

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: Swinford - Béal Átha na Muice	Ref: 361
County: Mayo	Mark: 311
Category: C	Date(s): 05/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	46	47
Streetscape & Public Places	80	42	44
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	40	42
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	37	38
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	24	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	31	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	30	31
TOTAL MARK	550	301	311

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2023. 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 Super Valu Tidy Towns Competition for 2023. We thank you for your entry, and wish you all the best in all your future work. Good luck.

Swinford - Béal Átha na Muice, a small town with a population of 1394 people – has entered the competition for approx. 27 years and has a committee of 7 members with support of another 12/14 volunteers.

- You We keep in contact through whatsapp and hold regular committee meetings in person throughout the year. You can call on the transition year students when there are any suitable projects for them to take part in. As well as your annual spring clean, 3 other local communities, Midfield, Culmore and Killasser villages now also take part in the National Spring Clean

- Support is received Governmental agencies including, An Taisce, OPW, Pobal, National Biodiversity Centre, Mayo North East, Mayo North & Moy Valley Resources, RSS & TUS schemes, Western Fisheries Board, Birdwatch Mayo, Green Campus GMIT Castlebar, Mayo

Local Enterprise Office, Mayo Community Futures, Mayo Co. Co. Heritage office and the Swinford office of Mayo Co. Co. Invaluable help & support is also received from the officers of Mayo Co. Co. Environmental office.

Many local businesses also provide support including The Gateway Hotel, Connacht Gold, Kennedy's Eurospar, O'Connells Pharmacy and Tesco Swinford.

- You communicate with the public via your website, www.swinfordtidytowns.com.

You actively use your Facebook and Twitter pages for sharing regular updates and useful information. You also publish information in the Swinford notes of all the local papers, Western People, Mayo News, Mayo Advertiser, Connacht Telegraph and Swinford & Killasser Parish newsletters, for people who don't use computers or social media, to keep them informed on all our recent projects and activities.

- Since the pandemic, you are back working with local schools and clubs. It is pleasing to note that the transition year students are a great help. You also work with local national schools who are now back holding regular litter picks.

- The adjudicator is pleased to reads that Swinford Tidy Towns involvement in the tidy towns competition gives your community something specific to aim for and a strong sense of pride of place. The positive attitude towards implementing local improvements in turn attracts new business and people wanting to live in your area.

The coloured hand drawn map and legend provided with your Entry Form, showing the new projects carried out this year and the main features of the town, was of very good quality. This made it very easy for the adjudicator to

navigate around the town and aided the assessment process considerably. The before and after photos were also very helpful in this regard.

The quality of the application form was excellent with simple project references under each category heading. A little more information outlining the specific work undertaken by the committee under each project description would be welcome. The comprehensive 5-year Tidy Towns plan, based on the template provided in the Tidy Towns Handbook was noted positively and we wish you well with its implementation.

The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the application form, which is suitably concise at 34 pages long including photos and the 5-year plan details - well done. The text inserted on the form was also quite easy to read and the use of red text for the project numbers was helpful.

