

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Kilmacthomas - Coill Mhic Thomáisín</b>	Ref: <b>855</b>
County: <b>Waterford</b>	Mark: <b>319</b>
Category: <b>B</b>	Date(s): <b>09/06/2023</b>

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	42	44
Streetscape & Public Places	80	39	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	39	41
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	32	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	38	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	40	41
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>319</b>

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

A core committee of 7 & an ability to call on a further 12 volunteers presents a good-sized work crew. However, you have understated your volunteer base this past year given you had the people power of 17 Transition Year students - what a coup! The services of four Community Employment employees are an amazing resource for Kilmacthomas as many other communities have seen this scheme disappear. The workload they undertake & projects they accomplish take significant stress from Tidy Towns groups. With frequent & cohesive interaction between community groups, it is notable how many more projects are initiated & reach fruition as has been demonstrated by the working relationship between yourselves & KSEG.

A strong working relationship with Waterford County Council is essential & well done on continuing to invest in it. Pobal funding is a lifeline for Tidy Towns groups & you continue to make wise use of your annual allocation. Community support is integral for the success of any Tidy Towns group. Based on the financial, physical & material support you receive, these are testament to a community that values the work you do. You have both the traditional & modern communication mediums sorted.

What an excellent strategy - dedicated school liaison officers! A singular point of contact for each educational establishment leads to a more streamlined approach. This strategy is obviously successful - 17 willing TY students in the last academic year that achieved a significant body of work in 9 months, amassed life skills & contributed positively to their community. For those younger consort attending National School, you are inculcating from a young age an understanding of sustainability & gardening.

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

As one walks in to Kilmacthomas from any direction, the colorful residences, business premises & other facilities present an eye-catching vista. There is no doubting the pride that many residents have in their abodes & gardens. Businesses too present their facades with both panache & pride. It is heartening to see previously vacant buildings now with successful tenants in situ and other commercial buildings marked with sold signs. It would be hoped that the twin pronged approach of the Derelict Site Levy & the Vacant Home Improvement grants will provide the impetus for the renovation/restoration/sale of existing unused buildings. Please do provide us with brief updates on vacant buildings in each year's submission e.g. are there any plans for the Convent of Mercy building or the commercial building at the top of the street?

The new bilingual heritage style street signage makes a remarkable difference - the cohesive approach has an impact visually.

When one views the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, it is remarkable to see the difference 20 years has made on Kilmacthomas's streetscape - so many buildings of significance have been repurposed for alternative community uses & others brought back from the brink of ruin - courthouse to library; residence to Foroige club; etc.

A Heritage Trail has potential with the existing erected information plaques & viewing points - there is much for the first time visitor to explore. It is fantastic to see family businesses still going strong today & looking just as vibrant. The sympathetic restoration of the Railway Station is a case in point & was a delight to visit on adjudication day. The small road, opposite the Old Station entrance, has certainly had a transformation with the council's resurfacing works - easier to maintain & less likely to attract litter.

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

The uniform landscaping approach you have adopted in relation to window boxes presents a wonderful vista for both residents & visitors. The combination of the red geraniums for colour & the trailing nasturtiums for pollinators meets the needs of both the community & nature. It is imperative for Tidy Towns both are happy! Well done on camouflaging the disused commercial building with the complimentary wooden planters & pollinator friendly perennial planting. It is great to see from the photos included your spring planting schemes & keep adding those bulbs that provide food for early pollinators. The bridge's hanging baskets were starting to bloom & again add great colour. Is there a need for the wooden planted containers on the right hand side of the road down to St Declan's College - would planting in the ground alongside the fence result in less work & reduce watering demands? Have you considered, over time, choosing to plant climbers on the railings alongside The Greenway Grill, as the containers there will need replacing in the future?

The colorful planted containers at the Old Station create a wonderful visual impact with the roses & antirrhinums. The final completion of the project here - outbuildings, car park perimeter, etc will enhance the area.

