

SuperValu TidyTowns Newsletter

Issue 4-2023

The SuperValu TidyTowns competition, administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development and sponsored by SuperValu, supports the Sustainable Development Goals

A Chairde,



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2040



SuperValu



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

Welcome to our fourth issue of the SuperValu TidyTowns newsletter of 2023. Thank you to all of the groups who have submitted their entry for the 2023 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. We have over 870 registered entries, what an impressive amount of villages, towns and large urban centres across the country doing their but to make their place, a better place.

Thank you also to all the groups who entered the Special Awards. Adjudication by the national panel of Adjudicators has commenced since early June so continue with the efforts, in some cases your Adjudicator may be but in other cases, they are on their way.

The results will be announced in early October but until then, can we once again thank each and every one of you and wish you all the very best of luck in this years competition. We would once again encourage you all to ensure your entry has been received and registered by checking the list of registered entries on the TidyTowns website under the competition, page at this link; <https://www.tidytowns.ie/competition/registered-entries/> If your entry is not there, please do get in touch immediately.

In this issue we bring you stories from around the country, President Higgins's visit to Trim, Champion status for Rush TidyTowns in the area of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Stories from Kilbride TidyTowns, Kilrush TidyTowns and a lovely poem from one of our now resident Poets, Denis Heffernan from Emly. We also bring you the results of the 2023 Ireland's Best Kept Towns, congratulations to each of our worthy winners.

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Communities in Bloom 2023

Throughout July and August, qualified volunteer Canadian and International judges will visit participating communities and evaluate each on its overall performance within the following criteria: community appearance, environmental action, heritage conservation, tree management, landscape, and plant and floral displays. This comprehensive evaluation provides guidance on continuous community improvement and is based on the local conditions and achievements of residents, businesses, organizations, institutions, and municipal government, all working together towards common objectives, and making

community engagement an essential component of the program.

The communities will be rated from 1 to 5 Blooms, based on the scoring obtained. Also, the national and international communities will aim to obtain Bronze, Silver or Gold levels in their 5-Bloom rating. This year Ennis in Clare will be representing Ireland on the International stage and we wish them every success.

Our Values



**An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail**
Department of Rural and
Community Development

The Department of Rural and Community Development prides itself on delivering excellent customer service. We are committed to our values of Respect, Integrity, Innovation and Connectedness.

Rush Tidy Towns – SDG Champions



Rush Tidy Towns Appointed Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Champions for 2023-2024

Rush Tidy Towns are delighted to announce they have been appointed by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications to be Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Champions for 2023-2024.

The 2023-2024 SDG Champions Programme, developed by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, aims to raise public awareness of the SDGs and to demonstrate that everyone in society can make a contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

26 national champions have been selected from across the public, private, community, voluntary, youth and NGO sectors and are represented by larger, national organisations and smaller, community groups.

The role of an SDG Champion is to act as an advocate and promoter of the SDG's and a good practice example of how an organisation can contribute to the SDGs and integrate them into their work and activities.

Speaking about the launch event, Minister Ryan said:

“I am delighted to be relaunching the SDG Champions programme for 2023-2024. We are facing major challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with unprecedented pressures on our planet, economy and society, as well as the impacts brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Now is the time to accelerate action towards achieving the goals, to build back better while leaving no-one behind.”

Speaking about the nomination, Rush Tidy Towns SDG lead Annette Fuhrman said

“Rush Tidy Towns is very excited to embark on this journey to drive awareness and advocacy over the course of the year, and we are committed to contributing to and working in partnership to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda in Ireland and showing how individual and local actions contribute to a more sustainable and better world for all”

About Rush Tidy Towns

Rush Tidy Towns is a volunteer-based organisation located in Rush North County Dublin with strong roots within the Community of Rush. We are engaged in managing the delivery of a diverse range of projects across the genres of Biodiversity, Sustainability, Litter Awareness, Gardening, Community events and local amenity delivery in conjunction with Fingal County Council.

In recent years we have gone from strength to strength in both the delivery of our projects for the community as well as enhanced relationships with the wider community, clubs, organisations, businesses, schools, as well as local and national organisations and authorities. In the most recent Tidy Towns competitions we have been awarded several awards in recognition of our work.

