

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Waterfall - Tobar an Iarla** Ref: **1746**
County: **Cork(South)** Mark: **271**
Category: **B** Date(s): **19/07/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	33	36
Streetscape & Public Places	60	33	35
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	33	35
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	25	27
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	16	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	35
TOTAL MARK	470	257	271

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Waterfall – Tobar an Iarla páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Waterfall and Ballinora is very welcome to the 2019 Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for your very comprehensive and well-considered entry form with your updated 3-year plan and helpful mapping showing locations for your 2019. Your interest in enhancing the social and physical structure of your community and the energy and enthusiasm applied to your Tidy Towns work is palpable from your entry submission. Your Tidy Towns groups is a subgroup of the Ballinora/Waterfall Community Association. We note that you have a core committee of 8 and their efforts are helped by around 25 additional volunteers which provides access to a wide range of expertise from within your community. Volunteers and residents with specific skills or interests often form into sub-groups to work on particular projects.

You enjoy good links with Residents' Associations, Ballinora National school, local scouts, GAA, ICA and other local groups and have a particularly strong connection with the Retired Men's group. From your entry form, it sounds like your community is buzzing with activity and there is great opportunity for people to be part of a very active and vibrant social network. We enjoyed reading about the various community events you organise including your annual quiz night, annual vintage car and tractor run, social events for volunteers, monthly Trad night and it is lovely to hear that you are keeping traditions of the 'Wren' day alive with an entertaining visit to the local nursing home. Well done also on your annual cleanup in the grounds of Marymount Hospice. You have a good proactive working relationship with Cork County Council and you receive support from other agencies including SECAD, UCC, Teagasc, IFA and the Bride Project. We note that there was some uncertainty at the time of application regarding the continuity of support under the Community Employment Scheme and hope the outcome since has been positive.

We are delighted that your work is enhancing the social cohesion of your community and strengthening your sense of place as well as achieving very visible improvements in your local environment and infrastructure. Congratulations on your success in winning the Best Small Village Award in Cork in the 2018 Muintir na Tíre 'Pride of Place' awards. It would seem that you primarily use electronic means for communication which keeps use of paper to minimum. You have a very active Facebook presence which you use well to seek support and showcase your work and achievements and credit is due to the person or persons who have responsibility for its upkeep. Your regular posts carry lots of photographs of your volunteers in action and it's lovely to put faces to the people of all ages who carry out such great work in your community. We note that you also use Instagram to appeal to the younger audience and WhatsApp for committee contact. We applaud your committee and all those who get involved in support of your work and your extra marks in this category this year are well deserved.

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

The railway bridge makes for a dramatic entrance to the village and is an emblematic feature of the locality. We commend your proactive vision to seek funding for preparation of a heritage management plan for the bridge area and hope you are successful with your application. O'Shea's bar looked well, and we favourably noted the cosmetic improvements that have been carried out to enhance the appearance of vacant properties. The old village post box is looking a little weathered and needs attention. Seats and other elements of street furniture are mostly clean and fresh looking. The school is very well presented, as are its grounds. The GAA grounds and scout den were also tidy and look well kept. We admired the landscaping in the Church grounds and would suggest freshening up the paintwork on the Church and boundary walls in advance of next year's adjudication. We were delighted to see what appears to be the retention and incorporation of the original old roadside hedgerow along the frontage of Woodside into the village streetscape – it makes for an excellent wildlife corridor right through the heart of the village and is quite innovative. We noted the new lighting in Ballinora village and the electronic speed signs which we hope are proving effective at the entrance to Waterfall. We admired the attractive heritage trail signs which help to project a strong sense of place and the development of trail Apps in association with UCC enhances their communication. We visited the old graveyard at Inniskenny and admired the restoration works completed on the boundary wall and the very interesting and informative new sign and landscaping beneath. The graveyard itself was quite overgrown with long grass and consideration might be given to maintaining mown tracks through to enable access. We wondered if there are any plans to carry out conservation works on the old ruin - this would require advance consultation with Cork County Council's Heritage Officer for appropriate guidance.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

There are several good quality landscaping schemes and well-sited pocket plantings throughout both villages. We admired the new all-season planting at the bridge area and the use of the shale mulch is very apt in the setting. The area needed a little attention to weeding on the day of adjudication. We also admired the nicely planted and very well-maintained bed with its seasonally colourful wheelbarrow plantings near to the school. Beautiful hanging baskets and box planters at the stone bridge on approach to Ballinora create a very attractive entrance and more hanging baskets and half barrel planters throughout both villages were admired for the colour they bring to their surroundings; all were well planted with healthy looking plants. We note that these are tended by a summer watering team from the local scouts and well done to them for taking on the task. Grass areas within both village areas are very neat and well maintained. The new medicinal garden is a lovely celebration of your 'Young Scientist' winner with great potential to expand into a larger scale project and we suggest some form of signage or labelling that identifies the plants and their usage.

