

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: Glounthaune - An Gleanntán	Ref: 130
County: Cork(South)	Mark: 344
Category: B	Date(s): 15/06/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	48	49
Streetscape & Public Places	80	43	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	44	46
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	41	43
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	22	23
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	37	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	34	36
TOTAL MARK	550	331	344

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. As adjudicators, it is a pleasure to return to Glounthane for adjudication in 2022 and to see the many improvements that you have rolled out since our last visit in 2019. It's pleasing to see that your hard-working committee of 8 is assisted by up to 20 volunteers and it is clear from your entry form that you are a very active group with frequent area cleanups and beach cleans taking place along with a host of community activities including an open-air music festival, launching the new bicycle path, a spook fest, a Saint Patrick's Day Parade and a Christmas craft fair to name but a few. The number of links that you have established with other community groups (Glounthane Community Association, Mens Shed and Muintir na Tire) is most impressive and we would love to hear about all of the collaborations that take place between your committee and these groups on your tidy towns projects. There are plenty of examples of the good working relationship between your committee and Cork County Council (with the new cycle path \ Greenway being the most recent major collaborative project) and we urge you to keep this up and maintain your links with the Community Employment Scheme. It is not surprising to see that you enjoy such strong support from local businesses as they clearly realise the importance of the work that you do for your area. We are delighted to see that you have established good connections with the schools and that you work together on an ongoing basis. Now that you have a youth representative on your committee, we urge you to consider going one step further and to set up a junior tidy towns committee as they have proved to be a very valuable source of new ideas and energetic helpers in other tidy town centres. We enjoyed reading about the positive experience that your committee has had in the competition since your revival in the 1990s and we thank you for your positive comments. In our view, the work done by your committee and volunteers has significantly improved your town as a place to live, work and visit. Thank you for your completed application form which was well organised and comprehensive. However, at 64 pages it is becoming overlong and we urge you to cut down on the content included for 2023. This could be achieved by omitting some of the photos and by including your plan as an appendix. We would also like to add a note on your inclusion in category B which you justify on the basis of a calculation that there are 400 houses in your area with an average of 2.4 persons in each. Please note that this differs from the 2016 Census which reveals that the population of Glounthane is 1440 persons – a figure that is likely to have risen further over the past 6 years. Therefore, your area is now considered to be a category C small town (1001 – 2500).

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

We would like to congratulate the committee and volunteers on their excellent work in delivering the new bicycle path which was launched in October last. This is a wonderful addition to your area and it looked tremendously well during our visit. The improvements to the entrance of Harper's Island also represents a significant project that

benefits local people and visitors alike. The enhancements to the Ashbourne walkway entrance were ongoing at the time of adjudication and works were also taking place on the pavement outside Fitzpatrick's shop so we look forward to seeing these projects completed next year. We acknowledge that improvements have taken place to Fitzpatrick's shop and the rising tide bar and both buildings looked very well during our visit. In general, the standard of presentation of commercial premises in Glounthane was exceptionally high with the Elm Tree standing out. The Post Office, Church centre, flower shop and Community Hall also deserve praise for their well-kept appearance. Well done on lengthening the Sli na slainte route as this represents an excellent project and we have no doubt that it will deliver many benefits for residents and other visitors to your area. It is a lovely route with its picnic benches and striking views of Cork Harbour. The committee are also commended on undertaking repairs of the stone walls (in partnership with Cork County Council) as they are an integral part of Glounthane and deserving of conservation. It is noted from your entry form that an upgrade of the railway station was underway (by painting it, locating planters on the platform and siting a mural at the shelter area) and it should be noted that these improvements were limited to the shelter, mural and interior of the railway station building at the time of adjudication - as the front façade had not been painted.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

