

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Castlecoote - Baile Mhic Oireachtaigh	Ref:	282
County:	Roscommon	Mark:	368
Category:	A	Date(s):	03/06/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	52	53
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	46
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	49	50
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	42	44
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	27	29
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	68	69
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	44	45
TOTAL MARK	550	359	368

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.

The first thing we read in your application is about the great community support that you have in Castlecoote. Then you state it is important as you've got such a vast expanse of grass to cut in your village and everybody helping to cut it helps reduce the cost to your group. This statement seemed in contrast with your work and actions to support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Reducing grass mown, and lengthening mowing cycles, benefits our pollinators and other wildlife and enhances the whole biodiversity of your wonderful corner of Roscommon. And indeed on adjudication, on approach roads you have allowed grass to grow long especially for Pollinators.

Your application form is very good showing 'before and after' photographs and importantly how all your initiatives link to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. You have also demonstrated that your work is strategic and focused as you have included your long-term plan showing your key areas and aims for the next few years. You refer to sustainable travel. This would be very topical for a rural area, and you've talked about actively carpooling to events. How have you set up a carpooling scheme across the village? It would be great to share details of this with other communities or indeed in the TidyTowns newsletter.

Some of the details in the report was from previous years and it is suggested that some of these listings and notices are now removed.

For a community the size of Castlecoote, you have a large number on your committee, and this is applauded and demonstrates the pride and support in the village. We also liked reading that a number of your committee members are under 18 years of age. It was great to read that new people moving into the village are helping you in your work. Finally – this is no specific category in this competition to award marks for caring and watching out for each other, but your entry spoke strongly of the community support provided to all residents and you are applauded for this social support.

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

The centre of Castlecoote village is lovely to walk around and read the information in the centre of your village. The dappled shade from the riverside silver birch trees makes for a lovely place to sit and enjoy the village. We really liked the display of your Competition Winning Medals in the phone box and elsewhere there is also information on gardening for wildlife and details of the impressive Castlecoote Loop.

Castlecoote Stores was a busy, nicely presented building in the middle of the village. The entrance to Farrell's had some lovely images of what Castlecoote Mill looked like in the last century and this information board and the planters and fixed flower baskets all help to soften and enhance the look of the steel entrance gate - so well done

The church, its grounds and railings looked lovely. Two volunteers were busy working during adjudication there. The Church Hall seemed to be freshly painted, and the new belfry was admired. This was one of your highlights over the last 12 months - the restoration and installation of the original church bell and the creation of a new Belfry for it.

PJ's bar and lounge appeared freshly painted and looked lovely with hanging baskets and window boxes. Likewise Castlecoote Lodge looked well – a fair distance from the centre of the community but also included in your adjudication area.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Public realm in the centre of Castlecoote was of a high standard and you have put a lot of effort into painting, planting and nurturing the landscaping of the community. Despite our early visit, you were well prepared for our arrival. The outdoor seating, local information displays, trellis and undulating stone wall work well together. A bird table was attached to a silver birch here that appears to be damaging the birch and should be removed. Wooden barrels had a nice array of plant suitable for pollinators with fresh compost....is it homemade or peat free? Do you have a community composting area or do your volunteers use compost from their own gardens? As well as the 'veg pod' at the school, have you considered a polytunnel for the community to grow on plants and flowers from cuttings? We are not sure where they are currently grown. Your street furniture throughout Castlecoote looked well. We enjoyed viewing the last known Castlecoote chieftain who maintains a watchful eye over those enjoying a refreshment at PJs! Thanks for outlining the decision to place it safely in this corner.

How is your weed wand? Would you recommend this and if so – perhaps you could provide a short piece for inclusion in the National Tidy Towns newsletter? As you head out the Castlebar Road the pavement is divided from the road for a short distance with a narrow-raised area covered in stones. This would be nicely planted up with annual such as poppies which would negate the need to manage weeds in this area.

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

We were delighted to read that you recently attended a seminar with the local LawPro (The Local Authority Waters Programme) office. This was to investigate opportunities to deliver more projects in and around the River Suck. From your entry form, and information available in the village, it is obvious you are well versed on the abundance of local wildlife. We were delighted to read that you have commissioned a biodiversity survey of the peatland area and look forward to learning more about your findings. You detailed some lovely projects that you implemented in the past such as the bioblitz and we wondered how you've used the information collected during this weekend of wildlife surveys? Do you organize walks and talks, for example during biodiversity week in May? Do your volunteers participate in any citizen science projects? Examples are found at www.biodiversityireland.ie

It suggested that the large wildlife mural on the pavement by the bridge is actually relocated to the seating area at the banks off the river. This would allow the viewer to realise the painting is of your bridge. The artwork is great but as the Perspex is faded it is hard to see the details. Can the Perspex be replaced please?

