

# Tidy Towns Competition 2024

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Castleknock - Caisleán Crucha</b>	Ref: <b>772</b>
County: <b>Dublin</b>	Mark: <b>296</b>
Category: <b>E</b>	Date(s): <b>10/07/2024</b>

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2023	Mark Awarded 2024
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	36	38
Streetscape & Public Places	80	36	37
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	36	38
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	31	34
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	25	28
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	32	33
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>296</b>

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

“Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu don bhliain 2024. 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 2024 Tidy Towns competition and thank you for your entry form, map with legend and 3-5 year plan. From initial reading of the entry form it was clear that you are very well structured as a group and have a great network of support. Further reading reveals just how well organised you are, and it is wonderful to see that you have not only put thought into the best way of managing your steering group but that you also collaborate so well with other Tidy Towns committee and especially Clonsilla who are a very newly formed Tidy Towns committee. The 3-5 year plan is a great piece of work and it is such a pleasure to be able to see the progress of projects. It was interesting to see the projects that you have decided not to pursue and the reasons given. This is a good example of our changing world and the need for us to adapt to new ways of living.

Well done to Amy Crushell for the clear and manageable map which makes the life of the adjudicator so much easier but the added bonus were the beautiful pen drawings of local landmarks on the map by local artist, Brenna Crushell. The logo which now encompasses the all-important Environmental, Sustainability and Climate Action Group is equally lovely. The fact that you changed your logo as a result of focus group feedback from younger members of community shows that you really are listening to your community so well done indeed.

Although you do not have a Junior tidy Towns at present, it would be good to have some younger volunteers especially as you have noticed the demographics of your current steering group and volunteers. Have you tried approaching the Transition Year (TY) co-ordinators? The students doing TY are often looking for projects and many have a great interest in the local environment. Similarly, students who may be pursuing their An Gaisce award might be interested in working with you for a period of time.

It is good to hear that you support some of the International Protection applicants in your area and that they volunteer with you on a regular basis.

Your many supporters include local businesses and agencies, and you are involved in many other activities in Castleknock. This ensures full community collaboration and communications. Your great allies are Myo's Public House who are so helpful and supportive to you, hosting the defibrillator, providing parking, weekly tea and coffee for the volunteers and even taking on board one of the key Tidy Towns aims by changing from annual to pollinator friendly perennial plants – this is community support at its very best.

You have extensive methods of communication, and your target reach for Facebook is over 20,800, a 38% increase since your last competition entry which is phenomenal.

It is acknowledged that apart from the set schedules for litter picking and work parties, a significant amount of work goes on in the background and you are to be commended for all that you do to make Castleknock the best and most sustainable village possible in which to live.

It was initially thought that you had omitted to identify the Sustainable Development Goals achieved under each

category or project but in fact, not only have you identified but you have explained how the projects have helped to achieve the goals. This is a first for your adjudicator and it signals your understanding of the aims of the SDG's very well.

With a total of 63 projects in your entry form, it will not be possible to comment on each one but rest assured that they have all been taken into consideration when marking and as many as possible will be viewed.

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

Although this adjudicator knew of and had passed through Clonsilla many times, this was a first time to stop and really view the town and it was a pleasant surprise. As you note, you have a number of natural and built heritage sites and these will form an excellent foundation for your future work.

You intend to focus on highlighting your heritage and intine you may create a heritage trail for the village.

Well done for organising the first of a number of tours for St. Mochta's National School covering both the built heritage and biodiversity in Porterstown and along the canal. Hopefully this will be the start of many such tours and will be open in time to other members of the community.

Well done also for highlighting the streetscape grant to all businesses in Clonsilla and in time you will see the fruits of your labour. There is often a ripple effect as one business undertakes some improvements and upgrading so others are moved to do so also. Many towns and villages provide suggested colour palettes to create a unified and coherent streetscape – this is something you might think about.

Your active engagement in the 2024 Masterplan for Clonsilla Village providing a voice for the residents of Clonsilla is great – such engagement is much needed and residents are best placed to provide practical and knowledgeable feedback to councils for developments and improvements in their area.

Having driven through or past Castleknock many times over the years, this adjudicator was really looking forward to spending some time visiting and viewing the landmarks and some of your projects and was not disappointed. The minute one drives along the beautifully leafy roads to the centre of the village, one is impressed by the beautifully maintained residences and housing developments, trees, grass verges and some excellent planting schemes. Care and attention to details is obvious everywhere. Although the weather was cold, windy and at times wet, the village still looked splendid and eventually the sun did shine for a short while.

