

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Tallow - Tulach an Iarainn	Ref: 1043
County: Waterford	Mark: 283
Category: B	Date(s): 28/06/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	36	37
Streetscape & Public Places	80	35	37
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	42	43
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	18	20
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	11	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	39	40
TOTAL MARK	550	272	283

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.

A core group of 12 is a sizeable committee for any town & you are well supported with a growing volunteer base. For new residents to Tallow, the Tidy Towns is a wonderful introduction to how the community works together for a common purpose & a great way to get to know members of the community. Tallow is one of the many towns & villages reaping the benefits of arriving immigrants who provide a new perspective & a willing spirit. How fantastic that a new business to the area has come on board as your main sponsor as this financial backing allows you to concentrate on projects rather than spend valuable time fundraising from zero. There is no doubt you have the backing of other community groups, agencies & the business community. All this support is essential for achieving the completion of projects.

Having committee members who crossover between groups ensures there is a close understanding of goals & areas where cooperation & collaboration can take place.

Clearly, you have all modes of communication covered from the traditional to online.

To have one Community Employment employee is a gift however three is in bonus territory. Their assistance cannot be underestimated for the completion of tasks on the To Do Lists in addition to larger projects. Tallow's youth collaboration with Tidy Towns on various activities is important both now & for the town's future.

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

It is remarkable for Tallow to have three listed buildings that were derelict for decades now brought back into residential & commercial use. These buildings typically are a labour of love given the restrictions attached to their restoration so well done to the new owners. The twin pronged approach of the Derelict Site levy & the Vacant Property Refurbishment grants is having a positive impact on many rural towns & villages with owners choosing to make decisions on long vacated buildings. There is a noticeable lift in community sentiment when renovations move a streetscape from eye sore to pleasant vista. It was remarkable on adjudication day to see the number of properties under active restoration. Your joint strategy of keeping Waterford County Council updated on vacant & derelict buildings & proposing alternative uses will continue to pay dividends in the medium to long term. Are there any plans for the building at Tallow Bridge given its prominent position at an entry to the town? Do continue to keep us updated with your progress in this area.

When one sees that 4 pages are dedicated to Tallow in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, it provides one with an insight into the rich history of the town's built environment & there are still some wonderful examples of well-composed buildings.

Many businesses are still unaware of the Shop Front Improvement scheme & in many towns, like Tallow, the Tidy Towns have undertaken to keep businesses informed. This is mutually beneficially as the improved appearance of

shop fronts adds greatly to the streetscape. Well done on engaging positively with local enterprises & garnering results that was evident during the visit. A discussion on business signage & window decals would benefit Tallow greatly as there is presently no consistent approach – some are excellent & others not quite so. The difference it makes to a streetscape is astounding.

The provision of seating in a town environ is essential & it is quite remarkable the use made of the facility once installed. Seating provides an opportunity for all the community at various times to sit, rest, meet up, engage, take in the scenery & appreciate the feature. It was lovely to see some of your colourful additions. The creation of new footpaths & the restoration of existing paths ensure Tallow is a walkable & accessible town for all residents irrespective of mobility.

The colourful playground was in active use on adjudication day & what a perfect location sandwiched between two residential areas with parking provided. The Foróige garden by the river is a lovely space with one of the most colourful benches seen to date. As they have the space to plant in the ground, a raised perimeter bed would be an ideal substitute for all the containers presently there. A sign here too would let the visitor know the great work of Tallow's youth.

A good working relationship with the council is essential & bringing to their attention works that require completion or attention is mutually beneficial e.g., West Street footpaths & hopefully Cockpit Lane fence in 2024.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You are certainly starting to transition your landscaping from annuals to perennials as recommended in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP). It is a joy to see your work in so many areas around the town as it is so important we plant pollen-rich plants that provide food for our pollinators. The most recent release from AIPP, the Top 10 Pollinator-friendly Plants for Different Situations is an excellent resource. <https://pollinators.ie/top-10-pollinator-friendly-plants-for-different-situations/>

Hyde Park is a fantastic amenity for all the community with different picnic areas, seating, stunning mural & scenery, orchard, walks etc. Tallow's two-headed dragon was certainly a surprising & delightful sight for your adjudicator. As an art installation the work carvings are spectacular & the recent addition of more animals to the menagerie presents a wonderful opportunity for an art trail to link with others in Waterford. Any visitor could not fail to be intrigued by the creations – the owl in particular perched on the ivy-covered stump is spectacular. An edible hedge to the rear would provide a lovely backdrop to this area, as it is a little stark. You have an opportunity here to set aside some space for long meadows & cut paths through for additional walking & play for children. It adds another dimension to what exists already.

