

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Newport - Baile Uí Fhiacháin	Ref: 567
County: Mayo	Mark: 315
Category: B	Date(s): 28/06/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	47
Streetscape & Public Places	80	46
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	37
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	28
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	40
TOTAL MARK	550	315

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.

Newport, Baile uí Fhiacháin, a mid-sized village/town with a population of 600 people – last entered the competition in 2019. Has a committee of 6 members with support of another 4 volunteers.

- It is noted that you hold monthly committee meetings to agree priorities and proposed actions. There is a weekly tidy-up every Tuesday evening involving a team of volunteers (approximately 4 regular volunteers in addition to the core committee).

There is local youth club involvement – who play a very active part in your Good Friday clean-up and each year and get involved in a town enhancement project. Western Care service users assist with weekly litter-picking and Good Friday Spring Clean and your annual fundraising event is held on the June Bank Holiday weekend.

- Newport Tidy Towns has received support from various local national and local organizations, businesses and entities including RSS, Tús, Mayo County Council, Friends of Mayo Dark Skies, Newport and District Development Company (NADDCo), Nephin Begers, Newport Business Association, Newport Tourist Office, the family festival, Newport St. Patricks Day Parade committee, the Marine Institute, Lynda Huxley 'Save the Swift' project, An Taisce, Newport 300 events, and the LEADER/South West Mayo Development Company (SWMDC).

- To communicate with committee members you use bulk texts, a WhatsApp group, emails, weekly tidy-ups etc. To contact volunteers and the wider public you use Facebook posts, regular bulletins in local newspapers (Mayo News & Western People), Parish Newsletter, regular website updates and bulletins posted on the Tourist Office Noticeboard.

- You have a very strong connection with the local Newport national school and there are regular visits to the school to promote Newport Tidy Towns. It is pleasing to read that in 2022 the school earned its tenth Green Flag. This is a great achievement.

- The adjudicator is pleased to read that Newport Tidy Towns has played a significant role in the recent development of Newport as a thriving market and tourist town, particularly with the recent development of the great western greenway. Your view that Tidy Towns involvement is much more fundamental than just keeping the village clean and tidy and planting window boxes is certainly the correct approach, when making preparations for entering the competition each year. Your long-term goal for Newport to be seen as a 'great place to live, work and visit' is without doubt very achievable and we wish every success on that journey.

The coloured maps provided as part of your entry form and those included under each category heading, were of excellent quality. Nowadays to save paper and in the interest of sustainability, the entirety of the entry forms are not printed by the adjudicators. Just one copy of the village map is printed, to assist adjudicators navigating around the

applicant village and identifying the various projects completed over the last year.

Therefore, it is preferable for Tidy Towns committees to submit just one map showing the main village landmarks, with all the relevant projects completed over the year, marked on that map and clearly numbered, together with a numbered legend. This makes it easier for the adjudicator to navigate around the village and aids the overall assessment process.

The quality of the application form was excellent. The Newport 3-5 Year Tidy Towns plan has been noted positively and in particular the overall development approach i.e., that any future development will be sympathetic and progressive and take into consideration any environmental impact on the town. In this regard, you are wished well with the completion of a Town Design Statement. The Tidy Towns Plan is very comprehensive but lacks reference to specified timelines, which would allow progress to be monitored and evaluated. Assigning some responsibilities to specific groups for individual tasks might also be beneficial.

The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the application form, which including photos and maps and 3-5 years plan amounted to 49 pages long. The inclusion of a single map next year, will reduce the overall size of the document. The text inserted on the form was very easy to read. The use of bullet points under each category worked very well and the photographs showing events and works in progress were excellent.

