

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Athleague - Áth Liag**

Ref: **269**

County: **Roscommon**

Mark: **316**

Category: **B**

Date(s): **03/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	44	46
Streetscape & Public Places	80	43	44
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	45	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	31	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	18	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35	36
TOTAL MARK	550	304	316

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.

Planning and taking part in consultations is important and it was great not only to see the inclusion of your long-term plan but also the input that you put into the community and economic plan for Athleague that is now coming to fruit. The work of the women's network is impressive and gains you points in the 'Sustainability' category of the competition upcycling textiles. They even delivered commissions for local businesses making corporate gifts. This is often a time where a lot of unwanted items are exchanged so it's nice to think these items are locally made from recycled products.

There was a lot of work over the past 12 months to provide accessible amenities for all in Athleague.

You work with different groups and state bodies and even your local school - all to great effect. We were delighted to hear that the pupils judge your Christmas window displays of local homes and businesses. Maybe some of them will turn into Tidy Towns Adjudicators in time!

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

Since your adjudicator's last visit a lot of buildings have been upgraded. The Community Centre looked exceptionally well having been extensively renovated. The car park was clean and tidy and it was nice to read information about Athleague and see old Mill Stones incorporated into the landscaping. Many more buildings were recently painted and looked very well such as the dark and light grey building with the blue door and the blue carriage door and arch. Nearby The Bridge Public House also presented nicely and Hamrocks Bar was also nicely painted.

Other commercial premises really looked well including 'Les Petite Tartes', Conlon's Chemist, the solicitors and Town & Country Interiors. What an asset to your village to have premises like these that would attract people into your community. The outdoor picnic tables were bright and colourful and we particularly liked the one for people with wheelchairs. This is another example of the thoughtfulness that you've put into making your community accessible.

There are bollards on the pavement to prevent parking - could these be of a metal design to match in with existing street furniture rather than red and white plastic? Your "happy to sit and chat" bench made your adjudicator smile, and it was a delight to see so many friendly people in your village.

Five flags were flying proudly at the National School - each well-deserved for all your endeavours. St Patrick's church itself looked well and it was very nice to see presented and maturing trees and planters made for an attractive

entrance to the village.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

We were delighted to read of the new play area to be constructed – the Circle of Life Park. This has been in your long-term plan for a while so it is great that it is about to happen in 2023.

The wooden statue to John Haughey is very well executed – a talented sculptor created this. It makes a lovely centre point around the carpet roses all of which were nicely maintained. A number of the trees behind here have died so maybe they could be replanted. Some silver birch would be a lovely and would help screen out the field behind. Don't forget to loosen the support straps from growing trees so they don't run and scar the bark of the trees. Nearby the tribute to Aileen Cust was also appreciated, raising awareness of the pioneering women in Athleague.

Cordylines are not native to Ireland and it is noticed that some of these are struggling so perhaps they could be taken out and replaced by pollinator friendly shrubs.

The fairy trail was visited and looks bright and colourful. Using stainless steel, or not using nails at all, will prevent introducing any infection into trees. What a lovely path to explore.

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

Your main project this year was to provide access for wheelchair users to fishing platforms on the River Suck, one of the most important wildlife habitats in Europe. Because this has protective EU designations it's important that all the right permissions were in place to ensure the construction of this platform did not actually destroy the habitats in the vicinity. So big congratulations - you've done a great job and a lot of behind the scenes work has gone into making this happen. This is a great piece of work for a small community.

Have you thought about putting up wildlife information signs around the river?

The new amenities by the Riverside centre look lovely and how wonderful to have a swimming area here for the community. Nearby the orchard planted will make a lovely spot for doing workshops and harvest events in the future.

In your long-term plan you mention creating more bug hotels next year. These are ideally for educational purposes so should just be created in possibly schools or residential zones. Perhaps you can focus instead on offering guided wildlife walks? Or promoting participation in citizen science projects linked to water quality as there are so many wonderful rivers and streams around Athleague.

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

The upgrade building works to improve energy efficiency for your Community Centre are applauded/ You should write an article about this for inclusion in the national Tidy Towns newsletter as many others would want to learn about improving their community buildings. Future buildings are to follow suite including the Riverside Centre. This is thanks to a successful grant application by Roscommon Women's Network (RWN). The grant will allow for an energy audit of the building. Best of luck to all for this great energy efficient work. Meanwhile the volunteers at CycleUp upcycled in 2022, 206kgs of textiles. In the process the volunteers learnt new skills, met people and made an important contribution to the circular economy.

Other actions included the new composting area in the Community Orchard cleverly repurposing pallets. Have you used your compost yet in your landscaping? Maybe you can run a short hour-long demonstration for those interested in having their own compost heap at home.

Is there a good local link service for Athleague? Do you need a bus shelter for the village?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your adjudicators do not like festive lights up outside the festive season however you have nice white lights up across the bridge itself that look pretty. But they have been put up poorly - cable tie sticking out (the ends of each should have been cut off) and loops of wire are obvious, and wires run along the top of the bridge which could have been discreetly positioned down the back. Possibly it was a cold, wet day when your volunteers put these up. A little attention here could rectify this. A lot of artificial lighting can disrupt night life, so it is important to maintain some dark areas and use low-intensity lighting.

The dog-litter sign in the park is faded maybe this could just be removed. If dog waste is an issue, you could organise an initiative for school children to raise awareness of it.

There were some bits of litter near the takeaway premises but no doubt that would be quickly tidied up by the business owners and your Tidy Towns volunteers. Elsewhere Athleague was very clean of litter.

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

Homes throughout in Athleague village were really nicely presented with flowers and fresh paint. One home with an attractive pink door on the main street caught the eye of your adjudicator

There was a nice landscape bed of flowers and shrubs at the entrance to an estate which we believe is called 'The paddocks.' We couldn't see a name so perhaps a bilingual sign could be erected here. There was a pole with no sign on it that needs to be removed from here.

You are encouraged to promote energy saving schemes where possible and details of energy-saving grants available. The school is located quite far from the residential estates. We wondered if you could explore an off-road path between the school and the R360.

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

Arriving in from the Roscommon Road on the N63 there's a real sense of arriving somewhere special with all the roadside tree planting. You could widen the strip of grass not mown under trees to allow for feeding of pollinators and movement of wildlife along here. Avoid placing planters on the approach roads as they would be difficult to manage along this busy stretch of road. You could possibly add some planting of bee-friendly shrubs around the new welcome to Athleague signs.

In front of Kepak there is some nice pollinator-friendly planting. The new extension of this factory has great potential and as opposed to spraying to prevent growth along the new fence, it could be wonderful to have honeysuckle., clematis, ivy or other native plants trained to grow along the fence. Elsewhere rusty gates into the closed Mill could have a nice painting or art work attached to enhance this area and stop us looking at the closed buildings behind.

Concluding Remarks:

When we visited it was a beautiful day and lots of people were in the village enjoying the river, floating on the water, walking along the walks and reading in the park. You have created a lovely place that people obviously enjoy living and visiting. More importantly you have put effort into ensuring people of all mobility can enjoy these amenities. It's been a delight to return to Athleague.