The Ramp Boreen is a gem, from the initial view of a tree-lined tunnel with Lisfinny Castle appearing on the left to wonderful vistas of pastureland & woodland groves elsewhere. The views from the wee stone bridge in either direction are spectacular & the mural is a revelation from that distance.

Tallow Bridge is akin to another park such is its size. The Ned Power memorial is striking in its prominent position flanked by trees. Are the containers necessary, as they appear surplus to requirements? The stairs waterfall opposite is a shrewd way to manage a watercourse whilst providing a lovely aural backdrop when traffic is absent. There may be some attention required to keep brambles at bay from the midst of the shrubs.

Tallow GAA has a fine facility & space for some landscaping elements. There is an excellent publication to help sports clubs become more diversity friendly. <https://pollinators.ie/new-guidelines-published-to-help-sports-clubs-become-more-biodiversity-friendly/>

The GAA have also launched a new Green Club Toolkit. <https://learning.gaa.ie/greenclub> It would be worthwhile bringing both to the club's attention.

The new petrol station is quite the large space & well done to them on including pollinator friendly shrubs & flowers. As it is an area with significant hard surfacing, it would be wonderful to see them add climbers to the walls to soften the space e.g. dog rose, honeysuckle etc. An additional bed inside or on the perimeter wall bounding the road would have offered the opportunity to add greenery to a grey area. There is a considerable incursion of the horsetail plant – a fast growing native & extremely invasive species that is difficult to eradicate completely from an area.

The landscaping in front of Bride Valley Stores softens the building's façade. There are some lovely examples of thriving plants although scutch grass & sycamore saplings are doing their best to invade. An infill of the gaps with cuttings from existing plants would complete the picture over time.

The pedestrian crossing planters are very colourful & again do focus on nectar rich plants for maximum benefit.

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

The Wild Bird information board will be an excellent educational & informative installation. The encouragement of the community to log sighting on the National Biodiversity Data Centre website is the next step.

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/start-recording> The Irish Garden Bird Survey is a wonderful way to get families involved & it commences December each year. <https://birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/surveys-research/research-surveys/irish-garden-bird-survey/>

We can all become Citizen Scientists in our locality. Your resident photographer is a fantastic asset & his postings on social media are stunning.

With your increased focus on wildflower areas, it would be interesting to note if you are seeing more insect & bird life. Again, recording species provides you with a baseline against which to measure any change. This is where social media provides a platform to engage with the community whilst also providing an appreciation of Tallow's biodiversity. The Bee Garden was busy with activity & the borage was proving to be a favourite with the bees & hoverflies. The Blooming Bee Biodiversity beds at Tallow Bridge were ablaze with colour & activity & it was lovely to see the short meadow with clover, self heal etc. The area opposite will certainly have a bounty of blackberries in the autumn. You have made great use of the crossroads both from a safety perspective & as a food bank for wildlife.

Your sponsor is to be commended for their request to use the financial contribution to Tidy Towns for further biodiversity & sustainability projects.

Well done on taking on the care of the old Church of Ireland graveyard. This is a project that is taking time to get

over the line. Whilst visiting & peering through the magnificent gates, there is quite the mammoth task ahead of you. There are some beautiful specimen trees for which you may in time consider a Tree Protection Order. Before taking any action, consult with both your local Heritage & Environmental Officers as they have a wealth of knowledge at their disposal and you have a lot of planning to do in advance. Also there is an excellent publication for faith communities. <https://pollinators.ie/faith-communities/>

Well done on leaving the area behind the Grotto as a long meadow & maintaining the verges only. Its raised profile creates a lovely picture.

As with many areas in West Waterford, Himalayan Balsam has taken hold & it was visible in the river at Hyde Park. As you no doubt know, it is invasive & fast spreading & complete eradication from a site can take several years. Please do ensure it is reported to the local council & keep in touch with them re its control.

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

It is wonderful to see the orchard at Hyde Park & it would be hoped that the harvest is put to good use. The apple trees require some pruning & one certainly needs staking in order to fulfill their potential.

You will note references to containers throughout this report. As we experienced a very dry June, water demands increased & many communities found the task of watering onerous. Thus, where possible, a more sustainable approach would be to plant in the ground & reduce the number of containers over time. This in conjunction with your new rainwater harvesting at Glanbia should meet your group's watering needs.

The Tallow Hub is an excellent initiative by a local community group. It offers local workers an opportunity to reduce their commute, financial outlay & carbon footprint. For employees who are fully remote it may even offer the possibility of eliminating one car in a two-car household. Do let us know next year its occupancy rates, as it appears unoccupied presently. Following on from the same area, sustainable transport, it was heartening to see the Local Link bus availed of on adjudication day as they parked up in the car park at Kearneys. Also the bicycle path that passes the school is a great amenity & it would be interesting to know how many children use the facility.

