

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Hollyfort - Ráth an Chuilinn	Ref:	217
County:	Wexford	Mark:	310
Category:	B	Date(s):	09/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	46	47
Streetscape & Public Places	80	38	39
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	37	39
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	32	34
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	18	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	37
TOTAL MARK	550	298	310

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....

Hollyfort is welcome to this year's competition, and we note you re-entered in 2014 after several years absence and have stayed with us ever since. Your group of 20 comprise a committee of 10 members and 10 volunteers and you send new residents a welcome letter and an invitation to participate in events. We counted more than 20 agencies that support your work, including Wexford Co. Co. and many business interests.

Hollyfort Village Facebook and Hollyfort Village Blog are main sources of communication. Events are promoted in local newspapers, and you publish a newsletter which is distributed to 200 houses in autumn. Well done on establishing a Junior Tidy Towns group. Your major project over the past year has been fund raising for a new kitchen in the 200-year-old community centre.

We have noted the plan for 2021 – 2026 and suggest that you add in the periods when various projects will be completed. Well done for referring to the sustainable development goals throughout the entry form. Many thanks for the colourful map of Hollyfort with project numbers marked for our attention. To avoid crowding the map, we suggest that the numbers be placed to one side and use arrows to indicate the location. We found the numbers confusing simply because you have so many. Next time, please reduce the numbers, make them larger and place a legend on the same page as the map. We note you provided a list and details of projects under this heading in the entry form. That information is repeated in the respective criteria. That is unnecessary duplication which we ask you to avoid.

We recommend that you read the revised handbook which has guidance and project ideas on all eight criteria. It is available at the following link. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/competition/handbook/>

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

We visited the old schoolhouse, garden and car park and noted the improvement works done there. We note the school was built in 1821 and renovated in 1992. The car park is a work in progress. St. John's Church which is on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage is a fine structure. We compliment you on having a toilet facility available at the rear of the church – which we appreciated. Ireland has a problem regarding the availability of public toilet facilities, and it is great that communities such as yours are helping. We admired the many mature trees (beech and yew) around this small cemetery. This is a pleasant feature of old cemeteries that is sadly missing in many new cemeteries – where tree planting is not considered. The cemetery is well maintained. Well done on your attention to derelict buildings – we wish you luck with saving the 'Duck House'. The 1916 Commemorative Garden, built by the Bann River is a nice tribute to Maire Comerford and Aileen Keogh, two Hollyfort women involved in the 1916 Easter Rising. The garden is well-maintained. The repainted Cooney's shop looked well. Work was ongoing at

the village pump which is a nice piece of your heritage that is protected with a stone wall which we presume was built in 2015. It is great to learn that it was repaired in May 2023 and is still working, and the water is used for flowers and plant containers.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Hollyfort does not have large green spaces such as a park or sports pitches. Instead, you have open spaces within Chestnut Grove and the Scholar's Rest housing schemes, and these will be discussed in the criterion Residential Streets & Housing Areas. The memorial garden on one bank of the River Bann and the picnic area on the other side are small spaces and there are strips of green space at the main crossroads, all of which look very well. You have done a terrific job at the crossroads with the L110132 which no doubt makes a great impact on people driving through that junction. Hopefully, it encourages them to slow down helping to improve safety on the road. We pulled in the car on the roadside car park and immediately admired the floral display attached to the railings. In looking further, we noted the specimen of Ginkgo biloba, the maidenhair tree growing behind the railings. It is sometimes called the living fossil from 200 million years ago and which in 1690 was discovered in Japan. We hope it grows well in Hollyfort. Across the road, we saw a delightful border of herbaceous plants in flower – well done on that scheme. The Failte sign on the large boulder was part of this scheme and we climbed the few steps to 'Ted's Rest', a seat made by Ted Behan from an old oak tree that had fallen in 2014. On the other side of the road, we noted farm implements on the raised bank with planted oak barrels in between, and a surface of gravel. Laurel hedging forms the background. It is assumed that the oak barrels are intended to be features, as well as the agricultural implements, otherwise, we wondered why they were there – they are not needed - the plants can be planted directly into the ground. Since the two sections of wall at the junction are painted white, there is a case for having the planting schemes match with each other, in which case we suggest, that the implements and the barrels be removed elsewhere. The could be placed on a hard surface, perhaps alongside the other implements near the village pump, but on the ground in front of the stone wall where they would be more visible than on top of the wall.