The Community Park is a fantastic amenity & the colourful seating adds a lovely pop of contrast. Your work on removing blockages from the millstream has aided the flow of water. The Riverwalk is a lovely opportunity to enjoy the water's edge & the council is to be acknowledged for installing the new railings alongside near the Mill car park for greater safety. The "memorial" garden there is perfect spot for a rest & reflection with the dedicated seating. Are there plans to remove the damaged wooden railing at the other end of the Riverwalk?

The Community Garden's accessibility for the community adds greatly to its value. The pruned fruit trees will offer a greater harvest from a healthy orchard. Your plans for a Community Herb garden are to be commended & while it is a good idea to plant certain herbs in containers e.g. varieties of mint, lemon balm etc, most other herbs do very well planted in the ground & will be more drought resistant.

It is great to see your reassessment of work completed & recognize when a project is not sustainable in the long term - the revised landscaping at the "Flower Garden" is excellent while still packing a visual punch. It was blooming red on adjudication day.

The green area with the picnic tables across from the playground is a fantastic example of how areas can be left for folk & flora. On adjudication day, there was a lovely swathe of ox eye daisies on show.

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

You are to be commended for adopting "No Mow May" at all your green areas, nature will thank you too. It would be great to see you feature this on your social media pages during the month. It presents a wonderful opportunity to engage community members in carrying out Flower Timed Insect (FIT) counts - a fun activity when spring flowers have the opportunity to bloom in uncut areas. In fact, the poppies at Grow HQ had a posse of insect suitors!

<https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/fit-counts/>

The Riverwalk & Community Park is indeed a wildlife corridor & using it to erect education information boards is an engaging way to increase the community's understanding of its value whilst also providing interesting nuggets of information. The National Biodiversity Data Centre is the place to log sightings of flora & fauna.

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/> There are many surveys on this site that could be undertaken & there are excellent online courses, perhaps something of interest for winter nights. Once again featuring on social media what has been sighted piques the interest of people or perhaps invite identification.

Well done on taking further action to protect the river & commencing the task of moving the compost area.

Unfortunately, the invasive Himalayan Balsam has taken root in the old compost area along by the river. Please do ensure it has not been moved into your new compost area & ensure it is reported to the council.

Your move away from peat to organic compost is commendable. It would be hoped that the new composters at the schools in addition to the one at the Community Garden would meet your gardening needs. The inclusion of pollinator friendly perennials in your ground planters & containers is fantastic to see.

The natural stonewalls around Kilmacthomas support many plants, lichen & moss. The identification & logging of each may be an interesting project for one of next year's TY students. There is no shortage of walls or plants - the one to the National School is a prime example.

It was noted on adjudication day that the Prayer Garden by the church seems neglected. Are there plans for its future? It could potentially make a wonderful biodiversity garden for the school - close by & secure.

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

Well done on propagating the geraniums each year & similarly you will find the nasturtiums seeds/pods easy to save for germination next year. With their propensity to self-seed & their longevity you should have no shortage of nasturtiums for sale in both July & September's local markets.

Margaret, the Community Employment workers & those generous members of the community are to be commended for the creation of the National School's new vegetable garden. The imaginative repurposing of materials destined for landfill for this project is a fantastic demonstration of what can be achieved with no financial outlay. It presents the children with an amazing opportunity to learn what gardening involves & the value of patience! Best of luck with this entry in the Tiny Tidy Towns competition. Please do consider a short write up for inclusion in the Tidy Towns newsletter.

It is great to see the water refill station & the bike repair facility so well placed at the Old Station, ideal for use by

locals & passing cyclists. It was encouraging to see quite a number of bikes parked at the bike rack at the National School - well done to those children who cycle or walk to school.

Composting of waste should be done at each household so the fact you have installed one in each school provides a great learning opportunity for students. The request for a second one from St Declan's is telling. Do let us know in next year's submission how the system worked & what was the output. We have seen it fail at many schools due to a lack of supervision & active involvement.

