

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ardmore - ArdMhór** Ref: **647**
County: **Waterford** Mark: **368**
Category: **B** Date(s): **07/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	53	54
Streetscape & Public Places	80	46	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	47	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	42	44
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	27	29
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	45	46
TOTAL MARK	550	358	368

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

What an achievement, a voluntary participation rate of shy of 30% of the population, quite astonishing in these current times. Sometimes in a small community it is hard to say no to a reasonable request! It is wonderful to see that level of engagement & no doubt is the foundation of what Ardmore has achieved to date & your Mission Statement. The cross over of committee members on various organizations assists in having a cohesive purpose & understanding the needs & requirements of each group. Communication is key & you are covering all bases here with your variety of communication channels. The organization of community social events is often the glue that binds a community, as they are fun, relaxed & opportunities to engage without agendas. There is significant work involved in organizing one, not alone three annually – you are all to be congratulated. The range of activities on offer locally for the young & not so young is astonishing. These must be an enticement to stay local. Inspiring the next generation to get involved in the community takes time & commitment as they have a plethora of distractions. Well done on involving them in various aspects of your work outside of litter picking. Your list of supporters is impressive & you are adept at seeking out experts in various sectors & availing of their expertise. This takes time & resources however it always pays dividends.

Lovely to see you welcome the Ukrainian residents from all over Co Waterford with a walk, refreshments & music – an opportunity to normalize life even for a short while.

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

Ardmore is a charming village to enter & quite the visual feast for any visitor. The main street with the old style lighting standards creates a lovely vista. The Visitor Information Centre has to be one of the most unique buildings assigned to this purpose. The redecoration with sea themed motifs is a delight to behold. Well done to those artistic children who lent a paintbrush & a hand to complete the works of art. What a transformation a myriad of colours applied to the picnic benches there has made, an instant throwback to Rock confectionery that your adjudicator is reminded of from their childhood seaside holidays. These are an attractive amenity for all.

Thank you for providing updates on the future plans for the following – a. unused land in village centre with suggested uses – remote working hub/assisted living accommodation for older people b. Water Sports Activity Centre down at the existing beach car park. It is good news you have received approval for the latter now & it would be hoped that once Waterford County Council have funds you will receive the green light. Such a centre is a magnet for families with children & an economic bonus for other local businesses.

It is great to see you have recommenced your plans for Irish names of local townlands & streets. How well the new stone signage looks at Chapel Row. The stone dual signage on the various roads throughout Ardmore works well. The retention of the original form & fabric of many of the buildings contributes to the character of Ardmore's streetscape & should be celebrated. The various detailing on buildings enhances the visual quality of Ardmore's architecture. The two thatched cottages are gems. The businesses are to be commended for their attention to the

presentation of their premises facades. The colour palates are eye catching & it would be hoped attract more paying custom. It takes time to bring everyone on board in order to present a cohesive vista however well worth when one sees the end result. There is no doubt that the two-pronged approach of the Derelict Site levy & the Vacant Property Refurbishment grants have focused minds & propelled owners into action. This is a win-win for many communities including Ardmore. We look forward to updates in future years submissions.

The new seating on the Cliff Road as well as the restored viewing area would charm any visitor to Ardmore. We saw on your social media feed the dedicated PJ seat – now that was worth a hike.

We note the two framed natural history boards on the wall of St Declan's church are still obscured by the new board about the Cliff Walk. A move to the right would allow all to be visible. The information boards at the various locations are most interesting although some of the heritage signs would benefit from a thorough cleaning.

Your popularity as a destination during the summer months & for residents all year round has its challenges & you are addressing these one by one – footpath bollards from Beachcomber's Sweet Shop to the beach completed; footpath to the GAA pitch in progress; upgraded Cliff Walk & engagement with Waterford County Council on outstanding challenges is the best strategy. "The two most powerful warriors are patience & time".

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Well done on providing practical assistance through the local horticulturist to businesses re their available green spaces & softening hard surface areas. Your proactive approach in this regard is a balm for businesses that have many demands on their time & available resources. That approach was evident on adjudication day with a stunning vista of blooming window boxes with a common planting colour & species theme. The pollinator perennial planting was a delight to see. Your similar approach with local sports groups will pay dividends & biodiversity signage once in situ will keep the concept to the forefront of minds & hopefully result in action this year or next. Your engagement with the Rae an tSéipéil developer paid dividends with areas left for landscaping to the front. On adjudication day, some of these beds were not looking their best with plants struggling to survive. A cohesive approach here to landscaping in conjunction with the developer/residents & your resident horticulturist would reap the most benefits & reduce the need for containers in the vicinity.

This summer's heat will challenge many plants in containers in particular the trees still in barrels at the old petrol station, the containers in the village green & those on the roundabout. Is there a need for so many containers either side of the Tidy Towns seats & at the roundabout? The plants there were not thriving on adjudication day. The green area on Trench Road, "Past, Present & Future" has good infill planting & in time, will soften the large wall to the rear. The seats once repainted will complete a perfect picture. The rose bed opposite Quinns was blooming on adjudication day & was complimented with the residence opposite also awash with roses.

