

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Inistioge - Inis Tióg** Ref: **394**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **361**
Category: **B** Date(s): **05/07/2022**
27/07/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	51	52
Streetscape & Public Places	80	48	50
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	53	55
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	44	45
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	25	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	58	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	39	40
TOTAL MARK	550	350	361

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. Adh Mór! Welcome to the 2022 Tidy Towns Competition Inistioge. It had been a long time since I had the privilege to visit Inistioge so it was wonderful to come back. Well done to your core committee and other volunteers for a wealth of work over the last 12 months. As a long time entrant... 59 years no less... into the competition you really have nailed down the concept of partnership and collaboration with an impressive list of local, county and national organisations with whom you work. Well done on supporting your local community groups, especially in lessening their environmental impact; an excellent example of SDG17: Partnership for the Goals.

You communicate your message in a variety of ways ranging from the traditional to the modern. In this way you are reaching as far and wide an audience as possible. This is often an unseen aspect of Tidy Towns but the effort that goes into an effective local communications strategy takes a lot of work and hopefully you are reaping the benefits of same. Your new notice board in An Robhar parking area had a wealth of information from Pollinator Plan guidelines to the promotion of your Heritage Trail Guide.

In particular your commitment to the ongoing support and encouragement of young people in the area is commendable. From schools to clubs to An Gaisce there is no angle you haven't used to support and nurture this active citizenship. Also being able to showcase their artistic skills in your 2022 Calendar is a wonderful way to place their contribution front and centre in the village.

Many thanks for your Development and Action Plan. It sets out a clear strategy for your ongoing work. A suggestion might be to indicate how these actions align with the UN SDGs, in this way it will aid in seeing if any project could be tweaked to support another Goal. It will also help in submitting your competition entry each year. Whilst N, M or FP was marked there was no mention of the SDGs per project though the overview in each category was welcome. Not to worry, both the community and public sector are still coming to grips with this but make sure to give it a go next year. Check out the SDG information on www.tidytowns.ie as well as application form for the SDG Special Award which both have great ideas about how to align your activities with the Goals.

Many thanks for your comprehensive submission – the text was succinct and many photographs accompanying each Project showed their progression and impact. Your beautifully hand drawn map made it easy to navigate the village. For next year could you name the projects on the map – and if room permits which category they refer to and if they are N, M or FP. In this way you make the adjudicators' job even easier to maintain their anonymity. I nearly gave myself away cross-checking the map with your submission as one of your volunteers was out painting a park bench as I arrived and got my bearings!

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

Inistioge truly is blessed to have such a wealth of built and vernacular heritage. However, it is the likes of your Tidy Towns group and local owners who showcase such pride of place that keep your marks so high in the competition. I was delighted to see you had entered the RIAI Shopfront Award.

You are doing tremendous work as part of the Village Enhancement Scheme. There is wonderful connectivity throughout from your traditional village centre park to an outstanding riverside park. There are many towns around the country who would be most envious of this wealth of community green space. Minister Humphreys was correct, 'you are indispensable'. Very often grant aid is not open to public agencies and to have active community groups who can apply and drawdown such grants is key.

It was a beautifully warm day as I adjudicated so I took time to seek shade in the wooded looped walk. Another great amenity for your village and there were some amazing garden displays as I walked down Point Road. At the section of bank protection with stepped blocks, could you leverage some more support from Woodstock Garden Centre to see if this could be planted or landscaped with a low maintenance shrub. About 75m in there is a section of path with a deep crevice where it joins the bank – a potential hazard for walkers or kids on bikes. In other areas this has been filled in, could you add this to your list of jobs for 2022/2023? Further in again is a pole with a fallen dog waste poster. Maybe relocate the poster to the larger set of signs behind and remove this pole.

The overall village centre and streetscape exudes charm – you even have a Taj Mahal; well an exceptional Lego replica on proud display in a residents home window on the Square. Your businesses maintain their shopfronts to a high standard and even those that are in need of repair such as beside W. Walsh are maintained with painting of doors and potted plants out front. The outdoor seating area and planting at the Woodstock was very inviting

There is a wealth of ecclesiastical heritage in the town. I was delighted to see the church bell still in use as opposed to the use of digital belltones. I was tempted, but restrained myself, to go down and give it a go as I walked up Mill Road. St. Columcille's Brass Band building is in need of freshening up, but I did note some barriers outfront so perhaps this is work about to start?

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

For a small village you have incredible landscaping; from pollinator friendly road verges to the exceptional River Park. I parked in An Robhar car park by the sports grounds and all the bedding areas were maintained to a high standard, perhaps the area around the plaque (Inistioge Carpark & Safety Enhancement Scheme) could do with a little more attention as it is a focal point. As I walked towards the village centre your planters became more and more numerous.

