



SuperValu Tidy Towns

Caring for our environment

Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes



Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals

Handbook

Brought to you by the Department of Rural & Community Development



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

SuperValu

The SuperValu TidyTowns competition commenced in 1958 and has since become Ireland's best-known sustainable and environmental initiative. The competition is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development and has been proudly sponsored by SuperValu since 1991.

The competition is independently adjudicated under eight categories, these are;

**Community-
Your Planning
& Involvement**

**Streetscape
& Public Places**

**Green Spaces
& Landscaping**

**Nature & Biodiversity
in your Locality**

**Sustainability-
Doing more with less**

**Tidiness
& Litter Control**

**Residential Streets
& Housing Areas**

**Approach Roads,
Streets & Lanes**

In September 2015, 193 UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development "Transforming our World". The centrepiece of this Agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which reflect economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Throughout the entry form, you will see where many of these goals are aligned to the different TidyTowns categories. Please identify, if applicable, under each category where your projects or initiatives aim to address one or more of the sustainable goals.

You will see that the "Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes" category aligns to goals 11, 15 & 17.



This Handbook, which has been prepared with input from the national panel of TidyTowns adjudicators, is divided into sections, each category is covered individually, however, the entrant is advised not to read each section in isolation from the others. Landscaping has an important role to play in the adjudication of Streetscapes and Public Places, Residential Streets and Housing Areas and Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes, Tidiness and Litter control, likewise will be looked at in a number of categories. We would encourage you therefore to refer to all categories regardless of the project or initiative being undertaken.

Please refer to the General Information section also which contains valuable information for all TidyTowns groups.

In this section, we look at "Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes" please refer to the scoring sheet to see the marks for this category. The entry form contains the following text to assist the entrant in completing this section of their entry form;

Appropriate presentation of approach roads, including the roadside verges and their boundary treatment. The appearance of town and village streets, connecting roads, roundabouts within the 60 kph, laneways, bridges and cycle lanes. Provision for inclusive access and pedestrian connections.



APPROACH ROADS, STREETS & LANES

This category considers all aspects of approach roads, streets and lanes in a TidyTowns centre. The road networks in our cities, towns and villages facilitate the movement of cars, public transport vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. As a result, the appearance, functionality and the convenience that roads, streets and lanes offer motorists, cyclists and pedestrians are primary considerations under this category and they should be considered when TidyTowns groups and their project partners in Local Authorities, Government Departments and National Agencies (such as the Transport Infrastructure Ireland) are devising projects to maintain or to improve.

The road networks in our cities, towns and villages also have a significant influence on our ability to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. This influence principally lies with how road space is allocated to different transport modes as poor or limited provision for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users will encourage people to avoid these sustainable modes and instead, to use private cars. The Sustainable Development Goals require us to change our transport behaviour by using active travel modes (like cycling and walking) and to avail of public transport more regularly. There are 3 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) relevant to this category – Developing Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11), Life on Land (Goal 15) and Partnerships for the Goals (Goal 17)). TidyTowns groups should be mindful of the opportunities that projects under this category can offer to meet these SDG's, particularly with respect to promoting active travel (like cycling and walking) and making public transport more attractive.

What the Adjudicator considers

The presentation and appearance of:

- Approach roads, including roadside verges and boundary treatments
- Town / Village streets and connecting roads
- Roundabouts within the 60 kmph zone
- Laneways, back areas and bridges
- Cycle lanes
- Pedestrian connections and inclusive access
- Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals

Note: TidyTowns groups and volunteers are reminded that their safety and welfare must always take priority. In order to ensure the safety of volunteers, TidyTowns groups are encouraged to seek the advice of An Garda Síochána prior to undertaking projects on roads, roadsides and road verges.

APPROACH ROADS, INCLUDING ROADSIDE VERGES AND BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

First impressions of a city, town or village can be strongly influenced by the appearance and condition of its approach roads. Approach roads are very suitable for planting trees to form avenues that greatly enhance the visual appearance and sense of arrival to a town or village. Guidance on the choice of trees and after care can be found in the Handbook section entitled ‘Green Spaces and Landscaping’.