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

We read with interest your 5-year plan for wildlife, habitats and natural amenities in your locality. This outlines a very strategic and well-considered approach to informing your group and your community on the biodiversity and habitats of the area to enable you plan for their support and management into the future. It is great to read that you have the necessary resources lined up to progress your Year 1 Habitat mapping Programme and we look forward to hearing more about this in next year's submission. Well done on your cooperation with the Retired Men's group to organise a talk on birds and it was encouraging to see that you had a good interest and attendance. We commend your red squirrel project and installation of bird and bat boxes and note that the local scout group also gets involved in making and installing bird boxes - we would be interested in hearing some further comment on your observations of activity and occupancy etc. in next year's entry. We are pleased to hear of your active engagement with the local school on their biodiversity Green Flag project and we congratulate the students, their teachers and all involved in their successful achievement of their Green Flag this year. We visited the school garden and admired the well-constructed raised beds and attractive, pollinator-friendly planting. We also favourably note your use of pollinator-friendly planting in your planting and landscaping schemes throughout the locality and the wildflower meadow area opposite Springvale. We did notice what appears to be evidence of herbicide use around sign poles and trees and along kerb edges in some public areas. Use of herbicides is not compatible with a pollinator-friendly environment and the scorched vegetation is unattractive. Wherever possible, we strongly encourage manual methods of weed and vegetation control.

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

We commend your new development of a communal grass composter in addition to your existing green waste composting setup along with your new water-efficient hanging baskets and we note your use of water butts for rainwater harvesting. Your move away from planting schemes using seasonal annual plants to permanent perennial and shrub planting is also favourably acknowledged and encouraged and you mention your book sharing facility and support for the local school's clothes recycling collections. We commend your initiative in establishing a sustainable energy committee to produce a community energy master plan and we look forward to hearing more about this in future adjudications.

All of these activities demonstrate that your Tidy Towns group has a good appreciation for the ideals of this category and there is more that can be done. To continue to gain further marks in this category, the adjudicator is looking for innovation in tackling the big issues of reducing waste at source, water conservation, food waste, plastic disposal, transport efficiency and energy use. You are progressing some of these issues and we encourage further consideration of how homes, farms and any businesses in your area can help to tackle these issues? To generate further ideas that contribute to a more sustainable environment and for helpful tips and case studies from other Tidy Towns entrants please take a look at <https://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/> and other websites such as <https://stopfoodwaste.ie> and <https://www.greenhome.ie>. You also mention in your entry form your engagement with the local school on their Green Flag activities. Collaborating closely with your local school as they progress through

the Green Schools programme could inspire ways for your Tidy Towns groups to benefit further under this category by adopting some of their environmentally conscious practices for communication and replication across the wider community.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Litter control is excellent in Waterfall and Ballinora and we congratulate you on both villages and their environs being litter free on adjudication day. In your entry form, you have given a very comprehensive insight into the organisation of your activities under this heading. You have a team of litter controllers with each volunteer assigned a specific area for regular litter patrol and this is obviously a very effective system. Well done to all who keep your village looking so clean and it would seem you have good support from the community in dealing responsibly with litter. It is good to note that litter collected is segregated for recycling and on the day of adjudication the recycling banks in O' Shea's car park were neat and tidy.

We commend the local scout group and other young people who help out with your National Spring Clean and other clean-up activities and the Retired Men's group for their assistance to you in dealing with illegal dumping. It's good to hear that you have a helpful working relationship with the local litter warden and your local waste management company.

Some further improvements are possible. Weed growth along the kerb edges on the main thoroughfare in Waterfall needed attention and while the majority of road and directional signs were clean and well presented, there were a few we noted that needed some action. On the stone bridge approaching Ballinora from the Curraheen direction, both 50kph signs needed a wash and one sign was damaged. In Waterfall, the sign at the junction for the cemetery needs washing and a 'Slow Through Village' sign was faded and needed replacing. Similarly, in Ballinora, a sign 'Caution Children Crossing' is discoloured and needs replacing. Temporary signage within the villages and on some approaches advertising various events and commercial interests is an issue for further consideration as it creates visual clutter and detracts from the amenity of your village and its surroundings.

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

Individual properties within the villages, residential estates and on approach roads are generally well presented and we applaud all those property owners and occupiers who clearly take pride in their place and keep their road frontages, gardens and boundary walls freshly painted and neatly maintained in support of your work. We also commend your volunteers for their support and help to older residents in maintaining their property frontages. We admired some very nice front gardens which contribute greatly to the overall appearance of the area. Along the main thoroughfare in Ballinora, one beautifully painted, lavender-coloured cottage with a pretty garden caught our eye and sets a very high standard. Well done also to the Residents' Associations who help to keep the residential estates clean and tidy. Heatherfield features nicely maintained green areas with maturing trees and well-kept shrubberies providing year-round effect. Some lighting columns need repainting and kerb edges needed sweeping along some stretches in the estate to remove dried up grass clippings and accumulating natural debris. There appeared to be some use of herbicide to control grass growth along kerb edges. We strongly advocate minimising this practice as it is bad for the environment and the scorched and dead vegetation is unsightly. While it is more time consuming using a spade to create neat edges and manual removal of weed growth is preferable. Springvale is a tidy cul-de-sac with high hedges that are neatly kept and the houses in the Woodside development in Ballinora feature lovely stone walls and many attractive front gardens.

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

All approach roads to Waterfall and Ballinora looked well and litter free on adjudication day with a relaxed rural character suited to their surroundings. Interventions, where they occur, are appropriately restrained while neatly cut and well-maintained grass verges are apt in demarcating the approaches to the villages. The attractive namestones set within colourful planting schemes on the main approach routes provide a positive first impression for the visitor. Directional sign posting for Waterfall is rather scarce and is an issue to review. We note your ongoing liaison with Cork County Council in regard to road lining, most of which looks fresh and sharp.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting the villages of Waterfall and Ballinora whose character and attractiveness is being continuously enhanced by a hard-working community that clearly love and value their surroundings. You have great potential to progress further in this competition and we wish you continued social enjoyment and success with your future endeavours.