

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: Letterkenny - Leitir Ceanainn	Ref: 704
County: Donegal	Mark: 355
Category: G	Date(s): 12/06/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	50	51
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45	46
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	52	53
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	43	44
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	21	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	39	40
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	41
TOTAL MARK	550	346	355

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Thank you for your clearly laid out map which was very useful during our period of adjudication in the town. You have responded to last year's comments on the length of the competition application and this year we note that you have submitted a much more concise and easier to read application. This makes all the difference to us judges in assessing your centre and means we are less likely to miss details of your works. You clearly have a very structured approach to the competition with 8 teams taking particular responsibility for specific categories. The scale of works you address is commendable considering the number of regular volunteers you have to help. As you say for many volunteers, becoming involved in the Tidy Towns can be a great way of positively integrating new residents into your community. It is positive to see so many of your group also contribute to other community efforts in the town and a real sense of community support and interaction is evident in the application. The last few years have shown us all the possibilities of alternative methods of communication and your digital communication team looks to have been a positive outcome of our lockdowns by promoting new methods of communication with the community and within the group. As ever, through your youth officer you communicate effectively through the schools and collages with the younger generations of Letterkenny, and we congratulate your local student on his particular study of hedgehogs with your support. Letterkenny has gained a reputation as a centre which addresses a varied range of challenges in your home place, head on, and the people of Letterkenny should be rightly proud of all the works done by the group. Be in no doubt that the range of agencies you link with and the other local community groups you interact with is a key to your successful advancement in this closely contested competition.

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

The works proposed at the Cathedral Quarter look very encouraging. The mosaic is a lovely piece of art combining a signage function with a modern way of highlighting this special area of the town. Your use of street art to communicate important topics both here and with your bees has been very well executed in the town. The information signage on the gate at Church Lane, highlighting how the plan is to turn roads into streets is a very positive message as facilities for pedestrians are poor in this important link street with parking taking precedence over pedestrian space and accessible paths. We look forward to seeing this transformation. The Letterkenny Regeneration Strategy 2040 is a great opportunity for the town. Use your voice to ensure all the Sustainable development goals are considered and that for example sustainable urban drainage elements such as rain gardens are part of this reallocation of space. The new planted areas at the road works at Convent Road are an example of how the reallocation of road space can make junctions more pleasant places and we hope they will be planted by next year's visit. The road junction at Glencar and Dr McGinley Road is another spot when the extent of hard paving

could be much reduced and opportunities to convert road space to soft landscape and install feature trees to highlight the junction, could be examined with the local area Engineer. Your input into the progression of blue green infrastructure in the town can advance many categories in the competition and bring multiple benefits to your residents. The Laurance collection mural is a thoughtful example as to how people both in the past and now, form our places and bring life to spaces. Your ability to use new forms of communication will be further enhanced with the street art app. Good luck with progressing this. The paint the town initiative will help bring a coordinated theme to the streets as colour can be so important with the Gray sky's often present over our towns. Look to upper floors when assessing streets and aim to have old sign poles/Christmas decorations/ and peeling paint remedied even where the ground floor is well presented. Shop fronts were well presented with the signwriting at Mourne Antiques admired. Following on from the last few years reports well done in proactively addressing the problem of dereliction with the Local Authority and we hope the conference was enlightening for all.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The use of seasonal planting can be an important tool to highlight key places in the town especially where space may not allow permanent planting. The range of roundabouts you have due to traffic management decisions in the town make for a range of eye-catching planted display. 10% is a good start in providing seasonal colour with pollinator friendly plants but achieving 50% this year would be even better. Let us know the results of your review in next year's submission. There may need to be changes in how the planting is acquired and maintained. The effort you have put into tree planting in the town is great to see. The key to increasing tree cover in our towns is to look at reallocating space from uses such as car parking or excessive paving and then new opportunities for planting may be possible with the help of the Town Gardener. Look beyond tradition parks and open spaces for the opportunity to change Letterkenny from Gray to green. The towns allotments seem to be busy and well maintained. Due to the topography of your town there are many grass slopes that must be difficult to maintain. Consider letting some of these develop into wildflower banks with a reduced mowing regime. The grass areas at Circular Road would be ideal for this change in mowing. We hope there is positive feedback to the changes to mowing at Sentry Hill and your bespoke sign will let passers-by know of the reason for its altered appearance. The town park was a lovely spot to visit and was well used on a sunny adjudication day.

