

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Swinford** Ref: **361**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **276**
Category: **C** Date(s): **12/07/2018**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	45	45
Streetscape & Public Places	50	37	37
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	37	37
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	32	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	19	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	43	47
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	29	29
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	27	27
TOTAL MARK	450	269	276

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Béal Átha na Muicechuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. Swinford TidyTowns is very welcome to the SuperValu TidyTowns competition. We thank you for your entry form and accompanying documents including your five-year plan. It is really positive that you took on board the outcomes of the Community Futures Survey conducted a few years back and have developed your TidyTowns plan around this. As that survey was conducted in 2012/13 perhaps you would consider running a 'Survey Monkey' survey or similar each year to get feedback from the community to inform your future work. We congratulate the ten core committee members and two junior committee members for your dedication and commitment to creating a sense of pride in the town. You have a further number of volunteers whom assist you regularly but that are not on the committee and it is heartening to learn from your application that a number of other organisations also assist your work programmes when called upon. It is therefore appropriate that the following are recognised for their contribution to TidyTowns in Swinford: Mens Shed, Foróige, Ladies GAA, Swinford Scouts, Swinford GAA, Swinford Golf Club, the Gardening Club and a number of local schools. We thank all the local businesses that support your work. You are apt at communicating with your local stakeholders via various mediums and we know you are active on Facebook and Twitter. Your web page is excellent and you have lots of useful information available for householders. We found your map satisfactory but please consider how it could be improved upon for next year. We suggest listing project locations you want us to see, the inclusion of housing estates with names, approach road details etc. Projects should be numbered on your map with corresponding key of what you want adjudicators to look for.

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

The Church set on an elevated corner site on Chapel Street with well landscaped grounds is impressive. The silver painted railing along the boundary is a notable feature. The Library and Cultural Centre looks well and has been designed in keeping with the railway station. The handball alley was noted and is a link to your social and cultural history. You have been working with Mayo County Council in relation to dilapidated buildings and it is positive that the number has greatly reduced but there is more work still to do as there are a number of empty unoccupied premises in the town core. Many businesses are putting their best foot forward in terms of presentation of premises and shopfronts. We particularly admired the bright frontage of the Gateway Hotel, the AIB and BOI banks, and Cafolla's in between. P. Moores would benefit from a fresh coat of paint. A lot of window stickers and signage detracts from the Eurospar on Market Street. We see this practice in a lot of stores on streets throughout the country, not only Eurospar. Windows were originally in place to show passers-by goods and wares and entice them into the shop, now the focus is on the capacity of the shop floor. The East Mayo Anglers Association building was noted for its simple yet effective signage. The Golf Club and GAA Clubs are both well-presented facilities and we admired the skilfully painted signage on the gable walls of both. The Tesco car park is very well presented complete

with e-car charging point and bike racks. The new MUGA playground at Park Road was noted. Mellet's Emporium looks really well and they have also been thinking sustainably by having a book exchange where patrons can bring a book and take a book.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The newly commissioned TidyTowns planters and bench seating were noted at the playground carpark. We enjoyed a walk in Brabazon Woodlands. It would appear to be popular with families and is conveniently located beside the playpark. A wonderful green space in the heart of the town. We looked at your Procession of the Souls instalment which leads to a large grassed area and burial plot; does this also lead to the Brabazon Woodlands? We have researched and learned that this is a memorial dedicated to the history of the Great famine in Swinford. We didn't know this while adjudicating and some explanation would be useful. Do you carry out maintenance works and keep this area well maintained? The 1916 memorial was visited, as was the famine graveyard at the hospital. Trees do not need stakes across from the entrance into Tesco's nor within the garden of the Mayo County Council office near the library. Empty planters were noted on the Kilkelly approach.

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

You tell us that you are currently surveying and mapping the town with the assistance of the Biodiversity Officer. Significant effort has gone into the initial survey and we understand that the Biodiversity Officer is preparing action plans for various areas. This work will greatly inform and direct your future projects. Another well-coordinated and multi-faceted project is the Swift Project. We are glad to hear that swift numbers are increasing in Swinford as their population in Ireland has declined by over 40% in the last 15 years. You have also been monitoring the Swinford Stream in association with the East Mayo Anglers Association. Thank you for taking action in relation to the Japanese knotweed which we now understand is being treated by the Council. You mention that you plan to undertake a bat survey in the town and that the Scouts and Foróige club will make and install new bat boxes. Bat boxes was something mentioned in your adjudication report last year also. If this goes ahead this year, we advise that it should be followed up with an educational / awareness raising event. Perhaps you could get an expert from the Bat Conservation of Ireland to join your group for a bat walk and you could volunteer for their monitoring surveys. They can lend you a bat detector for use during a monitoring scheme which may be of interest. (<https://www.batconservationireland.org/>). It is important to add new and varied initiatives to your programme each year.