The mill race wall beside the shop was beautifully adorned and the village park, with its beautiful mature trees, was immaculate. Your Heritage Museum also had wonderful planting.

On the way to the River Walk I noticed your extensive and well maintained 'Home Composting Demo Site'. This is a great way to raise awareness about composting whilst also having a functional site. Brilliant project! On Point Rd, one side was flanked by a pollinator green area whilst the other had more formal (but still pollinator friendly) lavender planting.

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

You are very fortunate to have such a wealth of biodiversity on your doorstep, with the Nore being designated as a Special Area of Conservation. Many thanks for providing the wider context of biodiversity in your area, really sets the scene for this category.

Your ongoing support of pollinators as part of the Inistioge Pollinator Plan is excellent. You've been doing this since 2018 so you must really be seeing the benefits in your locality. Are you part of any of the National Biodiversity Data Centres citizen science monitoring programmes? Many of your projects in this section are maintained, this is a positive thing as sometimes there can be an over-emphasis on developing New projects for your submission. Maintaining longterm initiatives such as the ones listed are just as important. Delighted to see you are once again looking at the Special Awards. You are also committed to improving your knowledge as illustrated at the attendance at the webinars.

Whilst part of your streetscape, I really admired the steps down to the river at the River Park. Having physical access to our waterways is so important, especially for children and experiential learning. You've combined a number of categories such as your composting area which also has a Bug Hotel and bird stands which also incorporated solitary bee nesting habitat. I noted some Himalayan Balsam on the riverbank; could this be a future project? Also in your Looped Walk, the invasive plant Winter Heliotrope has established itself a few 100m's in by the old stone wall. There also appears to be Rhododendron on the upper trail. These species can spread quite rapidly so try and get it under control if you can. Take specialist advice from your local Heritage Officer or contact the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The 'Bee Pollinator Friendly' labels in the looped walk on the benches had me a little confused; I was looking for solitary nest holes at the sides but is this just a gentle way to push the pollinator-friendly message? The tree panels on your directional signage were wonderful. You are very lucky to have such a wonderful artist, Monica McCormick, do your wildlife signage and you also save money by using existing resources like the 'Pledge your Garden for Pollinators' leaflet which you use on the Poyntz Rd. sign. Keep

up the great work in this category!

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

You have assigned a Green Team Leader for sustainability initiatives which is a great start and a way to spread the workload across categories. Your strong role in advocating for your community and the change from standard to LED street lighting is having a real impact on climate change, year on year removing over 1,400kg of CO2 annually – well done! Also, great to see your engagement with the SECs programme run by the SEAI. This has transformed some communities and I encourage you to check out their podcast.

What also really amazes me about TidyTown committees such as yours is the ability to create meaningful and impactful changes in your locality. Your water conservation and collection measures is an example; simple, practical and saving countless thousands of litres of water. There is often an assumption that water is plentiful in Ireland, it isn't and it is up to us all to conserve this precious resource.

Another example of cross-over between categories is your sustainable landscaping – composting, peat free and chemical free. This helps meet a number of SDGs as well as sourcing your plants locally you help promote a resilient community with local employment. Manual weed control is more labour intensive but kinder to the environment and more effective in the longterm.

I like your festival green charter and the use of recycling bins. Some more information would be great as to how you work with service providers to prevent waste in the first instance or is there ways to reuse items on an ongoing basis. Maybe look to other festivals within and outside the county for ideas – no point all of us reinventing the same wheel!

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your village was spotless on the day of adjudication – not one item of litter was observed; well done. Your volunteers do amazing work, and it was wonderful to see the involvement by the Scouts and local families. Also, great to use your involvement in this competition and others like the All Island Best Kept Town to leverage local support. Can I take this opportunity to congratulate you on winning Ireland's Best Kept Village Award – lots of happy faces in the photo I saw on the TidyTown Ireland Facebook page. As I walked around I did notice 3 old tyres under the trees beside the 'Home Composting Demo Site'. If there are no plans for them they should be correctly disposed of. I also noted some Teddy Bears affixed to poles – is this initiative still ongoing? There are some old COVID signs that need removing or replacing (e.g. at the entrance to the sports field from the carpark and entering the looped walk) or as we hopefully exit the pandemic... rationalising. Maybe there is scope for less? The Kilkenny County Council pumping station has a faded wall sign that needs replacing. Just as you enter the Looped Walk there is an old gate tied to the fencing – is there a purpose for this, if so it could be made more secure and freshened up, if not perhaps find a use for it elsewhere. Your Bring Centre was well maintained though there is a wooden barrel planter to the side which needs freshening up.

