

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Waterfall - Tobar an Iarla** Ref: **1746**
County: **Cork(South)** Mark: **300**
Category: **B** Date(s): **10/07/2022**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	39	41
Streetscape & Public Places	80	36	39
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	37	39
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	29	31
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	18	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35	37
TOTAL MARK	550	281	300

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. We are delighted to welcome your hard-working committee of 8 members and like the adjudicator in 2021, we are most impressed by your level of organization with your multidisciplinary committee being informed by two subgroups (on biodiversity and sustainability issues respectively), both of which are headed up by local experts. It is also pleasing to see that there are 35 volunteers who are keen to help you out. There is no doubt that your committee and volunteers are very active with a broad range of events regularly taking place. It is great to see that effective links have been established with Cork City and County Councils along with SECAD, the Community Employment Scheme, SEAI, UCC and numerous others providing you with advice, funding and assistance. We are glad to read that local businesses and employers are very supportive of your efforts with Ballinora nurseries, Supervalu Ballincollig, Bishopstown credit union and Bandon Co-op helping you out. We were struck by the number of partnerships that you have formed with other community-based groups such as the Ballinora Waterfall and District Community Development Association, the GAA, the walking group, Residents Associations, Munitir na Tire, Mens Shed and the ICA and we urge you to maintain these partnerships in the years ahead. Why not consider delegating the responsibility for some of your projects to the other community-based groups? We are confident that your comprehensive communication strategy is working well as this is clearly reflected in your high level of engagement. It is particularly pleasing to see that your committee and volunteers work closely with the schoolchildren and other youth groups (such as the Scouts) in your village. This is seen as a very effective way of increasing the level of participation and raising environmental awareness. Be sure to collaborate on projects with the schoolchildren and youth groups as much as possible. You are commended on setting up the walking and singing groups and we are pleased to read that they have proved to be very effective social outlets for women and new residents in Ballinora / Waterfall. We are heartened to read that your participation in the competition has proved to be such a positive experience and that it has increased pride in your community and area. We also like to thank you for your very comprehensive entry form, map and appendices as they were helpful during our in-person adjudication. Be aware that the entry form is now extending to 51 pages and we would encourage you to try and reduce its length by omitting some of the photos for next year. Your three year plan was read with interest and there is no doubt that it is a very useful document as it identifies projects under each of the tidy towns headings.

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

Ballinora / Waterfall provided us with a timely reminder of how much we, the adjudicators, missed our in-person visits to tidy towns centres since 2019. Your lovely twin village looked fabulous on adjudication day. In Ballinora, Scoil Bailenora looked stunning while the Church and its recently revamped grounds also looked well. The painted mural is a lovely eye-catching feature. In Waterfall, O'Sheas (as always) impressed while the railway bridge on the