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

- It is fully recognised that great strides have been made by your committee under this category on tackling derelict buildings in Newport. A building next to Walsh's Pub has been upgraded and it now has an appealing frontage, housing a display for the Newport Sea Angling Club.
- The enhancement work carried out at Cusack's Corner at top of Main Street involving the installation of 3 wall murals, has been transformative and significantly improves the presentation of this part of the village. It is noted that Newport has been approved for over €5.6m funding for village enhancement works to be carried out over the next couple of years. This will facilitate the development of a Business Hub, an outdoor civic space, and safe pathway to the Church and Barrack Hill.
- The enhancement of business premises by the colourful painting of shopfronts will yield significant improvements and you are working with Mayo County Council to devise a streetscape colour scheme and façade painting incentive scheme, to ensure there is a well-co-ordinated and pleasing approach throughout the town.
- A programme of enhancement works has also been carried out at the Playground located near the Viaduct and the Newport Tidy Towns committee has been involved at every stage of this development.
- We arrived in Newport on the sunny day in late June. The first port of call was the roadside car park at Meddicott Street overlooking the river and the Fair Green. The houses and commercial properties fronting this very wide street were presented to a very good standard and a number of these historic properties were faced with natural stonework, which added to the quality of the streetscape here. The large expanse of tarmacadam in this area dominates the scene and perhaps a greater level of separation between the car parking areas and the main road running through this area, would create opportunities for greater walkability and a more pedestrian and cycle friendly environment – in the shorter-term improved road and car park markings would be beneficial.
- The stone wall frontage along the Fair Green and nearby river and the memorial to Eamonn Ó Laighin were admired, as well as the stone planting beds defining the car spaces, overflowing with attractive pink ground-cover roses, which were in full flower. The views towards the river bridge and viaduct were outstanding. The imposing St. Partrick's Church building situated on an elevated site above the main part of the village, completed this wonderful vista.
- The overall quality of the streetscape and presentation of buildings on the main street in the village was excellent. Properties such as Walsh's Bridge Inn, Newport Pharmacy, Newport Animal Health, Brannen's, Keanes Meats, Hairs and Sirs, The Credit Union premises, the striking Hotel Newport and stone fronted building housing the Tourist Office, all significantly enhanced the village streetscape. The list of very attractive properties in Newport is not exhaustive. The Main Street is rather wide which will provide an opportunity to create a civic space or allow for the widening of footpaths on both sides of the street. This will make the central part of the village more walkable, pedestrian and cycle friendly. The provision of additional cycle parking facilities here, to facilitate visitors arriving from the nearby Greenway should be considered in the short term.
- We proceeded from Main Street up Barrack Hill across the sloping cast iron bridge to the grounds of St. Patrick's Church. The charming stone cottages with attractive gardens and floral displays fronting the road on this approach were greatly admired. The grounds of the Church which has a castle like appearance and houses the last Harry Clarke-stained glass window, were equally admired. The scenic views across the surrounding countryside through the canopies of the stately trees located on the site perimeter, were an attractive feature here. The site of the Church is maintained to an excellent standard with charming stone walls and a nicely designed Grotto feature, with extensive use of large cobblestone on its frontage and surround.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- The existing parkland areas, new planting beds and floral displays and children's playground in Newport were presented and maintained to a very good standard. The signage erected at the viaduct providing information on the former railway station, rail-line and viaduct, which finally closed in 1937, was greatly admired. The floral schemes in this area also greatly enhanced the setting of the new signs. The new sculpture feature highlighting Newport's connection with the former Princess Grace of Monaco, also provided a fitting entrance to the viaduct walkway, with very scenic views overlooking the town and river.
- The wooded area known as the Princess Grace Park in Newport was also visited. This area consists of a dense natural (mainly deciduous) woodland, situated on an elevated site overlooking the harbour area and Clew

Bay. The park is bounded by attractive stone walls fronting the Quay Road and is a wonderful local amenity. It is certainly a hidden gem in Newport. One has the impression that the park area may be underutilized at present by the public. Perhaps improved signage notifying the public of the entrances to the park would increase its popularity with local residents and visitors. The concrete blocks placed at the entrances could be removed to allow proper gates to be installed. Within the park the existing walkways will need to be properly surfaced to facilitate year-round access. The erection of information signage, including local flora and fauna, would enhance its overall presentation to the public. The judicious removal of a small number of trees overlooking Clew Bay, will also provide panoramic views across the bay for the enjoyment of park users. All of the above can be implemented on a phased basis as part of an overall development plan for the park, as funds become available.

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

- It is noted that six new nesting boxes for swifts have been erected at the school, two of which have cameras inside, connected to a TV screen. This is a very good way to enable children to learn about nature and particularly the life cycle of our endangered swifts. It will be interesting to see if the birds take up residence here over the next few years.
- It was also interesting to read about the newly designated Mayo Dark Sky Park and that Newport is a gateway to this park – incorporating 15,000 hectares of public land with ultra-low levels of light pollution, retaining a gold tier status. Your volunteers assist by recording data from light quality meters to keep the park light management plan up to date, ensuring the retention of the low light status.
- The new seating area at Chambers Garden Centre has enhanced the monitoring of wildlife beside the Newport River and your committee is assisting with viewing arrangements, including provision of nest sites for ducks and other waterfowl.
- You have successfully used organic nettle plant food and organic weedkiller (using vinegar, salt and washing up liquid), for plant feeding and weed control, which is minimising the use of chemicals and herbicides, in the interest of protecting local biodiversity.

