

Tidy Towns Competition 2024

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Monaghan - Muineachán** Ref: **611**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **371**
Category: **E** Date(s): **17/06/2024**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2023	Mark Awarded 2024
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	55	57
Streetscape & Public Places	80	51	52
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	45	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	47	49
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	24	26
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	38	40
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	42
TOTAL MARK	550	356	371

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. Welcome Monaghan - Muineachán to the 2024 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. It was our first visit to your town in some time and we were very impressed during our time there. How great to see that you have had such a successful relationship with the Tidy Towns family over the last 60 years. As a Tidy Towns committee, you have a core of 12 active members who are supported by numerous volunteers. Given your groups workload and ambition we have only been able to mention a small portion of your works in this report, but rest assured all have been considered in scoring for this year. We were very interested to see that you had combined your town plan with your biodiversity plan as part of your overall objective to make Monaghan a Biodiversity Town. This plan will run its course by the end of 2024, how many actions did you achieve in the plan's life? Your new Biodiversity Action plan runs until 2027 with some actions being carried over. Collaboration is at the core of all you do, and you provided us with a very impressive list of groups in the town you engage with. In particular we wish to welcome SNAP and the Migrant Men's Group as new groups joining forces with you this past year. There are too many others to mention here but all are thanked for their collaboration and enthusiasm with a special mention for the Men's Shed and the Ukrainian Women's Group. Your town's youth are also to be congratulated for their commitment to the town from the junior tidy towns 'eco camps' to the primary schools 'primary pollinators'. Communication is key to your work in progressing the ethos of biodiversity first in all your activities and is your main focus this year. As last year, your co-ordinated effort and focus for excellence in all you do has again gained you marks in this category.

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

Monaghan is fortunate in having some lovely streetscapes with many vernacular buildings that combine to make an attractive county town. The Dawson Monument is such a landmark in the core of the town with the impressive classical Courthouse nearby. Many of the town houses and colourful painted businesses are really well kept, keeping their traditional shopfronts well maintained, which all adds to the charm and character of the town. S. McKennas traditional green coloured façade, the eye-catching Bee Healthy, Gillanders with its dairy planter and The Western Arms particularly caught the eye. Your outdoor market was taking place at the Diamond which gave a buzz to the town. Look to ensure upper floors are as well looked after and remove obsolete clutter such as old signs and faded banners, alarm boxes or light fittings. The new Peace Campus was visited and the Railway Station renovated admired, great additions to the streetscape. There were a number of people waiting for the bus at the old library and we wondered if more benches could be provided here for public transport users. Have you heard of the 'happy to chat# bench initiative? A sign on benches identify that someone is open to engagement and benches around the world carry the same sign: 'Happy to chat bench. Sit here if you don't mind someone stopping to say hello'. This could allow commuters engage with fellow travellers while they wait for buses here. We enjoyed a coffee

and ice cream in Fro & Co. The Dublin Street Plan looks exciting and ensure that nature based solutions are part of its objectives to ensure your biodiversity town ethos is carried through to core urban works. Sherry's is a lovely start but we felt the laneway links from Dublin Street to the rear parking areas weren't particularly inviting and having permeability in the town will be key to making this development a success and reduce street car parking. The stag and fox mural at Terrys Bar were wonderful. Your work to address vacant properties is acknowledged.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

It is true that the landscape and biodiversity categories are often intertwined and this is certainly your approach in Monaghan Town. The list of current projects is very impressive and you are indeed fortunate to have a very talented Town Horticulturist to advise you. We made our way through the town core, admiring the busy market day activities, and appreciated that space is limited in the town core for green areas. The enclosed frontage to the lovely St Patrick Church is one of the few areas of grass. Your reduced numbers of pots and planters still added lots of colour, although importantly they were placed sensitively so they did not overwhelm the streetscape or architecture. The window boxes at Dinkins upper floors were admired as were the vibrant reds and deep pinks to the pots at the steps to the Market House. Your new corten steel planters added height at the Diamond with the maturing birch trees now free from their tree guards. A significant number of birch trees have been planted around the town to ensure street trees are included in any new developments to ensure a long term tree cover in the town. Is there a need for a Monaghan Town tree strategy with a canopy cover aim? Measure the existing canopy cover in the town and aim to protect and maintain this level of canopy cover and to identify opportunities to support more canopy in areas that need it most. Ties this into the Monaghan as an arboretum concept. We then found ourselves at Peters Lake and your new roadside pollinator planting. What a gem to have a lake actually in the town and we accessed it from the North Road not from the surrounding car parks. We loved the focus on incidental open spaces and visited the space by the schools on the Clones Road and the Rowantree junction with your signature boulders. The wildflower banks at Monaghan Hospital were visited and the bird mural to the utility box was a colourful addition. We wish them luck with developing their sensory garden. The low wall here was in need of a wash or a new coat of paint. Remember to add all of your actions to the All-Ireland Pollinator plan log. The bog garden at the end of the greenway is again a prime example of landscape and biodiversity being considered together successfully. Indeed the greenway is such an asset for the town and the attention to detail in its finishing, signage and planting is second to none. We very much enjoyed our walk along this green route.

