

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Cappoquin - Ceapach Choinn</b>	Ref: <b>853</b>
County: <b>Waterford</b>	Mark: <b>331</b>
Category: <b>B</b>	Date(s): <b>29/06/2023</b>

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	46	48
Streetscape & Public Places	80	39	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	43	45
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	34	35
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	13	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	39	40
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	42
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>331</b>

### 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 a succinct & informative submission that was a pleasure to read, easy to follow through & lovely to see the before & after photos included. Cappoquin has a strong & sizeable committee led by a very young octogenarian & a significant volunteer base to call upon for work projects. It is great to see your photos on social media show you having fun while getting the work completed, a most important element. You certainly understand the importance of communicating your message & quite rightly place an emphasis on the face-to-face encounters in addition to your centralized public notice board, social media & local radio. The support network you have is astonishing & speaks highly of the role the community see you play. Your concept of partnering with other groups under the SDG goals is novel & would be worth a short write up for the Tidy Towns newsletter as many communities are finding the task of incorporating the goals into their work challenging. The active engagement of Cappoquin's youth is imperative for its future & well done on involving them in more than litter picks – what young child doesn't love to see a seed they planted grow into a plant to rival Jack's Beanstalk, a sunny sunflower! The involvement of other youth groups in Tidy Town activities is commendable & the GAA's young membership may be on hand to ably assist you in a number of categories as they have Waterford's first "Green Club" plaque. Well done to them on their national win.

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

When one checks the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage for Cappoquin & discovers seven pages of entries, there is no doubting one will see high quality craftsmanship, attractive shop fronts, distinctive housing & elegantly proportioned buildings. It would be an interesting project for a Transition Year student with a historical curiosity to update the pictures on this website as they are now two decades old. [www.buildingsofireland.ie](http://www.buildingsofireland.ie) You are to be commended for carrying out an audit on Cappoquin's building stock & then liaising with both owners & Waterford County Council on improving the streetscape. To have achieved improvements in 8 buildings in a 12 month period is astonishing & more in train. The availability of finance for the painting residential homes in the town is a win-win for all & many times the will is there however the funds are lacking particularly in these times. It was quite remarkable to witness the number of properties undergoing refurbishment on adjudication day. There must not be a tradesperson short of work in Cappoquin! The twin pronged approach of the Derelict Site levy & the Vacant Home Improvement grants have propelled property owners into making decisions on long vacated buildings & it is most welcomed by the vast majority of towns & villages where dereliction has marred the visual integrity of urban centres.

The work completed on the Blackwater House is admirable & as it occupies a prominent corner site in the centre of

the town, its refurbishment & reuse lifts that area. It is lovely to see the raised lettering on this building & next door retained. Even on buildings in the process of refurbishment it is great to see actual pictures of the previous occupants at work as in Lonergans & the retention of the small-pane sash windows. The Shop Front Improvement Scheme is one that may in time incorporate Cappoquin & best to lobby your local Council for inclusion in the next round. The painting of prominent buildings like St Mary's Church contributes significantly to the streetscape. The heritage style bilingual street names add character, as do the lighting standards. Cappoquin is fortunate to have overhead cables removed from Main Street; it makes a significant difference to the panorama. The Square is a lovely space in an urban environment with colourful seating, commemorative areas, information boards, etc. Its elevated position allows one a lovely spot to watch the world pass by. It is quite incredible to see the difference the restoration of some of the old walls at Twigbog makes to the vista from the Park. It would be hoped over time that property owners would reinstate their boundary walls with the old stone. This would make a vast improvement to the streetscape. The playground in front of Cappoquin National School would benefit from some TLC. The school itself has an enviable location surrounded as it is on three sides by green space. It was lovely to see the clover meadow & plenty of trees. The Health Centre appears to have had a repainting & looked well. It is great to see that there is space in front to place plants & flowers in the ground. St Anne's Church is an oasis in the town & the surrounds are akin to a mini woodland.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

The Millwheel Park or Jardin Chananat-la-Mouteyre was a revelation. What a lot you have packed in to a relatively small space around the meandering paths – picnic tables & benches, seating, wild meadow, information boards, butterfly garden, bee boxes, pebble art, bat boxes, perennial planting & more besides. The nepata was creating a wonderful display on adjudication day although the shrubs behind appeared not to be performing as well & do need some attention. It may have been due to the extremely dry weather. The giant oat grasses are striking in their ornamental pose. You have a significant amount of maintenance work here & in the bed near the picnic area there are indications that scutch grasses, rogue sycamore saplings & other plants you may want in the wild meadow are taking hold there at the expense of shrubs & perennials. There were some gaps that require additional plants in order to complete the picture. A cohesive perennial planting colour scheme creates the most impact. Cobble lock looks amazing when initially laid however the ongoing upkeep is onerous especially when manual or non-herbicide use is the only option. The views from the park towards the Avonmore Bridge & River Blackwater are stunning. There are significant plans for the Twig Bog Boat Slip located alongside as read on the site notice in addition to a separate notice for a proposed walking trail. It would be hoped that these could be brought on board without any negative impact on the park.