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

- Projects undertaken by your committee under this category include minimizing the use of single use coffee cups in local Cafés and eateries, recycling of Christmas trees in conjunction with Mayo County Council, harvesting of rainwater for use at the polytunnel and Tidy Towns lock-up, propagation instead of purchasing of bedding plants by using the polytunnel, recycling of old wheel hubs to create 'flower gardens', Cycle/Walk on Wednesdays held at the local school, the conversion of lighting at Greenway Activity Park to a low energy lighting system and re-use of mulch from shredded pruning material.
- You continue to make good strides in this aspect of the competition. The new 'Easygo' electric vehicle charging points located in the car park to the rear of the Main Street were positively noted on site.
- Other areas worthy of consideration by Newport 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.
- 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. Solar panel 'Meitheals' in the local area have been used to good effect by other committees. 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 your weekly tidy-ups on Tuesday evenings are continuing on a regular basis, targeting areas requiring special attention. In addition, an enthusiastic team of 20 volunteers from 6th class in Newport NS travelled to your nearest beach at Mulranny and did an amazing job clearing rubbish from the beach and dunes area. You also carry out an annual clean up on Good Friday, including coastal clean ups at the Caulicaun area and at Melcombe. Your volunteers assist Mayo County Council in emptying bins during busy periods and you are progressing local dog fouling initiatives.
- On the day of adjudication, the village area was found to be very tidy and largely litter free – congratulations to all concerned with keeping Newport clean and tidy.

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

- The adjudicator was pleased to witness on site, the apartment development located opposite the viaduct which has been extensively renovated. The entire building façade and perimeter boundary walls have been freshly painted, which has greatly enhanced this part of the village. The 'before and after' photos clearly display the transformation achieved in this area. Residential properties are generally presented to a very good standard throughout the village and on approach roads.
- The adjudicator called to Rossmore estate, which is maintained to an excellent standard, with attractive stone walls at the entrance, together with a central well-maintained open space area with good tree planting. The Sandymount Quay estate which overlooks the harbour area was also very well presented, with a natural stone wall entrance, accessed from Melcombe Road, and attractive tree planting and floral displays provided on the open space.

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

- On the Mulranny approach to Newport, the road environs are enhanced by attractive private residences with well cared for front gardens and stone wall boundaries adjoining the road. A concrete post and rail fence located near the Circle K premises is prominent and it is suggested that a native hedge could be planted here to reduce the visual impact of the boundary fencing on this approach. Road surfaces and markings are to a good standard. There was some evidence of spraying of herbicide on this approach.
- On the Crossmolina approach, the Burrishoole GAA club grounds and high boundary walls are prominent here. These walls would benefit from a refresh with paint and perhaps consider planting some trees along this frontage, where space is available. There are wonderful views towards Newport along this approach with the St. Patricks Church building dominating the skyline. The road environs are also enhanced by attractive tree planting and well-maintained grass margins. Road surfaces and markings were to a good standard.
- Entering the village from the Westport direction, the road is characterized by attractive natural vegetation along the roadside boundaries. Road margins are maintained to a very good standard with attractive tree planting and floral displays. The canopy of the Newport Tyre centre premises is visually prominent here and perhaps there are plans to upgrade this area in the near future. The steel cabinet located on the road margin, at the junction with the Melcombe Road, is visually prominent and perhaps this can be relocated to a more suitable site or painted to provide an artistic feature at the entrance to Newport.

Concluding Remarks:

Your committee is making good progress in achieving your long-term goal to develop Newport as a 'great place to live, work and visit'. Newport is developing as a very attractive tourist destination in Mayo and the role of your committee is to the fore, in ensuring visitors see the natural beauty of the village and surroundings at their very best. The work undertaken by your committee this year has been impressive, for a relatively small number of people involved. The visit to Newport was an enjoyable and memorable one. We wish you well for the future and for the further sustainable development of your village community - keep up the good work.