

# Tidy Towns Competition 2022

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Douglas - Dubhghlas</b>	Ref: <b>116</b>
County: <b>Cork(South)</b>	Mark: <b>321</b>
Category: <b>G</b>	Date(s): <b>30/06/2022</b>

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2022</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	46
Streetscape & Public Places	80	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	42
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	34
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>321</b>

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. We are delighted to welcome your hard-working committee of five members to the competition and we are glad to read that you can count on the support of 30 volunteers for completing projects in your area. The invaluable support that these volunteers provide is demonstrated by the fact that they are responsible for updating your social media account and your website. Your entry form indicates that you are a very active committee and it is great to see that you have collaborated with other community and voluntary groups such as local residents associations in area clean-ups (Bracken Court & Broadale) and planting projects (Bromley Park). Now that these links are firmly established, we encourage you to look for other possible collaborations with community-based groups – particularly under the nature and biodiversity and sustainability categories. Well done also on supporting your neighbouring tidy towns committee in Ballinlough by providing them with advice and giving them the benefit of your experience. The partnerships you have formed with statutory agencies and bodies such as Cork County Council, Cork City Council, Tus, SECAD (South-East Cork Area Development) and the Local Authorities Water and Communities Office (LAWCO) are impressive. This is considered to be a very pragmatic way to proceed as all of these organisations are a first-class source of advice, funding and other resources. The strong support that is provided to you by many local businesses is also appreciated. The active youth involvement in your projects is applauded – well done to the students from local secondary and primary schools for engaging in your projects under the litter, biodiversity and sustainability categories. You are commended on your collaborations with the schoolchildren and scouts in Douglas and we urge you to keep this up. Perhaps a logical next step is to form a junior tidy towns committee? This will afford the younger age groups the opportunity to select their own projects and to implement and maintain them. It would also be a very effective way of boosting local participation and for raising awareness of what you do. Thank you for your completed application form which we read with interest. However, at a weighty 96 pages, it could not reasonably be described as concise and we will ask you to cut it down significantly for next year. This could be achieved by providing short concise descriptions of your projects and significantly reducing the number of photos included. This would provide for a much more legible and user-friendly document. We are delighted to read that your participation in the competition has been a rewarding experience that has promoted a better community spirit, improved the appearance of your area and fostered a stronger sense of local pride in Douglas. Keep up the good work!

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

One of the best aspects of the return of the in person competition is that adjudicators get to visit lovely areas like Douglas once again and we are pleased to say that it looked tremendously well on a bright June evening. We are glad to see that despite the difficulties faced by shops, businesses and the hospitality sector over the last two years, the vast majority of commercial premises in Douglas achieved a high standard of presentation. We admired the

sleek modern design of the redeveloped Douglas Shopping Centre and the recent Aldi development also looked well. In the main village, the Bank of Ireland, Barrys, Eco, Coriander and Okura Japanese Cuisine (with the charming new Parklet positioned outside its entrance) stood out while in East Douglas Village, the contemporary design of open fire pizza and the East Village bar restaurant hotel were impressive. Barry's garden is also a pleasant space which adds to the vibrancy of your area. It was observed during our walk around that these are exciting times in Douglas with new developments planned on sites adjacent to the Aldi store. The area at the bus stop in front of the Legion of Mary premises looked a little untidy and we wondered if there are any plans for this site? In Douglas West, Roosters Piri Piri, the South County, O'Sullivan's and Dino's all looked very well and we loved Finline furniture which is accommodated in a repurposed industrial building. The community centre is a most attractive modern structure and we also loved Kubo and Bean and Leaf which are located nearby. It is great to see that your committee and volunteers are working proactively to improve the buildings in your area by preparing a list of derelict and dilapidated buildings in the village as a 'first step' in realising improvements for them. In our view, the city council will be appreciative of your efforts as it is stated government priority at national level to seek the regeneration and redevelopment of urban centres as a means of realising compact growth settlement patterns. We are pleased to read that planning permission was sought and approved for the rundown cottages in West Douglas and that their redevelopment is almost complete. Well done also on continuing to monitor the condition of street furniture and we would urge you to identify priority items in this report as this will enable the council to adopt a phased response to your requests for repairs and renewals. Be aware that redundant sign poles add clutter (a small number were spotted in Douglas village) and we wondered if the pay phone boxes could be tidied up? The heritage photo exhibition and oral history project is a lovely initiative which has the potential to capture the interest of residents of all age groups in your area. While the exhibition was noted in the Douglas Shopping Centre, it is acknowledged that other outputs from the project are anticipated and we would welcome a further update on it next year. The renewal of the heritage trail signage is applauded and well done also for hosting annual guided heritage walks. Perhaps sites of natural interest in Douglas could be included in your heritage walk at a later date? We note that the design of a new Grange loop walk is proposed and its development is expected to get underway this year. This is an exciting project and we look forward to exploring phase 1 of the walk next June. The new welcome to Douglas signage is reviewed under the approach road streets and lanes category.

