

Tidy Towns Competition 2024

Adjudication Report

Centre: Glounthaune - An Gleanntán	Ref: 130
County: Cork(South)	Mark: 374
Category: C	Date(s): 25/06/2024

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2023	Mark Awarded 2024
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	50	52
Streetscape & Public Places	80	47	49
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	48	50
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	44	46
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	25	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	66	68
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	39	41
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	38	41
TOTAL MARK	550	357	374

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu don bhliain 2024. 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 your well-structured application, great use of photography, maps and planning document. This adjudicator has passed through on occasions but never stopped to take a close look at your many amenities, both natural and constructed. It was a delight to spend some time in your green spaces and attractive residential areas. Your 3-year plan provides detail aligned to the 8 TT categories naming an individual committee member or a group as responsible. One would imagine that an individual is more accountable than a group but clearly you have widespread buy-in and excellent collaboration with many local organisations with similar or complimentary objectives. This is clearly one of the secrets to your success as the committee and volunteer body is modest in size relative to the breadth of ambitions and activities. Having area representatives from the Village, Johnstown, the Highlands, Cois Chuain, Annmount and the Woods at AGMs is important, as too is the specificity in roles and responsibilities. Both strong leadership and committed teamwork appear to be hallmarks in Glounthane TT. Congratulations on the Muintir na Tire biodiversity award. Harpers Ireland is well captured in the 7-minute video; what an incredible biodiversity and educational resource to have on your doorstep. 20,000 visitors in one-year points to its popularity and this must present additional challenges to the management team. You provide a long list of examples of 'outreach' and great examples of how well you work with new members of the community and all age cohorts. I note from your website that you stated your ambition of a bronze medal within three years. I can certainly see why you achieved a bronze in 2023.

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

There are a handful of prominent buildings and facilities in this category such as the old school/community centre in the lower village, the gothic-style church, Fitzpatricks, the Elm Tree, the playground, the national school, train station, post office, florist and a handful of other premises and buildings. The Elm Tree's investment in a very striking formal landscape with expensive pleaching and topiary makes it very eye-catching and stylish. Fitzpatrick's upgrade is very understated and smart, quite colourful but not garish, quite sympathetic to its high-profile location. The recent upgrades in the public realm, pathways and verges, the many improvements to the train station and of course the new greenway create a strong impression, good integration of new with old. There is no loss of charm or character and despite the heavy throughout of traffic your traffic control, safety measures and the many horticultural interventions ensure that Glounthane has maintained its unique sense of place.

Your play, social and new sensory space is in great condition and appears to be well used. The green space with benches at the Rising Tide is a wonderful social space. I was surprised to read that the excellent paint job was carried out by TT volunteers. You have great signage throughout the village, one or two may need a wash, the

combination of relentless rain in 2024 and overhead trees creates a never-ending cleaning requirement. The sign in the children's playground is a good example.

Your local artist did a fabulous job on the service boxes. They may be a necessity, but they are particularly incongruous in a lovely setting like yours. Flower imagery works better in your environment. Well done to all concerned.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You have many green and floriferous spaces, some that please the human eye and others that also benefit a wider range of critters. The use of containers appears to be wholly appropriate e.g. to dress the community centre in keeping with the cottage garden style. The use of tiny planters on the bridge appears to be fine, perhaps due to the ongoing commitment of the early morning waterers and the use of drought-loving pelargonium/geranium. The small containers along the wall at the parish centre adjacent to the church yard are planted with begonia. They must prove difficult to sustain. There was some weeding required in planted areas along the road opposite Fitzpatrick's but nothing that had been left get out of hand.

It was clear that a lot of hard work has taken place over the years on Craig's Field, the Sensory Garden, the Railway Garden/Centenary Garden. As a result, they are fantastic green spaces for use by all the community. Johnstown Park is a great space and ideal for biodiversity support thanks to the 5,000 bulbs planted and the late mowing regime. Your photography captures it well. The Ashbourne Walkway is indeed a restful place and the containers looked well

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

Having Harpers Ireland, a designated SAC and SPA in your front garden, as it were, is an incredible advantage and opportunity to celebrate the natural world and some of its most beautiful and interesting creatures. It is often forgotten that there are only 20 or so bird species that are truly native to Ireland, as opposed to visitors. You are lucky to have so many migratory birds in proximity. It was fascinating to read about the newly recorded water beetle and the Dunlin. I particularly like the way in which small bite-size snippets of information is shared in the signage. So often the larger signs are less accessible and occasionally they detract from the natural location. With barn owls, sand martins, 5 bat species and horses used to maintain grass and gorse what a great location for walks and talks. The huge effort put into bird hides and nesting boxes is inspirational and the Men's Shed deserve high praise indeed. This is a world class facility, and, in some ways, it is still in its infancy. Well done on your award and for the recognition of biodiversity at the Sensory Garden

The use of Yellow Rattle and Ox-eye Daisies in Crompan Park is ideal for a no-mow designation. While the semi-parasitic yellow rattle inhibits grass growth it can be hard to establish in a new setting. Sawdust sounds like an excellent organic mulch and weed suppressant. Presumably it has to be free of solvents and preservatives. This adjudicator is a big fan of beech and an admirer of your 4km of beech hedge which is coming along nicely. While it is not native, seemingly, it has been around since the 1600s and it provides so many functions, wind break for butterflies and bees, shade, a corridor and a linear fast-food restaurant for so many birds and beetles. Well done for taking such good care of it during the greenway construction.

