

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Tullamore - Tullach Mhór** Ref: **727**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **353**
Category: **F** Date(s): **03/07/2022**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	54	55
Streetscape & Public Places	80	49	51
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	47	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	35	37
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	22	23
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50	51
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	43	44
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	43	44
TOTAL MARK	550	343	353

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. Adh mór.

Welcome to the 2022 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your entry and for your endeavours and commitment to your improving your community. Best wishes for the future.

Tullamore is the largest town in Co. Offaly participating in the TidyTowns competition and your group has been active for almost 60 years; congratulations - this is a great achievement and the results are apparent all around the town, with many projects and improvement works carried out and others in progress or planning. One of the advantages of a bigger town is the larger population and you have a strong TidyTowns committee of twelve people bringing a great variety of strengths and skills together for the benefit of the community. There are many tasks to do to keep a large town tidy so many volunteers are required to support the TidyTowns committee in their work and you are fortunate to have more than 75 volunteers to help; of course, in such a large town, each individual volunteer will be as busy as they want to be as there are many tasks to be completed on an ongoing basis. It is noted that you have been reviewing your progress to date and are working on a long-term plan to carry your group forward into your seventh decade of involvement in improving your community and surroundings.

Your submission document is of a very high standard, and you are fortunate to have talented people to do this work and to produce the great selection of both traditional and modern communication materials that you use to raise awareness of your projects in the community. Over the years, your group has developed numerous valuable links with the local authority, chamber of commerce, local development company and many other local and national organisations to support your activities and projects to the benefit of the town. You have strong support from the many businesses in the town and you are engaged with the numerous different community groups, collaborating to identify potential projects and complete the work. There are large number of schools in the town actively participating in a wide range of different projects and working on obtaining Green Flags for their schools and you are engaging with these; it is noted that you intend to form a Junior TidyTowns group to encourage the younger residents to participate in the care and improvement of their town and we look forward to seeing the fruits of this project in years to come. You have many housing developments in and around the town and are fortunate to have established good working relationships with the residents' associations to assist in maintaining their own areas. You have already identified many projects for the future which will further enhance the town; the latest TidyTowns handbook on the website has a wide range of activities and ideas that your group could consider for the future, some with considerable outcomes for easily executed actions.

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

The town of Tullamore has a long history and there are many different styles of buildings in the town dating from the 1500s to the present day; fortunately, many of these buildings have been maintained or restored to a high standard

and are in daily use as residences or business premises. The town has numerous modern developments designed to cater for current demands and present-day standards. The Tullamore Town Enhancement Plan is being implemented at present and the completion of Millennium Square was one of the first aspects to be completed recently. This paved pedestrian space with new seating, large planters, canopies, bespoke lighting, trees and access to the footbridge creates an area near the centre of town for the community to gather for events; the planting hadn't taken place during the visit but some genuine wildflowers (aka weeds) were growing very well. The town has a number of other public spaces and the area around the harbour, all of which are maintained in good condition and used by the community. The business premises in the town vary from traditional shop fronts to modern designs and the vast majority of them are in excellent condition and create a pleasant streetscape; it was noted during the visit that some are being updated or restored and that some other buildings in need of attention are for sale or in the process of transferring to new owners, so hopefully these will be improved before future visits. Work is at an advanced stage on the Tullamore Community Arts Centre, bringing another building back into community use and preserving the structure for future years. Footpath repairs have been carried out, often in tandem with the installation of bollards to prevent illegal or obstructive parking, especially on some of the busier or narrower streets. The recent move to outdoor settings for dining and socialising is evident in the town with many premises placing tables and seating outside their premises, giving a continental feel to the streets on summer evenings (might be different in winter!) There are some fine terraces of housing around the town and some of the older period houses are very well-maintained as family homes; great efforts have been made by the TidyTowns group and the relevant authorities to tackle the issue of vacant or derelict houses in the town and progress is ongoing.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

As well as numerous paved public spaces, Tullamore is fortunate to have plenty green spaces such as Lloyd Town Park, Fiona's Way, Tullamore Wetland Amenity and the nearby Charleville estate. The town park provides opportunities for recreation, sport and relaxation close to the centre of the town; it was busy on a Sunday morning during the visit with people using the playground, outdoor gym, basketball court and many others walking their dog or just relaxing on the grass. There are plans to replant some of the large planters and refurbish the water feature in the park which will be a great improvement to that area and will increase the footfall as it is not particularly inviting at present. There are areas of wildflowers and longer grass to support wildlife and pollinators and a bug hotel to offer shelter to insects and other creatures there also. The grassed area along the Tullamore River in the park has been left to grow taller providing shelter and protection for wildlife; the downside of the long grass is that it may hide litter and there was a town rubbish bin, an old suitcase and a crate discarded in the river on the morning of the visit. The town park also has bat and bird boxes to encourage these creatures to nest there; perhaps the information signs could be attached to a branch using string rather than nailing them to the trees. The larger street planters in the town have been planted with a range of ornamental grasses, alliums, Geums and other plants which are longer-lived, more drought-resistant and friendlier for wildlife and pollinators. Some of the tree supports could be removed at the stage as the trees are well-established and the timber supports are a potential source of injury to the trees now. Hopefully the Charleville Centre garden will be completed in time for the next adjudicator to savour.

