

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Fenor - Fionnúir	Ref: 236
County: Waterford	Mark: 334
Category: A	Date(s): 19/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	47	48
Streetscape & Public Places	80	42	44
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	41	42
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	48	49
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	18	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	28	29
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	38	39
TOTAL MARK	550	325	334

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.

Your committee may be small in size however your influence & ability to see projects through from inception to completion is laudable. It is always heartening to see a large volunteer base as this is indicative of a great community spirit & respect for the work you, as a group, undertake. To have the support of other local community groups, local agencies & the business community strengthens your enthusiasm & commitment. The involvement of Fenor's youth in the community is imperative for the future of the village thus it is fantastic to see them get active through the schools & sporting groups. While you use traditional means of communication, your joint Dunhill & Fenor Parish Facebook page is very active. A great way to keep all generations in the loop regarding local activities & events. You have all communication channels covered in Fenor.

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

Fenor Church's presence is a central feature in the village & its fine detailing enhances the artistic design quality of the site. Due to the age of the building, ongoing repairs as have been undertaken this year on the roof will be a requirement in the future. The power washing & fresh coat of paint presents a well-maintained exterior façade. The creation of the Grotto to celebrate the Church's quasiquicentennial is an appropriate choice & the location a natural fit. The stonemason was busy at his work there on adjudication day. Well done on putting plans in place for the landscaping of the area once the Grotto has been built. The tree sculpture is astonishing, both in size & detail. We would concur with last year's adjudicator re a sculpture trail for Waterford – rather than take on the coordination role yourselves, chat with your Local Heritage Officer for guidance or Discover Ireland might be open to creating a vignette of the various sculptures & their locations as they have done on Fenor Bog.

An accessible village is a basic requirement for all residents irrespective of their age & mobility thus it is great to see a wheelchair manageable ramp replace steps at the church car park. Additionally, the provision of a public convenience in a village is a welcome sight although it was locked during the adjudication visit.

Waterford is indeed fortunate to have the talents of the Waterford Walls Project & your adjudicator has seen many examples of their work throughout the county. The mural on the exterior of the National School adds interest & is complemented by the freshly painted building. It is heartening to see inclusivity has been addressed in Fenor with the addition of an extra room at the autism unit at the school & dedicated play equipment at the Play Park. We all need to live in an environment that caters for all residents needs irrespective of ability status. Well done Fenor! Derelict or vacant properties have been the bane of many a Tidy Towns group. Some communities have completed an audit of these buildings & then liaised with the local council on possible outcomes. This strategy has been successful. The Derelict Site levy & the Vacant Home Improvement grants are two initiatives also having positives outcomes for many villages & towns. Therefore, it is fantastic to see the residence beside Mother McHugh's Pub,

refurbished & occupied. Once the boundary walls work has been completed, what a positive difference it makes & will make to the streetscape.

Mother McHugh's Pub and Café Ni Bhrian building facades were well presented & the cohesive colour certainly enhances this part of the village. This area is an excellent location for the defibrillator. The plaque commemorating the old National School is a lovely addition although tonnes of materials obscured it from view. No doubt these are temporary & only required until the grotto is completed.

Well done on engaging with Waterford County Council on new street lighting. The ideal would be to have the wiring underground to enhance the streetscape & as indicated, to ensure the light itself provides illumination without impacting village biodiversity. We will await with interest the provision of updates next year.

The provision of additional amenities at the GAA grounds is welcome – handball court & Astro turf - & offers additional options for the local community to stay active & healthy. The retention of the stone building as part of the facilities adds interest.

The construction of the new Scouts Hall at Ballyscanlon Lake, once completed, will provide a great base with all the required amenities for the Copper Coast Scouts. Is it envisaged this will also be made available to the local community for events & meetings, if required? We wish them the best with their funding applications & they are to be admired for having achieved so much to date – groundworks, power/water & toilet on site & storage facility.

It is superb to see all age cohorts & their sporting interest catered for in Fenor. The installation of a tarmac path & seating at the French Boules pitch is most welcome. However, your adjudicator was confused as to its location.

Previous reports referred to it adjoining the Playground but this appears to be a basketball court. You might highlight it in next year's map to avoid future uncertainty.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The Playground is an excellent example of a natural green space for all children. The use of large rock boulders, natural stone & tiger mulch compliments the area. The nod to your local history with the mining cart adds interest.

The clover filled green areas are numerous & delightful to see. However, some of the trees are overdue to have the supporting stakes removed & many need lower suckers pruned to allow them to thrive. We note in the Playground there are a number of containers & given the amount of green space there, any plants could be removed & planted in mounds in the ground. Some of the containers are clearly redundant, as there were no flowers growing in them.