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

Rejuvenation and renewal appear to be keywords in your entry form with respect to the landscaping and green spaces in Douglas for 2022. We would like to commend you on the number of projects that you have revamped for this year's competition. Many attractive examples of planters could be seen with the shrub planting outside Coriander in Douglas village and the numerous (and colourful) planter boxes in the car park of Finline furniture standing out. The range and quality of planting schemes in the community Park was a highlight and we were delighted to see the strenuous attempts to promote pollinator friendly planting here. The perimeter planting beds around the car park of the community centre were lovely and they were stocked with a great range of shrubs and flowering plants that included daisies, purple toad flax and fuchsia. We are delighted to see that the wildflowers have thrived so successfully in the park (adjacent to wooden raised planter beds) and along the riverbank. The timber raised planters were a work in progress during our visit (they were ready to be filled with topsoil) and we look forward to seeing their completion next year. We were delighted to read that there have been impressive new additions to your amenity areas with the completion of the Billy Coleman garden and the Parklet. The Billy Coleman garden is both a fitting acknowledgement of the valuable work of a director and founder of the Douglas Community Association and a high quality addition to your area. The contribution of Men's Shed this project is also acknowledged. The parklet is similarly impressive not least because of the inclusion of colourful planting along its boundaries but also due to its overall message – that parking can be phased down and replaced with attractive seating areas which enhance the many high quality hospitality experiences available in Douglas! You are commended on working with key businesses to improve planting schemes outside their premises – with Circle K in Douglas Village, Supervalu on the Grange Road and Breen's centre on Donnybrook Hill providing the notable examples of this approach. Barrys Garden in Douglas village also looked very well (while we had misgivings about the prevalence of begonias in the planter boxes, we loved the flowering agapanthus and nasturtiums). The planting at the Credit Union building on Douglas West and the grounds of St Columbas School also impressed. Well done also on working in partnership with Cork City Council - as their support on planting schemes is acknowledged and we note that additional flood relief landscaping is to be undertaken in and around the Community Park. We are aware that close attention has been paid to the landscaping of your roundabouts and these are reviewed in the approach roads, streets and lanes section of this report.

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

Your entry form reveals that significant progress has been made under this category with your new biodiversity action plan in place. This valuable document sets out all of your priorities under this category for the near future. Regrettably, the web link in your entry form would not open and we will encourage you to submit a list of the actions that are included in your biodiversity plan next year – taking care to highlight any actions that have been assigned to other community groups or schoolchildren. We are delighted to read that your operational programme to manage invasive species has begun with your workshops and training commencing in June 2022. As your community volunteers have been recruited and are in place, your monitoring program can begin with your initial focus being on Japanese Knotweed, Cherry Laurel, Traveler's Joy and Winter Heliotrope. We would appreciate an update on this project in 2023. We were interested to read about your winter heliotrope eradication programme in Ballybrack Woods and noting that it is a pilot project, we would appreciate hearing about its results next year. We applaud the ambition shown in your 5000 trees for Ireland project and we are delighted to see that native trees are being used. Is there an opportunity here for a collaboration with some of the local schools? Perhaps they would be interested in developing a tree walk (with tree name plates) as a means of raising environmental awareness. We were most

