

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Tinahely - Tigh na hÉille</b>	Ref: <b>245</b>
County: <b>Wicklow</b>	Mark: <b>331</b>
Category: <b>C</b>	Date(s): <b>29/06/2023</b>

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2022</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2023</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	49	50
Streetscape & Public Places	80	44	46
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	43	45
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	40	42
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	19	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35	36
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>331</b>

### 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 oraibh i mbliana. Welcome to the 2023 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your entry and for your endeavours and commitment to your improving your community. Best wishes in this year's competition.

Tinahely is most fortunate to have a very strong TidyTowns committee and a large group of volunteers to help with your projects; this helps to prevent fatigue as everyone is not required to be involved in every single project over the year. The Tidy Towns group is a subcommittee of Tinahely Community Area Projects (TCP), and your group was elected in June 2022, with more than half of the committee members new to the group – quite an achievement! You actively use social media (WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram), the Tinahely website, the Wicklow People Newspaper, and notices and posters to communicate your messages; Tinahely is a busy town so you directly engage with key stakeholders in the many local groups contributing to community life in Tinahely - Men's Shed, Tinahely GAA, Tinahely walking group, Tinahely upcycling group, Active Retirement group, CE Scheme, and local estates residents' associations amongst others. Your collaborations with these groups bring all sorts of advantages for the town and certainly helps you complete your projects. You also engage with Wicklow County Council, Pobal, the PPN, and LAWPRO, among other local and national bodies, who support various aspects of your work. You engage with many local businesses for the resources and materials needed for the projects you are doing, supporting the local businesses, and getting help from them – well done! You note that former city dwellers have re-located to Tinahely in the past few years, benefitting the local economy, schools and the community in general, bringing new skills and small businesses to the area.

Likewise, you collaborate with the three local national schools on a whole range of activities to get the younger people interested in their community and the environment around them; you nominated Tinahely National School for the School's Garden Award at the Wicklow Sustainable Development Awards 2022 and they won – what a boost for the town! You alluded to the difficulties in keeping the children active in Tidy Towns as they move to secondary school in the nearby towns but perhaps the Junior Tidy Towns group could be used to entice the teenagers to remain involved. Also, bringing the students on board with the Tidy Towns programme for their Gaisce Award work in future years could be beneficial.

Your application was well presented, and the map was very clear and easy to follow so well done! Thank you for sending the three years' plan also – great for keeping the team focussed on the next steps. Do consult the latest version of the TidyTowns Handbook and the regular newsletters which are available on the website - they include plenty of suggestions and ideas for suitable projects to consider for future years.

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

Tinahely has been constructed on hilly ground, giving lots of views out over the surrounding countryside;

construction styles vary throughout the town and over time; most of the residences and premises were very well-presented - there were some attractive gardens and traditional stone walls in good condition too. Many of the buildings in the town have been painted in bright colours, highlighting their architectural features and contributing to the fine streetscape overall.

The courthouse with the garden and public space around it at Dwyer Square has been sympathetically restored to become a fine focal point in the town. Many other projects such as cleaning the Tinahely Bridge, restoring the historical water pumps, cleaning and re-lettering the granite bench and 'Tinahely' Stone in Dwyer Square, and power-washing the public areas all take considerable time and effort and greatly enhance the visual appearance of the town. Compliments to the local CE scheme workers for installing the new 'bird house' fence on Market Square to replace the old garage door in poor condition; the planters of a similar design were noted too.

The upgraded footpaths at various places around the town have improved the appearance of the streetscape considerably and your engagement with the local authority will hopefully succeed in getting further repairs and replacements completed. Tinahely National School was well-presented as was the wall around the GAA premises; the red gates at the GAA front entrance were painted and improved the area considerably. The community playground was tidy and in good condition with a good selection of play equipment for children, adult exercise machines, a skate park, and a basketball court.

St. Kevin's church and the adjoining cemetery were in very condition and there were spectacular views over the surrounding countryside from there; plenty of clover found in the lawn areas which were not overly manicured. Considerable effort has been made to clean and paint some of the unused buildings in the town, bringing them up to a good standard and heavily disguising the fact that they are not in use. A sincere well done to all who contribute to this worthwhile project as some of the details and efforts were found to be well above rolling on a coat of fresh paint, e.g., Haskins Oil Lamps and Lanterns!! It is heartening to see that renovations are ongoing on other buildings to bring them back into use; this will further enhance the streetscape in the future. Hopefully the owners of the other disused properties will follow suit.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

Tinahely finds itself in rural setting with many vistas over the surrounding rolling countryside and the town has plenty green spaces reaching out to the surrounding fields and woodlands.