- The EPA Circular Economy Award (2021)
- The Climate Action Award (2022)
- Sustainable Development Goals Award (2022)
- National Pride of Place runners up in the towns over 5,000 population judged on all aspects of community living (2022)

The behavioural and societal change required to achieve the ambitious goals of the SDG's necessitates a multifaceted and multi-level engagement from micro to macro. Rush Tidy Towns have strong relationships within the community and a track record to deliver. Through our diverse work we contribute to all 17 SDG's on various levels. For more information on the ongoing initiatives within Rush Tidy Towns please visit our Facebook page.



Left to Right, Paula Lopez, Rush Tidy Towns, Minister Eamon Ryan, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications Annette Fuhrmann, Rush Tidy Towns



The SDG Champions for 2023-2024

Well done to everyone in Rush Tidy Towns on this fantastic achievement in being selected as champions and ambassadors for the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We look forward to hearing all about your plans and initiatives in this regard.

Presidential visit to Trim

Trim in County Meath are the current title holders of Ireland's Tidiest Town having won the competition in 2022. To acknowledge their success, President of Ireland, Micheal D. Higgins and his wife Sabina paid a visit to Trim earlier this month to unveil a plaque commemorating the town's success.

The sun shone brightly on Trim on Saturday June 3rd, as the streets were lined with well-wishers hoping to get a glimpse of the Presidential party as they drove through the town on route to the newly opened Trim Library and Culture Centre.



Children from local schools and groups formed a guard of honour and welcomed the Presidential Party with great enthusiasm.

Jackie Maguire Chief Executive of Meath Local Authority addressed the crowd and invited President Higgins to speak. This was Jackie's last official engagement and we wish her well for the future.

As always the president's words were insightful and encouraging and complimentary of the work that Tidy Towns

groups do across the country on a daily basis.

Brian Heffernan Chairperson of Trim Tidy Towns then spoke and applauded everyone who supported the Town in its endeavours to take the national title for the fourth time, yes the fourth time.

Musical entertainment was provided during the visit by GLUAIS, they are a band from Scoil Mhuire, Trim, Co Meath and are directed by music teacher Mr Mícheál Kerr. President Higgins then unveiled the plaque.



Irelands' Best Kept Towns 2023

The results of the 2023 Ireland's Best Kept Towns competition for 2023 were announced at an event in Farmleigh House in Dublin on June 20th. This is an all-island competition whereby entrants to the SuperValu TidyTowns competition compete with entrants from the Best Kept competition in Northern Ireland. Doreen Muskett MBE from the Northern Ireland Amenity Council and Mary Hurley, Secretary General of the Department of Rural and Community Development were on hand to announce the winners and to present the awards.



Blackwater in Wexford named as Ireland's Best Kept Village



Carrick on Shannon in Leitrim picked up the title as Irelands Best Kept small town and the overall title.



Enniskillen in Fermanagh were named as Ireland's Best Kept Large Town



Antrim took the title of Ireland's Best Kept Large Urban Centre.



Here we see the group from Carrick on Shannon in Leitrim pictured with Doreen Muskett MBE from the Northern Ireland Amenity Council and Mary Hurley, Secretary General of the Department of Rural and Community Development. The town who proudly took home the title of Ireland's Best Kept small town for 2023 and the overall title of Ireland's Best Kept Town 2023. Congratulations to you all.

Fairtrade & TidyTowns

Aidan Ring who is the Communities Outreach Officer with Fairtrade Ireland got in touch to talk to us about TidyTowns, conscious consumption and Fairtrade

Conscious consumption is the idea that we can make a difference to the world around us through the choices we make when buying things. For Tidy Towns groups the idea of buying local is increasingly important as more value and jobs can be retained in local communities if we spend our money locally.

Conscious consumption can also refer to buying less, and buying products that meet other sustainability criteria.

Think Global – Act local!

The Fairtrade scheme covers commodities like coffee, cocoa, bananas, sugar, tea and others that grow in warm tropical parts of the world. There are a range of these products now available in most shops in Ireland. It is supported by most of the overseas charities and Fairtrade works to ensure that the primary producers of the goods we buy get a better deal through what we are buying from them.

‘It’s amazing to know that something so simple as your shopping basket can help someone in Africa -
Connie - Carrick-on-Shannon’



In recent years during Fairtrade Fortnight in February, some Tidy Towns groups have become interested in Fairtrade as another way of supporting sustainability. Newcastle West, Adare and Bruff in Limerick and the Tidy Towns group in Carrick on Shannon in Leitrim have all gotten involved.

Aidan Ring, the Communities Outreach Officer with Fairtrade said;

‘It aligns with strategic vision of TidyTowns, through metrics like sustainability and biodiversity, and it’s also a way to take action and make a difference – the whole idea of thinking globally and acting locally.

