

# Tidy Towns Competition 2022

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Newcastle - An Caislean Nua</b>	Ref: <b>1037</b>
County: <b>Wicklow</b>	Mark: <b>326</b>
Category: <b>B</b>	Date(s): <b>01/07/2022</b>

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2021</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2022</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	44	45
Streetscape & Public Places	80	39	39
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	39	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	37	39
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	21	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	38	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	38	39
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>326</b>

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu don bhliain 2022. 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 2022 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your entry and keep up the great work.

What an excellent idea – a Village Forum with dedicated committees. It is an ideal medium in which to allow residents, existing & new, to connect, discuss, share knowledge & talk to each other about a wide range of topics that impact on the village as a whole & they as individuals. Having a dedicated Village Forum brings together all cross-sections of the community & community groups in a centralized way for all discussions. There is merit in seeking external objective assessment when planning the future for a community & it takes courage as none of us like to receive negative feedback if it is constructive. Well done on taking on board the findings of the commissioned Village Health Check report & using them to plan Newcastle's future.

No wonder you can get so much accomplished with a whole of community response. Dedicating specific days for Tidy Towns work is an ideal way for residents to help out when available & with the incentive of free coffee & cakes what's not to like!

As a group, you are very open to seeking & listening to expert advice as can be seen from the various groups - public, private & community – with whom you are in contact. You are the first group in Wicklow to reference the local National Botanic Gardens.

You appear to have all media channels covered so no resident can declare they were not kept informed of local events. The draw of a village notice board can never be underestimated.

It is always heartening to hear that the local school is involved in caring for their locality & contributing in a meaningful way. Is your local school taking part in An Taisce's Green Schools programme? If yes, you might let us know which flags they have & the flags they are presently working towards. Your Art Competition with specific themes is a clever way to get younger children focusing on the world around them & who doesn't want to win a prize & see their pictures displayed with pride in their home village. To have a young resident who is studying environmental science is quite the find & they may be able to offer assistance in the areas of Sustainability & Nature & Biodiversity. Have any of your younger community members contacted you about working with you to complete part of their Gaisce challenges or as part of their Transition Year (TY) program. Many communities have found that participants in these programmes provide a steady stream of willing hands, energy & ideas.

There is so much to be gained from collaborating with other Tidy Towns groups as you do with Kilcoole & Newtownmountkennedy on litter patrols & other environmental issues.

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

Newcastle's heritage is certainly on show in the village & surrounds with the charming row of estate cottages, Fitzwilliam Cottages, the ruins of the Royal Castle, 18th century parish church & the whitewashed railway cottage. On the day of adjudication, there was no doubting the pride Newcastle residents have in their village as homes & gardens were well presented. You are to be commended for presenting unoccupied residences & vacant business premises with clean exteriors & flowering containers.

The Oratory with its freshly painted façade, lovely stonewalls, green verges & bench was a picture of tranquility. The low wall opposite with its heathers & pops of colour is a perfect compliment to the streetscape.

How fortunate that the church, national school & parish centre can share parking facilities & the abundance of mature & newly planted trees creates a wonderful backdrop & foreground.

The village pump with its natural stone surround is beautifully set with the perennial pink planting schema. How nostalgic to see the old fuel pumps & given their age looking quite good in a heritage green. You are fortunate to have discovered a milestone as unfortunately with the widening of roads many have disappeared & it now stands proudly with wildflower meadows at either side. The heritage map of Newcastle provides an interesting aerial view of the village & the naming of the fields has such historical value.

It is heartening to see businesses present their exterior facades & outside areas to a high standard as in the case of the Castle Inn & Watchorns.

The Community Centre certainly earns its name with the number of activities located there as indicated from the signage. The ground area to the rear & side of the building would benefit from cleaning & the exterior doors brightened with a coat of paint.

Your Heritage Trail is a wonderful amenity for you & well done on completing it in 2020. In last year's submission, you referenced future plans for 100 km of walking trails in & around Newcastle. Has there been any progress in the past year on this plan?

It appears one of the unoccupied premises has been acquired judging from the large blue notice on the frontage. Are you aware of the plans for the site? It was noted there is planning for a development behind the Castle Inn. In light of the outcome of your Village Health Check, no doubt your community will be keeping themselves informed as to the impact of these developments on the village. Do let us know of any updates in next year's submission.

You might engage with your local County Engineer on improvements to the footpaths in certain areas of the village. Unfortunately with cracked & uneven path ways you have a lot more work with maintaining them & the kerb sides weed free.

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

As a village you are most fortunate to have a wide street with lots of green areas running adjacent to it. The swathes of wildflowers & wild grasses allowed to thrive outside the Community Centre on the bank, between the Oratory & Racefield create a wonderful panorama. Photos of the spring bulbs in bloom would be a most welcome addition to this section offering the adjudicator a sight to see not possible when visiting at this time of the year. Please do include in next year's submission.

