

Tidy Towns Competition 2024

Adjudication Report

Centre: Macroom - Maigh Chromtha	Ref: 183
County: Cork(South)	Mark: 377
Category: D	Date(s): 14/06/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2023	Mark Awarded 2024
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	52	54
Streetscape & Public Places	80	48	50
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	53	54
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	44	45
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	25	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	38	40
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	40	42
TOTAL MARK	550	363	377

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 participating in Ireland's longest-running environmental project and helping to make Ireland a better place through your commitment for the last 41 years. Your volunteers are indeed carrying the baton for future generations. It is great to see that you have many new members both local and foreign nationals that will all bring new energy and ideas in your priority areas of sustainability and biodiversity. Your new Secretary has focused on 'Communication and Collaboration' for 2024, which is key to delivering and encouraging your community to get involved and feel part of it through action. You have created a new website, Instagram account and new scan code on your signage - where you can highlight your achievements and communicate with your members on activities and plans for town enhancements and meet ups. The weather was sunny and warm– perfect for visiting your historic riverside community. Thank you all so much for the effort that you put into your entry this year. It was very clear and amply illustrated with colourful photographs of your work throughout the year.

Congratulations on your 41 years of involvement with Tidy Towns. How wonderful that the previous Secretary presented the minutes to your committee from 1984, all those years ago. Thank you also for your Working Development Plan 2024 and your very clear and useful map, you might add N, M on your legend next year. Your most significant project this year is The Famine Memorial project, funded from the book 'Muskerry through the MacSuibhne lens'. The project, being in two parts, has raised funds through publication and distribution through the Lee Valley and now the erection of the famine memorial in a very connected location to the book's story of death s by the river where many victims of the famine lay having been refused entry to the workhouse. When the adjudicator visited the site it was a sunlit and very peaceful place indeed and we could see the stone clad double level planter has been constructed but not yet planted nor the bi-lingual plaques installed. You might consider pollinator species with higher planting to the rear to screen the garage behind and consider a hawthorn hedge along the balance of the railing to give additional screening. There is no doubt that you interact well with your wider community and importantly, lots of young people feature in your work with Macroom Food festival, Music festival and Secads Multicultural festival . All 29 of your committee & volunteers , young and not so young, look great in your hi-viz vests and new portable 'Volunteers at work' signs and enjoy your meet ups/clean ups adding a bit of music to tea breaks!

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

Macroom is fortunate to have the river and castle as primary attractions and use for visitor and the community of Macroom. You have a number of projects in the pipeline including Masseytown upgrade, Briery Gap redevelopment and Macroom's Heritage Led Regeneration Plans. We can see that some work has been done work on many derelict premises, and notices erected on others – keep up your communications with the Municipal District Cork

county council and we commend you on your persistence on this with many successful outcomes. Street art is very well used in the town on gable walls and in laneways creating interesting messages as well as highlighting the history of the town. The new Masseytown mural is so vibrant and of such a high quality mentioning apple and cherry trees in the text! I wonder if this might inspire some theme planting for the town with abundant varieties of both apple and cherry trees that could thread through the town enhancing pollination while creating colourful spring flower displays. Well done on the new signage and also on the maintenance of the existing signs although the sign near the entrance to the river walk at the junction needs attention as well as the picnic bench needing repainting outside O' Riada's. On the day of the adjudicators visit the tree signs were very clearly readable but in some cases the trees were overgrown with other wild plants and could benefit from clearing around each tree and mulching to ensure that your efforts are maintained. New outdoor seating has been installed and very comfortable indeed providing a welcomed break from our walking tour of Macroom. We loved that some of the shop fronts had hand painted signs on the paintwork e.g. The Drapery Store, The Geary Bar, Lynches Bakery and Lynch Electrical and many shop windows had displays as well as south Square old advertising of 'Players Navy Cut cigarettes'! It would be great to see more signs on buildings explaining their rich history and we commend you on your promotion of the County Council painting grant scheme and IRD-Love Paint evident in the streetscape. Lovely fastigate oak trees give a great sense of scale to the street leading up to the school and more tree planting should be encouraged throughout your carparks, open spaces and streets as well as the removal of dead trees. It was a pleasure to wander down through the town and into the fairy park, and around the old mill and the castle of your town many pollinator-friendly plants and many bees were enjoying the resource that you've created here consider substituting more bedding plants for these as you plan ahead.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

We could see that the grass was just mowed following your 'NO MOW MAY' programme in many areas and also the adoption of the idea of leaving areas un-cut for biodiversity areas in Oakwood Court. The recently completed housing development at Pairc Uí Mhuiríthe has some lovely planting and the community can look forward to the flowering of their planted bulbs next spring.

You might try planting more areas with wildflowers but please make sure that any wildflower seeds supplied are native in provenance and as locally sourced as possible.

Your success in securing funding from Cygnus has ensured that the open space on this approach road and entrance to the town shows pride of place in its maintenance of the planting and grass. Have you considered 'low-mow' areas of grassland here and in other open spaces instead of the closely cut grass. The many flower beds throughout the towns were very well maintained and give a wonderful splash of colour at the Grotto, Town Square and throughout the town no doubt many assembled in the Men's Shed where we saw many planted ready to be moved into place as well as upcycling in progress. Consider creating ecological corridors where there is a food source and resting place for pollinators every 20 metres by leaving areas unmown / planting your pots window boxes and hanging baskets with pollinator friendly plants and plant native hedgerows in gardens and open spaces. The famine memorial project is underway and should be completed later this year, which we look forward to seeing next year!