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

All your residential houses are fully supportive of your efforts with many of them colourfully painted or awash with flowers – all no doubt looking to enter your Inistioge in Bloom Awards. Congratulations to your two estates who did so well at the County Awards. Ard Aoiheann looked wonderful in the Summers sun as did the many houses on the way there.

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

Your Approach Roads set the scene for visitors – first impressions count as they say. As I entered the village I was met with old antique farm equipment and well maintained road verge. A lovely tribute/memorial to your former founder Leslie Rothwell. Your streets and lanes are equally well maintained and contributed to the wonderful experience I had.

Concluding Remarks:

For a small village you undertake a tremendous amount of work. You are mindful of the heritage value of your buildings and the rich natural amenities that surround you. I wish you continued success in the competition.

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a pleasure being asked to visit Inistioge and to be second round adjudicator for the 2022 SuperValu TidyTown competition. Although we know south Kilkenny quite well, we had only been to your village once before and so it was wonderful to be reminded of the interesting undulating layout of the streets and paths and surrounding countryside. Thank you for your clear application form with photographs showing the projects undertaken, your map and your Development and Action Plan 2021-2023. We were delighted to see that it included projects under each of the eight categories in the TidyTown application form.

Your neatly cut grass margins welcome the visitor to Inistioge and leaving uncut areas is very acceptable to give our insects, birds and small mammals cover and food. We almost missed the farm machinery, honouring your surrounding agricultural community, which is now quite hidden in the long grass. We suggest this be relocated into the area which you continue to cut short so that it is more visible. Trim all margins into the village (we refer to the area beside the sign for Woodstock) so that motorists will know they are entering a town/village and should reduce

speed.

You have many historical structures in your village – the tower house, the imposing Catholic church, the Cofl Board of First Fruits church, a number of well-designed historical two to three storey houses, Columcille's Well, various historical civil engineering works including a variety of small bridges and also the beautiful ten-arch bridge crossing the River Nore with its classical Doric columns as additional decoration. There are some beautiful flat iron and wrought iron gates with cast iron pinnacles etc set in stone piers which we also admired. What do the carvings on the boundary wall of the church refer to? Are these included in your historical/heritage trail? We looked on Inistioge.ie, Historic Inistioge Facebook and TidyTowns Facebook pages but could not find a map of the Trail to download.

The school mural is beautiful ... quite modern and anatomically accurate. But what a location for an ER postbox! We can only assume this was an open space until the school was built or was the postbox moved here? We suggest it be relocated somewhere in the village unless there's an historical reason to leave it in its present location. We love the idea of the secondary school students showcasing their products at your Christmas market to as part of their Transition Year Mini-Company projects. Hopefully Christmas 2022 will see the return of this market.

Your green spaces are varied. Having the river and its tributary gives the village an extra appeal and you have used this well with the walks you've created. The three loop walks are clearly marked and we loved that the distances were indicated so that those doing it for the first time are aware of what they are undertaking. The village green is perfect in its simplicity – a tree surround space of neatly mown grass with a post and chain-link fence surround. The Millennium Garden raised high above the street was quite peaceful – definitely a place to sit and enjoy the view and we loved the historical wrought iron seat provided. The access route to St Colmcill's Well is very beautiful and the wide formal open green area near the bridge was admired.

The compost area (don't overdo signage), and the well-maintained community garden were also visited.

Your many stone walls around the village are beautiful but we noticed ivy growing on some. While ivy is a wonderful habitat for insect life and is acceptable/good on rendered (plastered) walls it is not acceptable on stone structures as the roots penetrate between the joints in the stones, making the walls unstable and leading to their collapse. Natural stone constructions are in themselves great habitats for insect life and also very beautiful in the streetscape.

Suckers were noted on some of the new trees which should be removed using a sharp knife or secateurs taking care not to damage the tree trunk.

We are aware that businesses need to advertise but we feel that the advertisements for Calor, ice cream, fresh bread, coffee etc are unpleasant, add clutter to the village streetscape and we question if they do in fact bring additional customers to the business.

Many individual businesses and houses had been freshly painted and had a variety of stunning pollinator-friendly floral displays – hanging baskets, window boxes, tubs etc. and quite a few others had gardens filled with colourful flowers and shrubs. Please commend the businesses and residents for the beautiful display created which makes for a very attractive streetscape.

It was a pleasure to visit Inistioge. The winding steep streets are very picturesque and we thoroughly enjoyed our return visit to your village. On our next visit we hope to complete one of your looped walks which look inviting. The Entente Florale Europe, Gold Award plaque was noticed – well done. We have no doubt that the local community appreciate all of your hard work which is reaping its just rewards and your involvement in the number and variety of projects is to your credit.

We agree with the marks awarded by the previous adjudicator.