The new green area is a wonderful example of a collaborative project. You have some fantastic opportunities here for an edible hedge that can, over time, negate the need for hanging baskets & for some appropriate tree planting. We look forward to seeing your plans for the small biodiversity project in this space.

You are fortunate to have some lovely spaces that you have maximized with landscaping – one horse plough across from the childcare centre; the green strip on Mill Street; area outside the old Convent National School; area beside Walsh's Hotel to mention just a few.

Well done on making the move this year & next to perennials, nature will thank you firstly & then with the community on board & understanding the change of focus it would be hoped that individuals will also make the change to their existing gardening models. You might also encourage local businesses that sell plants to provide information on planting up perennials in window boxes. A move from containers to planting into the ground, where possible, is a good strategy given the increasingly long dry spells & monsoon rains we are experiencing in Ireland.

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

It is great to see the wildflower beds at the entrance to the GAA grounds. There is quite a bit of maintenance here too & have you considered planting an edible hedge or climbers that would cover more of the walls, reduce the need for watering in time & your people resources in addition to providing food for wildlife?

Last year's adjudicator referenced having a Local Biodiversity Action carried out & you are considering this for next year. Please do make contact with your Local Environmental Officer at the Council, as they will be able to assist you with an application for funding from the Local Biodiversity Action Fund.

It is heartening to hear that the local football club is creating a community garden with a focus on biodiversity. Next year's adjudicator will be fortunate to see its progress. As referenced in your submission, the GAA now have a particular focus in this area under their Green Club initiative. This combined with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan for sports clubs that you have supplied to them will set them up for success.

The biodiversity area at Twigbog probably has the largest poster this adjudicator has seen to date on pollinators – a great educational medium especially in full colour. It was lovely to see the self seeded calendula & scabiosa & very popular with the insects during the visit. In the Park, the red-tailed bumblebees were feasting on the red scabiosa blooms.

We noted last year's adjudicator was lucky to spot an otter, what a coup. There is presently a National Otter Survey taking place to assess the population status & it would be great if you could log any sightings.

<https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/national-otter-survey/> Are any of the schools involved in wildlife surveys? The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a treasure trove of resources & information.

<https://biodiversityireland.ie/monitoring/> It would be great to see you log your sightings of the mammals, birds & insect life you have noted seeing through the year. The sharing of these on social media creates an awareness of the importance of nature & how we need to leave space for them to co-exist with us. Do let us know the occupancy rates of your barn owl, bat & hedgehog boxes in next year's submission.

As you are located in the Blackwater SAC & are conducting water sampling in conjunction with the GAA & having discussions with Anglers' Association, please do include a brief synopsis of the findings – stable, improving or

worsening status of the water & fish stocks.

Well done on addressing the use of herbicides by others at Millwheel Park – Mother Nature & our health needs us to be vigilant re toxic materials.

The prevalence of Himalayan Balsam throughout Cappoquin is a serious cause for concern. It is even making its way in, with stealth, to the Millwheel Park. The amount of it clearly visible at all river viewpoints is alarming. Are there plans by the Council to address this issue as this plant is highly invasive & takes years to eradicate in any site it colonises?

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

The refurbishment of Blackwater House into a Digital Hub by Cappoquin Regeneration Company is a laudable achievement. Is it envisaged that it would be available for local people to substitute commutes for a dedicated workspace? We will be interested to hear how it progresses as it should have an impact on transport & employment. In conjunction with this development, it is great to see several bike rack installations in the town, encouraging locals to leave the car at home for short journeys. Your plans with the GAA for further bike racks & traffic calming measures will hopefully come to fruition in the next 12 months.

It is great that you are walking the walk & not talking the talk in relation to sustainability – mulching of fallen tree branches elsewhere used then as wood bark covering at Millwheel Park. The creation of vegetable trugs from discarded timber & offcuts for the Day Centre ticks so many sustainability areas – reduction of food miles; grow your own; diversion of materials from landfill; use of local skills; etc. The highlighting of the Refill Tap Map & App is a good way to continue to get the message across re reducing plastic usage; saving resources; reducing spend & changing our mindset from disposable to reusable. It is great to see a local business host a book reuse corner & donate the proceeds to charity – strategic use of a small corner space.