approach and the new Waterfall sign (recast from recycled metal) looked tremendously well. Your heritage trail is a delight and anyone visiting your lovely village for the first time would be amazed at the wealth of historical features and structures that can be found here. With standing stones, Fulacht fia(s), ring forts, wells and numerous stone bridges - your village has it all! We are delighted to see that there is such a strong appreciation of your heritage and this is demonstrated by the provision of the new heritage information signs which are a lovely addition to your heritage trail. We spent a very enjoyable morning exploring Ballinora / Waterfall whilst seeking out and reading the heritage signs with great interest. We note that a range of projects have been undertaken for this year's competition under this category. The new seating area (and planting) at the waterfall bridge provides visitors and residents with an attractive new space to enjoy the natural and built surroundings to be found here. The railway bridge looked very well and the stone walls, planted banks and highly visible signage were appreciated. You are commended on your work to Cronins Bridge which involved carrying out repairs, removing tree stumps and replacing damaged walls. The development of the information sign in the elevated location with panoramic views is applauded. Well done also on maintaining the grotto, painting the field gates and working with An Post to get the postbox replaced. All of these works have contributed to the impressive appearance of your lovely twin village.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The range of landscaping schemes on display during our visit was second to none. It was obvious to the adjudicators that your committee have worked exceptionally hard on your projects under this category with lots of good examples to be seen. In Waterfall, there was a concentration of high quality schemes around the railway bridge with the planting at the new seat, along the natural stone wall and in the biodiversity garden all drawing positive attention. The new semicircular stone faced beds also looked very well. We note that decisions have yet to be made about the treatment of the bank where the new steel waterfall sign is positioned but we are confident that your committee will make the right choice. We say this as there are many fine examples of planted banks on display such as the hydrangea banks that be seen at the junction in front of O'Sheas while the combination of hypericum and cotoneaster on the bank opposite O'Sheas is similarly impressive. We also enjoyed seeing the wildflower meadow blank opposite the entrance to Springvale and it is great to see that it is thriving. The floral displays on the planted poles that line the road through Waterfall also looked very well while the shrub planting at the Waterfall stone name sign is a highlight. The landscaping in Ballinora was no less impressive with the shrub bank between the mural wall and the school looking particularly well. Well done also on your hard work providing attractive planting at the Ballynora name stones on the approach roads and in the planted baskets on the bridge. The new gravel-based beds at Iniskenny graveyard with roses, shrubs and hebe looked very well and we look forward to see them mature in the years ahead. We would also like to commend you on the clear emphasis that has been shown to pollinator friendly varieties and for adopting a 'no weedkiller, no herbicide' policy.

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

It is great to see that there are so many good projects underway under this category. We applaud the adoption of a 'no weedkiller, no herbicide' policy as this will make a positive contribution to your environment. We urge you to try convince others in your wider community to do likewise as a means of boosting its positive impact. It is also considered to be an important first step in your habitat mapping project as it will help preserve all types of habitat. We were delighted to read that the mapping project is underway as the data that it yields will be very valuable and provide you with baseline information for monitoring your habitats in the years ahead. We would appreciate further update on this project in 2023. As indicated by the reports submitted with your entry form, you have completed some fascinating work on your local bat population and it is heartening to see that work has led directly to projects being undertaken to support them such as sowing night scented plants (that attract moths), Buddleia and Sweet William. Noting the importance of hedgerows, we wondered if there are any plans to increase the number of natural hedgerows in your area? We applaud your decision to include an ivy wall (which provides a food source and a home for insects). Well done on reintroducing the Ballinora Pippin apple trees. We love hearing about how they are getting on so please keep giving us updates! We are glad to see that your committee and volunteers are embracing the need for additional pollinator planting but there is a sense that more could be done. For example, we agree that planting a spring bulb corridor is a great idea but it is strongly recommended that it should be comprised of a mix of bulbs that include crocus, alliums and snowdrops as daffodils are not pollen rich. As pointed out in the landscaping section, adopting a 'don't mow, let it grow' approach can also boost pollen sources as it allows natural wildflowers to thrive.

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

A good mix of projects are presented in your entry form under this category. We liked the focus on both practical actions and awareness raising activities. With respect to the practical actions, the reuse of materials like stone and metal to make walls and gates is applauded as this provides an excellent example of minimising resource use. Well done also on harvesting rainwater and making your own compost. Consider setting a target to make yourselves 100% self-sufficient with respect to locally sourced rainwater and locally produced compost in the next few years. The more ambitious the target is – the better! As a signal of your intent, it is recommended that these targets are included in your action plan. There are other options available to you too. For example, you could aim to source all of the plants and seeds that you need for your landscaping schemes locally – either by growing yourselves or by seeking donations from local keen gardeners. The rewards for achieving these targets are significant as it would demonstrate to the wider community in Ballinora / Waterfall that these actions are not only effective but that they are achievable. You are commended on hosting a range of different events that focus on relevant teams such as climate change \ solar energy, electrical vehicle information day, the circular economy and the swaparoo event. We would encourage you to give some thought to how you might track the effectiveness of these events over the next few years in order to ascertain if they have contributed to behaviour change in Ballinora / Waterfall. We were

pleased to see that there is a strong focus on transport behaviour as your committee and volunteers are promoting the use of electric cars and encouraging people to respond to online surveys on public transport. Consider carrying out a survey which looks at what proportion of your residents use traditional cars, electric cars, public transport, bike or walking as this would provide you with up-to-date information and enable you to work out what needs to be done to change behaviour. Perhaps the students and the school would be interested in collaborating with you on this. Please let us know in 2023.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