125 fruit trees is a significant planting project & one of your locations at the Oratory is an excellent choice. The inclusion of more of the fruit trees in local estates is strategic as this initiative elsewhere has seen more residents consider them as an alternative to ornamental trees. "DC for Bees" is an initiative to establish mini orchards & may provide you with an additional source of fruit trees for other potential areas. [www.hostinireland.com/dc-s-for-bees](http://www.hostinireland.com/dc-s-for-bees) In time, you might consider the establishment of a nut orchard.

The long raised bed was awash with wildflower blooms & even on an unseasonably cold & wet summer's day the colour scheme of pinks, purples & whites shone. While the driving rain was an inconvenience, it did not dim the panorama of the sweeping length of oxeye daisies on the way from the village to the church. The backdrop of the stonewall with the blooms was a stunning vista.

You have quite a number of planters & containers to maintain through the village. They again were all presented well. However you might consider placing of the plants some in the ground in beds or in mounded areas to reduce both water usage & the upkeep involved.

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

Your newly formed Biodiversity group has not let the grass grow under their feet. It is fantastic to see they have engaged with the council on the County Development Plan, Local Authority Waters Programme, had successful funding applications, acquired spring bulbs, upcycled planters, attended seminars, published newsletters & organized workshops. We will await with interest the findings of the ecological study on the 2km stretch of the Little

Varty River. The organization of a public kick sample was an excellent start & both Delgany & Greystones Tidy Towns groups are actively involved in river monitoring & are always happy to help other groups. There are many surveys that they do during the year & which you could commence. Many communities are engaged now with protecting their river ecosystems & some have formed river trusts. East Wicklow Rivers Trust's has the Vartry river included in their area of interest & would be worth contacting. <https://wicklowrivers.ie/>

The planting of over 200,000 native species trees by Newcastle landowners & the community of Newcastle is quite the achievement. The legacy for future generations to enjoy is immeasurable & to have local children involved in the project provides them with a opportunity to see the impact of their actions as they grow alongside the saplings. Continuing to educate & engage the community & especially landowners on the importance of nurturing existing trees & continuing to plant native saplings cannot be underestimated in light of the climate crisis.

As you engage with the local IFA representative & local farmers, you might check if any of them are participating in Farming for Nature – this initiative is focused on the natural health of the countryside & ties in nicely with your aims. [www.farmingfornature.ie](http://www.farmingfornature.ie)

Your Seed Bank initiative will have no shortage of wildflower & wild grass seeds to harvest based on their showing on adjudication day. This initiative will feed in perfectly to Wicklow Libraries Community Seed Ark to which you can contribute. We look forward to seeing the list of varieties you save in next year's report. Please do ensure you are using local wildflower mixes in your planting scheme & not uncertified varieties as some mixes contain the invasive black grass.

The pollen corridor you are creating with the mini orchards, wildflower & wild grass meadows, bulb planting and tree planting is critical as habitat fragmentation is frequently cited as one of the most serious threats to biodiversity.

Bug hotels are a great way for children to get a close up view of the invertebrates living. Remember natural insect habitats occur as small separate nests as larger structures pose a risk of disease & parasitism. Also others like the mining bees of which we have 26 different species require only a clear bank of ground in which to nest.

Now that you have your dedicated group, do avail of the training workshops & resources run by the National Biodiversity Data Centre. We will expect to hear you are monitoring & tracking changes by encouraging your community to become Citizen Scientists as they undertake surveys & counts e.g. the Flower Insect Timed (FIT) Count. [www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie) It would have been interesting to know the findings of their Coast Watch survey last autumn.

How fortunate you are to have Birdwatch Ireland & the East Coast Nature Reserve a short distance from the village. They will be of such assistance in your plans for the location of owl & bat boxes. Do the local school organize visits there? Have you carried out any surveys to determine what bats are residing locally? A bat walk & talk is so interesting.

Are the Monterey Cypress, Giant redwood & Sessile Oak under tree protection orders? As these trees are of amenity value it may be wise to contact the County Council. <https://www.conserveireland.com/national/tree-preservation-order-t-p-o>

It was mentioned in last year's submission that a Biodiversity Action Plan was due later in the year however there is no reference to the plan or inclusion of same in the submission. You might address this in next year's submission due to its significance.

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

It is great to hear that the Repair Café is to receive a weekly spot in the Community Centre. This initiative addresses the issue of waste's first R, reuse. How many times has an item been discarded for want of a simple repair? The demonstration of the repair gives people both confidence & skill to complete the task themselves the next time.