Your mutually beneficial relationship with the GAA around rainwater harvesting & maintaining their entrance beds is a great strategy.

It is wonderful to see commercial buildings with solar/PV on the roofs – perhaps there may be the prospect of holding an information evening on renewable energy & funding options with the South East Energy Agency & having local adoptees of the technology attend in order to answer questions relating to their experiences to date.

<https://southeastenergy.ie/>

There are so many volunteer groups & platforms working in this area & you can avail of their expertise. Some of these are - Voice Ireland <https://www.voiceireland.org/> ChangeX <https://www.changex.org/> Stop Food Waste <https://stopfoodwaste.ie/> to mention just a few.

It is imperative that you focus, as a group & for the wider community, on the first of the Rs – Reduce, Refuse, Reuse rather than the final one, Recycle.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

Many of the information boards pertaining to buildings & other important landmarks e.g. Walsh's Hotel/Old RIC Barracks need the perspex cover replaced as the surface deterioration makes the detail underneath illegible. A cohesive standard for all information boards would be best to establish now that you have excellent maps for St Declan's Way in addition to town trails.

An annual audit of street furniture is a wise decision e.g. redundant pole, obsolete signage, discarded safety equipment, clogged drains & gulleys, etc. You can then decide the jobs you can tackle as a group & those jobs requiring involvement from the local Council. Then by reviewing annually, over time a work schedule, where appropriate, can be introduced & clutter removed from the streetscape.

As the town is adding back more commercial space through refurbishments, it would be worth your while meeting with the local business community/Chamber of Commerce & seeing if it were possible to have a standard scheme for commercial signage that adds rather than detracts from the premises. The use of decals in shop front windows could also be discussed. Other communities have had businesses either remove them or use local pictures from past times to add interest & a nicer aspect.

Well done on working with neighbouring Tidy Towns groups on adjoining stretches of roads as many times these areas are sadly neglected. It is a relief to hear you are noticing a significant reduction in rubbish on the N72 year on year.

Unfortunately, on adjudication day there were multiple bags left at the clothing bank & the plastic bottle receptacle was almost full to capacity. It is a shame you are such a distance from Dungarvan otherwise you could avail of the reverse vending machine there for the disposal of the bottles & cans. It was disappointing to see takeaways discarded at the Square within an arm's length of the refuse bin – no excusing that particular litterbug. Elsewhere in the town there was very little evidence of any litter. Well done on all your ongoing work in this area. It takes time to bring everyone on board.

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

Port na hAbhann has a beautifully maintained estate & time & effort has gone into its presentation.

The small estate behind the new Green has great potential for further tree planting & landscaping on their communal space at the entrance.

River Glen has a lovely tree lined avenue with a lovely short meadow & flowering container at the entrance. Some attention to the small green verges would create a perfect picture.

Are there any plans for the laneway at Glenside? – the possibilities are many & varied.

Upper Shanbally was a revelation – if the entrance & front were private gardens one would pay handsomely to visit. The landscaping here is stunning & the pops of colour from the roses & perennials is beautiful. Just one note, the pruned & dead birch trees need to be removed. Perhaps this is where you are intending to plant the new trees as a commemoration to past residents.

Lower Shanbally & Dane's Field were looking well on adjudication day. There appear to be wide gaps in the footpaths & alongside thus allowing a build up of soil & an imperfect home for greenery. Dene's Yard with its stonewall entrance & woodland backdrop has a lovely secluded space within the town & was spotless in its presentation. It is lovely to see the pride most Cappoquin residents take in their abodes & gardens.

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

The N72 from Dungarvan presents a wonderful vista to the arriving visitor with well maintained stonewalls, accessible footpaths, hedgerows & mature trees. The trees outside the GAA boundary wall soften this elongated hard surface, as do the blooming hanging baskets over the bridge. The approach across the Avonmore Bridge offers wonderful views of the railway bridge, the Blackwater River, the Presbytery, the Boathouse & once again well maintained stonewalls. The work on Daly's Cottage camouflages its vacant status & the Bacon Factory mural is a lovely nod to Cappoquin's commercial past. The R669 approach is a long stretch of residential area with homes & gardens presented with pride. The dry stonewalls & the hedgerows interspersed soften the built environment.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

You are to be commended for incorporating the SDGs into all aspects of your work & highlighting visually through the town the meaning of each goal. Indeed, you are fortunate to have a local expert in this field to provide advice & assistance. The progress you have made on a variety of projects is outstanding & your plans for the future will stand you in good stead. It was a pleasure to visit Cappoquin & a delight to happen upon snippets of history sprinkled here & there. Your adjudicator was heartened to see the ground swell of community support & the rich community spirit.