

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Roscommon - Ros Comáin	Ref:	681
County:	Roscommon	Mark:	363
Category:	E	Date(s):	04/06/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	51	52
Streetscape & Public Places	80	50	52
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	49	51
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	42	44
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	27	28
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35	36
TOTAL MARK	550	351	363

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. Thank you for your entry form which was very nicely collated with pictures and slogans and clearly demonstrated how your work linked with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. These are 17 goals that Tidy Towns, agencies and countries across the world have signed up to advance. They include concepts such as equality, sustainable development, safeguarding our waterways, safeguarding our sanitation etc.

Few perhaps realise the extent of the work of a Tidy Town's group. We read about the frustration and difficulties your group had trying to change bank accounts and demonstrating your charitable status. We would like to applaud your volunteers for your patience.

It's important to be strategic and focused in your work so having a long-term plan for your specific work, monitoring planning applications and inputting into development plans is very important. We were delighted to read about your support and engagement for the new urban regeneration plan very cleverly entitled 'Putting the spokes back in the Wheel'. As soon as we read this title we understood exactly what you wanted to achieve - infilling the central streets and lanes of Roscommon Town. We highly applaud the regeneration of the town centre and the streets around this area.

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

The integration of modern public realm architecture with the traditional built heritage worked well. We loved the upgraded public space at the Main Street and Market Square. The granite paving, new planters, signage, lights, seats and cycles racks all looked lovely – the modern style blended nicely with the old. The wider space to the northern end will allow for temporary stages for festivals etc and indeed you plan to make a covered civic space here. On a warm Summer's evening Roscommon felt continental with many enjoying food outdoors and cars slowing down to facilitate this shared space. Overlooking the Square, premises looked well such as Mahon Sweeney Solicitors which was nicely painted a dark grey over all its three floors.

Modest signage at the Post Office worked well – some signage elsewhere was not in keeping with the heritage buildings where they were attached. Maybe advancing a bi-lingual signage policy in keeping with the built heritage could be an action? We admired how you have integrated older features of the town into the new public realm. For example there is now marker embedded into the new pavement indicating where the old gate into Roscommon town was located.

The wonderful flower painting on the window of Roscommon Volunteer Centre should attract more to help out with your worthy projects.

We welcome the proposed works at the Old Courthouse and you are applauded for not allowing this to be left and relocated permanently to a more modern building. We have seen this happen in other communities in Ireland and it is a real shame. The new temporary Courthouse building is a great example of state bodies and communities working together to get a temporary solution that fulfils a long-term requirement for the community.

J C Dorley's on the corner one looked well as did the other public house nearby – James J Harlow.

The array of independent businesses certainly would bring us back to spend some time shopping at our leisure. Walking around in the evening it was lovely to be able to window shop in premises with lovely displays such as Sephoria Boutique, McGuinness' Pharmacy and the clever high window displays in Donnellan & Co. Further down the street we enjoyed looking at NCBI, Jorena and the gifts at Wards. The paint colour scheme at Wards was lovely too.

Another solicitor's firm was housed in a lovely period building in Church Street and we are delighted to see such buildings occupied. The County Council's Heritage Office should be able to give some free advice on the best treatment for the rust on the original guttering here. It was excellent to see the pictures in your entry form of the transformation in Abbey Street – but last year's adjudicator mentioned this in their report so we were unsure if additional work had also been completed in 22-23 in this area?

Finally, the cathedral is a magnificent piece of architecture. For miles around the 175 ft steeple can be seen (we learnt its height from your on-line Heritage Videos). It's not until you are very close you can appreciate its architecture and intricate design such as the statue of St Michael the Archangel. There is great enhancement potential in the car park next to the Cathedral. Maybe someone trees that could be planted around the boundary as a legacy for the next generations? Or perhaps some raised planters in the centre of the car park would make a big difference here and help break up the large expanse of tarmac?

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

We absolutely loved the management of the front lawns of the Government Buildings that house the Property Registration Office and the Agriculture Food and Marine Department on the L1812. If you look the pictures of this site on Google maps you see a lawn that is tightly mown like 'green concrete' compared to the abundant, attractive array of fantastic habitat created in 2023.

The new planting beds by the original courthouse looked wonderful - the slow meandering path planted with rowan trees look really well here. We liked that the stonewall at the back still has some of the old plants growing on it. No doubt you are aware that stone walls provide very good biodiversity habitats. What is the metal planter here? Is it a heritage piece? It is not until you look at Google maps can you appreciate the difference you have made here.

St Coman's walk is a lovely amenity to have on your doorstep allowing you to follow in the footsteps of your fifth century monks. The handy QR codes allow you to learn about the Built and Natural Heritage of this area and it's great to read about the red squirrel program.

Outside the Council Offices, the street trees seem to be quite heavily pruned into an unnatural shape? Elsewhere, we saw extra elements in public design that enhanced areas. For example at the pedestrian crossing between the Garda station and the car park, the entrance has a concrete roof with an open circle which really adds to this area. This could have simply been a plain security railing but this element was a nice touch!

Well done to the Men's Shed volunteers from Ballyleague who did the planting in the Market Square. Did you use peat-free or home-made compost? Maybe you used the composter at the Convent Lane garden?

