

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: Birdhill - Cnocán an Éin Fhinn	Ref: 587
County: Tipperary(North)	Mark: 352
Category: A	Date(s): 13/06/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	53	53
Streetscape & Public Places	80	44	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	48	49
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	40	41
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	24	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	61	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	42
TOTAL MARK	550	343	352

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.

Thank you for the inclusive and expansive entry form that contained support material such as photographs, maps, pictorial records, and event details relevant to your application.

At this juncture, the adjudicator points out that due to the brevity of the report covering 8 sections comments cannot be made on all work projects that you have undertaken but feel assured that the adjudication was done fairly and objectively.

It was noted that there was no future specific work plan included in the entry form and maybe consideration should be given to this for 2023 although the Nurturing A Rural Community which embraces Tidy Towns is probably sufficient- we agree to differ on that!

The Sustainable Development Goals Programme (SDG) is at the heart of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2021 Tidy Towns adopted and integrated these goals into the competition.

It is noted that under category headings you have included relevant goals that demonstrate the work being undertaken by the committee to meet the SDG objectives.

First off it's wonderful to see all committees back in full action after the restrictive impositions that Covid foisted upon communities.

Birdhill is one of the consistent high achievers in the competition over the decades and it is a testament to committees and volunteers down the years that in 2022 that standard is maintained.

Well done on having 31 years of participation in Tidy Towns since your first entry in 1991.

Judging by the content of the entry form the drive for excellence has not diminished one whit.

You have a large committee of 22 and an equally impressive volunteer force of 40 that can be called upon to give a handout for different work programmes.

The adjudicator presumes that you have an executive of 4/5 that oversee the work schedule and promotional activity for the group with various sub-committees reporting back at regular meetings.

Well done on your all the year round involvement and also the initiatives to attract additional volunteer support no matter how small.

The adjudicator was mightily impressed with some of the new projects such as the Celebration of May Day and Community Art Classes.

These are the type of projects that re-engaged the community after a period where people's lives had been disrupted by Covid.

Credit to the individuals that came up with these ideas and more importantly made them happen.

The pictorial records show people in a relaxed mood.

The level of support from the Local Authority, other development agencies, local organizations, and local businesses is noted.

It is a testament to the committee that you can leverage such practical support when required.

Your gratitude to Tipperary County Council and Tipperary Leader has been noted and well done also in highlighting the excellent work of the Local CE Schemes over time.

Your methods of communication are excellent and combine the old reliable such as the local newsletter and the various forms of social media that are now part of all our lives.

Well done to the young person who maintains the Instagram page, the content of which is bang up to date, on your behalf.

The Birdhill Tidy Towns web presence is most professional and the adjudicator was very interested in the historical articles about the village particularly its association with the Twiss family.

Well done to all who contribute to your varied communication methods that spread the message to the wider community.

The Junior involvement in your activities is very strong and this augurs well for the future of Tidy Towns in the village.

The success that you have had in the competition has ensured a strong buy-in from local organizations and individual businesses and long may it continue.

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

The planning application for the Tourism related development of the old co-op building was noted.

Whilst the proposed development will no doubt attract additional tourism numbers to the village thus creating an economic benefit the adjudicator would hope that the history of this building and its association with the heritage of Birdhill will be reflected in some format in the new interpretative centre.

A Sale Agreed sign was observed on the old council store which suggests that the future buyer has plans to develop the premises and adjoining site.

Credit to the committee members who were responsible for the upkeep and camouflaging of both these premises over the years.

Birdhill has some focal points that would be the envy of other villages around the country.

The core area of the village is always maintained to the highest standard and this takes effort to make sure the green is cut regularly, the shrub and flower beds are tended to and stone paving and seating area are clean and tidy.

Well done on putting in place new projects in 2021.

The interactive and information element added to the Pollagh Trail is very creative and easy to use.

Whilst on this topic you are to be commended in putting QR scan friendly codes on different information boards the standard of which is top class.

Who would have thought QR Codes would make such an impactful return.

The Stumpery was also visited as was the Fernery.

Commendations also on the use of Irish language on gate signs entering the Woodland Path and Literary Trail.

The Decade of Centenaries put in place as a simple memorial using the image of a dove and painted stones are an attractive entry point on the Nenagh entrance.

Well done to all involved in the creation and implementation of these exceptional new projects.

The following are a few additional observations that this adjudicator made during the walkabout.

Coopers and Matt the Threshers as always presented to a high standard with ample parking and accessibility for patrons

The Old Barracks has a new business and a unique one at that.

Continued success to the owners of the well presented and ultra-modern Coffee Roastery.

Information Boards are a feature of the village and the central map with legends and QR codes on the gable end wall of the Matt the Threshers is an excellent example for other villages and towns to copy.