For more information about how Tidy Towns groups can engage with Fairtrade, please visit... or email Aidan@fairtrade.ie

Kilbride TidyTowns – Co. Meath

Denis from Kilbride TidyTowns in Co. Meath made contact with us to share a note on a very positive experience that they have had in developing a local Biodiversity Action Plan Report on local habitats and environment. With biodiversity being so topical at the moment, it may be of interest to other groups.

“Kilbride Biodiversity Action Plan Report”

During the past year Kilbride TidyTowns, secured funding, sought expertise, conducted research and facilitated the preparation of our “Kilbride Biodiversity Action Plan Report” which was funded by the “Community Foundation Ireland” and prepared by Mr. Fintan Damer, ecologist. We now have a local report and specific recommendations that will guide our efforts in enhancing biodiversity in our local habitats in the years ahead.

The grant application was seamless and the ecologist was selected from a recommended list supplied by Community Foundation Ireland and was very helpful and professional.

While the Tidy Towns group assisted Fintan in every way we could, we tried not to influence his assessments and recommendations so that we would get an independent report, on which we could base our biodiversity efforts into the future.

Lots of interesting facts and figures emerged about our local habitats and environment and while there are some very positive aspects, there are also many actions and recommendations, so that we can improve our biodiversity and the sustainability of our local environment into the future.

Examples of the findings included:

- Identification of 3 bird species which were on the Red List (high conservation concern) and 7 more species on the Amber List (medium conservation concern) and recommendations on how best to enhance their habitats.
- Evidence of the existence of a number of local mammal species, including badger, hare, otter.
- Identification of and recommendations on the control of non-native invasive plant species.
- Analysis of and recommendations on improving the quality of our local waterway, the Ward River, and adjoining streams.

We now hope to have the time, energy, volunteers and buy-in from everyone to get many of the recommendations actioned in the coming months and years.

During the process we also liaised with a photographer who photographed our wildlife, which we shared with our local school, Scoil Bhríde, who started projects on each of the species identified.

We found the project to be very informative and educational and provided for much debate on matters specifically important for our local environment, and would therefore recommend it to other Tidy Towns and community groups.



See photo of a flock of wintering yellowhammers which we identified during the project and which are on the red conservation concern list. If you've not experienced the Dawn Chorus recently, I highly recommend it. You don't have to know which bird is which (although when you do, it's even more wonderful), just get out there and let it wash over you. Wash isn't a bad verb for this. You may have heard of 'forest bathing,' well this is like Nature's Power Shower. You don't just feel refreshed, you feel positively alive and alert in ways you hadn't anticipated when you dragged yourself out of bed as the first fingers of dawn crept over the eastern horizon.

Thank you Denis for sharing this with us and well done on such a great body of work.

2022 Regional awards Ceremonies

The next of our 2022 Regional awards ceremonies will take place on Wednesday June 28th in Trim. This will be the awards ceremony for the Midlands and East region. On the night we will be presenting awards to winners in the 2022 competition from, Dublin, Kildare, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath and Wicklow.

The event is being held in St Loman's GAA Clubhouse and we wish all those attending a very enjoyable evening.

We are working on the remaining events which will cover the South East region which will take place in Blackwater in Wexford and then the event for the South West and Mid-West which will be held in Clonakilty.

We appreciate your patience on the holding of these events, more details to follow.

Kilrush TidyTowns

Brid Tevlin from Kilrush TidyTowns got in touch about a project on creating an urban Orchard with help from their Junior Tidy Towns members.

Turret Lodge Orchard and Wildflower Meadow
A Junior TidyTowns Project
By Kilrush TidyTowns

In 2017 Kilrush TidyTowns created an Urban Orchard that ultimately turned out to be unsuccessful; we had planted apple, pear, and cherry trees in cement containers and while they grew and produced some fruit, after much discussion and monitoring we decided to relocate the trees.

In April 2022 we prepared the ground at the garden area beside the Turret Lodge. The lodge was built in 1845 as a gate lodge on the Vandeleur demesne; it was the place where the landlord's estate met the town. Kilrush and District Historical Society realised their dream of having it restored in 2020 and now use it as a heritage and genealogy centre. The historical society and Kilrush TidyTowns decided to make the garden space into a wildflower meadow and orchard. Its location at the fringe of Kilrush Woods meant a manicured lawn would look incongruous, would be lacking in biodiversity and difficult to maintain.