St. Declan's Cemetery is a beautiful & tranquil green area with lots of interesting points of note & stunning views. It is well managed & was busy with bird & insect life during the visit. St Paul's Church has lovely arboreal environs. As mentioned earlier, the viewing area & new seating on the Cliff Walk are excellent. However, is there a need for any planters here as the view is the prime reason to sit & stay awhile? They seem superfluous to requirements. Many of your residents are to be completed on the landscaping of their gardens, it really does add to the collective beauty of Ardmore.

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

An Sruthán is a pleasure to traverse & what an excellent idea to continue the painting theme used at the picnic tables at the Visitor Information Centre. The labeling of herbs & edible plants with additional information is an educational walk. Do you ever hold community events there, e.g. demonstrations on herb recipes or remedies, taking cuttings etc? A few of the fence labels do need repainting.

The 3-year timeline demonstrating the impact of the goats on the Cliff Walk was most interesting. It is clear evidence of how natural control can be both effective & work in tandem with nature in particular in a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It appears more communities are getting on board with this conservation grazing approach as seen in Mayo & Dublin. It seems you are not content with engaging only with mammals & are equally involved in birdlife – Grey Legged Partridge & Owls. These joint projects with KCA are captivating. We will await with interest the results of your conservation work with these species whose habitats are under threat. It will be exciting to see what the CCTV cameras reveal over time & also to receive updates on the occupancy of your 32 various nest boxes. Have any of the six swift nest boxes erected in 2019 had swift residents?

Good to see you share articles on the value of "weeds" & the food source they are for our native insect life as well as encourage "No Mow May". Highlighting updates & news from organizations focused on nature is a great way to provide the community with bite sized nuggets – Birdwatch Ireland; Irish Wildlife Trust; Clean Coasts; Leave No Trace Ireland; Explore Your Shore; Tree Council & more. It is a joy to see the old stonewalls with native plants thriving – ivy leaved toadflax, maidenhair spleenwort, etc. The Backyard Bioblitz is a great introduction for community members to educate themselves on local biodiversity. It would be interesting to hear next year what was the level of engagement during National Biodiversity Week in May.

As there is a new owner of the Caravan & RV Park, have you engaged with them on the provision of areas for biodiversity in particular the newly landscaped areas? It appears they have plans for the left hand side of the entrance judging from the prepared soil. Close to their entrance was a wonderful meadow complete with All-Ireland Pollinator posters. It is great to see landowners assign areas for this purpose. The area on the opposite side of the road, again marked for pollinators, has trees that are not thriving & others that are dead. It would be best to replace them.

It is quite a sight to see the swathes of erigeron/fleabane throughout Ardmore. It loves its home there & presents a most striking visual delight - a win-win for pollinators & Ardmore. Businesses who have the space outside are adept at making the most with their pollinator friendly planting schemes & there are some lovely examples. Quinn's moss art wall is distinctive & well done on keeping it sustained in the June heat.

Your adjudicator could find no reference to a Biodiversity Action plan – have you had the opportunity to have one

completed. If not, there should be funding from Waterford County Council or the Environment & Nature fund of the Community Foundation for Ireland.

Education of the community, young & not so young, is critical & you are to be commended for taking every opportunity to relay this information from local & specialist sources. The Flower Timed Insect (FIT) count is a fun way to involve children in taking notice of their natural environment. The Save the Bees school project was certainly a labour of love & well done to the children, teachers & parents on assimilating so much knowledge on Melittology. Congratulations on achieving the Green Glag for Biodiversity, well deserved.

Almost every coastal community has experienced the effects of coastal erosion. As your proposed project in this area has been delayed due to funding, we will look forward to an update in next year's submission.

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

Well done on your Sustainability workshop in April – practical hands on experiences similar to this are invaluable in educating the community on what can be done with existing resources. A lack of knowledge & resulting fear can stymie the best of intentions. From the photos it appears to have been quite well attended & these attendees will be equipped to pass on some of the knowledge & experience garnered to others. There are so many examples of your sustainability ethos throughout the village - EV charger at Round Tower Hotel; solar & PV on private residences; blue flag beaches; own cup discount at Quinns; own nursery at Keever's Field; seed harvesting & plant propagation; solar powered bins & much more besides.