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

The whole time walking around Roscommon we could hear the screeching of swifts (and not just the calls being played on a lure) so your efforts should be applauded. Everywhere in the town are good examples of how you have integrated natural heritage into your day to day activities. For example, the small orchard by the Council Offices, or the use of pollinator-friendly plants in planters in the centre of the town. It's important that all development is appropriate and sustainable, and consideration is given to endangered species such as swifts. You have done exactly this at Roscommon Castle integrating the restoration of the building with the protection of these endangered species. They are some of Ireland's most amazing birds and they hold the Guinness World Record for non-stop flying recorded for at least nine months. But you know all of this and your entry provided lots of details including an update about the new swift nest boxes erected on the Motor Tax office.

We admired the work of the River Jiggy Project and the adjacent orchard. You work with the local school to host an annual nature watch here- the site was a little overgrown to facilitate this during adjudication. Do you run a community workshop to harvest the fruits and maybe make apple juice or jam? It was good to see the information boards here.

The students at CBS revamped the insect accommodation in Convent Road garden – well done to them. Did they

examine the residents noting the various species of Irish insects? Bug hotels are a useful educational tool but even in our own gardens a couple of logs left in a corner can provide similar habitat.

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

This category of the competition is about preventing waste so we were delighted to see the new edition of the Roscommon Repair & Reuse Directory. And a shout out to students Josh and Evan from Roscommon Community College for their wheelie bin compactor and winning the National Award out of 25k entries! This should help more put items into recycling. You support WEEE recycling – how is Roscommon doing on meeting its recycling targets?

Some ideas that could be expanded here could be a seed-sharing project or having small libraries in estates/parks where neighbours can share books. Do you have any walking buses to schools in Roscommon? Or perhaps the Roscommon Sports & Recreation partnership deliver some cycling proficiency classes for young, and younger!

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We visited you on the afternoon and evening of a Public Holiday weekend. A large group of young people were hanging outside Tesco in the pedestrian zone. The rear Tesco and SuperValu car park was empty allowing us to see any rubbish left in the area. And fair play to all as the whole area was spotless – indeed we saw two of the teenagers use the bins provided in this pedestrian area and the back lanes and alleys all looked clean around here. It felt safe walking all along this area and we ambled along enjoying more window displays of colourful local and African wares.

Your entry form includes nice pictures of your volunteers in action.

You should watch out for cable ties - we noticed a couple on a 'yield sign' near the courthouse that have been there so long they've been painted over.

The swimming pool building and the educational establishment nearby were very nicely presented but the pool car park had some old litter in the corner so maybe this needs to be part of your litter patrol route.

During adjudication, Castle Court car park had new fencing to divide the car park up so there's obviously plans for this area. But nearby the bins were poorly stored, and there was a lot of litter in the corners of this area.

Watch the placement of Christmas lights and decoration up all year which is not appropriate. One suggestion might be to have a RTT volunteer paint the rusty newspaper storage unit noticed outside a premises on the Main Street?

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

Homes in Jubilee Close looked well and the area was tidy. Many residential estates were visited such as Saint Kieran's Park with its nice communal green area. Maybe the residents might consider creating a small maze cut through longer grass? It could be a fun way to explore and enjoy the area whilst benefitting wildlife also.

It was good to see homes on in the centre being occupied – such as along Castle Street and Abbey Street. Homes at Castle Manor looked very well also. We read in your entry form that these residents, like others, came together to work on projects to enhance their estate – well done as it looked lovely including the new planting under the name stone and the grass dividing the road from the pavement. Freshly painted benches at Hawthorn Drive looked good. Finally – we loved the orchard planted by Antogher Court – well done to you guys too. Overall there is great Civic pride across the residential estates of Roscommon.

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

The stag mural at the back of Rouge & Co cafe was lovely and brightens what could be a dreary area. The fresh paint at the Medical Centre looked well.

Driving along the Lough Road the lovely trees make a nice statement and then the evening sunset shone across a massive field of yellow flag irises which was just gorgeous!

No corner has been forgotten in Roscommon – overlooking the iris fields we admired the plaque at the entrance to the old GAA pitches. It commemorates the volunteers who managed the pitches here - goodness it must have been wet playing on those fields.

Driving out the Castlebar Road, there are large areas of grass tightly mown. Perhaps a two-level mowing regime could be adopted here with grass away from the roadside allowed to grow longer. This could be cut on a 6 week cycle. This would save time and money and benefit wildlife.

The IDA business park was quite tightly mown and it's suggested that they follow the example of the other state offices at the far side of Roscommon to see what can be achieved when the grass is allowed to grow to provide a gorgeous meadow for all to enjoy and benefit. There's great continuity of pavement on the Castlebar Road and the new Lanesborough Road footpaths looked well. Returning into town on the Racecourse Road, one of the town name stones needs the lettering re-painted. The new approach road from Boyle looks great and the roundabout here makes for a lovely welcome for those arriving from the North.

Arriving on the Golf Club Road we didn't see a welcome to Roscommon sign, just the 50 kilometre limit. You have cleverly designed welcome signs from Roscommon Tidy Towns that small sections can be updated depending on the number of medals won – we hope you can keep adding to this.

On some of the approach roads, there are low-stone walls in front of large bare industrial / commercial areas. Might some of these landowners be persuaded to plant some trees inside their boundaries to enhance their areas? Or else have some interior fencing with screening to help shield the area?

Concluding Remarks:

Agencies are working together to transform Roscommon – it was a delight to explore the town and enjoy the new civic space at Market Square, the wonderful amenities at Páirc Loch na nEan and overall we were impressed with the wildlife, biodiversity and the efforts of the community to keep Roscommon Town Tidy.