

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Strokestown - Béal na mBuillí** Ref: **715**
County: **Roscommon** Mark: **300**
Category: **B** Date(s): **26/07/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	38	41
Streetscape & Public Places	80	40	42
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	36	38
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	31	32
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	21	23
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	33	33
TOTAL MARK	550	286	300

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 detailed entry form packed with pictures of your work over the last 12 months and indeed 65 years! You must be one of the longest competitors entering this national competition. Your entry form included lovely compliments to all the unsung volunteers and previous committee members over these decades which we are delighted to pass on for you.

You have put a lot of effort into behind-the-scenes activities. For example, you have designed and published your new website <https://strokestowntidytowns.weebly.com/> packed with tips, advice and providing details of your work plan. This is so good as it is important to always be open and provide details of your work so the community can understand and support your work. You have a plethora of support from groups, businesses, schools etc all working together and your social media shares details of such activities across bodies. Your effort this year demonstrated a pride across the wider Strokestown community and all working together. You even have a busy community café! A suggestion is to have an on-line suggestion box for the community. We loved not just the Tractor Run with 40 vehicles adorned with festive lights, you had a sustainable – climate friendly Junior Tractor Run too. Best of luck with this in December 2023.

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

We were delighted to read of the selection of Strokestown to participate in the 'Town Centre First' initiative. There is so much potential in Strokestown you would have no doubt been frustrated seeing many buildings not at their best. The design and quality of the built heritage would have deemed Strokestown a Heritage Town in other parts of the world. There are so many striking period buildings that lack an appropriate setting in front of them. We were delighted therefore to see the proposed artist impressions for the Bawn Street plans show a reduction in the expanse of tarmac, more green provision and the potential for attractive outdoor eating/dining areas as have become so popular in recent years in many other communities. It was good to see a few premises being upgraded during adjudication, and hopefully they were availing of the vacant-property-refurbishment-grant that now includes vacant public houses. It is hoped you can disseminate details of this to other owners in the area and that this, and the town centre initiative could form a ripple effect to enhance many more properties in the area. At the top end of Strokestown, poor signage at and around the bottle banks, and a variety of vehicles for sale on the Main Road did not enhance the area.

The facade of the Magnet Ballroom was still nicely painted and the flowers on display around the railings, distracted

the eye that you didn't notice the fire damage on this property. Hope this gets quickly sorted. Beirne's Grocery shop and pumps looked lovely during adjudication. Many other premises looked great and embraced the design of their buildings and had wonderful window displays such as at McDonnell's pharmacy and at Ivy Rose.

We were surprised that there was no display in the lovely window setting of the Post Office. There is a great spot here with many visitors so perhaps you can offer to have a suitable display to be enjoyed here. The many newer buildings off the centre of Strokestown including the schools, community centre and creche looked well – we liked the bright colourful windows of the playschool.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Planters and landscaped beds at key positions make a difference. For example, a lovely line on a low wall on Bridget Street help distract for the poor presentation of the yard and premises behind here.

The efforts of the Green Hub Gardening Club and the Women's Shed in Strokestown could be seen during adjudication, and in your entry form. You have developed, with Ardcarne Garden Centre, a Community Planting Plan. We loved the many 'Before & After' pictures of the Grotto Area show the great efforts you have put into this area. This is part of your Grotto Improvement plan. When we visited, we enjoyed seeing the old boots used as planters, and the many heads of sunflowers providing strong bursts of colour and also seeds for birds. Try and resist from having too many signs in a small area as it can begin to distract from the beauty of the area. You could encourage others to follow your examples by downloading some of the bookmarks or plant lists from www.pollinators.ie/resources

We would like to commend those commercial premises who had put effort into the planting displays such as the hanging baskets and planters at the front and side of the Percy French Hotel. Around the corner the paintings and planters at Donal's Lounge looked well. Mannion Insurances had lovely window boxes on the upper floors of the premises which looked well at this busy junction. Take care when painting and using tyres in landscaping as they continue to leach chemicals and even micro-plastics so do encourage these to be properly recycled in turn.

We were disappointed with the industrial metal frame erected around the weighbridge which distracts from this heritage feature.

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

We love the information shared about the simple, no-cost-actions at the Primary Care Centre where a part of the lawn has been allowed to grow longer to benefit pollinators. Pictures of the wildflowers that have grown up here as a result are lovely.

