

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Stradbally - An tSráidbhaile** Ref: **235**
County: **Waterford** Mark: **373**
Category: **B** Date(s): **08/06/2023**
12/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	54	55
Streetscape & Public Places	80	49	52
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	50	51
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	44	46
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	22	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	45	46
TOTAL MARK	550	361	373

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

There is no doubting the fact that you would not be where you are today in the Tidy Towns Waterford League table without the wholehearted support of the community. You are to be congratulated on recognizing the demands on community members' time & establishing a database, Power Hour, where they could pledge a single hour of their time. This is definitely a strategy that could be adopted by many resource strapped communities. Perhaps you might submit an article for the Tidy towns newsletter on your initiative once you have road tested its viability a little longer. You are indeed fortunate with the strong supportive relationships you have nurtured with local businesses, other community groups & agencies in addition to the feet on the round of the Community Employment Scheme employees. Thank you for including the address of your Facebook page, not an easy page to find without the link. St James School is to be congratulated on their wholehearted adoption of the Green schools programme. It is clear Stradbally's youth are well informed for the future with the work they & their teachers have put in to achieve 5 green flags. You are starting them young in the ethos of the Tidy Towns with both preschools availing of the ECO Park's amenities & resources. The involvement of transition year students in your work presents an added opportunity for willing workers.

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

The streetscape of Stradbally is enchanting. It is quite remarkable that the built environment is presented to a consistent high standard. We note your update on the residence that is now unfortunately vacant due to bereavement. It would seem likely given its location that once probate has been granted, decisions will be made on the future of the house. While the Credit Union building is not in current use, its façade is presentable. It is quite remarkable the number of entries on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage for Stradbally. As many of these records were last updated over 2 decades ago, it might be an interesting project for a transition year student or the community group, Stradbally Past & Present who present a most interesting archive. On the day of adjudication, conservation work was taking place on the ruins of the old St James's church. The donation of stone from Woodhouse Estate is both a coup & generous. Well done on accessing funds for the project. The water wheel's facelift & maintenance program has it looking pristine at Barrack's Cross. The painted wall offers a pretty backdrop. How interesting the history behind the benches donated by Dungarvan's Men's Shed for the Village Green & their final resting place is just perfect on a hot June day when shade is required. The GAA are to be congratulated on their achievements off the pitch with their additional facilities. However, the next phase – walking track – will ensure its inclusivity for all the community. Your easy co-existence with the soccer club is to be admired especially as your goals are mutually beneficial with the community at your core. The Village Green is definitely a magnet as on adjudication day cyclists stopped to quench their thirst, families sat &

enjoyed 99s & farmers sat taking a breather.

Well done on the installation of a further defibrillator this time within the village itself. They are so important for rural communities & a testament to first respondents' community spirit.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Many a village would envy your amenity, the Village Green, situated as it is in the midst of the village. You have packed in a lot into a small space without sacrifice – table, seating, benches, bicycle stand etc. The planted wall behind the bicycle stand is thriving & pollinator plants were abuzz with insects. The rose beds with their link to past community members is a wonderful visual memory bank. With all that the Village Green contains, is there a need for the 4 small grey containers lining the two paths? They appear superfluous to requirements. Also the advice you received regarding the replacement of the water trough at the feature water pump is spot on.

The landscaped area alongside Monavaud Lodge is a lovely use of a small space. The perimeter is planted with a great variety of pollinator friendly plants that were blooming on adjudication day. It did appear as if there was mainly compost used as the growing medium. You have received expert advice on the best growing medium – 80% topsoil, 5% grit & 15% compost. The hanging basket standards are beautiful although they are lost here against the stunning backdrop. The information boards here provide some interesting facts to digest.

The handball alley or hurling wall as it was on adjudication day is an excellent example of how a large hard surface can be softened with landscaping. The plaque provides an interest history nugget. The curved stone bed & mounded areas to the rear provide contrast to the straight lines of the alley. Once again the plants are well chosen. The mature planting schemes at other locations e.g. alongside the Credit Union, at the corner of the cul de sac are thriving & were looking well on adjudication day. The area at the Slí na Sláinte map would benefit from additional rose planting & again the containers here do not add to the space.