interested to read about the range of projects that are underway in the Mangala in Ballybrack Woods – all of which aim to conserve biodiversity and raise awareness of its importance. These projects include; agreeing and implementing a management plan with Cork City Council plan for the 3 habitats to be found here (grasslands, wetlands and woodlands), path repair and maintenance, providing education and information through guided walks and a foraging trail, monitoring of water quality and installing information boards as an outdoor classroom location. We would welcome some further details on the role of the committee and volunteers in the implementation of the habitat management plan. The water quality management project that relies on citizen science (water samples are taken by residents and schoolchildren for recording and analysis) is an excellent initiative and we wondered if this is a pilot program or is it taking place in other locations too? The information boards are great and they are a very effective way of raising environmental awareness. Why not ask the schools to complete a survey of flora, pollinators or insects as the results could be used to prepare an additional board? The provision of a wildflower meadow in the community Park in collaboration with local primary schools is a great project and a useful follow-up would be to ask the schoolchildren to undertake in pollinator count. The biodiversity training program is also great initiative and we encourage you to keep note of the numbers who are participating as this will enable you to monitor its impact on raising awareness across the wider community.

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

The participation of your committee in the SECAD sustainable community training programme (which commenced in September 2021) is applauded and we are delighted to hear that it has led directly to the preparation of the Douglas sustainable community plan in 2022 – 2030. We were most interested to read that you created a database of groups and organisations to support the implementation of this plan and that the community hub website is under development. We urge you use this database to monitor how many groups (and residents) are engaging in actions that are designed to conserve energy, reduce resource use and avoid the generation of waste. By doing so, your committee will be able to work out which actions are proving to be the most effective in driving behaviour change. This will be particularly valuable information when reviewing your actions at a later date - as it will enable you to continue with the projects that are working well (and having a positive impact) and to modify or discontinue the projects that are not. The innovative changes that you have adopted to your everyday tasks are appreciated - using recycled cardboard as a weed suppressant and sourcing of plants for the parklet (and the Park Community Garden) from the gardens of committee members and volunteers are great ideas. Well done also on engaging in the composting of leaves to produce leaf mould and for harvesting rainwater - perhaps a target could be set that allows you to aim to be 100% self-sufficient with respect to plants, compost and harvested rainwater? The construction of a recycled greenhouse is also a lovely idea - perhaps one of the schools would also like to develop one of these structures? The foraging trail is considered to be a great way of raising awareness of the local food sources that can be found on your doorstep and you also commended on your use of social media to circulate tips to the wider community on how to do more with less. We acknowledge that the Community Park has been entered into the green flag award scheme and we wish you the best of luck in this.

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

Your committee has a very comprehensive approach to litter control involving participation in the national spring clean event, regular litter patrols, raising awareness of your litter control message and engaging with the schools and the wider community on the issue. The visit demonstrated that the approach is working well as the vast majority of areas in your busy urban area were clean and litter free. There were a small number of exceptions to this with litter seen at the bus stop in front of the Legion of Mary premises, at the parklet and in a small number of areas in the Community Park. As these are all areas in which people congregate, we recommend that they are given additional attention in 2023. A small number of overflowing bins were also spotted at the parklet and at the entrance to the Community Park from the village / pond bank entrance and this may well have been a contributory factor in the litter that was seen. The frequency with which these bins are emptied may need to be looked at in your litter management plan. The standard of tidiness was considered to be high with most areas appearing neat, tidy and weed free. However, improvements remain possible. We were slightly surprised to see that some of the road signage in key areas (e.g. on the approach to the finger post roundabout and on the approach from the Carrogaline Road) was in poor condition and we have two recommendations in relation to this. Firstly, we encourage you to include signage washing in key locations as part of your regular cleanups and secondly, a signage audit needs to be completed as this will help you to identify the signs that need to be repaired or replaced. The completed audit could then be submitted to Cork City Council. Your Community Park looked very well during our visit and its appearance could be further improved by power washing the railings adjacent to the bank and the litter bin immediately inside the pond bank park entrance. Opposite this entrance, a most untidy postbox was present and we wondered if it is possible to address this? The ESB substation in front of the Legion of Mary would also benefit from attention. We were delighted to read about your litter picker heroes programme – as this seems like a great initiative to generate interest and enthusiasm among younger age groups in Douglas to take action on litter.