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

Your planning framework ensures that you carefully consider all areas of sustainability each year and over multiple years. By breaking sustainability down into its constituent TT areas such as energy, water conservation, active travel, etc you are truly firing on all cylinders – to use a fossil fuel simile. The installation of 6km of LED lighting along the greenway must achieve a significant energy saving. This is clearly an excellent security measure making the greenway accessible and safe on winter evenings. Although the light fittings are downwards facing there may be an adverse impact on biodiversity and I wonder whether the lights are switched off at a certain time.

I was delighted to see that a bulk tank is used to collect rainwater for your hard-working irrigation team (couple) Presumably the new pump and pipe connected to the old water pump assists in this regard also. This is another excellent Men's Shed initiative. It is interesting to read about your trial of home-made spray for weed control. Perhaps the stronger concentration of acetic acid in the Polish vinegar will be effective. Although there are cleaning vinegars with 20% acetic acid, the 10% in the Polish is still high. While vinegar, Epsom salts and washing up liquid may be found in the home they can be very toxic when used in high concentrations, causing damage to plants, people and/or wildlife. Biodiversity Ireland are currently surveying alternatives to pesticides. Keep an eye out for their final report expected later this year.

You have access to a local SEAI expert, and it appears that you are making the very most of this member of the community. Encouraging community members to attend online courses and/or information sessions in the library must be translating into numerous retrofits and energy source conversions. It would be great to start to measure the impact (and savings) and to use it inspire others to act. It is interesting to hear about the installation of the people counter on the greenway. A measurement of its increased use would be instructive for other communities developing greenways. You are recycling clothes, reusing coffee cups and recycling fallen trees into furniture in collaboration with the Men's Shed. I particularly like the idea of the bookshelves in the post office. This is so much better than a small outdoor bookcase in our damp climate

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Glounthane was spotlessly clean on adjudication day. You have a lot of passing traffic and there are many locations where litter could accumulate. You continue to make the most of the An Taisce Spring Clean-up and you are performing superbly in the Cork CCC anti-litter awards that include weekly audits. The annual beach clean-up must be a hard physical task but so worthwhile. I saw many dog walkers and no evidence of dog fouling which is testament to your signage and availability of scoopers/mitts. You had 70 volunteers from Ely Lily focus on bindweed

in the verges this year. This is an indication of the problem that bindweed has become across the country. I hope the 20 cubic metres gathered never finds its way back into gardens. I suspect that bindweed will always be with us. Your An Gaisce students look happy in the photos. It would be great to capture their thoughts and feedback. What did they learn? Has it changed their outlook in any way? Can anything be shared with other young community members? CCC's investment in an electric road sweeper should make a huge difference to the greenway. Congratulations to everyone who devotes their time to this thankless and repetitive task especially those that do so on a weekly basis, whether it is their immediate environs or further afield. This zero-tolerance approach is what will ultimately change others who have yet to recognise the environmental and economic damage that they are causing.

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

You made no references to your larger residential areas under this category. However, it is clear from the community category that Johnstown, the Highlands, Cois Chuain, Annmount and the Woods are represented and active in the TT committee. More importantly it is clear that from the great maintenance levels that all areas and residents are invested and committed to TT principles. The Old Quarry has some interesting plants on the wall of the quarry, the Highlands has many great front gardens. The Woods were very attractive with great impact at the entrance. The Hornbeams are fabulous. The Photinia could be mulched with bark to avoid the need to spray. It is nice to see some of the newer concrete rendered boundary walls planted with ivies where otherwise they would appear incongruous in your setting. The older areas around the village that you detail in the application are delightful, full of charm and character. Small touches like the whitewashed stones and the colourful cottage gardens are picture perfect. One garden in particular is a horticultural gem.

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

This is a particularly important category for "the small glen" as you have so much road frontage and so much passing traffic, vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian. Clearly you recognise this, and you have devoted herculean efforts over the years. The addition of multiple sets of traffic lights and road narrowing to accommodate the greenway appear to have assisted in reducing traffic speed. The quality of the extensive landscaping by CCC, Pavillion and GTT, and others are a huge factor in combating the impact of vehicular traffic. Hats off to all concerned. The investment in quality landscaping by the Elm Tree and others forces drivers to take notice and reduce speed. As the L3004 cuts the village in two everything that you have done to preserve your sense of place is commendable. The replica bridges are well constructed although the link to the old dry bridge seems tenuous. The old dry bridge itself on the north side, the stone beds and the planting are very attractive.

Keep an eye on planting that obscures signage during the summer season. Some of the fastigate Oaks on the L3004 are in trouble and may need replacing. It is not unusual to lose a few. Early replacement ensures that they maintain some uniformity. The small planters around the car park at the parish community centre (referenced earlier as small and hard to sustain) are well maintained. However, they are underwhelming and under scale at the heart of the village. A more impactful planting scheme/green boundary that signals the importance of this location could also provide a sense of enclosure and more safety to the many groups using this excellent facility. These are small subjective comments. In collaboration with others, you are responsible for creating what must be one of the most attractive and biodiverse approach roads in the country, all the way from the Elm Tree to the R263 junction.

Concluding Remarks:

Thank you for submitting an excellent application that reflects the great community spirit at large in Glounthane. I am delighted to have had the opportunity to spend some time in your gorgeous location. The old school/community centre, cottage gardens and Rising Tide bar were unknown to me, and Harpers Island was a revelation. Your Men's Shed must be one of the most productive in the country and the impact that you have achieved on your approach roads is second to none. Best of luck in the competition