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

- We commenced our visit to Swinford on a sunny day in early July. From the public car park accessed from Pound Lane, it was interesting to be able to walk through a narrow lane and Duggan's butchers' shop, directly onto the Market Street. The stone fronted laneway and restored Mellet's Emporium premises were greatly admired here. The adjudicator on leaving Duggans was immediately struck by the colourful streetscape and shopfronts on Market Street and the centre of the town. Market stalls erected on the Main Street with assorted 'Bric a Brac' items on sale provided great browsing opportunities for the passerby. There were many highlights noted in terms of attractive window displays and colourful shopfronts in Swinford and these included, the Flower Cabin, Moore's Supermarket, P.O'Connor and Son Solicitors, Forkans Mans Shop, O'Connell's Pharmacy, Campbell's Café, the AIB Bank, First Choice Credit Union and the Gateway Hotel premises. The above list is not exhaustive.
- The adjudicator is aware that many properties in Swinford, which have fallen into disrepair in recent years, have been significantly improved and enhanced due to the actions of Swinford Tidy Towns committee in conjunction with Mayo County Council and the property owners concerned. The attractive hanging baskets erected on lighting poles in the center of the town added a welcome splash of colour. It would be good for the future to paint some of these lampposts, where discolouration is noted and this will further enhance the presentation of the streetscape considerably. The natural stone paving prevalent in the center of the town, which clearly has been power washed, enhanced the overall quality and presentation of footpaths here. The new litter bins were noted and made for a very clean and tidy town center. Some of the seating and metal bollards placed on footpaths, are in need of ongoing maintenance.
- It was a pity to see that the Swinford stream has been culverted in the past, where it crosses Bridge Street. This is a very attractive and important feature in the town, which in many areas is largely hidden from view. We called to Sancta Maria Terrace estate and noted the large area of open space adjoining the stream which is maintained to a very good standard. There are attractive trees and a section of fencing located along the river here. Adjacent to the roadside footpath at Riverside Road the neat margin, stone wall, planting scheme and seating was positively noted. The Paddy Bolingbrooke Handball Alley is a prominent feature on this open space and perhaps could be softened with perimeter planting. The purple beech tree with an attractive surrounding stone wall, was particularly admired at the entrance to Pound Lane.
- The Swinford National School Scoil Mhuire agus Treasa on the Station Road was presented to a very high standard with a freshly painted frontage and attractively landscaped grounds, together with a neat and tidy car parking area provided on the opposite side of the road. The towns library and cultural center was visited and this superb facility the grounds were admired. This area appears to be the site of the old railway line and station and the youth memorial garden was especially pleasing.
- The private residences situated along the Circular Road which have attractive gardens were positively noted. The old weighbridge is a small stone building in need of extensive restoration and we look forward to this work being completed. The adjacent building and the nearby fuel storage area are visually prominent along the road and they too require some attention. The Swinford stream runs to the rear of the weighbridge and perhaps there is an opportunity to develop a walkway along the stream in the future. The planting scheme and paving at the junction of Main Street and Brookville Avenue and the stone walls along Brookville Avenue were especially admired.
- The Church 'Our Lady Help of Christians' which is situated on an elevated site overlooking Chapel Street was visited. The grounds here are planted and maintained in an exemplary manner, with attractive stone wall and railings along the road frontage. The nearby single story Garda station premises with a neat and tidy car park area was also noted positively. The large living Christmas fir tree located here and at the junction of Brookfield Avenue and Main Street are worthy of special mention and no doubt these are important decorative features on the run-up to the festive season. The frontage along secondary school along Chapel Street was also noted, with quite prominent boundary walls and railings. It would be desirable to introduce some tree planting in the green area here. The small seating area and sculpture at the Sisters of Mercy monument on Chapel Street was positively noted.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- The Park and site of the wonderful Swinford community children's playground and Brabazon Woods area was visited. The Wood Well project was viewed and your committee members are to be congratulated for the wonderful restoration works which have been undertaken here and which have transformed this site. Perhaps a sign could be erected providing further information on the history of the well and in its importance to the local area. The attractively painted walls and fences, wooden signage and solar lighting, complete with a neat and tidy gravel area, added to the visual aspect here. The Swinford stream along this stretch of parkland is choked with weed and perhaps can be cleared in an ecologically sensitive way, to restore this important natural feature in the area.
- A very pleasant walk within the Brabazon Wood was enjoyed and we noted the new oak tree planting and installation of well-surfaced tarmac paths, which provide enhanced access in this area. The Fairy Village was also positively noted. The Butterfly Garden located at the start of the woodland walk is a gem. The adjudicator was overwhelmed with the beauty and symbolism of this garden, complete with stone seating, mosaics, wood sculpture,

attractive landscaping and paving etc. all with a butterfly theme. Very well done to the committee members who implemented this wonderful project.

- Reducing Swinford Tidy Town's overall usage of seasonal bedding plants for your floral displays is an initiative that your committee could consider under this category for the future. Colourful and permanent perennial and pollinator friendly planting e.g., using plants such as *Alstroemeria* spp. can provide a good alternative to the flamboyant but labour/water/feed and energy intensive annuals such as *Lobelias*, *Begonias* and *Petunias* etc.

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

- It is noted that you continue to maintain the Swinford stream which flows through the town in cooperation with East Mayo Angling Association. From a cursory glance, the quality of the water in the stream looks to be pristine and no doubt every effort will be made to keep it that way, as it an important tributary of the Moy and Salmon spawning ground.
- The adjudicator is pleased to note that your swifts project at the National School is continuing to be a huge success, with the Swift population growing in Swinford every year and that all your watering needs are met by 100% harvested rainwater.

