

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Skibbereen - An Sciobairín** Ref: **693**
County: **Cork(West)** Mark: **366**
Category: **D** Date(s): **10/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	50	52
Streetscape & Public Places	80	48	50
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	42	44
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	25	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	42	43
TOTAL MARK	550	351	366

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.... Thank you for your 2023 Tidy Towns entry which covers a vast amount of projects and work both completed to date or ongoing. The layout and content of the entry form is excellent and helps greatly when adjudicating. It is noted that you have endeavoured to reduce the size of the entry form as much as possible. The appendices outlining the Skibbereen Plan 2023 – 2026 and illustrative photographs of projects and work sessions were most useful. Your map was very clear and easy to follow with a well set out legend to accompany it. Adjudication day took place on a wet Saturday in June but the weather did not dampen the atmosphere of Skibbereen and the town was very busy with plenty of people out and about.

You have a core committee of 12 people with an additional 12 who volunteer on either a regular or intermittent basis. This increase on previous numbers is excellent and will hopefully enable the distribution of the considerable workload involved a little bit more. The number of volunteers mentioned belies the number of volunteers from various groups who are involved with the many projects in Skibbereen on a collaborative basis. You hold monthly Tidy Towns meetings and also participate in other agency meetings such as Skibbereen Chamber, PPN and local Cork County Council meetings as required.

You have great support from a long list of agencies, clubs and local businesses and in particular receive support from the Area Executive Engineer and the Environment Department of Cork County Council in relation to your efforts to encourage biodiversity in council owned locations through reduced mowing regimes.

You communicate with a variety of methods via social media platforms with twice yearly newsletters and regular blogs on the Skibbereen Tidy Towns website and in printed media with regular news items in the Southern Star. You aim to welcome young people and invite them to participate in various work sessions including clean ups and conducting a walkability audit. You liaise with all of the schools in the town and have this year forged a new relationship with Foroige. You also work with the local sports clubs to engage young people in your ongoing efforts.

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

Skibbereen town centre was exceptionally busy on adjudication day and the amount of traffic going through Main Street and in the vicinity of it did not make navigation easy for the pedestrian.

You have five new projects and four maintained under this category. The improvement works of the Town hall as part of the Public Realm Improvements have now been completed and were visited. They are very impressive and the new accessibility aspect an important one. You have requested a sign denoting the location of significant heritage site and this will be an important addition to the area. The area is very clean and well finished but it is lacking in colour and the planters here were somewhat disappointing. One of the box balls did not survive and in

terms of pollinators, box balls would not be considered to have a lot of value and it is recommended the choice of planting be reconsidered here to give maximum impact.

The new paving along Bridge Street is a big improvement and it is good to know that the ducting for underground cables to be installed in the future is in place.

Our Lady's Grotto is a key landmark and the new planting will be very impactful as it matures. The wall surrounding the grotto would benefit from painting to freshen up the whole area.

Well done for addressing the signage in the town and for carrying out an audit in conjunction with TY students from Skibbereen Community School. Hopefully this will pay dividends in the future.

The walkability audit is also an excellent initiative and will help guide both the Tidy Towns Committee and Cork County Council in its thinking for the improvement of key facilities in the town.

The mural celebrating the Summer 2022 theme of Roaring 20's is a good disguise for the derelict building and was much admired.

The JFK Bridge is an area that is in need of some care. The railings could do with a fresh coat of paint as well as the name signs here.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Your work on the O'Donovan Rossa Memorial Park was positively noted. This is a really lovely space with a clever design and the mulch seems to be a big improvement. The maintenance of the park is of course likely to be a challenge in the Summer but this adjudicator was impressed with the work here so well done.

The playground was visited and this is clearly a well-used amenity and is well maintained. The areas that have been left as sites to go 'wild' under the Pollinator Plan and to be cut only on a six weekly basis is a great advance for biodiversity. This is the single most effective and low cost action to support a vital biodiversity eco-system service. Please do check the staking of the trees in this area as they look to be in need of proper staking.

The flower beds outside the Cyara premises could also benefit from a revamp and some perennial planting to brighten up this entrance.

The draft design undertaken by the two TY students from Skibbereen Community College for the Community Orchard is an excellent proposal and hopefully you will be able to implement some if not all of the design elements in the future. You are encouraged to try and plant native Irish trees and plants here.

There seemed to be a dearth of planting in the town on adjudication day. This was disappointing given the positive comments from last year's adjudicator. Planters on the JFK bridge were empty, planters outside premises on the Main St were also empty and there were many poles for hanging baskets but no baskets in sight.

Olympic Square is one that could be a vibrant and pleasant space in the centre of the town. There were an awful lot of planters here, seemingly placed at random amongst the seating. It is suggested that this area could be nicely designed with fewer planters strategically placed and planted up with perennial pollinator friendly plants.

In general throughout the town there were a variety of different planters, wooden and plastic, of various shapes and sizes. This does not create a coherent streetscape which is a shame. Perhaps an overall audit of planters could enable the relocation of some planters to provide an aesthetically pleasing layout for the benefit of the local community and visitors.

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

Your collaboration with Cork County Council has proved to be very rewarding in the delivery of a Pollinator Plan for the town and this is excellent news.