The creation of a sustainability policy for your group will hold you accountable & demonstrate to the community at large what can be done & how to go about the process. Some of the events you held with other groups – fashion swap shop; bric-a-brac night; book swap; etc, create interest & a forum for discussion. The current economic climate also provides a more engaged audience. You may already be aware of the NGO, ChangeX who provide ideas & funds for sustainable community challenges. <https://www.changex.org/ie>

St Declan's Way, an Irish Camino, attracts visitors who understand the concept of sustainability & slow travel. Have you worked with any of the other Tidy Towns groups along the Camino on this project? Ardmore is fortunate to have the Local Link bus service & it was noted on adjudication day that both locals & visitors were making use of the facility.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It is heartening to hear you are seeing a year on year reduction in litter collected during the Roadside Spring Clean event. How interesting that you can identify a significant reduction in disposable coffee cups & mineral bottles. Your groups of young volunteers are mighty impressive & goodness they are in training early, indeed from the buggy! The customized Big Belly bins are akin to street art installations with local places displayed on the sides. Time will tell whether access to the litter they contain is crow family proof! The Recycling Centre was free of litter on adjudication day. In your engagement with Waterford County Council, you might ask if the signage at the back of the recycling bay could be replaced or updated. It is looking a tad tired.

The signage at An Sruthán although located in one place at the beach end is quite cluttered & in places masked – an examination of what is required may be advisable. The information board on bees at the far end needs a new location as it is now obscured by both the fencing & vegetation. Although some potential "artists" did manage to attempt to add their own version of art. A reconsideration of where & how to locate all the notices at this end would result in an organized image.

A chat with the Local Area Engineer on parking bay markings would be a good idea as those in the main parking area are quite faded & in particular the disabled parking space.

You have much in common with any inland waterway villages where they have spent time this year & last in conjunction with Inland Waterways Ireland, removing redundant & discarded boats. The impact can be transformative for harbour boat users, the community & visitors. However, on adjudication day there was a lot of material that appeared obsolete, to a non-fisher person, located all along the right hand side.

An annual audit of temporary commercial signage, redundant street furniture e.g. poles would be worth conducting as they add unnecessary clutter & an untidy aspect to an environment. Additionally, the upkeep of street furniture e.g. lighting standards, seating etc is significant however keeping a running audit on when maintenance was completed allows one to best gauge when they require attention & plan accordingly. The Ardmore Pattern Festival wall would benefit from some attention to bring it back to its prime. The planting underneath will add colour later in the summer. There is a lot of signage at that corner, some of which is obscured by vegetation. Have you ever considered a standard colour for all information signs – presently some are blue, others green & more are black? Perhaps an item for discussion.

It would be hoped that in time all the overhead cabling can be moved underground as visually it is intrusive especially when contrasted with the main street.

There was very little litter about on our visit, a little washed in at the cove on the tide.

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

As a seaside destination, you have the balancing act of meeting permanent & temporary residents desires & these do not always conjoint seamlessly. On adjudication day, walking the streets & lanes & observing residences & gardens it was obvious that the vast majority of owners maintain their abodes to high standards. Ardmore is fortunate to have some very talented gardeners. Have you had the opportunity to make residents aware that they can pledge their garden for pollinators with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) <https://pollinators.ie/pledge-your-garden-for-pollinators/>

Russell Court's transformation has an immediate impact on the panorama & was well presented on adjudication day. There is significant work in maintaining to a high standard, a white façade. Dubh Carrig's entrance with its stonewalls, green area & mature hedging creates a good first impression. It was nice to see the green areas

carpeted in daisies.

The new development, Rae an tSéipéil, is architecturally sympathetic to the history of the houses that once were the homes of local fishing folk. It adds much to Ardmore's residential capital.

Ard Mhor is a lovely example of vernacular architecture. Monea Crescent are fortunate to have space potentially for tree planting. Pocket Forests & Easy Treesie are two fantastic organizations focused on assisting community groups & residents plant more trees. <https://easytreesie.com/> <https://www.pocketforests.ie/>

It is clear from your submission to Waterford County Council following the upgrading of the municipal water services, that you welcome further considered & inclusive housing. We look forward to receiving an update on their response in next year's submission.

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

The approach road from Dungarvan presents a wonderful vista with both the hedge sign & the planted fishing boat. Just past Browne's Caravan Park there are sections of the road that need resurfacing as a priority. Perhaps this is planned as part of the works currently in progress on the R673. The milk churns on the roadside stand are a nostalgic sight & a lovely reminder of Ardmore's heritage. Have you recorded them for National Heritage Week? <https://www.heritageweek.ie/projects/recording-milk-churn-stands>

The Youghal approach road provides some stunning views & it was a pleasure to see the hedgerows full of honeysuckle, dog rose, hawthorns, wild grasses etc. It is heartening to see the Wildlife Act being adhered to in & around Ardmore. You should all take pride in maintaining the boundary of Perks to a high standard as to the visitor it is not immediately obvious it is a defunct enterprise.

There are quite a number of different signage styles on the approach roads to Ardmore – old & new signage for the village, Travel Ireland South East Coastal Drive, Pride of Place National Winners 2014 – a single style would be preferable.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a pleasure to visit Ardmore & you have achieved a significant volume of work in the past year. The output of your work is clearly visible within the village environs. Your plans for the future are equally inspiring. It is great to see you incorporate the SDG goals in your plans & actions, a vital exercise. As A.J Winters said "Just because things are taking time, it doesn't mean they won't happen".