A visit to the school was delightful. First at the pedestrian entrance strawberries were growing in a concrete pipe which was now a lovely planter. At the main door of the school there was a colourful plastic bottle-top mural of the village showing all the premises including the mill and the church. This was a lovely sustainability message incorporated into a piece of art. You have used brightly painted pallets and even some tractor tyres were painted up for planting. Ideally the tyres would be recycled to prevent sustained leaching of micro-plastics.

The veggie pod that you had hoped to purchase for the school was in place and plants were growing on adjudication day.

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

Well done on all your efforts to complete your main project for 2023 - the new walkway and cycle way that leads down past the bog. You describe how along this trail wildlife is in abundance and the birds are singing their hearts out. We are delighted for you and congratulations on your efforts to make this happen. This was one of the activities for Roscommon Bike Week in May so well done again. And we loved that the seating provided at the trail head was made from recycled pallets.

With retirees in the community, perhaps a promotion of the benefits of electric bikes could be of interest?

Marks in this sustainability category are also awarded for your seed swap project. You had packets of seeds available for anyone in the old telephone box. We wondered if the water tap at the village pump could be changed to a push button to conserve water? You do have many water-conserving initiatives. For example, rain-water is collected in tanks at the Community Centre and in butts at both the school and PJs to water planters nearby. We imagine nearly ever home and business in Castlecoote has a water-butt in place! How many homes follow your suggestions? Have you ever organized an event to reduce food waste?

You have provided details of lots of projects that you have maintained or advanced such as the repair of hurleys or the reuse of toothbrushes as cleaning implements! Are all of these listed actions still promoted? Maybe provide some statistics on recycling rates for the village.

Whilst the school is not served by a bus, there was no other mention of a bus service for the community in your entry form. Do you have a local link to bring residents into Roscommon Town for shopping. If so, it is recommended you promote this. We didn't see a bus stop or bus timetable on display.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It was good to see the pictures of all your community united to help with your Spring clean including your Green Coast Litter Pick which confused us until we realized you were talking about picking up riparian litter along the River Suck! What a beautiful amenity this river is for you to enjoy in the village.

Thanks to Castlecoote Stores for providing your volunteers with a cuppa now that the Covid restrictions have lifted. The recycling bins were clean and nicely presented. The sign above these bins has a lot of information in small print that's difficult to read since it's located so high on the wall. Is such a sign necessary here? Perhaps the school children could create another bottle-top sign here with messages about the circular economy and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The mini-roundabout in front of the Mills, and associated road-line markings, may need to be re-painted at some stage.

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

Homes in Castlecoote were nicely presented to a high standard and we appreciate the efforts by the community to manage the communal areas outside of their homes. How many homes have solar or PV panels? It would be worth promoting energy saving tips and initiatives especially as the cost of leaving continues to rise. How many of the homes grow pollinator-friendly flowers or leave some of their own lawns to grow long - #NoMowMay.

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

It was lovely to see on the Roscommon Road where quite a lot of the grass area had been deliberately left to grow. We felt that this looked really well - it showed that you are arriving at the somewhere special and you are deliberately managing for wildlife. We did feel however that there could be a lot more grass areas allowed to grow longer. For example on the road down to Muff Cross you are mowing a very long stretch of grass that would look wonderful if it was allowed to grow, or if it could be planted up with ox-eye daisies and poppies for example. You have great continuity of pavement from Muff Cross into the village. As mentioned, you have worked on the new arrival route into Castlecoote – the new walkway and cycle path. This is a great initiative. Do consider ways to add welcome and invitation notices to attract visitors from trail head access points into the community.

Concluding Remarks:

The Castlecoote community has worked hard and your sustained efforts over the last 45 years of your involvement in this national competition have paid dividends. Not just in being a previous winner but also just in the active citizenship, social strengths and village enhancement. You have clearly demonstrated how your efforts are advancing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Well done to all for your efforts across all adjudication categories of this national competition.