction with the property owners and new seating has also been provided near the children's playground.
- The existing housing scheme at Saint Brendan's Village was visited and the individual homes here, which are attractive single storey dormer type dwellings with nicely maintained garden areas, were greatly admired. The entrance to the estate from the main road is particularly attractive and is enhanced with colourful floral displays and an attractive name stone. The biodiversity garden area, including bug hotels and wildlife signage, was also positively noted. Views from this development towards the bay and coastal landscape beyond are spectacular. There is an internal open space within the estate which is surrounded by a low steel fence and perhaps consideration could be given to removing this fence, as its purpose is not clear.

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

- Mulranny Tidy Towns has been very active in relation to the maintenance and presentation of approach roads and these were found to be of a very high standard with adequate provision for wildlife corridors.
- The approaches to Mulranny from the Westport and Achill directions are maintained to an excellent standard, taking into account the need to protect biodiversity. Travelling into the village from the Westport direction one is struck by the beautiful linear display of shrub roses providing a wonderful splash of deep pink colour as one enters the village. The roadside margins are regularly maintained whilst at the same time the areas behind the roadside bollards are allowed to develop as wildflower meadows. These meadows were in full bloom on the day of the visit and the adjudicator marvelled at the large number of wild orchids spotted in this area.
- The approach from the Achill direction is characterized by stone walls and wonderful natural vegetation adjoining the road, including swathes of bracken fern backed by dense growth of willow, ash, and sycamore trees. The roadside lay-by here with picnic area, floral display and excellent signage is a delight. The standard of road signage throughout Mulranny was well co-ordinated and exemplary.

Concluding Remarks:

Mulranny village is located in a unique scenic setting overlooking Clew Bay and adjacent to the wonderful Great Western Greenway. With so much to offer the visitor, it is no surprise that the village has developed into an important tourist destination in Mayo over many years. A strong Tidy Towns presence in the village has reinforced the transformation which has taken place and the strong community spirit which clearly exists. This dedication and enterprise will continue to guide your future development plans in a sustainable and considered way. You are wished well with all your future endeavours.

Second Round Adjudication:

I was delighted to have the opportunity to visit Mulranny for the 2nd round adjudication. You are blessed to have such stunning views over Clew Bay along with a lovely beach. Your application was of a high standard, though I think 44 pages is too long. Perhaps a reduction in text, number of projects and collage photos should be considered for next year's entry. I appreciate you are doing a lot and want to demonstrate this, but I agree that 59 projects on your map is just too many to keep track of. This means the most important projects are at risk of being overlooked. I acknowledge you have a strong community spirit, with many great committee members and volunteers. Your 5-Year Plan is ambitious but achievable and shows you have focus. By removing and/or carrying forward the 2022 projects it will simplify the document for you, as advised by the first adjudicator.

I am very impressed with your project to welcome over 70 new Ukrainian residents. You had a successful 'meet and greet' last December and have actively included them in local activities and events. Your key project to move the Marian Shrine from its original home to the parochial house grounds has worked well. The statue looks very striking, with the plinth, bench and gravel surrounds. The blue flowerpots are pretty, though the flowers were perishing on my visit. I wish you well with the wrought iron gate project – these are lovely heritage features in our landscape, yet too few have survived. The History and Heritage project sounds amazing! Highlights on my walk around were the Arts Centre, the school and new astroturf pitch, the traditional cottages, the new Goat Café, 'The Taste of Mulranny Pizza' and the Centenary Garden, which was full of butterflies on the day! I would agree with the first adjudicator that the village centre landscaping is dominated by hard surfaces and would benefit from some planting to soften it. It is wonderful to see so many visitors, though the village was packed with cars, and detracted somewhat from the attractive features, e.g. the cottage next to the pizza restaurant. Some of the buildings would look wonderful if painted in bright seaside colours.

I was glad to see so many bicycle parking stations for Greenway users and the new stand at the beach. The planted area at the school carpark looks very well, though the information board looks outwards and was blank on the carpark side. Perhaps it could be duplicated on that side, or a panel added with other information displayed. The nearby young Rowan trees look beautiful, though a couple may need a little attention as they are struggling. I noted an enclosed space along the main footpath in the village with empty flowerbeds. It would be lovely to see this filled with some colourful flowers.

I note your dedication to biodiversity and sustainability. You have so many positive projects in the mix, such as the Coastal Birdwatch Survey, the Machair project, native tree planting and EV charging points. The move to pollinator-friendly perennial schemes is positive – I would like to see more bee-friendly species in the window boxes and planters in future. I had watched the Nationwide programme featuring the Old Irish Goat Society visitor centre

and the 'Gift of Hands' initiative. These are fantastic projects. I am heartened to see such interest in both the goats and the arts & crafts produced at the centre, along with its inclusive approach and focus on repurposing materials. You now have the Mulranny Decarbonising Zone Committee, which will no doubt assist greatly in your ambitions to become a more sustainable community!

I would encourage you to be mindful of some invasive plant species I saw on my visit – namely Himalayan Balsam, Fuchsia, Montbretia and Rosa rugosa were also quite prevalent. They all have benefits for pollinators but tend to spread far and wide if not managed. Well done for your regular clean-ups in the village and at the beach, in addition to recycling rubbish where possible. Your hard work has paid off. The rose beds looked very pretty on the approach; you have put a lot of work in here. The welcome signage also looked well. It is great that you are reducing mowing along verges, including the 'Long Acre'. My visit to Mulranny was a pleasure and it is clear why you do so well in the competition. I wish you luck with all future endeavours!