The perimeter of pruned & dead trees between the Playground & GAA pitch could be used to accommodate additional climbers like clematis, honeysuckle & dog rose. It would camouflage the bare trees & branches.

Mature hedging & trees surround the GAA pitch. Are there plans for the area between the pitch & the basketball court? Also are there any plans for a dedicated walking track around the pitch? There is now funding provided by Healthy Ireland as was secured by your neighbours in Dunhill. No doubt the club has plans for the entrance yard & designated parking etc. While there are some trees planted inside the front wall, it would be hoped more would be added & an edible/native hedge planted to screen the block wall.

The graveyard has some fine cut stone headstones that indicate high quality craftsmanship & it was lovely to see the lawns filled with clovers, buttercups, etc. Once again, there are a lot of containers here & they are resource demanding from a watering & people point of view. Have you considered amalgamating the plants in mounded flowerbeds inside the boundary walls? The mature Horse Chestnut trees facing the road are remarkable. We note where one was lost & now the spot has been covered over with hard surfacing. Was a replacement ever considered? The large shrubs separating the car park from the church & graveyard would benefit from attention as the cleaver "sticky back" is attempting to take over. Also a climber like clematis or honeysuckle would screen the fuel tank there.

We are delighted to hear of your plans to plan native trees & pollinator friendly plants on the pathway from the school to the church in autumn/winter this year. It would be advisable to take advice on the variety of tree/s to plant given location, soil condition & any height requirements. A single variety would work best from an aesthetic viewpoint. The planting on the stone bank across from the two commercial buildings was a riot of red roses & hydrangeas – infill planting would assist in reducing maintenance.

The National School has a lovely front area with mature trees & shrubs. The raised stone bed on the left hand side as one enters the car park has some thriving perennials although the scutch grass is making significant inroads & will swamp the bed if not attended to in the near future. Are there plans for planting to screen the fencing panels to the right hand side & rear of the car park? There would appear to be plenty of space if a cooperative landowner is involved.

Well done on ensuring you have a variety of spring bulbs as many communities focus on daffodils that do not provide a food source for early insects. It would be lovely to see photos of your flowering snowdrops, crocuses & muscari included in your submission next year.

Your move from annuals to perennials is most welcome & lovely to see this in the containers in the churchyard.

Have you plans to continue this move on the planted stonewall there too? Begonias certainly provide colour & do well in Irish weather however they produce very little nectar to be attractive to pollinators. In relation to containers, again best practice is to plant in the ground where possible.

The Copper Coast Scout Group are to be much admired for planting 1200 trees around the site of their new Scout Hall.

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

You are to be commended for what you have achieved jointly with the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) at Fenor Bog since 1999. The regular monitoring of hydrological supporting conditions at the bog in addition to onsite survey visits ensures the future of the bog is sustainable. It is such an important educational tool for local school children in addition to college & PhD research. The signage here is excellent & accessible to all. Your adjudicator thoroughly enjoyed the walk & one could feel a slowing down, both physically & mentally, as one traversed the designated route.

The knowledge that two colonies of wild bees have made the bog their home is exciting news. Have you determined what species of native bee they are? The Bee Sanctuary of Ireland, based in Wicklow, www.thebeesanctuaryofireland.com & the Irish Bee Conservation Project www.ibcp.ie would be good to link in with in relation to your wild colonies.

We will be interested to hear the results of the beetle survey currently ongoing at the bog. It is great to hear you continue to keep records on local bird life & noted the earlier arrival of both the swallows & cuckoo this year. As recommended by last year's adjudicator, there are so many learning outcomes from your almost quarter century of regenerating & protecting Fenor Bog. The availability of platforms like YouTube & TikTok would enable the involvement of Fenor's youth & the dissemination of information to other small communities with a comparable environment on their doorstep. What you have achieved & more importantly, the processes involved in the project are the tools communities can use to take on a similar project.

We note that your Pipistrelle & Long Eared bats are still resident in Fenor Church. Have you completed a baseline survey previously to determine whether the populations are increasing, decreasing or stable? A Bat Count at the Church, whether big or small, in conjunction with the school or local Transition Year students perhaps might be an option. The volunteer led group, Bat Conservation Ireland, is very helpful to communities, organizing walks & talks & undertaking surveys. www.batconservationireland.org

Kilfarrasy Beach appears to be a mecca for photographers such were the numbers seen on adjudication day. It is easy to see why they received the "Green Coast Award" last year. It is wonderful that the water quality & clean environment here can facilitate organized foraging workshops in addition to shore ecology learning.