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

It is heartening to note that the adjudicators reports are helpful to you in advancing your strategies to progress in the competition. The Biodiversity Champion Programme is a great way you have arrived at to particularly focus on this category given its huge importance to us nationally and indeed globally. Funding to get expert advice is always money well spent and good luck with your wildlife gardens biodiversity project under these Champions stewardship. Your Biodiversity Night will further spread the word and gained you volunteers which as well as a bonus. The coloring sheet is a great idea too. There is a wealth of advice on the All Ireland Pollinator plan website to help with your effort to really implement its aims in as many areas of the town as possible. But remember that Biodiversity opportunities should be sought in all projects and sites whether they are funded by your group or the local authority on public land. For example, with all the green ways being planned ensure that hedgerow connectivity is not impacted with the insertion of these linear routes in our precious green areas. Could you contact the maintenance manager at the town hospital, where there are large mown grass areas, to talk about a more biodiversity friendly mowing regime? Ensure you have a programme of maintenance for all the new trees planted in the town. They may need additional watering to successfully establish and ensure tree ties are removed once they become established.

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

Your Climate Action and Transport Survey seems to have been a great success and a fantastic way to understand how residents feel about these important topics. 42% recognition by residents of the work you do is a great testament to your work and its visibility in the life of the town's residents. Good luck with the second stage of the survey and your liaison with the AUL students to gather this important information. The range of projects outlined in the submission demonstrates the importance you team in advancing sustainability in the town. Water management is becoming so critical with hotter summers becoming more common. The self-watering baskets are allowing more efficient watering and contribute to water conservation in Letterkenny. Building on this theme have you considering promoting rainwater planters for residents to install especially in core townhouses if footpath space allows? These planters divert rain from the roof that would normally flow into your town drains, and instead it flows into the 'rainwater planter'. There are a number of guides available online (Dublin City Council have a diy planter guide) and they could be built with the support of residents groups or the Men's Sheds? The Men's sheds planters at Church Lane demonstrate that they would be more than capable of adding further functions to planters in the town, so they have both a green and blue function. As part of your input into the local transport plan suggest to the Council where more cycle stands could be provided – replacing car parking bays if necessary. We hope a walkability audit is included in the plan as in some key areas of the town such as High Road footpath provision is poor or non-existent. And this should be an important walking route to St Conall's.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We visited the town a number of times and we have to applaud you in your efforts at keeping the town clean. At all times we were very impressed at the standard of cleanliness so well done to your Litter Co Ordinator and his teams of volunteers and their litter picking zones. We walked the main street early on a Sunday morning and no litter was evident along this busy core street after a Saturday night. Bins were clean and empty. Gable ends can be particularly eyesores where focus is concentrated on street fronts but generally, they were well painted and clear. Indeed, the murals are a way to make these often overlooked but very visible walls eye-catching. Talk to your area Engineers to ensure speed limit signs approaching the town are clean and legible especially at the Glencar Road

entry. This can be a poor first impression for visitors. The younger generation are engaged through your junior litter competitions. Report back on the use of alternative weed control measures being trialled. Roadside weeds grow where organic matter and silt builds up so often a sweeping regime along with targeting road drainage failures (where gutter silt is not being washed away) is a way to prevent weeds growing in the first place. As ever keep up the good work!

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

The cleaner Community campaign in its 37th year has been a great success for you. This together with the Helping Hands sub committees work, shows the amount of support you have available for your residents' associations. We visited several estates and admired the entrance planting at Willowbrook and the open spaces at Ashlawn. A section of new path would help the accessibility of the outer residential area at Cluian Ard. How have residents reacted to the change mowing at Glencar Park. Have you tried to engage with the town's apartment dwellers? A best kept balcony or terrace award might be added to the Cleaner Community awards list for those in the town who do not have the luxury of a private garden space. Remove tree ties from established trees in housing open spaces as they mature.

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

As mentioned in last years report we have come to expect a high standard of presentation on approach roads into Letterkenny. There were considerable road works happening this summer on the outskirts of the town in the Transition Zone. We look forward to seeing these completed as they are important linkages to the town centre and need to be designed with cyclists and pedestrian in mind to encourage active travel. Ensure these new layouts include significant roadside and avenue trees to offset the scale of the roads and to replace any trees cleared to facilitate road works. New boundaries to industrial areas should be planting to soften their visual impact. We visited the new Joe Bonner relief road and also admired the upgrade of footpaths in the town centre. The works at the Cathedral quarter will improve pedestrian linkages to the main street. The extent of area given over to surface car parking in the town is quite visually dominant, especially in the retail part of the town. Could consideration be given to providing tree planting and cycle parking in place of some of this over provision, at no time was all the parking full. This can also help with your sustainability objectives. On the day of the visit a cyclist visiting TKMAX had to lock his bike to a signpost as no cycle parking was obvious.

Concluding Remarks:

Well done to all involved in this year's entry. It was this adjudicators first visit to your town and we hope it won't be the last. There are a number of projects in the pipeline in the town which will create better public spaces and in particular focus on transport and travel. Keep up your positive interactions with all public bodies involved in deciding how the life of the town evolves. Letterkenny as a past winner has a special place in the competition and as your submission shows continues to grow in strength and scale. The willingness of the committee to embrace new technology and try out new ideas is so refreshing. Your town is lucky to have you all working so hard to care for it. Congratulations to all your team and your army of helpers.