The natural playground is an inviting space for children of all ages & is cleverly built to use the undulating landscape. It was in high demand on adjudication day.

Cove Hill green area with its life sized sculptures is quite extraordinary & certainly a surprise for the visitor. The access via the wooden footbridge is enchanting. The seating provides a wonderful place to take in your surroundings. The variety of planting is interesting. Was it intended to have very few herbaceous perennials? Like many locations, invasive species have taken root in locations around Stradbally. Giant Rhubarb was observed growing downstream from the footbridge, Winter Heliotrope & Himalayan Balsam at the back of Stradbally cove along the River Tay. There was a notice at the cove relating to the latter.

St James's attendant graveyard with its light touch maintenance & absence of herbicide use is a lovely haven for human & wildlife alike.

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

The Eco Park is an astonishing achievement for a small community and in a wonderful location. What has been achieved on the ground in little over a year is remarkable. Your adjudicator would have assumed it was in existence for several years. 300 trees, fruit bushes, native hay meadow, constructed wetland, wildlife boxes to mention just the main installations. It was noticeable the amount of insect life & bird life in existence on adjudication day. Some of the trees will need replacing, as they have not successfully established. What an opportunity you as a community have to monitor the various species of wildlife both residing & visiting each year. The National Biodiversity Data Centre is the perfect forum for logging your sightings & keeping a record over time.

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/start-recording> The Eco Park offers an incredible opportunity for practical education on nature & biodiversity. Do take the opportunity to avail of the expertise of local agencies e.g. Community Water Officer, Park Rangers, Local Environmental Officers, etc when holding any talks or workshops. The Flower Timed Insect (FIT) count is another fun & engaging activity for children & adults alike & a useful tool for measuring change in the local ecosystem. <https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/fit-counts/> Your adjudicator was surprised at the lack of signposting from the road for the Eco Park & would have bypassed it only for the map provided.

It is fantastic that Woodhouse Estate is so supportive of your endeavours in various categories & especially in this area. The availability of their land in which to erect the owl boxes presents the owls with the best chance of survival given they have a range of 500 acres in which to hunt & reside. Is there any possibility of installing a trail camera on boxes where activity has been detected? It is fantastic to hear that owls have been sighted locally. The Barn Owl Project hold interactive sessions with communities so this might tie in nicely with your objectives. <https://www.thebarnowlproject.ie/>

The pollinator bed wooden signs are art themselves & add rather than detract from the areas signposted. Valerian, in all hues, certainly enjoys its position in Stradbally & was busy with visitors on adjudication day. In next year's submission, do provide us with an update on the Marram Grass protection project.

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

The erection of the polytunnel is an excellent strategy & will in time pay for itself as you propagate your own plants from seed or slips. It also provides you with a venue for workshops particularly as you will have the expertise of one of your upskilled CES employees. Their horticultural training will add greatly to your existing knowledge base. St James National School is to be commended for all the activities they undertake within this category. Your adjudicator visited the school & was delighted to meet the fowl inside & the sheep outside & see all the various projects. The students are certainly benefiting from a holistic education, spending extended periods of time in nature & acquiring life skills.

You were well ahead of the curve establishing a communal composting scheme over two decades ago. Now with in excess of 40 householders involved in the home composting scheme, where is all the compost created used? It seems that number would create a significant volume. You have an incredible opportunity with the new composting

system at the Eco Park to invite other Tidy Towns groups & demonstrate how you have created such success & involvement.

Stradbally Country Market's continued success is testament to its offering & lovely to see the invitation extended to all to join for a cuppa & chat. Country markets are great supporters of local businesses & offer a test market for germinating new ideas.

The location of water butts throughout the village is a great example & keeping this initiative to the forefront through gifting & prize gifting is a sensible strategy. Unfortunately on adjudication day, we could not locate any at the GAA club.

You have some excellent examples of reuse strategies – the local Facebook swap, borrow & freecycle page is an excellent resource & for many a solution in this time of escalating prices; Pins & Needles club (great name); paper shredding for greyhound bedding etc.

