

Tidy Towns Competition 2024

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Adare - Áth Dara** Ref: **440**
County: **Limerick** Mark: **381**
Category: **C** Date(s): **12/06/2024**
01/08/2024

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2023	Mark Awarded 2024
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	55	56
Streetscape & Public Places	80	49	51
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	53	54
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	38	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	25	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	67	68
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	39	40
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	43	45
TOTAL MARK	550	369	381

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...” We are delighted to welcome Adare to the 2024 tidy towns competition as your involvement is very much appreciated. Your entry form reveals that your committee has deep roots within the community of Adare with a total of 90 volunteers assisting your 12 committee members. Given that such a large number are keen to help out with your projects and activities, this demonstrates that your positive contribution to Adare is both valued and appreciated by the residents of your town. It is also clear that local and employers feel the same way with numerous shops, hospitality venues and service providers also providing you with direct support [by ensuring that their properties are regularly maintained and well presented] or by providing sponsorship. We urge you to continue to maintain these strong links with your local community and businesses as they are clearly part of your ongoing success in the competition. We would also like to commend your committee on fostering and maintaining good working relationships with key statutory organisations and funding providers such as Limerick City and County Council, West Limerick Resources, the Heritage Council, the Ireland Fund, the outdoor recreation and infrastructure fund, Communities Ireland fund and MTU. Well done also on adopting a partnership approach when working with community based organizations such as the Adare Community Trust, Men's Shed, the 2020 club, numerous local sports clubs and the Adare Business Association. We were interested to read that your communication strategy comprises a range of social media channels as well as traditional mediums – as this is clearly proving effective in getting your message out. It is particularly pleasing to see that you have adopted an organized approach to working with the schools in your town by appointing a school liaison officer - and that this has resulted in joint projects being undertaken. As your links with the school are now firmly established, we wondered if any consideration has been given to setting up a junior tidy towns committee? This would enable the school children to identify and work on their own tidy towns projects under the supervision of your committee. We were most impressed by the range of events that you have been involved in over the past year as it demonstrates that your committee has a very high level of engagement. Thank you for your completed application form and it is clear that a lot of work has gone into its preparation. However, be conscious that it is become quite long [with more than 40 pages]. Consider reducing its size by listing a single key project under Section 1 (your entry form makes reference to 12 examples and this is not necessary). We also wondered if any consideration had been given to drawing tidy towns action plan? As your committee has such an extensive number of links with statutory organizations and funding agencies, community based groups and local businesses, is recommended that a plan is drawn up in which key projects under each of the tidy towns categories for Adare are identified. The plan would also enable you to harness your high levels of support and formally allocate responsibilities for key projects to other groups and organizations.