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

You aim is to increase biodiversity through social media and by planting nectar-rich plants for bees and butterflies and maintain hedges and stone walls for birds and insects, and erecting bird boxes for nesting. Account has been taken of the richness of roadside verges which are full of woodbine, bluebells, primroses, and stitchwort. In the old school garden, a wildflower meadow is developed.

The SAC area around the River Bann Nature Trail is maintained as a wild area with little interference, except to remove fallen trees and remove Himalayan Balsam. Great spotted woodpeckers are now breeding in the area. The buzzard is another frequent flyer in the landscape and Dippers are regularly seen in the river Bann. The river is home to the lamprey species, which is of high conservation value and only live in clean water, and it is listed under Annex II of the European Unio. A feasibility study to map invasive plants of Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam is underway.

For National Tree Week, a planting of 350 mixed native tree species were planted along the Mt. Nebo trail. Red and black current bushes and a hazelnut tree were sown in the orchard for birds and bees where fruit is freely available to the community. This year you adopted the 'No Mow May' movement in the orchard.

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

This criterion is about the use of water and energy and other resources, as well as waste management. Regarding waste, the emphasis is on reduce, reuse and recycling. You have given several examples of recycling and reuse of various material in Hollyfort and the adoption of LED lights as well as rainwater harvesting, insulation of buildings and discarding of plastic cups. You have also upcycled chairs in the community centre and collected old eyeglasses for Vision Aid overseas. Being a member of Change X programme is quite a challenge – you practice grow your own and distribute wildflower seeds to young people. A free library is available for used books. Stones or bark are used as a mulch on flower beds to reduce evaporation. Minimal use is made of paper and over 360 trees were planted to help reduce the village's atmospheric carbon – you provide advice on how to go Carbon neutral and purchased benches and tables from local suppliers. Recycling bins are placed on the main road and are well-maintained. It would be best if they were in a less conspicuous location – such as the car park at the old school – when it is completed. We noted the community garden in the grounds of the old school.

Under this criterion, there are several projects that if undertaken could gain more marks. Therefore, we suggest you consult the handbook on the following link for more ideas on projects under this criterion.
<https://www.tidytowns.ie/competition/handbook/>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have reduced the use of chemical for weed control and use alternatives such as vinegar/washing up liquid/salt used instead. Autumn leaves are collected and composted. Litter picking is a regular task and collected material is segregated for recycling where possible. You participate in the annual clean-up national and regional projects. You have won gold awards and other prizes in the North Wexford 2K Clean. The erection of signs has helped to reduce the level of dumping in the area. You are a member of 'Leave no Trace' and promote your involvement through your blog post. Well done on these activities. We are pleased to record that we found Hollyfort very clean and tidy.

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

We were unable to access the Scholar's Rest estate – it looks like a nice scheme with a linear open space in front of

all houses – an ideal place to plant trees. A path to the village would be important. Chestnut Grove estate has fine houses but very small gardens. There is an interesting mix of tree species on the green open space.

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

The first thing we noticed was a very good road surface throughout Hollyfort. You take good care of the hedges and signs on approach roads and keep them clean. Dry stone walls are a feature here as in many other parts of Ireland and you keep laurels under control to prevent them from hiding the walls. Three bridges are crossed when approaching Hollyfort and you are vigilant about their condition.

Concluding Remarks:

We enjoyed our visit to Hollyfort and compliment you for the time and effort taken to implement improvements. We hope you find our comments helpful in your future projects. Keep up the good work.