The changeover by the sports clubs to solar lighting is commendable especially as it is supplied locally. It is interesting when it is seen in use how more people consider the change. It would be hoped your plans for solar lights in the town could be achieved.

Your local vegetable producer has certainly grasped the sustainability model with regard to their production process – reed beds for water runoff from vegetable preparation & the diversion of vegetable peelings to animal feed & compost production. Ear to the Ground or Countyfile would be very interested in covering this development.

Your use of social media in this area is welcome news & you have a wealth of information from which to draw up e.g. www.mywaste.ie www.stopfoodwaste.ie

It is great to see your plans to move from annuals to perennials. The type of perennials used is important, a focus on nectar rich plants as opposed to geraniums & impatiens. A recent publication referenced above is well worth reading & following.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Well done on artistic & subtle references to littering at Hyde Park – a gentle but pointed reminder to all visitors. The tyres either side of the Wildlife Trail Information board appear redundant & are best removed. If it were intended to plant them up, there is space to plant in the ground. It was so disappointing to see litter dumped off of the bridge at the Ramp Boreen – one would wonder at the mindset of the litterbug in such a scenic location!

The standard of your signage i.e. information boards, is excellent & great to see it all well maintained. A centralized location for public notices is the ideal & its location at the bus stop in the centre of town is a good choice given the level of footfall.

The Bottle Banks were free of litter & it is a difficult area to present well due to the overhanging trees & resulting impact on the surfaces of the containers.

An annual audit of street furniture is a sensible strategy e.g. redundant poles, obsolete signage, discarded safety equipment, standard of bollards & lighting standards etc. Once completed, you can assess what the community can complete & what needs input from the local Council. The difference to the tidiness of a streetscape, where these types of issues are resolved, is significant.

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

Willow Brook estate is fortunate to have so much green space available. The line of trees on the left hand side as one enters & the trees outside the entrance create a wonderful panorama. It would be lovely to see trees planted on the right hand side in the small verges. Well done to them on leaving an area unmown in one section. The wall at the back of the estate would be ideal for climbers like clematis, honeysuckle or other pollen rich plants. Indeed an edible hedge would also work. Have the residents considered planting into the ground instead of using the container barrel out front, reducing water needed & time spent.

Brideview Close's entrance has some lovely mature beds & well done to them on including pollinator friendly shrubs like hebe & spirea as well as adding more trees to the greens. The short meadow with clover & self heal was lovely to see. A few rogue sycamore saplings are trying to thrive unnoticed in their midst & best to extract them before they become established. It would be best to keep an eye on the new trees stakes & ties as they mature.

Woodview Park has a stunning stand of mature trees & great to see them add more trees. They are to be commended on the standard of the kerbing & path edges, that takes time & care.

Your adjudicator visited another residential estate across from Nora Herlihy House again with a large communal green space used for active play. It would be hoped that when the construction work is completed here a landscaping plan could be put together by the residents & developer to create a welcoming entrance & soften the block walls.

Similar to Willow Brook, there is space in both, Brideview Close & Woodview Park, to plant in the ground in mounds

instead of containers. As the summers continue to warm, it reduces the demands on residents' time & watering. The Alms Houses are a stunning example of refurbishment works on a protected structure & well done to you on establishing the gardens in order for the residents to be in a position to continue on with the maintenance. It is great to see the remaining two Alms houses will also be brought back into residential use. It would be lovely to see a cohesive scheme for estate signage e.g. Brideview Close's bilingual heritage style sign and well worth approaching your sponsor in relation to this project. There are some lovely examples of well-maintained residences in town & with the rate of refurbishments the town centre should see an increase in occupancy.

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

The Youghal Road approach with the planted green & wide expanse creates a lovely approach. The Mike Prendergast Road with the fields of corn/maize & the designated areas opposite for cycling & walking are well designed. A softening of the Meadowfresh Foods boundary wall with climbers or perhaps a more appropriate planting, an edible hedge, would complete the picture.

The approaches from both Fermoy & Lismore that culminate at Tallow Bridge provide the visitor with wonderful views of the countryside & the river Bride. Your plans to work with the landowner on the planting of trees from Tallow Bridge to Hyde Park will greatly add to this approach. Well done to all on working collectively to get this project agreed.

Concluding Remarks:

Your adjudicator enjoyed immensely their visit to Tallow. It is heartening to see the redevelopment of so many buildings that will bring life back into the town centre. As a community, you have made significant progress in recent years & your plans for further projects will ensure that Tallow is a place people want to live, work & enjoy life. Please do include your social media & website links. Your adjudicator was, with ease, able to locate your Facebook page. However not your website unless it is the Tallow Waterford one but the photo gallery there was not accessible. A link to both in the submission would eliminate any confusion. Please do address points raised in this report in next year's submission, as it is most informative for your adjudicator.