

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: Swinford - Béal Átha na Muice	Ref: 361
County: Mayo	Mark: 285
Category: C	Date(s): 13/06/2019

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	45	45
Streetscape & Public Places	60	37	38
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	37	38
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	33	35
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	21	23
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	47	48
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	29	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	27	28
TOTAL MARK	470	276	285

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Swinford - Béal Átha na Muice páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019 Thank you very much for your entry into this year's Tidy Towns Competition and for providing a map and your 5 year planas well as some additional photographs and other material such as examples of posters etc. which were very helpful.

With a core number of 10 people on your committee and a further 12 volunteers, you have a good base to carry out your work.

You work with a wide range of organisations including Mayo County Council, An Taisce, OPW, local businesses, the Western Fisheries Board, Birdwatch Mayo and many others.

It is good to hear that your work on Tidy Towns and the 'Pride of Place' competitions has led to an increased sense of community spirit and pride in your town and that you have seen a reduction in the number of vacant buildings in the town.

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

Some premises in the town that looked particularly attractive included The Flower Cabin, with an eye catching pink exterior, the East Mayo Anglers Association, Bee Golden Health food shop, and The Flying Doc Bar & Brasserie, and Melletts.

Public buildings of note include the Library and Cultural Centre, both banks, the Church which is very well maintained with good quality landscaping. Although the majority of shops and businesses in the town are doing their best to present an attractive façade, there are quite a few places which would benefit from a fresh coat of paint and perhaps some planters or window boxes.

In your comprehensive 5 year plan you have set out some very fundamental issues to work towards that includes major projects such as bringing vacant buildings back to productive use, structural work such as the extension of existing footpaths as well as to build new ones and the installation of new street furniture, to goals that are more obtainable in the short term such as cleaning street furniture, planting hanging baskets and carry out surveys of different aspects of the physical infrastructure of the town. This is a very good approach to take as there is a lot of potential in Swinford, and some lovely buildings, but it will take some time to achieve all of this and it is important that you do not get disheartened with all the work in front of you but to persevere.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The Brabazon Woodlands are a wonderful amenity for the town to enjoy, and appears to be a popular spot judging by the number of people that were enjoying a stroll here on the day I visited, and you are to be commended for the work you are doing in planting native trees here, including to replace those that have been felled or damaged by storms, and the Tús scheme workers have to be acknowledged for their assistance. The playground was well kept and looked very well. It is good to see that you have committed to the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and are ensuring that grass verges are cut according to this in order to help our bee population.

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

This is a category in which you are doing a lot of work, particularly in relation to the wildlife to be found in Swinford and its environs.

The Swifts survey is one such area in conjunction with the Green school committee along with the installation of Swift boxes to encourage Swifts to nest, and it would seem that it is working as you mention that their numbers have increased.

You are also carrying out a survey of the Salmon and Trout in the Swinford stream with the help of East Mayo Anglers Association, as well as cleaning up the stream.

You also plan to undertake a bat survey in the town and install new bat boxes, perhaps you could make an event and have a bat walk, something that is usually very popular with children. I also saw recently where a special camera (I think it was infrared) was installed into a bats habitat and they could be observed without being disturbed, but this is something I would recommend that you seek advice from the Environmental Officer in Mayo County Council.

Invasive species such as Japanese knotweed are a problem in many areas and it is good to see that you are tackling this issue in the correct way.

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

The work of the schools in Swinford in this category is highly impressive, with a fantastic 12 Green Flags in total between Swinford Secondary School, Swinford and Culmore National Schools with more to come by the looks of things. There are some very good energy efficiency measures utilized in the refurbishment of the Community Centre including insulation, double glazing and low energy lighting.

You are ahead of the curve with your rainwater harvesting with 100% of your needs being met through this which is something that is beginning to become more prevalent, but is still not utilized by all towns and villages. A lot of other interesting projects your are working on include your 'Food Cloud' initiative to reduce food waste, quite an issue in Ireland, 'greening' the St Patrick's day parade and Síamsa Sráide, additional recycling bank to deal with the pressure on them, composting bins and to extend this to communal compost bins, as well as annual WEEE recycling and hazardous waste collection amongst many others. Well done for your comprehensive and practical approach to this category,

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You are making huge efforts in this area, with numerous litter pick ups being carried out by many different groups such as the Tidy Towns volunteers, Transition year students, Scout Troop litter pick up etc., well done on galvanising all this support. The bring bank area was clean overall, however there was some rubbish dumped there, so it might be worth making a special effort here. There is also a concerted effort to reduce the plight of dog fouling through your mutt-mitt dispensers project was very well-illustrated. You also take part in the Mayo County Council anti-litter league, as well as the national and European clean-ups and involve the schools as well. It is good to hear that your hard work and concerted efforts are bearing fruit and that you have noticed a visible difference in the amount of litter to be seen in your town, so well done on this.

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

Generally houses and residential areas were kept to a high standard, many having lovely planting or hanging baskets, planters or window boxes. Although a few housing estates were visited, Brabazon Heights in particular stood out and was very neat and tidy as was the nearby 'Orchard' estate. Railway terrace also had some nice houses as did Dun na Ri. Sancta Maria Terrace looked well and was complemented by the wildflower garden. Well done to all concerned and perhaps as the standard is quite high it might be worthwhile to have a residential areas competition with some friendly rivalry to lead to even more improvements. Are there residents associations set up?

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

The approach roads to Swinford give a great first impression, I approached from the Dublin road and was impressed with the neatness of the grass verges, (which included a 'wildflower' strip for our bees and butterflies). The entrance signs looked well

djudicator entered Swinford from the Dublin road entrance and was pleased on the superb presentation of neat verges, a corridor of uncut grass for our bees and butterflies. The signs and landscaping also looked very well.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a pleasure to visit Swinford and see all the hard work and effort that is going on, and although there is some work to be done, in particular with some of the dereliction in the town you are making great strides, well done and best of luck with all that you plan to accomplish.