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

You're taking the very important step in this category – liaising with the County Council Ecologist on your Pollinator Plan 2020. You have some very valuable habitat areas here including The Gearagh and the meeting of the River Lee and River Sullane. You could also look at sourcing of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan. There will be funding for this and a well-designed plan by an expert would be a benefit. Any information you have gathered -share your information with the National Biodiversity Data Centre as all such information is valuable. Your composting area was viewed as well as your informative Biodiversity information signage and plant labelling in the Fairy and Sensory Garden. You have new tree-planting carried out in various areas including the Fairy Garden and St. Colman's Biodiversity Park. Swift boxes and bat boxes have been placed around the town, they might have succeeded in attracting new residents! Bee scrape signs were spotted at the river side entrance to the fairy garden, well done on educating the public and continue extending your signage to more areas. Consider Citizen Science projects; this has been a most positive innovation in recent years and is of huge value in gathering data.

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

We are delighted to read of your many diverse, sustainable and practical projects and initiatives such as promotion of the New Plastic Bottle recycle programme within the community through effective promotion within the community. Up cycling and reuse through clothes repairs computer and phone repairs as well as the encouragement and education of the correct disposal of unusable items as well as the men's shed successful enterprise with using recycled pallet wood for their Kindling, birdhouses and Christmas decorations ensures that 'doing more with less' is considered in Macroom. Some of the stand-outs of your entry here are your presentations to schools on sustainability and your schools supporting Green schools Programme through Clean air week, cycling programmes, keep cups and water bottles to reduce waste as well as the replacement and addition of new seating manufactured from recycled materials. Good to see the new Hi-Viz vests incorporate the SDG for climate, water, packaging and aquaculture. Successful installation of the TT Rain Harvester in many gardens as well as the men's shed and your leaf composting, demonstrates your commitment to sustainability. Keep this up!

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your anti-litter actions are very visible and Macroom was substantially litter-free on adjudication day, a great achievement! Your participation in the 'National Spring Clean programme' was a success where you focused on the litter/cigarette butts in the picnic and seating areas and encouraged residents in housing estates and approach

roads participate. Amazing the power of people and it creates a greater sense of community and pride when the work is done. In addition you have successfully lobbied your district office for reinstatement of street maintenance staff which when recruited will help with the problem areas and liaise with you and your Tus & RSS scheme workers to further reduce litter and keep signage, street furniture clean and upgraded as required. Your new solar compactor bin at Supervalu we saw in action as well as your Doggie Poo Bins. Generally your signage was well maintained, but the signage at O' Riada's as well as the picnic benches were looking a little neglected on the day of our visit and I understand that this is one of the areas for redevelopment.

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

It is great to see work has started on many housing developments both old (unfinished), derelict and new providing opportunities for enhanced open spaces and increased biodiversity. On the day of our visit it was fantastic to see work has started Oakwood Court biodiversity area, and it was buzzing with bee activity where the area was planted with Birch Cherry and oak trees. The new housing scheme above this, Pairc Uí Mhuirithe, has a lovely play area and was very clean with good access and but could benefit from more tree planting. There are some signs of derelict housing on some streets but areas like Barretts Place and Sleaveen Road are now being sold and redeveloped providing much needed housing for the Town. The committee's monitoring of other derelict properties like these will encourage the reduction of dereliction. Your awareness campaign for residences to avail of the painting grant scheme has had some uptake in the town with potential for more applications. One of the more prominent buildings such as bus station entrance has a large gable as well as many houses on the main street which could benefit from a 'make-over'.

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

The approach roads looked really well on our visit with the Hartnetts Cross, creating a wonderful welcome both through signage, planting and the backdrop of the castle gate created a great sense of place. The removal of the bill board opposite the Bull has improved the view and no longer creates an obstruction while the wildflower planting here is thriving and could be extended. The bus station could be considered an approach to Macroom, unfortunately it looked neglected and purely functional with planters on the boundary wall empty of planting. It is great to see that Foroige continue to be involved and doing a good job on the flower beds at the Graveyard as well as volunteers and residents actively cleaning the pavements verges and streets during National Spring Clean-up days. The entrance and egress points of the village are well-flagged and signed and it was great to see many bi-lingual signs in the Town. Roads and pavements were spotless as if they had been just swept some exceptions might be on the Towns busy areas where discarded cigarette butts were visible. You might consider specific Hubbub ballot street bins - an innovative way to encourage smokers to discard their butts! The street art was a highlight in the town and brings a vibrancy to the approach roads at Masseytown, Town Park entrance to name but a few. The streets accessing Dunnes Stores and the Mart have good way-marking for a pedestrian highlighting pedestrian routes in red, maintains safety in a busy car-dominated zone with some large planters.

Concluding Remarks:

It was such a pleasure to spend a morning in Macroom. It was fortunate that the sun shone throughout our visit. We were very impressed with your ongoing commitment to improving your town and continuing to encourage volunteers to join you. We know that it is no small task to keep any Town looking so well. Many thanks for all your great work.