Our junior TidyTowns members helped to prepare the area and replant the trees in April 2022. A hot, dry few weeks in the summer meant that a lot of care was needed and a watering rota was implemented to ensure that the trees survived.

In July 2022 Kilrush TidyTowns commissioned Dr Fran Giaquinto to undertake a study of the trees around Kilrush. In November Dr Giaquinto delivered a webinar on the findings of

her report which was well attended by locals and Clare County Council. The report will direct our tree care throughout the town in the coming years. Fran had much to say about the Turret Lodge orchard and meadow area. She greatly admired the setting of the orchard with a backdrop of the woods and the lovely old stone walls on the demesne. She gave invaluable advice on the care and maintenance of the trees and the nurturing of the ground around them.





At the start of March this year we carefully pruned the trees to remove any dead branches and to control the shape of the trees as they grown. In April 2023 we cut the grass and removed all the cuttings to inhibit grass growth and provide scope for wildflowers to take hold. Our junior TidyTowns crew laid recycled cardboard and placed seaweed, washed ashore in high winds, around the bases of the trees to inhibit the growth of grass. The trees will not have to compete with grass for nutrients and will have no risk of damage to the bark during the infrequent grass cutting. We know that in the first couple of years a wildflower

meadow can look a little unkempt but can already see the progress that the area has made.

Dr Giaquinto, in her report said that “this has the potential to be a glorious place where the trees can be long-lived. Apple trees, as they mature, are host to well over 350 species of lichens, mosses, and invertebrates and they represent important biodiversity habitats” This has been a very fruitful (pardon the pun!) project and while it is not yet looking its best it is already giving much pleasure to all who pass on their daily walks through the woods and the weekly Vandeleur Parkrun which passes the area every Saturday morning.



Fantastic work here, who doesn't love trees, they are vital to our very existence, thank you to all the Junior TidyTowns crew in Kilrush, the future is in safe hands.

Farewell

After close to six years working with TidyTowns in the Department of Rural and Community Development, I am taking up a new position within the Department in early July. I have to say my time spent with TidyTowns has been the most inspiring, motivating and humbling period in my 27-year career.



The ordinary people I have met doing extraordinary things to make their places great has blown me away. The towns and villages I have visited, the groups I have engaged with and the hundreds and hundreds of volunteers I have communicated with have made the journey so so enjoyable. Thank you to the Adjudication Panel and to our Sponsors for all your support. I wish each of you well with this year's competition and in to the future, may good health, good fortune and good friends be your companion on life's journey. It has been my absolute privilege and pleasure working with you all.

John

Poets Corner

June 2023

Oh what a beautiful day sunshine and flowers
To brighten our way
The smell of roses and new mown hay
What more do we want on a lovely June day.

Swallows fly high the little wren sings
The angelus bell in St Ailbes church rings
A train goes by full to the brim
A pheasant crows in the nearby glen.

Now to all Tidy Towns once again
I know you all would like to win
But its not about winning take that from me
The work you put in is there to be seen.

The judges are now all having a laugh
At the extra stuff put in our pack
With the entry form all done and dusted
Sit back and enjoy and wait to be tested.

Take time to enjoy the summer smell
The flowers and the new mown hay
The birds and the bees and every living thing
And say thanks to god for everything

Denis Heffernan

June 2023

Thank you as always Denis for bringing us these thoughtful and inspiring words.

Social Media

Communication is key, so they say and that is very true. It's good to talk, they say, but in this modern age, we communicate in many different ways. Social media is one such way in which we can share information on what we are doing and on useful hints and topics that may be of interest to other groups.

We always ask you to “Keep in Touch” and to follow our social media channels and posts so you can keep informed on what is happening the SuperValu TidyTowns world.



<https://www.facebook.com/OfficialSuperValuTidyTowns>



<https://twitter.com/TidyTownsIre>



<https://www.tidytowns.ie>



SuperValu who have been sponsoring the SuperValu TidyTowns competition for over thirty years would also encourage you to follow them and to include them on your posts so that the message can continue to travel.

SuperValu have a social media presence on Facebook and Instagram and their links are included here;

<https://www.facebook.com/SuperValuIreland/>

https://www.instagram.com/supervalu_irl/

Keep in Touch

Well that brings us to the end of another issue, of the SuperValu TidyTowns newsletter. We hope you find the articles of interest and that you continue to share your stories with us, it is your newsletter after all.

Anne, Helen & John

Department of Rural and Community Development
Government Buildings, Ballina, Co Mayo F26 E8N6

Email: tidytowns@dracd.gov.ie Tel: 01 – 773 6938



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