Many of your projects in this category are maintained or ongoing and this is as it should be for an established Tidy Towns group in a mature village. It is so important to ensure that any proposed developments are appropriate and where they may not be, you can act as a voice for residents. Similarly, your lobbying to ensure that the local shopping centres are maintained to a good standard is very important and well done for your actions thus far. The painting of the railings next to Castleknock Shopping Centre is a big improvement and thankfully some of the unit occupiers were willing to help to defray some of the costs.

The shop window of the village shoemaker must have been a delight last Christmas and the idea to base the theme on The Elves and the Shoemaker inspired. In addition, the message to 'Reduce, Repair, Recycle' made it very relevant. Well done to all concerned. Hopefully this will be repeated, and perhaps other shop windows could also follow suit?

An age friendly audit would be very worthwhile given your experience with the focus groups, it would appear to be relevant to Castleknock. We look forward to hearing the results of this project next year.

Your monitoring of vacant/derelict buildings, planning permissions and rezoning motions is so important and you have been successful with some of these actions whilst others are ongoing. We hope that the Elm Lodge heritage property in the centre of the village is eventually upgraded and used for the benefit of the community.

The Castleknock Heritage Trail were noted and some day, this adjudicator would love to complete the trail.

We are very much looking forward to seeing the results of your work on the wall of St Brigid's Church following the removal of a redundant Eir cabinet. This is a key focal point and it is good to know that the final design has been carefully considered.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

Your ongoing planting schemes and maintenance of these and of planters creates a lovely vista in Castleknock and many of the planting schemes were admired including the lovely lavender spilling through the railings the pollinator friendly perennials beside pavements, at corners and village entrance signs and beds of roses all of which combine to give a great streetscape in Castleknock village. The planting scheme in the roundabout and around the community centre and church was excellent.

The extra planters mentioned in your entry form were indeed in place on adjudication day and although they are large and were showing a lot of black container, having been recently planted, it is hoped that in time, the planting will take over and planter itself will fade into the background.

The planting in the car park of the Tennis Club was one area that it is felt more attention could be given. Whilst the grass has been left to grow, it was untidy and did not give the impression of being maintained. This might be an area that could be revisited.

Well done for your ongoing planting and maintenance of the orchards in and around the village. We are particularly pleased to learn that you have delegated the job of looking after newly planted trees to one or two volunteers. The first three years after planting is the most important in terms of formative pruning, weed control, checking ties and stakes and if necessary, watering so it is good to know that you recognise this and are managing it.

It is good to see that you continue to lobby for more seating throughout the village. This is an important social aspect of village life. One wonders if there are areas where more than one seat could be provided to allow for smaller groups to sit and chat? Remember also to try and provide wheelchair accessible areas beside seating

where possible.

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

Well done for entering the All Ireland Pollinator Plan - Local Authority Pollinator Award and the best of luck. Your main project for this year has been the establishment of Community Composting Bays at various locations throughout the village. This was a huge team effort with volunteers from all corners of Castleknock helping out, it is incredibly sustainable and you entered the 'Community Composting Made Easy – Too Good to Waste' in the SDG Week 2023. This was a great project and will pay huge dividends when you start to reap the rewards with home made compost and 'brown gold' that is leaf mulch. With the great amount of mature trees in Castleknock, it should be no problem to fill the leaf cages.

It is great news that you have located a site for a polytunnel and this will advance your target of being 50% self-sufficient in plants by 2025. You may even surpass that target.

A 'Glorious Gardens' Competition is an excellent initiative and congratulations to the winners, Rita and Denis McGowan. An expansion of this project to include housing estates is great and we look forward to seeing more lovely gardens and estates in the future.

So many other events and projects undertaken include the Little Wild Gathering, Snowdrop Walk, engagement with the local schools and the Biodiversity Action Plan.

You have a rich natural area surrounding your community and you are fully aware of this. Have you considered mapping these areas and carrying out a habitat survey?