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

As you say clearly in your town plan, biodiversity has been a part of your Tidy Towns message for well over a decade. The importance of spreading of this message through all members of the community is clear in your developing communications strategy. We loved your colourful logo with biodiversity at the heart of your town. We loved that you are reaching out to other communities to be part of this work recognising that biodiversity doesn't stop at town boundaries. By being a leader in making Monaghan a biodiversity town you may be able to make Monaghan a biodiversity county too. Thanks to all your trainees, ambassadors and advocates for their commitment to this action. And to your dedicated groups such as the residents of Mullahmatt with their urban orchards, fruit trees and native planting. They are leading the way. Your application shows an in depth understanding of the habitats that surround you and the impact your works can have in addressing the biodiversity emergency. Your new Biodiversity Action plan is full of ideas and information, and we look forward to seeing it being implemented over the coming years. We visited some of your biodiversity hotspots although the joy of your approach is that you recognise that biodiversity is all around you and that there is potential from window boxes to the bus station. From 300 trees planted by Monaghan Harps to your hug a tree day in conjunction with Monaghan Mental Health Association, trees are being incorporated into all aspects of life in the town. As stated previously there are too many events and actions to cover in the report, but all have been considered.

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

You really are committing the town to the circular concepts, and this was particularly highlighted with your local awards being made entirely out of recycled materials. From bags to hats upcycling and recycling is to the fore in the town. Is there any way to measure the impact of these campaigns. Can you work with the waste collectors in the town to see if the volume of waste being produced by the town or its commercial operations is reducing? Given the success of St. Macartan's College Cycle to School Initiative and the greenways increasing use, we wondered if you could get the senior schools help in doing a survey of travel and transport behaviour in your town? Given the greenway has encouraged more cycling to school as it's a safe route away from traffic. This could be a suggested project for your transition year students. Bike stands placed near the car park entrances could be considered or at other amenity locations. Your orchard tree initiatives and community gardens have been a focus for you and thanks to Teach na nDaoiné for the support they give to reduce food poverty in the town.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your new litter strategy with practical tips on how to safely carry out this activity is a great idea so that all new litter pickers are well informed. They can learn from the experts such as Joe with his 85 years of knowledge! The hi vis pack will also help spread your message. Your survey results will help you assess the impact of your works and messaging. On our walk through the town, bins (not all 117 were visited mind you!) were generally clean and plentiful and signs neat thanks to the efforts of your volunteers. Your "Litter Vigilantes" network is novel and comprises small groups and individuals who tackle litter in certain areas or estates in the town. Again your focus on communication is clear here with your use of social media to promote this idea. On the day of the visit the area around Peters Lake was well maintained but it seems new litter from the car parks area was the source of some very recent litter here. This is in spite of your innovative car can idea. Some sweeping at the kerb edge outside

hostelry's could be encouraged to deal with discarded litter butts in particular after busy nights

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

Between town houses, apartments and edge of town homes there are a range of residential typologies in Monaghan. New homes were seen in a number of areas at Plantation Road and High Street by the Hospital, with more homes planned with the Dublin Street development. This is the most sustainable way of ensuring our towns and villages have vibrant and viable futures and ensure all new residents get an introduction to your work. Liaise with local estate agents on this perhaps? Again, your submission notes the positive relationship you have with many of the residents groups in housing developments through the Monaghan Network of Tidy Towns and Residents Associations. Trees create a lovely entry to the well looked after Manor Wood housing estate. We hope the fruit trees at Latlurcan Glen are establishing well. Mullaghmatt is being given a facelift and the new boundaries to front gardens create a neater appearance. Are any of the gardens here recipients of your certificates for your garden award? Will this extend to terraces and window boxes? Whether you have just a window ledge, a medium or a large garden there are pollinator friendly actions that can relate to your own outdoor space for the benefit of bees and butterflies across Monaghan. We loved the recognition of the impact of historic boundaries on streetscape with the sensitive restoration of historic railings around the town and as seen at Belgium Square on the day of our visit.

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

The ox eye daisies on the approach from Clones were a lovely sight and your transformed roundabouts are eye catching. We loved the innovate strategy of joyful colour and texture of the natural flowering roadside planted beds at the car park opposite the shopping centre on Castle Road. What could have been a bleak back of town area was buzzing with bees on the clovers and made walking along Castle Road and Broad Road a lovely experience with the floral buffers to the heavy traffic. An example for barren car parks countrywide. Paving Materials seemed to be varied though the town with stone, red block and concrete used. It would be good to establish a Monaghan Town Paving Palette so new developments, as at Dublin Street, can tie into this and retained consistency across your public realm areas. Similar to the consistent use of boulders in landscape and greenway areas. Street clutter was at a minimum with a uniform black finish to street furniture and some road sign poles also painted black, a nice touch. The floral painted utility box opposite Dinkins was a delight.

Concluding Remarks:

I was as impressed by the obvious satisfaction you take in your Tidy Towns participation as with the actual work your group has carried out on the ground. We thank all the numerous stakeholders, groups and local residents involved in the works which make up this year's submission. We hope you can find a dedicated base for next year. Continued good luck for all your planned work in 2025 and beyond. In this adjudicators opinion, there is no limit as to how far Monaghan Town can go in the competition.