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

We applaud your decision to put together a database of residents associations for your area as it will enable your committee to stay in contact with individual estates and to better coordinate activities. We agree that support for maintenance tasks should be continued to be offered to residents associations but we also feel that they should be asked to place a greater emphasis on biodiversity and sustainability projects. As there is a big number of residential estates, it offers the potential for a much higher impact under these categories. For example, there are many estates in which a 'don't mow let it grow' approach could be considered for their green areas such as Lissadell off the Maryborough Road - and if large numbers of estates were to follow this approach it would mean a significant increase in pollination sources and carbon savings from less mowing. Other possibilities for biodiversity projects

could be providing bird and bat boxes in the mature woodlands to be found at Alden and Inchvale Road. We would appreciate feedback on these suggestions in 2023. A major strength of Douglas is the diversity that could be seen in its housing stock – from the traditional style single storey homes in Douglas West and Douglas village to its many high quality suburban housing estates and modern apartment developments. We are pleased to report that they all look very well and we would like to compliment all residents, your committee and volunteers for achieving such a high standard of presentation.

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

We were pleased to read in your entry form that your entire area is now under the auspices of Cork City Council (rather than split between the city and county councils) as this should make the management of roads, parks, estates and other public areas more straightforward as it only involves dealing with one Local Authority. It was noted during our visit that a great deal of attention is paid to the approach road roundabouts in Douglas with the trimmed hedge planting and feature white signposts on the signpost roundabout looking tremendously well while the Douglas Court roundabout with its central planters (stocked with colourful hydrangeas and summer bedding plants) also impressed. We note that the works at the South Douglas road roundabout are in progress and we look forward to seeing them complete next year. One area that requires your attention is the approach road from the finger post roundabout to the east village hotel and bar (no name could be spotted on it) as it had a very untidy and weedy verge with some evidence of litter. We would appreciate details on how you plan to manage this area in 2023 – for example, if the verges are to be left grow to benefit pollinators, some ‘managed for wildlife’ signage will be needed to raise awareness of this. The new bilingual street signs installed at the old Carrigaline road, Church Road and the Pond Bank were appreciated and we wondered if there are plans to provide this type of signage in other locations too? We are pleased to see that there is a notable focus now on promoting cycling with cycle lanes seen (e.g. on one side of the Maryborough Road), phase 1-3 of the Ballybrack Greenway now complete and numerous bike stands being provided at numerous locations including the west side of Douglas village, the Community Park and Douglas court. We urge you to monitor their usage – perhaps a survey on cycling in Douglas could be undertaken with one of the secondary schools? Well done to your committee for your input into the maintenance that is undertaken on approach roads and verges and we were interested to see that varieties of grass cuts are undertaken with fine, coarse, biodiversity and no cut areas identified. We would be interested in hearing about what number of areas are specified as biodiversity and no cut areas next year.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

We very much enjoyed our visit to Douglas this year. It was a pleasure to see the wonderful work that is being done by your committee, volunteers and your other project partners at first hand. We are delighted to see that despite the many disruptions caused by the Pandemic, you have made significant progress over the last two years and we look forward to seeing you again in 2023. Keep up the good work!