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

A number of local schools are assisting by working on the Green Flag initiative. Swinford National School has recently been awarded their 7th Green Flag! That is a wonderful achievement and shows a great commitment to promoting long-term, whole-school action for the environment. Recent refurbishment of the community centre has included insulation, double glazing and low energy lighting which together should bring substantial financial savings while also realising energy savings. You have been harvesting rainwater for some time and state that all your 'watering needs are 100% sustainable' this is wonderful and something we ask all TidyTowns communities to consider. This summer's drought has really highlighted our responsibilities in relation to sustainability – particularly water. TidyTowns groups will be able to use this to further proclaim their message and hopefully extend it to individual's households' water usage. The farmers are playing their part this year and making use of the farm plastics recycling compliance scheme. It's good that all farm plastics collected via the scheme are converted into new products including refuse sacks, plastic piping, damp proofing products and garden furniture. Be sure to close the loop and buy only recycled products if ever sourcing seating or street furniture. Your Food Cloud project is excellent under this category, the local charities have access to a supply of fresh food and Tesco can contribute to their community in a meaningful way. We thank Tesco's and the local charities for participating and its help the fight against food waste. EPA statistics tell us that the average household in Ireland throws away €700 of food each year. How could Swinford TidyTowns get involved? The Stop Food Waste Challenge could be a start. You state in your application that you took part in the Food Cloud project in 2015 – we'd be interested to hear about your involvement since as that is outside the scope of this year's adjudication period. You mention you hope to extend it to other shops; tell us how you have been facilitating this. You have been improving the credentials of the Siamsa Sraíde festival year on year since 2015 and currently are achieving a large reduction in the amount of waste going to landfill.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You are really active in terms of litter picks and community clean-ups and a large number of local people assist with these. Weekly clean-ups on Wednesdays during the Spring /Summer and weekly Saturday clean-up all year round are testament to your perseverance and dedication. We know you are ardent supporters of the National Spring Clean and 'Clean Up Mayo Day' too and have learned that this year you have also joined the 'Let's Clean Up Europe' campaign – well done. Bring Banks can be black spots for litter and fly-tipping but the Bring Banks we visited at the Corrib Oil/Topaz and Tesco's were clean and tidy. We are pleased to let you know that litter control was very good on the day we visited. Mutt Mitt dispensers are new this year also, introduced to combat the scourge of dog fouling. We thank the volunteers who empty these bins twice weekly and encourage local dog owners to continue to be responsible when walking dogs. In terms of tidiness there are a few minor issues including: repair wall at the Hospital entrance; the looped walks signage is missing at children's playpark carpark; empty planters; weeds in back areas etc.

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

We visited a good number of estates on adjudication day. The wildflower garden at Sancta Marie Terrace was noted.

Homes and gardens in Dun na Ri were very well maintained, however we noted that there are a number of tree stakes that could be removed here. Brabazon Heights and The Orchard were excellent. Do you run a Tidy Estates competition? This could be another string to your bow.

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

By reducing the grass cutting along the approach roads who hope to create 'Bee Highways' this has resulted in savings in resources and fuel while also providing wildlife corridors and areas where wildflowers are encouraged to grow. The hedge planting along the Amenity Park wall on the Kiltimagh Road was noted. You should also consider further areas where you can plant native hedging; they are being removed more and more. Our hedgerows provide foods for numerous species of birds, bees, and butterflies all throughout spring and summer, as well as nesting sites for many bird species. In addition they provide habitat corridors to native wildlife species, prevent soil erosion, store carbon and so contribute to managing climate change. The new footpath at Davitt Place was noted. During our adjudication visit there were no real issues with parking or traffic congestion which has been mention in years previously. The Topaz on the approach had a tidy forecourt. We noted that the Swinford sign and 50km speed signage near Park Road and signage on the approach from Castlebar would benefit from cleaning.

Concluding Remarks:

We have set out a number of suggestions which we hope will help you move forward in a number of categories. Last year, you received an extremely healthy increase in points; while your increase this year is not as generous we hope you are not disappointed. You have a large area to maintain and are taking on a lot of projects in each competition category. The standard of tidiness has improved significantly. You are doing great work in the town and we wish you well with your future endeavours.