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

- It is pleasing to note that all your compost from hanging baskets and planters is reused in flowerbeds in the town and the Wood Well restoration project was completed using 100% recycled and up-cycled materials. Thanks, are especially due to the local Tús workers for the design and build of this project. You are re-using a window and door, timber for the roof and blue bangor slates, to restore the old weighbridge building and you hope to have this project completed for next year's judging. We wish you well with the completion of this important restoration project.
- When considering any new projects under this category it is worthwhile first of all considering how the proposed project will align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The information provided in the Tidy Towns newsletters and Handbook is very informative in this regard.
- Other areas worthy of consideration by Swinford Tidy Towns for the future under this category, which is in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals, include the development of small electric microgeneration schemes for Wind, Solar and Hydro in partnership with the Local Authority - these may also attract suitable SEAI or Leader funding.
- You might look at the provision of public e-car charge points and additional bicycle parking facilities or off-road cycle tracks in the town, and where there are deficiencies, suggest suitable locations where these could be provided in the short term.
- The Committee might also consider in the future initiating membership of the Sustainable Energy Communities programme run by the SEAI which includes engaging in learning networks, preparation of energy masterplans and local energy action plans etc. The following are useful links in this regard.
<https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/sustainable-energy-communities/><https://www.codema.ie/sec>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

- It is noted that your Tús and RSS workers manually clean the weeds along the kerbs on your streets and approach roads. A Weedex type machine could be useful for the future as an efficient way to physically remove weeds, without the use of herbicides. The occasional use of a mechanical road sweeper is also very helpful.
- You keep in contact with all local businesses and householders to help keep the weeds and litter at bay outside their premises and this is working well at the moment. You continue to hold an annual Good Friday Spring clean which brings out other members of the community who would not normally do so. Well done to your local GAA clubs who organised a scrap metal collection over 3 weekends during March & April and over 100 tons of metal was collected.
- On the day of adjudication, the Town area was found to be tidy and largely litter free. However, at the bring center located in the public car park, some littering was noted here.

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

- There are many housing estates in Swinford, both large and small. It is noted that all these estates have nameplates or name stones in some form at the entrance and most of the estates have their own committees set up and receive a small grant annually for ongoing maintenance. Private residences and gardens along approach roads were generally presented to an excellent standard.
- The adjudicator called to several residential estates in the town including Sancta Maria Terrace, Brabazon Heights, The Orchard, Larch Hill, Bolingbrooke Drive, and River Garden. The general standard of maintenance and presentation of these housing estates was very good. Tidy Estates competitions are a useful way to ensure a consistent standard of presentation between individual estates in the town can be achieved and perhaps can be considered for the future.

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

- The Park Road was greatly admired for the beautifully maintained roadside open space areas and margins, complete with attractive tree planting, which enhanced the roadside environs. Private residences and gardens also enhanced this approach as did the GAA Club and Golf Club premises. Concrete post and rail fencing is visually prominent along this section of road, which could be softened with native hedge planting.
- On the approach to the town from Kiltimagh the adjudicator noted the attractive hedging provided on along the boundary of the GAA grounds which enhances the overall appearance of this area. The Tesco premises are well landscaped along the road which softens and enhances the building frontage here.

- On the Ballina and Foxford approach to the town, the road is characterised by attractive field and hedgerow boundaries, with extensive natural vegetation and well-presented private residences, gardens and footpaths. The arched stone bridge and the Railway Terrace private residences also looked very well on this approach.
- On the Dublin Road approach to the town, the roadside landscape is very well maintained with attractive roadside vegetation and nicely clipped margins. The Toyota and Circle K commercial premises are noteworthy and we especially admired the planted bank within the grounds of the Toyota premises. Jimmy's drive-through coffee and the planting along the wall of the ESB substation were highlights on this approach.

Concluding Remarks:

The adjudicator enjoyed the walkabout in Swinford town and the positive impact of Tidy Towns activities was evident throughout. The town has very good potential to progress well in the competition. There are new developments in the pipeline, such as the recently announced Enniskillen to Claremorris Greenway, which will pass through Swinford town. These exciting new developments will open up many more project opportunities for your committee and community. We wish you well with your future endeavours and hope you found the comments in the report helpful.