The Community Park was in pristine condition and the fountain feature on the Limerick entrance was well presented.

The adjudicator noted that private residences were all presented to a high standard some with exceptional frontages.

Road surfaces were good and traffic calming measures were adequate to cater for high volumes of traffic. Signage and street lighting were of a good standard.

Finally just a positive comment on the standard of presentation of Railway Station and its surrounding area including the excellent tranquil garden.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The village abounds, as you rightly point out in the entry form, in Green Spaces including grassland, woodland and meadowland, standalone planters and permanent stone beds all of which were presented to an exceptionally high standard.

Part of the entry form asks the entrants to "demonstrate the year round impact of landscape works in your community you are encouraged to provide photographs"

Thank you for the extensive number of pictorial records which were much appreciated by this adjudicator.

Well done on your commitment to pollinator and wildflower planting and the adjudicator noted this during an extensive walkabout through the various trails and to the extremities of the village.

You are privileged as a village to have many of these spaces that serve as natural habitats and recreational amenities for the local community.

This is a category that Birdhill has done well down the years and this year is no different.

Expertise in landscaping matters is strong within the committee.

Support from local land owners and Tipperary County by way of access to various lands to develop walking routes is certainly an endorsement of your work and how it impacts positively on the community as a whole. Part of the Tidy Towns Handbook refers to the need for planting design and arrangements to aim to enhance the local biodiversity and the overall ecological health of the locality. The committee has endeavoured to promote this concept to the fullest and this will be reflected in the next category. The following are a few personal observations. The new sports field is an excellent addition to the community and the planting of 41 oak saplings is welcomed. Very attractive entrance to the Railway Station with maintained edges and planters along the way. Excellent Say it With Flowers Information Board in the Railway Garden. Nice touch to be seen at the Information Hub (Old Telephone Box) with an excellent planter of colourful begonias and street furniture made from recycled material. Similarly, at the fountain area on the Limerick Road end, there was a nice permanent bed of annuals complemented by seating and a planter box. One was taken by the use of tree stumps to indicate biodiversity attractions aka the Moon Garden. The Community Garden is a haven of tranquilly and inclusivity, and the communication board is both novel and practical. Credit to those entrusted with the upkeep of this excellent amenity. Finally a positive comment on the modification of mowing and its effectiveness can be seen on the embankment on the Limerick Road entrance.

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

There is a large volume of information on this category inputted in your entry form and the adjudicator will endeavor to reflect as best as possible whilst making his own observations as well. The key components of this category are knowledge of local species and habitats and an understanding of the types of protected areas such as Natural Heritage Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Reserves, and Wildfowl Sanctuaries. It is also important to know Biodiversity and the Law such as the Wildlife Act and Habitats & Birds Directive. The adjudicator feels that as a Committee you have embraced these concepts and understand the principles involved. Good work is being done in the area of wildlife preservation and its promotion in an overall context. The projects that you have listed are varied and more importantly are practical, quite a lot of which necessitate ongoing maintenance. All were visited by the adjudicator who, being a walking enthusiast was most impressed with the Pollaghs Trail and Terry's Interactive Trail mobile option. The Community Orchard is an excellent amenity and it is noted that children from the local National School are very involved in seed planting and other mini-projects related to the orchard. You are to be commended for organising an Applefest and giving a demonstration on pressing fruit for local consumption. The adjudicator accessed the excellent website to view wildlife sightings down the years, what an extensive body of work. Credit is due to those that compiled this compendium. As mentioned earlier in this report the Committee makes excellent use of the forms of social media to promote its activities and this is one category that has been highlighted via the website and also through Facebook and Instagram. How nice to see the lengths that you went to care for the injured Bat. Very little more to add in this category except to keep up the excellent work and consult www.pollinators.ie and www.npws.ie as well as www.biodiversityireland.ie for regular updates on biodiversity matters.

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

This category has evolved in line with Government policy and best practice guidelines as to how communities try to minimize the use of all resources so that we strive for a reduction of our environmental impact. It also creates an awareness of the effectiveness of the Circular Economy which in reality is a straightforward concept and was there albeit in different formats in decades past. Aligned to the above this is a category that very much contributes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and it is noted that you have assigned relevant goals to each of the measures that you have listed. You have listed 13 measures that you are involved in within the entry form and all fall within the objectives of this category. It is noted that one or two projects were mentioned in last year's report i.e. joining Refill. ie and the updating of the Birdhill Repair Directory?. That said the new projects that you have brought to fruition, after research and consultation, over the last year are excellent and have been well assessed by the adjudicator. One was most interested in the Hotbin Composter as indeed many Tidy Towns groups would. It will be interesting to see how it works out in the future. The Renewable Electricity Generation Project in the Community Hall is another excellent project. As we are now back to some form of normality it may be time to consider organising "real" workshops as distinct from "virtual" ones for topics relevant to this category. The first port of call could be the County Environmental Awareness Officer to ascertain what is happening within the County and if there are plans for any environmental-related workshops or seminars during the coming autumn and winter.