It is pleasing to see that your committee and volunteers have been focusing on the development of newly planted areas as well as maintaining existing schemes over the last 12 months. The new triangular landscaped area adjacent to the cycleway near the Elm Tree looked exceptionally well with its abundant pollinator friendly planting that included white daisies and lavender. The (naturally grown) wildflowers and new trees that line the road margin were also appreciated. We applaud the upgrades to the heritage railway garden there were comprised of new shrub planting (by your committee and volunteers) as well as model railway engine features and signals that were prepared by Men's Shed - a great example of a collaborative effort between your two groups. The upgrades to the centenary garden (new picnic tables, rope safety fence, planting and nest boxes), the village garden (new planting and lawn maintenance) and the playground (new fencing) were also admired. We enjoyed seeing the attractive and colourful landscaping around the perimeter of the village green where the colourful lobelias, white daisies and lupins were eye-catching. Praise is also due to your committee and volunteers for the maintenance undertaken on the playground, park walk and outdoor gym as they looked lovely during our visit. It seems clear that the strong focus of your committee and volunteers on upgrading your public areas and outdoor spaces over the last two years has been influenced by the restrictions on indoor mixing that were necessitated by the Pandemic. You are highly commended for responding to this need and for providing high quality outdoor spaces for your community as the benefits of these areas will be seen for years to come. We salute your decision to engage in mature tree planting along the roadsides and it is recommended that other suitable locations are found for additional trees. The provision of 4km of beech hedging alongside the cycleway is applauded as this will provide for an attractive natural boundary as well as a source of food and shelter for insects and other wildlife. We urge you to identify further locations in Glounthane where natural boundaries would be more suitable than solid walls or fencing. The new roadside garden at the entrance to the Highlands adds interest while the shrub planting at the rockery and godwit statue was also admired and we have no doubt that this is appreciated by residents and visitors alike. The no mow policy and wildflower planting is considered under the nature and biodiversity category. I understand there was an error in the 2021 markings which I have addressed in this category.

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

We were excited to read about the many high quality projects that were undertaken under this category for this year's competition. The development and extension of the wildflower meadow at Johnstown and the addition of pollinator friendly bulbs is considered to be a great idea. We would be very interested in hearing about its contribution to local biodiversity and we wondered if a survey of the area is planned? While the inclusion of a meandering pathway through the meadow is understandable, we recommend that you seek the advice of an ecologist in advance of any further interventions. Well done on monitoring the water quality in Ashbourne Pond and we are pleased to hear that the reason for its deterioration has been identified and dealt with. Banning the use of chemical herbicides \ weedkillers is a very positive step forward and we urge you to discuss your experience with private householders in your town as a means of raising awareness and encouraging them to do likewise. We read about your decision to locate Barn Owl boxes at Harper's Island to control rats and field mice and we wondered if this initiative has been successful? Perhaps you could let us know in 2023. The building of a second bird hide in Harper's Island is acknowledged and we were delighted to learn that it is being used by school tours. Why not encourage the schoolchildren to do surveys of the birds that can be spotted and to monitor their populations over time? It is heartening to see that tree planting forms a major part of your activities with 550 native tree saplings planted (by Boy Scouts in 2020) and an additional 50 trees planted in Craig's field during National tree week. These are wonderful activities and we urge you to keep them up. It is pleasing to see that some of the local farmers are restoring farm field hedgerows and the committee are encouraged to identify other locations in your area where natural hedgerows could either be restored or supplemented. The benthic study of Harper's Island marshland is applauded as this research provides vital information on local levels of biodiversity. It is noted that you have been implementing a 'no mow' policy to encourage pollinators and that wildflower planting has taken place. It is recommended that you take note of the number of areas that are left uncut as a means of monitoring its contribution to food sources of pollinators. You are also reminded to concentrate wildflower planting in areas where there is either no or degraded vegetation as existing vegetation that is thriving should not be displaced.

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

The projects that are presented in your entry form under this category demonstrates your committee's awareness of the need to reduce energy consumption, conserve natural resources and avoid waste generation where possible.