Your future plans are impressive & we look forward to seeing them come to fruition. With regard to your plans for LED lighting at the Village Green, do ensure they are ones in warmer tones in order to minimize light pollution.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Stradbally village was picture perfect on adjudication day with not a scintilla of litter to be seen. Clearly as a result of some road works, further road surfacing works need to be completed to return the street to a good standard near the cul de sac. A word with your local area engineer on road markings would be beneficial as some road markings are quite faded. Have you considered using dog-fouling stencils instead of the notices where a problem exists? This results in less clutter on poles. No doubt the bench in the Green Area will be repainted now the repairs have been completed.

Unfortunately, the idyllic Ballyvooney Cove had the remnants of fires & litter left behind by disrespectful visitors. A review of the signage here in order to create a cohesive information point would be best as there is a plethora there presently.

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

There is no doubt that Stradbally residents take great pride overall in their abodes. There are some stunning examples of vernacular architecture & some exquisite gardens. Whitewell Estate has a well-presented communal green space with healthy trees. Have they considered leaving a wildflower meadow under the trees? This would not impact on the area of the green used for play.

The Comeraghs tree lined avenue & mature planting scheme present an inviting entrance.

Viewmount Estate is fortunate to have a wonderful native hedge running parallel to the entrance road & the area underneath left for pollinators. The hawthorns were awash with blooms on adjudication day.

St James Wood is a unique development & the stone entrance with the raised beds & seating plinth is attractive.

The central area with the mini orchard, & oxeye daisy swathe & wildflower area under the trees is striking. Some of the trees need to be replaced. There is significant work involved in maintaining cobblelock & it does not take long for plants to reseed themselves in the crevices it offers up. The residents have a body of work ahead of them.

Rockville Estate with its linear green space & cherry trees clearly take great pride in their place & the seating is a fun pop of colour. They have a wonderful opportunity to plant an edible hedge along by the front wall. Unfortunately, some of the cherry blossom trees are succumbing to disease. It may be best to consider what action to take now & plan accordingly for replacements.

For estates with the space, however small, there is an opportunity for further tree planting. Pocket Forests & Easy Treesie are two organizations focused on working with communities to plant more trees. <https://easytreesie.com/>
<https://www.pocketforests.ie/>

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

The Five Cross Roads approach certainly creates an impression with the backdrop of the mature elm trees, the information signage, stonewalls & green verges.

The approach from Dungarvan has so much of interest that a walk or cycle would be the best mode of transport rather than the car. The roadside verges & hedges were swaying with grasses & wild flowers. The entrances to Woodhouse Estate, Ballyvooney Cove & Cove Hill all create a stunning vista for the arriving visitor.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a delight to visit Stradbally & your community spirit & achievements are inspiring. Through your combined efforts you have achieved a significant amount in the past 12 months & your adjudicator wishes you all the best for the future.

Second Round Adjudication:

This adjudicator arrived in the village via the Dungarvan road and was immediately impressed by the presentation of the Holy Cross Church and its atmospheric burial grounds. Improvement works here were in progress at the cross roads, and, nearby, the school and bring center have excellent presentations. Barron's Hall and the unoccupied house were freshly painted and are a highlight in an area with buildings retaining a significant, rural, vernacular scale and character in this attractively presented location. The handball alley, its storyboard and colourfully planted roadside verge, look really well. Perhaps the interesting story board could be further developed to include some of the history of handball itself and its social context within the village.

The village green and surrounding buildings, both commercial and residential, form a very impressive center piece. The attractive green had many visitors and created a bustling atmosphere. The brightly coloured commercial

buildings, adorned with attractive, bi-lingual name signs, enclose this visually important location. Opposite, the more muted colours of the Georgian Terrace retain an elegant charm. At St. James Church, conservation work was in progress. The sympathetic repairs of this traditional building, being carried out here, are a fine illustration of the stonemason's craft. Nearby, St. James School looked well and this building retains many of its fine traditional detail. The high standard of presentation of residences including individual houses, street terraces and estates are an impressive feature of your village. New housing has been sympathetically integrated into the existing fabric and is maturing nicely.

Your committee continues to work hard and plan well for your ongoing development. This year's adjudicator has commented comprehensively on your entry. I fully endorse the comments made and wish you continued success in your future efforts.