Often referred to as the ‘shop window’ of a town or village, maintaining approach roads to a good standard is particularly important under this category. The appearance of the approach roads can often depend on issues like the condition of the road surface, road markings and signage. It is acknowledged that responsibilities for these issues can rest with Local Authorities or Transport Infrastructure Ireland. However, TidyTowns groups are encouraged to contact their Local Authorities or Transport Infrastructure Ireland in order to seek their assistance in resolving matters that are negatively affecting the appearance or the functionality of their approach roads.

The appearance of roadside verges is also important and their regular maintenance is encouraged. Verges can be improved by clearing litter, planting trees and maintaining signage. Clutter, often caused by temporary signage or other elements, should be avoided. Grass cutting should also be undertaken but consideration should be given to retaining wildlife ‘strips’ of vegetation growth along road verges as a means of conserving habitats and promoting biodiversity. These wildlife strips can incorporate species such as long grass, wildflowers and nettles. The condition of boundary treatments also influences the appearance of approach roads. Repairing gaps or breaks in fences and stone walls is encouraged. Consideration should be given to retaining or planting natural boundaries, such as native hedgerows, as they make a positive contribution to biodiversity and are often more suitable to rural settings. If fencing is necessary to enclose farm land or private property, the fencing should be placed inside the natural boundaries.

TOWN / VILLAGE STREETS AND CONNECTING ROADS

Central town or village streets are often highly visible and attract the largest number of cars, cyclists and pedestrians. Therefore, regular maintenance of central town or village streets is normally required to ensure that they look their best and create a positive impression for visitors and residents. TidyTowns groups are asked to focus on litter picks, weeding and other general maintenance tasks that ensure a tidy appearance. Groups are also encouraged to deal with the other issues that influence appearance such as the condition of road and pavement surfaces, street furniture (e.g. public seating and public art), litter bins and lamp posts by discussing these matters with other interest groups such as Residents Associations, a Chamber of Commerce or Local Traders Association and also with the relevant Local Authority. Partnership approaches between TidyTowns groups and local businesses to maintaining central town and village streets are welcomed. While connecting roads attract less vehicle and pedestrian traffic than central streets, it is recommended that they are also maintained, but at less regular intervals than busier streets.



ROUNABOUTS WITHIN THE 60 KMPH ZONE

In many larger centres, roundabouts on approach roads mark the transition between the rural and urban environment and they are often used to display public art forms and landscape features. This practice can be a very effective means of emphasising the distinctiveness of a village, town or city and it also helps to create a positive first impression for residents and visitors. While TidyTowns groups are encouraged to consider adopting this practice in new centres and continue it in existing centres, it should be noted that the advice of the relevant Authorities (either the City or County Council and / or Transport Infrastructure Ireland) is required prior to any works taking place.



LANEWAYS, BACK AREAS AND BRIDGES

The development of inner relief roads and car parks to the rear of shopping streets has opened up new dimensions to towns and the presentation of laneways, side streets and back areas has become an important aspect in TidyTowns adjudication. A range of common problems have been identified which include dilapidated buildings and sheds, walls in poor condition, the dumping of material and views of the backs of buildings. It is strongly recommended that the above issues are dealt with when new car parks in back land areas are at design stage or when existing car parks are being upgraded or improved.

New roads into back areas should be properly landscaped with mass planting of trees and shrubs, and walls and paving materials and construction should be consistent with the surrounding area. Attractive screens, screen planting or murals can be used to hide rear yards and service areas that appear unattractive. Suggested actions may include tree and shrub planting to screen the backs of buildings, demolition of derelict walls and buildings (possibly under the Derelict Sites Act), the construction of new walls and fences (which avoid fencing styles and materials which are out of keeping with the locality), permanent planted beds and the lime washing of walls. Old walls that support a typical wall flora of valerian, ferns, pennywort, lichens and mosses often make positive contributions to biodiversity and they should not be disturbed. Road and rail bridges can form attractive and distinctive features in our cities, towns and villages. TidyTowns groups are encouraged to engage with the relevant Authorities (such as their Local Authority or Iarnród Éireann) to ensure that these features are conserved and maintained wherever possible.

