

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Monaghan - Muineachán	Ref: 611
County: Monaghan	Mark: 356
Category: E	Date(s): 06/06/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	52	55
Streetscape & Public Places	80	50	51
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	44	45
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	46	47
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	37	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	40	41
TOTAL MARK	550	346	356

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

The focus on developing Monaghan as a 'Biodiversity Town' and a great place to live, work and play has been your motivating force for the past number of years. This objective has in turn given a clear focus to your ongoing community efforts. The successful awards night held at the Westenra Hotel is an important acknowledgement of your local groups and individuals who have made a significant contribution to the campaign in addition to providing an opportunity for people to interact and discuss development progress in the various categories. The promotion of the 'working together' ethic is commendable and the encouragement of youth involvement particularly laudable. It is good to read about your links with the Men's Shed and Saint Patrick's Direct Provision Centre. Indeed the myriad of other interested groups and organisations that assist you makes impressive reading. The clear maps accompanying your application were of great assistance to the adjudicator and facilitated visiting areas that may have otherwise been more difficult to locate. The photographs were most helpful and will be an important record of improvements and developments in both the town and its environs in the long term. You are generous in sharing your knowledge with other interest groups and we note your future intention to resume field trips to further this agenda.

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

Public Realm improvements carried out in recent years have made a considerable visual improvement to the presentation of the Diamond, the nearby Church Square and Old Cross Square. Street cleaning was being carried out each morning by an enthusiastic workforce. The result was a bright and clean network of streets during daytime. Like many Irish towns, Monaghan has suffered from retail and commercial closures in recent years and this has led to a series of abandoned buildings and dereliction in some cases. The colour scheme initiatives were a very successful proactive undertaking and has led to significant visual improvements. Some well considered colour schemes were admired along Glaslough Street and they have made a significant visual contribution to the improved presentation of the street. Shopfront painting of Bellevue Tavern and Mrs Hegarty's on Dublin Street recalling earlier days is effective. Beyond at Old Square Cross and the adjoining roundabout, untidy advertising signage needs to be rationalised and presented in a more orderly and attractive fashion. Improvement plans proposed for this area will offer an ideal opportunity for visual enhancement here. The three dimension plan for Dublin Street regeneration included in your application is exciting and we look forward to progress here in the years ahead. Monaghan is indeed fortunate that new shopping areas are located close to the town core and therefore offer an opportunity for strong linkage to the centre in any new proposed regeneration development. The plans for improvements at Courthouse Square were observed and, nearby, many fine building presentations were admired. At the Diamond, the excellent paving scheme developed in recent years is enlivened by the external facilities provided here. The space including covered seating areas adjacent to the imposingly presented Westenra Hotel, Screaming Bean Cafe and The Squealing Pig have a cosmopolitan appeal. Well considered murals were observed at various locations and at the Westenra Hotel car park a major mural focusing on Rossmore Castle was a considerable visual

enhancement to its surroundings.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The multiplicity of green spaces dispersed throughout the town is substantial and is providing a visually softening effect in many locations. Your campaign to promote pollinator friendly areas with the development of this agenda is noted and augurs well for the future. Your list of undertakings and ongoing maintenance is substantial, including the Greenway, the Ulster Canal, the Lakes, roundabouts, the Sage/Rotary Garden and the Men's Shed initiative. The completion of the Urban Orchard scheme will be highly educational and will add interest for residents and visitors alike. The integrated approach to your landscaping and green areas compliments many of the other categories and is a very successful highpoint of your programme. Well done to all concerned.