The town had lots of colour with hanging baskets, planted beds of shrubs and perennials and planted containers in bloom on Tinahely bridge during the visit. New and refurbished planters in bloom were observed at different points around the town and were looking very well. The move to using pollinator-friendly plants is commended and will reap dividends over the future years; work has been ongoing to establish wildflowers around the town also.

It was heartening to read of the large quantity of new trees (500+) that were planted in the area over the past year or so - native Irish trees including field maple, hazel, hawthorn, oak, and rowan and many edible fruit trees also. The edible planting and hedges are a great idea, raising awareness of the ease with which we could grow many crops for ourselves. These bushes and trees will grow and mature and be very beneficial to the rural and town landscape for many years to come. (Beech is not actually native to Ireland but has been here for over 500 years apparently!) Distributing 100 young trees on Earth Day, 22nd April 2023 was a very simple but highly effective way to increase the number of trees around the town; hopefully everyone planted their tree and is maintaining it. Do monitor the trees around the village as they grow – check that tree ties are attached and if they are no longer needed, remove the tie and stake to avoid unnecessary damage to the tree; remove any sucker growth from the base as well.

Your ambitious plans for upgrading the picnic area were noted and during the visit, two volunteers were busy cutting paths through the longer grass; the many developments and additions planned for the picnic area will significantly improve the area as an amenity for locals and visitors alike in the future. As the area improves and matures, it might be an opportunity to get the young people to undertake annual surveys to quantify the species present and record the population sizes – more information is available at National Biodiversity Centre <https://biodiversityireland.ie/> The issues with entrance /exit onto a busy road was noted and it is great to hear that these issues are under consideration by the county council.

The upcycled planters under the heritage signs on the approach roads looked well and will brighten the signs each year; the Hacketstown Road pollinator flower bed was filling up nicely and looking very well during the visit, as was the pull-in area at Shrubwell. The planned development of a Greenway between Arklow and Shillelagh with the Railway Walk incorporated into the Greenway, and a route along the River Derry into Tinahely Town Centre, should indeed bring many more visitors into the area and boost the local economy as similar projects have done in other areas - do keep us updated on progress.

Most of the street furniture was found to be in good condition so well done for maintaining it to a high standard.

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

The town is surrounded by farmland and woodland, providing food and shelter for many species of wildlife and nature walks for residents and visitors alike. Having the Special Area of Conservation at Tomnafinoge Wood, an ancient woodland that is self-regenerating each spring, practically on your doorstep is a wonderful resource; the walks through the woodland offer exceptional opportunities to immerse oneself in nature.

The river Derry citizen science project with Tinahely National School was an excellent opportunity for the young people to learn about the importance of protecting the river while providing you with very useful information on the species present in and around the river. Engaging with the River Derry Bubbles Project helped identify the invasive species issues and provided access to professional advice on controlling the problem; some of your neighbouring Tidy Towns' groups have been working with them to manage their invasive species outbreaks too.

Your activities and projects such as choosing plants suitable for pollinators, sowing native wildflowers, planting native and edible hedges, and reducing the frequency and raising the height of grass cutting to encourage wildlife to live in the area are all beneficial to nature and biodiversity in the locality. Always refer to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan <https://pollinators.ie/> when choosing plants and bulbs because some of the most popular flowers do not yield

much nectar for insects and pollinators. Involving the schoolchildren in these projects educates them for the future and encourages them to repeat the projects at school and at home if they have space available to them. The swift and barn owl nesting boxes will hopefully begin to show positive results in the coming years – and provide great opportunities for the schoolchildren to become involved in citizen science projects. More ideas and free resources available at National Biodiversity Centre <https://biodiversityireland.ie/>

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

Tinahely has certainly demonstrated that sustainability is achievable when a community puts its mind to it! Few communities would have attempted to establish their own recycling centre, but you have successfully done so and the proceeds support projects in the community. Have you highlighted this for the Tidy Towns newsletters at any stage? Has the composting project started yet? Hopefully your own home-made compost will replace the need to purchase compost for your projects in future. Please update us next year.

The craft shop and the St. Vincent De Paul shop allow for recycling and upcycling of goods locally that one person may no longer want/need but that are in good condition, diverting them from a premature trip to landfill, while making money for other useful causes. The ladies' upcycling group sounds like a great social event as well as restoring and upcycling goods; some other groups around the country have purchased bird boxes from outside of Ireland, but your upcycling ladies made boxes from locally sourced timber – no air miles involved! And not to be outdone, the Men's Shed are busy repairing, recycling and growing vegetables locally - great for the environment locally!