The appearance of car parks is also a consideration during adjudication. Car parks should be well signposted, surfaced with tarmac, rolled chippings or grit, and delineated with stone walling, timber rails or bollards. There should be adequate lighting. Shade tree planting is welcome in car parks, such as lime, sycamore or plane, but should be protected from damage by vehicles with kerbs or bollards. In choosing tree types one should also be aware of possible damage to cars by droppings from roosting birds.

CYCLE LANES

Cycling is enjoying a resurgence in popularity in our towns and cities with larger numbers, in all age groups, using bicycles as a means of travelling to work, school or college and for taking exercise. This has many positive benefits including improved urban air quality, less carbon emissions and lower traffic congestion. The development of greenways for cyclists has also boosted tourism. Therefore, it is sensible to grow the numbers who use bicycles. This can be achieved by enhancing existing facilities for cyclists, such as cycle paths and greenways, by ensuring that cycle paths are maintained to a good standard and by requesting Local Authorities to address defects in cycle lane surfacing and signage.

Improvements in cycling facilities are also desirable as a means of promoting active travel and for achieving our Sustainable Development Goals. Suggested improvements could include the development of dedicated greenways for cyclists and pedestrians, reallocating road space to facilitate cycle paths on existing roads and streets and developing (preferably covered) cycle parking areas. TidyTowns groups are encouraged to engage with their Local Authorities and identify areas that are suitable for greenways, as these facilities would deliver benefits for both residents and visitors. Cycle parking areas should be developed in highly visible central areas with good public lighting. Groups are also encouraged to work with schools, Local Authorities and clubs to identify opportunities to develop safe cycle routes (for example between housing areas, schools, parks and sports grounds) on existing roads. Groups should consider completing audits of cycle lanes and cycle parking areas in their towns and villages in order to identify gaps in the routes and any improvements that are possible. These audits could be undertaken with the assistance of schools, youth and sports groups and / or local cycling clubs and the results should be discussed with Local Authorities and Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS AND INCLUSIVE ACCESS

Walking is a particularly important active travel mode for all age groups but particularly children and the elderly. As a result, the appearance, condition and user friendliness of paths and pedestrian connections within a TidyTowns centre are all important considerations during adjudication. TidyTowns groups are encouraged to pay close attention to the appearance and condition of paths throughout their areas by regularly clearing litter and weeds (particularly at pavement kerbs). Groups are also encouraged to look at the convenience that pedestrian connections and pathways offer users around Community Facilities (such as schools, churches, community halls and parks), public transport sources (bus stops and railway stations) and shops. Narrow paths, gaps along the route of a pathway and poor surfaces all discourage walking and detract from the convenience of pedestrians. Poorly positioned sign and lighting poles, substations, litter bins and street furniture can also cause problems. Inclusive access is a particularly important consideration for people with mobility impairments, the elderly and parents with prams or buggies. Pavements should be sufficiently wide, surfaced to an acceptable standard with ditching provided at junctions in order to ensure that they can meet the requirements for inclusive access. The identification of 'Trip Hazards' along footpaths and walking surfaces in general should be noted. It is recommended that TidyTowns groups should take note of these issues when carrying out their maintenance work and engage with their Local Authorities on how defects can be addressed and improvements can be made.

Good quality pedestrian connections with inclusive access that are regularly maintained will provide for a much more positive experience for pedestrians. This will facilitate a change in transport behaviour by encouraging greater numbers of people to walk and avoid using their cars for short journeys. This will also enable the achievement of our Sustainable Development Goals by reducing carbon-based emissions, limiting traffic congestion and improving air quality.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, Tidy Towns groups have two significant functions under this category. The first relates to ensuring that the network of approach roads, streets, lanes, cycleways, paths and back areas in your area are regularly maintained and looking well. This function should be undertaken in partnership with other voluntary groups and the Local Authority.

The second function involves identifying defects that need to be addressed and improvements that are required in order to aid the achievement of our Sustainable Development Goals. It is also recommended that groups work closely with the relevant National and Local Authorities to address the issues and deliver the required improvements on a phased basis.



OTHER GUIDANCE

More detailed guidance on the design of new urban road and street schemes can be found in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) which is available from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government www.dmuers.ie and supplementary information on DMURS manual can be found on www.dmuers.ie/supplementary-material



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