The Community Garden certainly is working for you from a sustainability viewpoint - propagating your own plants, raising plants from seed, growing vegetables for fund raising, composting weeds etc. if you have the opportunity it would be wonderful to share some of these skills with the community. Also given the size of the orchard planted, have you plans for the produce when it comes to fruition? Other communities have organized apple festivals etc. The local charity shop, Sunflower, is a veritable Aladdin's cave of treasures & a fantastic example of reuse in action. There are some interesting ideas in this category in the Tidy Towns handbook. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sustainability-Doing-More-with-less.pdf> ChangeX is another platform with some excellent ideas & potential funding. <https://www.changex.org/ie>

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

An annual audit of street furniture provides you with the scope to identify items that are redundant e.g. standalone poles; items that needs replacing due to end of life e.g. street bins, damaged or temporary signage, illegible signage or items that need refurbishment e.g. seating, railway crossing gates, blocked gully traps, signage obscured by vegetation, etc. The completion of this To Do list makes a remarkable difference on a village's visual tidiness.

Well done on commencing your community litter picks early in the New Year & holding them on a consistent basis.

The Pure Mile is an initiative that commenced in County Wicklow & has garnered excellent support

<http://www.pureproject.ie/the-pure-mile/> perhaps worth exploring. Is the National School involved in The Picker Pals programme? <https://pickerpalsworld.org/>

On adjudication day, it was disappointing to watch St Declan's exam students consistently walk past litter on the road from the school to the village - in excess of 40 discarded items were noted. In view of the work their peers completed during the academic year, it was disheartening to witness.

The Bottle Banks were gleaming although some irresponsible individual had left black bags alongside the clothing banks despite the fact they were not full.

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

Hillview's consider planted perimeter, colourful picnic table & new fencing all lend an air of due care & diligence to this estate - well done to all. Have the residents considered planting an edible hedge inside or indeed outside the new fencing? With the increase demands this year for water, perhaps placing the container plants in a mounded area on the green might reduce maintenance.

Hillside Crescent has a unique green area at Mulcahy's Corner - lots to engage interest & the log edging is a very sustainable option. However, the perimeter hedging appears to be struggling to survive & may need intervention. Cruachan View perhaps was a tad over eager with their pruning on the boundary wall greenery. One is immediately presented with a significant amount of dead or dying vegetation. Ivy provides valuable pollen & nectar for honeybees & other bees at a time of the year when little else is flowering in hedgerows & gardens. The estate has some incredible green areas & a wonderful opportunity to add additional trees to those already in existence. Check out Pocket Forests & Easy Treesie who work with communities to add mini forests. [www.pocketforests.ie](http://www.pocketforests.ie)  
[www.easytreesie.com](http://www.easytreesie.com)

Port na Machan has a lovely native hedge planted out front, lovely bank of long meadow & short meadow green areas. The green roof on the refuse bay is a first for this adjudicator. Some of the trees at the entrance do now need replacing, as they are either dead or struggling to survive. The wooden seating lends a rustic air to the estate.

Residences & gardens within the village of Kilmacthomas are generally presented to a very high standard.

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

It has to be noted the dramatic impact power washing & paint has had on the Old creamery building on the approach road. What a transformation!

The approach road past Hillview is eye catching with the expanse of oxeye daisies, sweet Williams & wild grasses.

On coming down the hill, past the National School, one is struck by the natural stonewalls & tidy sweep of road.

St Declan's approach with the "Flower Bed", edged road & kerbsides & planters creates a streamlined panorama.

The Failte signs with their perennial planting are the crowing glory to the village approaches, great to have a cohesive theme.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

It was a pleasure to visit Kilmacthomas once again having completed the Greenway cycle some years ago. A lot of work has been completed & on adjudication day there was a small army of active volunteers suited & booted in Tidy Towns bibs planting out perennials. It was wonderful to witness the enthusiasm & joyful banter. Your progression on various projects is noteworthy & a delight to see. You have achieved a lot to date & we look forward to seeing your plans for the forthcoming years.