We have referenced earlier ideas for the GAA grounds. The GAA, late last year, announced the GAA Green Club Toolkit Phase 2. One of the five areas where guidance, advice & resources are offered is in the area of biodiversity. It would be worth drawing their attention to the toolkit in order to help themselves & the community. <https://learning.gaa.ie/greenclub>

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

Based on the examples you have provided in your submission, the residents of Fenor are cognizant of water conservation – individual wells at residences monitored closely re usage levels; rain water harvesting; energy conservation – retrofitting of existing homes & solar panel installations; reuse of materials – batteries, mobile phones, stamps, postcards & books for charities fundraising; school books swapped etc.

You referenced Fenor National School attaining a Green Flag – you might provide further details on the flag achieved as despite searching on their social media feed no reference could be located.

As referenced in the previous section, the GAA's Green Club Toolkit deals with many overlapping areas in the area of sustainability – water, energy usage, waste & travel & transport. Once the club complete an audit they can then decide which areas to tackle first, perhaps the low hanging fruit & easy pickings.

It was heartening to see the Local Link transport system used by community members during the visit – a great resource for all & hopefully availed of with regularity.

Your active social media platform would be an ideal way to share tips in this area. There are a lot of sources of information that could be used over the course of a year e.g., energy saving tips - <https://www.seai.ie/home-energy/energy-saving-tips/> reducing food waste - <https://stopfoodwaste.ie/> October Reuse Month <https://www.mywaste.ie/reuse-month/> Voice Ireland is a great resource for lots of campaigns, initiatives & ideas for reducing plastic. <https://www.voiceireland.org/> There are lots of opportunities for getting the whole community involved.

The Tidy Towns Handbook is another valuable resource for your use. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sustainability-Doing-More-with-less.pdf>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Fenor's 50+ volunteers who ventured out in the cold & driving rain on Easter Monday for the annual National Spring Clean initiative are to be applauded for their dedication & commitment.

You reference an ongoing problem with fly tipping & no doubt you are working closely with the local council to ensure the litter is removed. Some communities keep in contact with the local council requesting that offenders are prosecuted where identity is established from the content located. In known blackspots, increased surveillance has been required through the deployment of remote cameras to monitor illegal activity & secure evidence for prosecutions. A local initiative in Wicklow, The Pure Mile Project, encourages residents to adopt a mile of road for litter picks, clean-ups, anti-dumping campaigns & other activities. The strategy has resulted in a decrease in illegal dumping. <https://www.pureproject.ie/the-pure-mile/>

It was surprising to see the number of children's clothing items left behind in the Playground either tucked in amongst play equipment or strewn on the ground!

The Bottle Bank was tidy although the area to the left had rubbish in amongst the vegetation. If in time there are planned works taking place in the church car park like surface line repainting, an extension to the concrete plinth for the red clothing bank receptacle would help its maintenance. There were a few incidences of dog fouling. Many communities find that the application of dog stencils to the surface areas where the problem occurs reduces the incidents noted.

An annual audit of street furniture is a good strategy & once done it only requires minimal effort to update. Items like benches & other seating requiring repair or maintenance as seen at the Playground & at the graveyard.

Perseverance pays dividends in the end so well done on continuing to bring the issue of redundant poles to the attention of the local council. It takes time but it will happen.

The standard of signage throughout the village was excellent & is maintained to a high standard.

At the National School there is a gap between the road & footpath close to the safety railing allowing a build up of silt & resulting vegetation. If & when road works are taking place in the area, raise it with your Local County Engineer to attend to it whilst it remains small.

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

Fenor is fortunate now to have a village where all buildings are in use either for residences or commercial purposes. There is no doubting the positive impact this has on the whole community – a cause for celebration rather than rueful regret. The community is to be lauded for well-presented abodes & gardens. The cottage garden at the junction has a wonderful landscaping theme. Other residents with boundaries to the village have put a lot of work in to add interest & colour to the village.

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

The installation of traffic calming measures & road crossings in conjunction with new footpaths and lighting later this year will increase accessibility & safety within the village.

All of the approach roads have verdant & thriving hedgerows. It is lovely to see wide expanses of pasturelands over the road boundary hedges. The stonewalls, where seen, are well preserved & add greatly to the visitor's first impression of Fenor.

The wooden signage at the entrances to the village is rustic & quite unique. There is no disputing that this type of signage requires ongoing maintenance to look its best. Some of the flowerbeds beneath these signs were planted while others appeared to be awaiting plants.

Concluding Remarks:

This was your adjudicator's first visit to Fenor & a thoroughly enjoyable one. You are an example to many villages about what can be achieved if one views the journey as a marathon rather than a race. The amenities available to local residents are remarkable & well done on keeping the momentum with further projects in progress & others in the pipeline. We wish you the very best of luck in your future and thank you for your succinct & informative application this year. One minor suggestion re your application – a different colour/size or style of font would differentiate it from the headings & thus easier for your adjudicator to read.