There are some great initiatives underway in this category. Picker Pals (whereby the school supply pickers and bags to students who go out in pairs to collect litter) is a great way of drawing in extra helpers and raising awareness at the same time. Consider using reusable bags (to cut down on plastic waste) for this purpose. Hessian sacks (which are normally used for animal feed and aggregates) are a good alternative so perhaps one of your sponsors would be interested in discussing this as they could include their logo / name on the reusable bags? Your participation in the National Spring clean day is commended and it is great to see that it is so well supported with 50 volunteers taking part. The walk and pick initiative is a great idea and we are delighted to hear that it is a success – as it demonstrates that the wider community are as motivated as your committee in achieving a litter free village. We are very pleased to report that your extensive village was virtually litter free with just a small amount of isolated items in the green space outside Woodview to be seen. This is an excellent performance and it clearly demonstrates that your carefully crafted approach to litter control is working very well for you. Well done also on your road and pavement sweeping, weeding, signage washing and edging the grass at kerbsides. These actions contributed to a high overall standard of tidiness on adjudication day. The anti-dog fouling signs were also observed and you will be pleased to know that the bring site was in good condition. As always, small improvements can still be made. We note that a signage audit has been undertaken and we wondered if the signage poles have been included in this as a small number of untidy examples could be seen. Consider painting the field gate close to the steps at the waterfall bridge as its rusty appearance is notable. On the approach road into Ballinora from the bridge, we were surprised to find that hedge cuttings had been dumped in the ditch and it is recommended that this practice is avoided as it provides for an untidy appearance. Aside from these minor issues, the standard of tidiness was considered to be very high so well done to all concerned.

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

We are glad to see that there is a very good working relationship between your committee, volunteers and the residents associations of Earlswell, Heather field, Springvale and Woodside. In our view, this has influenced the high overall standard of presentation of entrances, roads and amenity areas in these estates. The support offered to all the residents is applauded and there is no doubt that it also helps to ensure that the appearance of housing areas in Ballinora / Waterfall is uniformly high. The high energy rating of the homes in the newest estate (Earlswell) is noted and we wondered if any consideration had been given to joining the sustainable energy community scheme? If so, full details are available from the SEAI. Well done on maintaining the Springvale entrance and seat as both looked well during our visit and we would also like to compliment everyone who was involved in sprucing up the well at Tobar an Iarla - it looked great! We enjoyed seeing the neat name signage and shrubs which adorned the entrance to Heather field, while Wood view also looked nice with its trimmed grass and mature trees. Work appear to be ongoing at Earlswell as little could be seen behind the large white gate. However, we look forward to seeing this new scheme when we return next year.

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

Your committee and volunteers are commended on achieving a consistently high standard of presentation on all approach roads. This has been made possible by your diligent approach to cleaning and painting name signage, tending to road verges and providing (and maintaining) very attractive landscaping schemes. We are delighted to report that no weaknesses could be seen with all approaches looking exceptionally well. Elsewhere, the roads and pathways were in good condition and we very much enjoyed seeing so many natural roadside boundaries which suit the narrow country roads that can be found all around your village. We were interested to read that investigation continue into providing a pathway between the two villages. In our view, this should be a priority as it would greatly improve the accessibility of all parts of both villages when travelling on foot. We would appreciate an update on this important project next year.

Concluding Remarks:

Your committee and volunteers should be proud of your excellent performance in this years competition and it is clear to the adjudicators that significant progress is being made with each passing year in Ballinora / Waterfall. Keep up the good work and we look forward to returning again in 2023.