New native trees were planted in the Spring under the guidance of the local permaculturalist – Hannah Mole. We loved reading about your participation in the National hedgehog survey – did you see many? Maybe some hand-drawn pictures of these or photos of other wildlife of Strokestown could be displayed in windows of some empty properties? Maybe the public could vote for their favourite mammal?

We wonder if you have a storm drain problem. During adjudication, at the bottom of Bridge Street, before the bridge, the storm covers on the pavement had a lot of suspect waste toilet paper debris surrounding each. Nearby there was a seating bench at this side of the river. Have you thought about advancing some projects around the river in Strokestown – your LAWPRO office would have ideas? Or a citizen science project to monitor air quality on the N5 that could possibly help collate data to support the need for the by-pass?

Best of luck with your Heritage Award Entry for the ongoing works at the famine / Cloonslanor Burial Ground.

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

We loved the Tourism Information booth which was open during adjudication and displayed details of local sites, but also contained a seed book to share seeds. Well done to the Men's shed for the repair of this and to the volunteers who open and close this lovely facility. This is a great example of repair and reusing materials, and we love the seed-sharing concept also. An idea may be to have some laminated sheets available here with details of the local built heritage in the form of a trail for visitors to follow. The sheets could be returned to the Tourist Booth and a version could be available for younger visitors in the format of a 'can you find a sculpture of shoes...?'

We saw one large tour bus drop off people in the town and they may have enjoyed find out details of the local heritage, including the weighbridge and the many fantastic built heritage sites in Strokestown. The new compost bins at Forge Hill looked well – do you use your own compost? Have you your own polytunnel?

We saw people sheltering in doorways whilst waiting for the local link. Perhaps you can push for the provision of a bus shelter for those awaiting of this service?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

This was a strong submission with photos to show the breadth of activity including many school pupils, and residents. Indeed you asked us to mention your thanks to them for their efforts.

This year you purchased a street-sweeper that one volunteer can manage, and they have managed a lot as there were no obvious weeds during adjudication. The litter bin on Church Street was full during adjudication. How often are they emptied? Have you considered provided segregated bins?

You have cleverly reached out to a local dog trainer and dog groomer to get their help to promote the need to responsibly dispose of dog waste too.

Is it possible to remove the hanging basket brackets at the bridge which are no longer used? The bridge is listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage for Ireland applauded for its finely executed stonework. You can see the many other sites of note in Strokestown on the on-line map at <https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/>. The "Sli na Slainte" sign at St John's Church of Ireland needs to be replaced. Nearby we felt the top of Church Street around the bottle banks needs a lot of attention. Some signs were out of date should be removed and others, if necessary to be maintained, should be straightened. Gates and signage and wire fencing around the yard here did not look well. The banks themselves were grubby and would not entice you to recycle here. It is suggested you meet with the Environment Team to consider how to brighten this area – maybe a community notice board? Or some nice planters here? Sprucing up this corner could have a ripple effect and adjacent properties could look well also.

At the playground there were signs with the National Development Plan funding insignia. They no longer need to be displayed as the required display period has passed and should be removed. We suggest an audit of all signs is carried out to consider what is missing; which signs could be removed; and which should be rotated back to their correct position (such as the GAA sign which directed us into Lisroyne Elms)!

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

Working closely with the residential estates, you have seen an upswing in interaction and involvement. Over 500 bulbs were distributed among resident groups in Strokestown, and new fruit trees were planted at Vesnoy and the ground clearance at Tower View. Indeed you have listed actions in the entry form of actions by residents in every estate where they have completed actions to tidy and enhance their areas.

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

Whilst construction of the Strokestown by-pass is up in the air, you can focus on areas where improvements can make a difference. The new welcome signs looked well. The adjacent landscaped bed arriving from Lanesborough on the corner was overgrown. We appreciate this is a dangerous corner so perhaps a maintenance-free option is included in your planting plan? Other pockets such as the planting around the water-pump at the junction for Four Mile House looked well on our departure.

Concluding Remarks:

Best of luck advancing your Community Improvement Plan. From walkways at Cloonslanor Burial Ground to improvements at all residential estates, it is packed with good ideas across all 8 adjudication categories. We wonder how your entry form looked like when you first joined this competition 65 years ago? There is a strong sense of community, and community focus in your entry. Well done on your hard work over the 12 months and good luck with your forthcoming exciting endeavours including your 2023 junior-tractor run.