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

Tullamore has a good mix of grassed areas, some managed closely with frequent mowing and others less frequently maintained such as along the roadside verges, at some of the industrial parks, at some of the larger roundabouts, at various housing areas around the town and along the canal; the longer grasses and wildflowers provide food and shelter for insects and wildlife. Following the Pollinator Plan's recommendations and using the signage makes the public aware that the areas are being actively managed for pollinators rather than being abandoned. The plants growing in the planters around the centre of the town are being chosen for wildlife value and for water conservation as well as providing colour and visual interest. Charleville Estate on the edge of the town with its mixed, established woodlands has many habitats where wildlife of all types live – insects, birds, and mammals; many of these creatures may be monitored by various organisations such as BirdWatch Ireland or Bat Conservation Ireland and the local schools are involved in the recording and reporting processes. There are eskers in the vicinity of the town with their particular habitats with a mixture of creatures and potentially rarer plants – it is good to see that these habitats will be left to grow naturally without imposing other species which could alter the balance over time. The river running through the town is being managed and improved to allow wildlife to use the river and for humans to access it also.

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

Tullamore has embraced the concept of sustainable towns and is actively engaging with SEAI and the community to raise awareness of the many sustainable projects taking place in the town and to promote other activities that businesses, schools and residents could participate in to become more sustainable on a daily basis. Nowhere in the town is this more evident than in the schools where the students are actively involved in the Green Schools programme, acquiring Green Flags for their schools and bringing their ideas home to educate their families on the necessity for sustainable living and demonstrating simple ways to improve sustainability in the home. Interesting to see that a local business recycles more than 70% of WEEE materials in Ireland and that a local hotel is participating in the Green Hospitality Programme. The town is actively promoting the 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' message and smarter travel is being considered for existing and new developments. The TidyTowns group has plans for other projects in years to come such as examining the reduction of plastic usage, growing pollinator-friendly plants for the town, expanding the community composting facility and planting as many trees as possible to reduce the town's negative impact on our climate. The pre-school play area beside St. Mary's Youth and Community centre have been inventive with their reuse of cable reels and recycled timber to make planters to brighten their area.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Tullamore has been very active in collecting litter on a regular basis and in raising awareness of the litter problem; your campaign and efforts appear to be working very well as the town was found to be very tidy with little sign of litter during the visit, even early on a Sunday morning. The areas around the bring centres were relatively clear of litter with only a small amount lying near the bins, possibly from the previous night. Your group are very active in assessing the litter problem, examining ways to reduce the issues, and promoting ways and schemes to engage the public and raise awareness, such as the 'Adopt a Patch' initiative and the annual 'Spring Clean' litter collection. It is heartening to see that many residents and other organisations and groups in the locality strongly support these initiatives; particular mention this year goes to the schools, the group who did the major clean-up at Churchill last December and the Canoe Club who used their canoes to clean the river/canal during April 2022. A shocking 80 tonnes of litter was removed from two estates in the town alone and a number of initiatives have been put in place by the local authority in an attempt to reduce the risk of this happening again. The Tullamore River deep clean yielded over 1.5 tonnes of needlessly dumped materials over a relatively short stretch of the river so hopefully this dumping won't be repeated. Dog fouling was mentioned in your submission and the efforts being taken to combat the problem were outlined; again, it appears that your persistence (including the 'Any bag, any bin' stencils on the footpaths) and endeavours are gaining traction as there was very little evidence found during the visit.

Many of the footpaths and edges of the kerbs were free of weeds and some others had just a few small weeds here and there. It appears that herbicides are being used in Lloyd Town Park as there was some dead grass around trees, signposts, poles, along the edges of some paths and under some groups of trees near the river in the park. Achieving a balance in managing weeds without spraying herbicides is difficult so it may be a decision made by the local authority rather than the TidyTowns group; generally, 'herbicide-free' means extra physical work which can be significant in larger areas so it may be a point for discussion in the future.

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

Your group has been running the 'Tidy Tullamore' competition and most of the areas take part; the competition element is a great motivator for most people as who doesn't want to win?! The housing areas and residential streets around the town were mostly tidy and well-kept. Many of the residents and businesses of Tullamore obviously take great pride in their home or premises, with clean and freshly painted buildings and many gardens were colourful and very well-maintained. Many of the housing areas have been adopting the reduced mowing regimes 'Don't mow, let it grow', with some regularly mown areas combined with longer grasses and wildflowers, providing refuges for pollinating insects and wildlife.

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

The approach roads, bypass and roundabouts in and around Tullamore are appropriately maintained by the local authority, keeping in mind the need to support and protect insects and pollinators; narrower strips of grass are mown regularly while the remainder of the area is mown less regularly, providing shelter for wildlife. Hopefully the roundabouts that were changed to suit the windmill transport have been reinstated and replanted now. Bulbs are planted for spring colour and wildflowers grow during the summer season. There are quite a few back lanes around the town and the majority of them were tidy and weed-free.

Concluding Remarks:

Tullamore TidyTowns group has been busy improving and maintaining the town to the benefit of the local residents and visitors alike, almost right back to the time when the TidyTowns contest was being established; many projects have been completed and you have numerous plans for more improvements to be completed in the future. Best wishes as your group prepares to begin its seventh decade enhancing Tullamore!! We look forward to seeing your progress in the 2023 TidyTowns entry!