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

The committee has adopted a combined Development Plan and local Biodiversity Action Plan as their three-year plan for Tidy Towns endeavours. This plan was devised by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants and follows on from an earlier habitat survey carried out by Billy Flynn. This partnership continues apace with funding received from Leader and CFI to continue developing a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). These detailed surveys of local habitats and water courses provide a further impetus towards the establishment of Monaghan as Ireland's first Biodiversity Town. The detail of work done and in hand is vast. Partnership with other town organisations such as the Men's Shed, 'Hug-a-Tree' initiative in association with the Mental Health Association, the greenway development in association with the council horticulturist, the new pollinator garden at St. Davnet's Campus, the bat survey at the Lock keeper's cottage are just some of the many exciting projects listed. The overall ambition of the committee is towards planting in ground rather than containers, planting wildflowers from seeds, using perennial planting rather than annuals and building up a stock of herbaceous perennial plants. Sage garden has been completely re-planted with perennials. A tree trail from Monaghan town is a truly impressive campaign. As a first-time visitor to much of Monaghan County, this adjudicator was completely bowled over by the unspoiled rural landscape, the continuous hedgerows and the magnificently statuesque trees throughout the county. By raising awareness, it is to be hoped that this generation and future generations of Monaghan people will help to preserve and reinforce this aspect of their environment.

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

The numerous projects outlined in the form give a powerful message about implementing a sustainable ethos in your town and environs. Monaghan County Council environmental officer works consistently with all schools to promote the Green Schools Programme. Post-primary schools down through the years have taken part successfully in Junk Kouture. A new project started in one school but hoping to spread to others is the design and creation of hats from recycled material. This adjudicator failed to find examples of this project in any shop window, but this may have been a failure on my part. The town's largest employer, Combilift, demonstrate their commitment to sustainability in a very interesting webpage. The Keep Cup campaign is frequently successful and other innovative ideas are the 600 free food waste kitchen caddies distributed, the Unwonted Gifts, and the book and DVD swap and handy container hub at Pizza D'Or. Monaghan County Council upgraded 71 houses under the energy efficiency retrofit program in 2022, at an average cost of €30,000 per house. MCC is now seeking tenders for 125 properties at a cost of €4 million. Increased jobs, training and skills, less energy used, better housing conditions less illness/demand on HSE services. Sustainability in action.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The success of the repainting scheme at Glaslough has already been mentioned and the scheme has resulted in a total of 56 houses being repainted in 2022. Improvements in replastering and repainting at the hospital in High Street were noted. Well done on your continuing efforts regarding derelict buildings at various prominent areas near the central core. It is encouraging to read that your positive approach has been appreciated and that feedback is good. Your persistent approach to monitoring and reporting of overflowing recycling bins has resulted in an increase of 20 points in your IBAL score. The new larger capacity bins have resulted in a decrease in litter in the Lake area and also, it is hoped, at the bus station. Success in achieving funding for the professional cleaning of the Ulster Canal include tackling the invasive species Azolla.. Hopefully, the decrease in litter amounts at Peter's Lake will prove to be long term.

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

The town has a large number of residential housing estates and the majority were visited. The annual award scheme to be renewed is obviously very successful and an important communication channel to keep in touch with the residents of the various housing areas. You have a wide variety of support initiatives and promotional self help schemes ranging from assistance with painting, boundary railing renewal and a street furniture enhancement programme. Contact using Facebook obviously strengthens your communication. Well done to the volunteer who now offers sustainable gardening advice to other groups. Belgium Park Square, St. Patricks Terrace, Knockroe Road Glen and Tully were visited as were the estates at Beechgrove Woodlands and Latlurcan. Green spaces were maintained to a good standard and imaginative individual private garden presentations were admired at various locations. Your submitted photographs were of great assistance in displaying the colour and extent of the considerable works carried out in relation to this important category.

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

Rossmore Park on the Clones Road sets a high standard for the presentation of approach roads in Monaghan and your operatives are to be congratulated on the high standard of maintenance and presentation achieved here. Well done on developing a more sustainable landscaping plan and maintenance program in recent years, a great investment for the future. Hedgerows on approach roads are a feature throughout your county and should be protected and reinforced as boundaries where possible, especially when new development occurs. It should be an objective to carry out an inventory of ill-considered, indiscriminate signage. Well designed signage can make a significant attractive contribution to your landscape and further enhance this important aspect of your environment.

Concluding Remarks:

The Monaghan committee has a strategically sound plan to steer their ongoing development campaign. You are working well as a united group and the successful results of your endeavours are to be widely seen throughout the town.