The Pollinator Plan site locations included in your appendices was most interesting. It is not immediately clear what your choice of plants might be, how you might implement this plan and if you will be able to increase the number of locations that would enable pollinator-friendly corridors, foraging pitstops and safe shelter areas for pollinators. This is especially important along main roads. These details will no doubt be considered and reported upon in future submissions.

The continued work at Windmill Rock is noted and the planting of native trees in the area by the horticulture students of Skibbereen FET centre is positive and they will contribute enormously to the biodiversity in the area.

The first three years after planting will be important in terms of formative pruning, weed control, checking ties and stakes and if necessary, watering. This will need to be carefully managed.

The flower beds planted in the public car park behind Fields were very much admired. These are a fine example of the sustainable planting that can be used throughout a town centre and are admired by all members of the community.

It is a shame that the trees planted at the Main street/Market Street car park have been constantly vandalised. You are encouraged to persist however as trees can make such a valuable contribution to the streetscape.

The Ilen River Nature Matters community group is clearly a great success and makes a great contribution to the sense of stewardship amongst the townspeople. Congratulations on their commendation for their entry in the Muintir Cork Pride Community Annual Awards.

Grass cuttings were noted in the O'Donovan Rossa Memorial Park and it seems a shame that an area in the park has not been put aside for the composting of these cuttings and other green waste.

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

Your main project for this year's entry is the 'Skibbereen taking on Food Waste' campaign which is supported by the Clean Technology Centre at MTU. You have already achieved success with projects run by the Tidy Towns Committee as well as Cycle Sense and CECAS including awareness events and social media campaigns, composting events facilitated by Waste Down, surveys comparing levels of household waste in general waste bins and engagement with the local primary schools to create a seasonal receipt book. Well done to all concerned with

this project which it is hoped will go from strength to strength. It would be good if you were able to quantify the successes and results of your initiatives. With base figures, you could then have goals and targets to reduce waste.

The Net Zero Skibbereen Community group established in 2022 has an ambitious goal of making Skibbereen carbon neutral by 2040 with an interim goal of 50% reduction in emissions by 2030. Although ambitious, it is vitally important that such ambitions are encouraged. The Energy Master Plan (EMP) with energy surveys provided to selected businesses is an excellent guideline for the years ahead and we will watch this space with great interest in future submissions.

Additional EV charging points funded by the Dept of Rural and Community Development Connected Hubs Fund and the Ludgate Hub are very positively noted.

Other sustainable initiatives in Skibbereen include Cycle Sense and Relove Paint.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You carry out a considerable amount of clean-ups and litter picking throughout the year involving many different members of the community and this is evident throughout the town. In general there was a fair level of tidiness in the town on adjudication day with a few exceptions. However the exceptions were likely to be recent activity rather than a trend.

Quite a number of shopping trollies were noticed around the town, seemingly abandoned. Some bags of rubbish were also seen sitting on pavements. Some litter was noted in the O'Donovan Rossa Memorial Park as well as bundles of half filled green waste bags at the entrance.

Sign posts in certain areas really do need a good clean. The Angling in Ireland board would be one example. Some of the litter bins are also in need of a good clean and it was a pity to see a bus stop on Main St with a big black plastic bag over it saying 'not in use'.

The Bring Centre was closed but appeared to be well kept and clean from the outside.

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

The re-introduction of an extensive business and residential competition is to be commended. You hope to include a Best Residential Estate / Residential Street category to encourage some friendly competition. You are encouraged to include a most sustainable garden and / or a most biodiverse garden as a part of this competition to raise awareness of the urgent need to address the environmental issues we are all facing.

The Riverdale Estate having been chosen as one of the areas to be planted in line with your Pollinator Plan will bring great environmental benefits to the area and the location is ideal crossing three residential estates and with a riverside walk. It will be interesting to learn how this progresses in future submissions when the planned 90 metres of native hedging is planted.

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

You have been extremely successful with the 'Adopt a Roundabout' campaign and the three roundabouts viewed were very nicely presented. These are important landmarks at the entrance to the town and their presentation makes a big difference so well done.

The planting of lime and mature birch trees inside the boundary wall at the Ilan Street junction with Schull road are a great addition to the landscape of the area.

The 'Love 30' project by Cycle Sense installing 30 kms speed signs in the town centre will hopefully reap rewards and reduce accidents as a result, making Skibbereen a safer town for all.

The approach roads to Skibbereen were well examined on adjudication day. Due to the recent warm weather followed by the rain, some of the town signs were slightly obscured by long grass. This is an inevitability and not of great significance. The signs themselves were all seen to be clean and well presented. The width of the roads allows the grass verges to be left to grow in the interests of biodiversity without causing a hindrance or any safety issues. As a result the approach roads give a very pleasing outlook to the motorist.

The cleaning of the roads used for the Skibbereen Walks totalling 13km are a key focus for the Tidy Towns committee and you are to be commended for your work in this area.

The Schull road is a particularly lovely approach road along the River Ilan and very well maintained.

Concluding Remarks:

The work of Skibbereen Tidy Towns is clearly an integral pillar of the community and you are to be commended for your dedication and work. It seems fitting that you have chosen to dedicate your 2023 entry to the late Bev Cotton who had a vision for a sustainable town and who laid the foundations for many of your ongoing projects. Keep up the good work and best wishes for this and future competitions.