To get more out of this sector in terms of creating even greater awareness of all things that contribute to a more sustainable environment consider looking at the following websites for idea generation
www.localprevention.ie (LAPN) www.origingreen.ie

The Circular Economy concept is explained in detail in the following www.dccae.gov.ie and www.epa.ie where you will get a pretty good idea of what new developments have happened over the last few years

The idea of what is called a linear economy of "take, make and waste" is now being seen as not sustainable and alternatives need to be found.

You have received relatively high marks compared to other centres of similar standing in the competition so one additional mark has been awarded.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

What is impressive about your submission under this category is how you have engaged with all stakeholders including the Tipperary County Council, local businesses and members of all sectors of the community.

The message of creating a culture of zero tolerance for indiscriminate littering and issues such as no dog fouling has been sent out to the community through all forms of communication.

"Plogging" is a new buzz phrase that has appeared during the last few years and it seems it's a by-product of the dreaded Covid period.

Well done to the Litter and Tidiness Committee for organising Spring Cleans on foot of a walk about assessment and well done to young and old for engaging in the event and helping to keep Birdhill tidy and clean.

It is noted that you work in partnership with local organisations, sports clubs, schools and businesses in promoting the Partnership against Litter programme in the greater catchment area.

The positive effects of this programme were seen on adjudication day as very little litter was observed.

It was noticeable that entrances into the village from both ends of the N7 were tidy and well presented.

The core area of the village was also virtually litter-free bar a few stray wrappers.

The Railway Station was also free of litter so the extra vigilance policy at busy points in the village is paying off.

Dog Fouling has become a major issue for many centres, notably larger towns, and despite all manner of awareness campaigns it has still not been resolved satisfactorily.

Birdhill is lucky in that it is comparatively small and does not seem to be adversely affected.

Speed and directional signs were in the main visible and clean but some road markings were a little faded

Street lighting and footpaths were well maintained and as the village is devoid of overhead wires one had a clear sky view.

The Bring Bank at the back of Coopers was adequately maintained.

Well done on your contributions to Milford Hospice Care resulting from your Crisp Packing Collection project.

Finally, the public buildings National School and Community Hall at Cooleen on the Newport Road were very well presented and credit is due to those who are responsible for their upkeep.

An increase of 2 marks is warranted.

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

The private properties in the main village area were all maintained to a very high standard and it looked as if many had been recently painted or refurbished.

Your comment that most of the private properties are in the outlier area of the village but they have invested in the Tidy Towns movement by way of offering practical support like litter picking in their immediate areas is a testament to the committee's ongoing promotion of its activities.

The collage of photographs supplied shows some exceptional homesteads with equally impressive front gardens.

The old Co Op building, Council Store, and other premises including the Information Hub have been mentioned in a favourable light in a previous section so there is no point in repeating comments.

What may have been missed is boundary areas and walls and these in the main were presented to a good standard.

The Village Green is well featured in this section and has got a revived feel to it primarily as you say because of the new Coffee Shop.

Well done on the themes that you put in place over the last year.

Not sure if the cutouts of the Tipperary Hurlers have any significance this year as the limelight seems to be stolen by the noisy neighbours in the road!

Well done and extra 2 marks are warranted in this category.

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

The new playing field on the Limerick Road is a great addition to the community of the greater Birdhill area.

It looks very well and the new novel dressing rooms and parking area are well appointed and maintained.

The entrance from the Birdhill Roundabout (Applegreen) was in splendid condition with grass margins managed in accordance with good practice for the promotion of biodiversity.

It was enhanced by the new dove faillte stone and some attractive planting arrangements and it also helps that the road surface was very good.

Similarly, the entrance from the Limerick end of the N 7 was also very well presented and has the Fountain area as an enhancement as one approaches the Village.

The road to O'Brien's Bridge down by the Railway and over the bridge whilst narrow had excellent road surface and good road markings.

The Newport entrance is steep and again narrow and maybe the Stop sign at the Community Park could be repainted.

One of the village name signs on this road is a little obscured by foliage.

Overall the standard was good.

Concluding Remarks:

It was good to re-visit the idyllic village of Birdhill after a little absence most of it enforced by Covid. Birdhill has always been a high achiever in the Tidy Towns Competition and this year is no different. Well done to all the Committee for their commitment to the cause in ensuring that it has constantly retained its status. You are wished well in the future.