The installation of new LED lighting on the new Greenway is noted and we acknowledge that the new Greenway has made active travel (like cycling and walking) more attractive. Given that the Greenway provides an alternative to commuting by car (for short journeys), we wondered if any work has been done on counting the numbers who use the new cycleway for this purpose? Consider approaching either Cork County Council or Transport Infrastructure Ireland for pedestrian and cycle counters as a means of monitoring the usage of your Greenway over time – as this will help you to work out if the new infrastructure is leading to behaviour change among transport users. The use of rain water harvesting at the community centre for the new village garden is considered to be a very practical step forward and we wondered if rainwater collection systems could be developed in other parts of Glounthane too? Perhaps this is a project that the schools will be interested in looking into. The reuse of stone and wood by Men's Shed is commended and we were particularly interested to hear about sawdust being used as a weed preventing mulch. We would appreciate further details on this project in 2023 as it may be a suitable approach for other tidy town centres. The use of horses in Harper's Island to control weed is also applauded. Don't forget to tell us about what your committee is doing to reduce energy, resource use and waste generation when carrying out your day-to-day tasks in 2023. We would also like to hear about any relevant projects that are undertaken by the school's and youth groups under this category. Details of the activities that your committee has undertaken to raise awareness of the need to reduce waste and conserve energy and resources within your community should also be included in next year's entry form.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The frequency of litter picks and area cleanups in Glounthane demonstrate that your committee is serious about keeping your area clean. You will be delighted to hear that the standard of litter control was exceptionally high and it was obvious during adjudication that close attention is being paid to ensuring your streets and public areas are kept litter and weed free. Aside from pieces of litter adjacent to a picnic table on Ashbourne walkway, no litter could be seen anywhere so well done to everyone on this excellent performance. We were interested to read about your ongoing strategy to eliminate dog fouling in public places and it appears that your approach is working as no problems could be identified. You are commended on your continued participation in the National Spring clean day and for engaging transition year students in this activity and in clean ups of their local areas. The work of the committee in raising awareness of the need to control litter (through your poster competitions and working with local schools) is also acknowledged. We were pleased to see that all areas in Glounthane appeared weed free and neatly swept. Signage and sign poles have also been carefully maintained. As always, a small number of very minor improvements are possible. The signal box at the Heritage Railway garden needs to be power washed while the life rings at the centenary garden could be spruced up. The base of the silver sculpture on the green space at Johnstown with weedy while some of the signage at the entrance to the railway station needed to be washed. Aside from these minor issues, the overall standard of tidiness was particularly high.

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

There is a lovely mix of housing areas within Glounthane from the period terraced dwellings in the centre of the village to well-kept modern suburban properties (such as those found in Johnstown and the Woods) and new contemporary homes that can be seen in Gort Fada and Harpers Creek. Your entry form demonstrates that your committee have been busy with projects under this category that include preserving the character of the older houses in the village, siting planters on the village street, planting the garden outside the Community Centre, planting the Village Green and citing and maintaining flower boxes in the Parish Church Centre. This work could clearly be seen during adjudication as the centre of the village and the green looked particularly well with its neatly cut grass and well maintained planting schemes. The standard of presentation of other residential areas in the village was similarly impressive and we wondered if the maintenance of these areas is undertaken by the residents themselves? Please let us know in 2023.

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

The main approach roads into Glounthane looked marvellous on adjudication day. The Elm tree entrance was most impressive with its new cycle and walking track, high quality landscaping schemes and stone entrance signage. The refurbished phone boxes stood out and it is great to see that they have been repurposed as defibrillator units along the Greenway. The repairs to the old stone flyover bridge were appreciated and it looked very well during our visit. We were most interested to read about the use of the speed indicator signs in Glounthane – particularly as the data on traffic speeds that was generated by the signs was influential in the decision to narrow the width of the road to create a cycle path. We are also glad to note that the improvements which have taken place have led to a direct reduction in traffic speeds. The committee is also commended on its work restoring your water well and the old village water pump as these are attractive and distinctive features of Glounthane. The siting of town markers is also appreciated.

Concluding Remarks:

We would like to congratulate the committee and volunteers on an excellent performance in this year's competition. We are most impressed with the range, quality and the high standard of the projects presented in Glounthane this year and we look forward to returning again in 2023. Keep up the good work!