Your local schools have been very active in this category as well with upcycled playgrounds, herb gardens, polytunnel, fruit and vegetable gardens, composting, sustainable transport and studying air quality near the school. With all their 'sustainable' projects, collecting their awards and hoisting their many green flags, they must hardly have time for formal classes at all – heartiest congratulations to the children and their teachers and all who help out! It appears that the schools have 'read the ideas book' already but more ideas for sustainability in the schools can be accessed through the Irish Schools Sustainability Network (<https://www.issn.ie/>) and the Education for Sustainability CLG <https://educationforsustainability.ie/> they may already be using these resources – no surprise if they are!

Tinahely won four other awards along with the one Tinahely NS won at the Wicklow County Council Sustainable Development Awards earlier this year – recognition for the many sustainable activities that take place in the town. Best wishes with your plans for more projects in the come year.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

Very little litter was found during the visit so well done to everyone involved – sustained effort over the years by the committee, volunteers and residents has resulted in a very tidy town. The Spring Clean campaign raises awareness after the winter and the litter is gathered before the grass and weeds grow and hide it; devising a Litter Management Plan for the town helps to keep everyone focused on controlling the problem. The PURE programme is a great asset to your county and it's very heartening to hear that the initial mile has expanded to nine miles in the space of a few months – further proof that the local community value the work you are doing and have felt motivated to help. The collaboration between yourselves and PURE resulted in a huge amount of historical litter and rubbish being removed from the Railway Walk; hopefully the raised awareness will lead to the walk being kept tidy in the future. Considerable efforts by your group have resulted in the new compactor bin being installed at the Railway Walk car park which appears to have reduced the litter issue there and you hope to replace more bins with the 'smart' bins. You have been active in cleaning the street furniture and planters and have been asking the council to replace the damaged bollards as soon as they can.

There was no dumping at/near the bring banks beside the fire station; one or two of the bins would have benefitted from a wash as they were getting a bit green, as was the stone sign outside the fire station.

The centre of the village was practically weed-free but there were a few weeds here and there along some of the kerbs further along the streets. It was noted that most of the back lanes were practically weed-free so well done for taking note of the comments by last year's adjudicator. There were some weeds growing out of gullies which could lead to flooding issues if not resolved.

The power washing of various areas around the town has improved their appearance considerably and cleaning the bridge now shows it off very well.

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

Tinahely has a fine streetscape of varied residences, and the majority were very well presented with many attractive gardens to catch the eye. It's great that the residents' associations work with you to keep their own areas and the housing areas were found to be tidy and well-presented during the visit. Good news for the Derry Drive residents as the old fence is getting into poor condition and part of it has been engulfed by a sycamore tree. The bank at Village Gate will definitely benefit from planting native wildflowers and the area around Bramble Hill will benefit greatly from the planting of one hundred trees there.

It is heartening to see that nature and biodiversity are recognised as very important aspects of the town and that the residents are taking positive steps to protect and enhance them; it was good to see that pollinator-friendly plants, wildflowers, and native trees have been planted around the various estates. Some estates still have large areas of short grass to be mown every week so perhaps a discussion about hay or wildflower meadows to replace some of the mown areas for the future could be with the residents' groups.

The Christmas lights competition is a great way to encourage people to get in the festive spirit and brighten up the town at the same time.

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

The approach roads to Tinahely were found tidy and relatively litter-free; the PURE mile initiative has been very successful, extending to cover nine miles in a short few months – hopefully a few more will join in and extend the litter picking even further. There are some fine stone walls around the town and most of the roads had at least one footpath permitting residents to walk in relative safety, and it was noted that the local authority plan to install further new footpaths in future.

The maintenance of the verges had been done in a wildlife-friendly way and there are many native plants and trees along the roads. A few briars/brambles were growing out of some hedges which could catch/scratch pedestrian – if one or two of the volunteers brought a pair of secateurs when doing litter picks, they could snip them away when they see them.

The heritage signs are a fine sight on approaching the village and the Upcycling group have been making planters in a bird house style fence which were noted at various places around the town. Some of the heritage signs had no planting around them; are there plans to put some plants/planters at those? The yellow pump, planter and seat near the entrance to Railway walk were looking well. Is there any way that a visitor would know if the water in the pump was safe to drink?

### **Concluding Remarks:**

The trip to Tinahely was an enjoyable one and the ongoing efforts of the Tidy Towns committee and the community in a very successful year for you were clear to be seen. You have many plans for the future, and you are wished well in your endeavours; we look forward to your entry again in 2024!