It is encouraging to see water-harvesting receptacles at both the school & at the Community Centre. It would be interesting to know how many householders have adopted the practice.

The Community vegetable & herb raised beds at the Community Centre are very accessible for all however on adjudication day it appeared only one was in active use for herbs. A shame given the resources of time, materials & money that went in to getting them established. Perhaps each one could be adopted by a family or residential area & planted & maintained.

Your 125 fruit trees – pear, plum & apple – planted in estates & community areas will have you all eating locally in the few years & reducing those food miles. It ties in nicely with the successful Country Market & no doubt you will be running workshops in jam & chutney making, dehydration & juicing.

Do many children bike to school? It was noted there was a bicycle rack located in front of the school.

The reuse of the brewery barrels & an old boat as planters is a good example of alternative uses to which one can put items.

Your free library is an art installation, it is so pretty while practical. They came into their own during the lockdowns

when access to reading was curtailed for so many.

You referenced workshops on plastic & food waste disposal – were these well attended, did you avail of Stop Food Waste's programme or Voice Ireland's Ditch the Disposables programmes? ([www.stopfoodwaste.ie](http://www.stopfoodwaste.ie)) ([www.voiceireland.org](http://www.voiceireland.org))

It will be interesting to hear the outcomes of your research into the issue of garden generated waste in next year's report.

Do consult the updated Tidy Towns handbook for a wealth of ideas in this area.

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

To hear that you have noticed a significant reduction in litter volume & that the art awareness campaign run for local children has generated a positive outcome is brilliant. The segregation of waste while time consuming is worthy as it diverts waste from landfill. Did you survey how many bags you were able to recycle versus the total collected. Some communities have over 70% & in some cases over 80% of waste collected could be either recycled or composted. Let us know next year. On adjudication day, no litter was visible in the village, well done on your regular litter picks. Have you heard of the Pure Mile Project? Many of your neighbouring groups are availing of its resources. [www.pureproject.ie](http://www.pureproject.ie)

To have a beach clean leader who is willing to take responsibility for a regular beach clean is quite the find. The community's participation in annual Big Beach Clean & the National School's monthly beach clean are testament to the value you place on your coastal environment. On adjudication day, the beach was clear of litter however dog poo was visible. When a coastal walk is such a golden amenity, it is a shame that a minority of dog owners do not take responsibility & clean up after their dogs. As there are 2 bins at the entrance to the coastal walk, one dog fouling notice is sufficient – one is in need of removal as it is peeling away.

Recycling Bank was clean & tidy & though there were bags neatly placed alongside it would appear the bay there is designed for this purpose.

The Community Centre boundary walls require weeding & power washing would brighten the paths.

Some of the village & estate kerb sides & pathways require weeding in order to present the village at its best.

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

It is a testament to the residents that the estates were looking well on the day of adjudication.

The creation of mini forests, mini orchards and wildflower meadows in estates is fantastic to see. Those seen on the day were thriving. The adoption of short grass meadows, verges left for wildflowers and a reduced mowing scheme is encouraging.

Certainly as could be seen from Newcastle residents gardens there is great interest in gardening & the sharing of this knowledge through workshops is an great example of skill sharing. Residents will be delighted to access the Community Seed Bank once up & running.

An information campaign on hedge cutting may be required as it was noted in some estates residents were cutting boundary areas although the season for hedge cutting is not until September 1st.

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

As stated earlier, the approach road, L5050 has stunning wildflower verges & was looking resplendent on adjudication day despite inclement conditions.

The approach road from Ashford appears to have 2 large unused pole structures before the speed signs. Are these to be used or removed? Watch Tower House maintain their exterior green area with a short cutting regime. Is there any opportunity to engage with them on leaving some areas for pollinators or reducing the mowing regime?

Well done on your collaboration with Kilcoole Tidy towns on the R761 approach Road. Druids Glen Golf Club entrance will benefit greatly from having the area landscaped.

You are fortunate that all your approach roads have mature trees, natural hedgerows & stone walls thus creating a idyllic entrance to the village.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

It was a delight to visit Newcastle although the foul weather cut short the Heritage Trail walk. Your work in the area of biodiversity is commendable & your plans for the future of the village ambitious.

Your Village Health Check Report will focus your attention on making short, medium & long terms plans for Newcastle. Take your time & put that time into the planning stages. As Dale Carnegie said "An hour of planning can save you 10 hours of doing". We can look forward to seeing your 3/5-year plan in next year's submission.

A few works of advice on your submission, all small & easily rectified - please make it clear which are new projects commenced in the last 12 months as some references in the submission were credited last year by the adjudicator. Also as advised last year, do colour code the map legend to differentiate between new & maintained projects. A good map with a clear legend is a critical piece of accompanying documentation on the day of adjudication.