Habitat mapping can help inform decision making in many areas including planning, climate change mitigation and conservation of nature and as such is an important first step in understanding the habitat around us and what we need to protect them and to identify any gaps in linkages of habitat. The Heritage Council provide excellent information in their Conserving and Enhancing Wildlife in Towns and Villages. You have already made a start and could expand by listing the plants and animals to be found in the various habitats and recognising their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). This information can be fun to gather and can involve the schools or other interested parties. Raise awareness through holding events such as hedgerow walks or bat walks. Contact the Irish Wildlife Trust for more information. For further information on this criterion, we suggest you consult the revised handbook which is available at the following link. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Nature-and-Biodiversity-in-your-locality.pdf>

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

This is a category that you have grasped firmly and have not only taken on board the advice and suggestions of previous adjudicators (thank you for your responses to last year adjudicators queries) but also divided them into the main headings of Waste, Climate Action, Circular Economy, Transport and Energy. The remaining heading of Water is on your agenda for next year.

You have noted some figures on your entry form showing some reductions and some targets. It is important to quantify the successes and results of your initiatives. You have carried out some research and it would certainly raise awareness if you were able to put some figures in terms of saving, diversion from general waste streams and increased recycling figures as a result of your projects. Once some base figures are established, then the aim would be to increase the amount of reductions, reduce the general waste and estimate the savings in terms of costs, labour and environmental damage.

Your work to date in this category is exemplary and you are to be commended for it.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

You are equally active in this category as in the others. You report all and any issues in the village that require maintenance, repair, or replacement and have noticed that if you don't report them, no one else will. It is good to know that most businesses will respond positively to your requests.

The small white stickers from vapes stuck onto litter bins are a big problem for many communities. There are now specific recycling bins for vapes and you might wish to explore this idea if you feel that the issue is getting out of hand. Litter bins throughout the village were noted to be clean and well maintained. One bin under a tree was noted to be a bit green as was the speed sign and letter box nearby, more than likely because of their location under trees.

The 'Helping Hands Litter Picking Team' have this year focussed on behavioural change and this is music to the ears of your adjudicator. Rather than passive enabling, if offenders can be persuaded to change their habits and dispose of their waste responsibly, the work of the litter pickers and indeed many Tidy Towns volunteers throughout the country, would be so much easier.

One wonders if you have considered approaching Fingal County Council to ask for recycling bins in addition to general waste bins. Many a responsible person would use the recycling bins if they were convenient and there are some very neat bins that are used countrywide for public spaces and allow for segregation of litter. Once waste is put in the general litter bin the chances of it being recycled further down the line is remote.

Castleknock was looking exceptionally clean, well maintained, tidy and litter free on adjudication day so well done to all the hard working volunteers.

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

There are many residential estates in Castleknock most of which have been in situ for some years. The result is that the trees have matured beautifully, the green spaces and shrubs are well established, and the front gardens of the houses are green and lush. Many housing estates were visited on adjudication day and without exception the standard of presentation was very high. It is clear that residents take pride in their areas and work hard to ensure

they look well. Your proposed competition next year will be interesting, and your judges will have a hard time making decisions and awarding prizes – there may have to be one for everyone in the audience! The name signs for the village and for the housing states were admired as they were clean, legible and well maintained. The planting was appropriate and did not impede the reading of the name signs. It is preferred that all names signs are bi-lingual and it was surprising to note that the vast majority in Castleknock, with the exception of the village name, were in English only. Perhaps this could be addressed at a future date.

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

In this category you are vigilant with regards to the traffic signs that get damaged or broken and communicate with Fingal County Council to have them replaced or repaired. All signs were looking in good order on adjudication day. In addition, the removal of rusty poles, abandoned Eir boxes and defunct notices has ensured far less street clutter. The approach road to Castleknock from the Phoenix Park is just lovely and the planting schemes here were much admired. Your work on the wall at the Gate was much admired and is a lovely tribute to one of your dear members Rita. Roundabout planting was excellent and it was nice to see that the grass along the verges had been left to grow with the exception of a strip for safe access. The painting of the Castleknock College wall has made a big difference and of course the wonderful trees give a shaded, exuberant feel to the roads.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Castleknock is a lovely village with heritage buildings and a very active Tidy Towns steering group who are making a big difference. Your pro-active and far reaching work is excellent and you are to be commended for the time, energy, passion and work that you all put in to making Castleknock as really lovely place to live and to visit. You are wished well in all that you do and in the Tidy Towns competition.