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

We were fortunate to visit Adare on a warm and sunny June afternoon and we are glad to report that your town looked really well. We would like to begin by commending Adare businesses on the excellent work that they have done on their buildings as in our view, the efforts of your local shops, hospitality venues and service providers are instrumental in attracting new businesses and ensuring that commercial vacancies are avoided. We are pleased to report that commercial properties looked particularly well during our visit. While the overall standard was notably high, a special mention is due to the Dunraven Arms Hotel, the Adare Pharmacy, Earls and Pearls, Aisling Maher Boutique, Garveys, Bill Chawkes Bar and Sean Collins & Sons. The thatched single storey cottages comprising businesses such as Adare Cottage, the Good Room, 1826, Aoifes and the Blue Door provided highlights at the entrance to the town while the traditional shopfront at Raincin is also considered to be a delightful feature. We were impressed by the repurposing of a heritage building to accommodate the Aibheil of Adare premises. Noting that the Co-op Creamery Building and the lovely old building beside the entrance to Scoil Naomh Iosaif continue to lie vacant, we wondered if any action had been taken (by the owners or by Limerick County Council or others) to secure their refurbishment and reuse? In addition, praise is due to everyone involved in the maintenance and upkeep of your community buildings such as Our Ladys Abbey (Scoil na gCailini), Scoil Naomh Iosaif, the Garda Station, the Library and the Town Hall – as they all looked great. We enjoyed our exploration of the heritage trail which an excellent resource for visitors to your lovely town as it provides details of the numerous high quality heritage buildings in Adare. The additions to the heritage trail were also appreciated. We would like to commend you on completing so many great projects under this category for this year's competition. The restoration work on the Dunraven fountain was admired and we are delighted to read that your efforts here have been recognised by an award from the Irish Georgian society. We applaud your decision to get involved in the provision of new bus shelters as there is little doubt that they play their part in encouraging more people to use public transport. We spent an enjoyable half hour on the newly refurbished riverbank walk and we are glad to hear that the improvements along it have made it more accessible and attractive to wheelchair users and parents pushing prams. The new seating areas, picnic tables and nature information signage also improve the user experience of this high quality amenity. It is heartening to see that most of the thatched houses on Main Street have been restored as they are considered to be a key part of the distinctive streetscape of Adare. The proposed reuse of the railway line is also noted with interest and we look forward to seeing these works complete next year. The improvements to station road and the car park layout are considered under the approach Rd. streets and lanes section.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The landscaping and planting schemes that your committee and volunteers have completed for this year's competition provided many highlights during adjudication. We particularly enjoyed seeing the long linear landscaped bed on the Station Road which displayed a huge variety of interesting plant species including sea thrift, trailing bellflowers, peruvian lillies, geraniums, hydrangea, avens, black scallops, candida and alliums. Eye catching colourful planting was also to be seen along station road (in raised beds to the rear of the natural stone boundary walls) and at the entrance to Manor View and Abbeyville. High quality landscaping schemes were visible in the town park hypericum with hydrangea and fuchsia (among other species) complementing the appearance of the washpool. There is no doubt that the town park is a marvellous space for both your community and for visitors too. The variety of landscaping schemes in the park is impressive with large clumps of mature shrubs seen along with natural wildflowers (such as daisies, buttercups, fox glove, geraniums and avens) in linear beds that follow the upgraded path network. We are also glad to see that the park it is being continually improved as upgrade have taken place to the path network and a new natural play area has been added. The willow tunnel, bridge, bouncing logs and picnic tables in the play area were proving very popular with children during our visit. We were interested to read about your plans to develop woodland micro habitats. However, we strongly recommend that the advice of trained ecologists is sought when working with habitats as interventions in undisturbed natural areas which already support wildlife may do more harm than good. It is great to see that your committee [and others] have embraced the recommendations of the All Ireland pollinator plan when selecting plant species for your landscaping schemes and we have no doubt that your choices are making a positive difference to pollinators. You are also commended on the awareness raising work that you have done on the need to continually engage in pollinator planting. It is particularly pleasing to see that Both AIB and the caretaker of the green spaces at the Holy Trinity Abbey church and the village green have sought and implemented your advice on managing green spaces responsibly. The use of the Dunraven field as a natural meadow is applauded and we wondered if there are any plans to undertake a survey of the Meadow to see what flora and fauna it accommodates? Perhaps the school would be interested in getting involved in this?

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

We are glad to see that a significant number of your projects under this category are focused on boosting pollinator sources in Adare. We have no doubt that pollinator bulb project [involving the sewing of 12000 bulbs in dovecot lane and riverbank walk), the Manor fields biodiversity planting (of 1000 tree whips), the implementation of your street pollinator planting scheme and the creation of bee lodges and solitary bee posts will have a positive impact on pollinators and pollination sources. However, we would be very interested to see how much of a difference these practical projects are making in Adare. Consider mapping all of the clusters of pollination sources (or pollen hot spots) in Adare and then undertaking FIT counts of the pollinators in them (full details of how to carry out a FIT count can be found on biodiversityireland.ie) - as this will allow you to gauge the impact that your projects are having. FIT counts also make great school projects so why not ask the teachers and schoolchildren if they would like to get involved? We were interested to read about your project which involved the distribution of a pollinator seed packet to every household and we wondered if monitoring has taken place to see how many of these seed packets were planted? The preparation of a biodiversity plan for Adare is welcomed and we would encourage you to ensure that responsibilities for identified actions are allocated to the schools and other community based groups as a means of raising awareness and ensuring that the plan is fully implemented. The duck muscle project sounds like

a very interesting local initiative and we look forward to hearing further results on it next year and you are also commended on your work setting up nest cams and the positioning of barn owl boxes (with the help of Mens Shed, local homeowners and local farmers). The citizen science species identification is a particularly impressive initiative and we would encourage you to recruit as many additional citizen scientists from your local schools, youth groups and sports clubs as possible - as it is a great way of raising awareness among younger generations of the biodiversity on our doorstep. We would appreciate updates on these important projects in 2025.

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

Praise is due to your committee and volunteers for developing such a wide range of projects and initiatives that are designed to avoid unnecessary waste generation, minimize the usage of fossil fuels and ensure that scarce resources are used more effectively. With respect to the circular economy, the continuation of the brown bin project (which is designed to increase local usage up to 100%) is applauded and we are pleased to read that the first steps have been taken to increase the usage of reusable coffee cups in Adare. We urge you to think of ways to monitor how many people are switching away from single use cups to reusable ones for the year ahead. The projects that you are undertaking to reduce energy usage are also acknowledged. We are glad to read that the Adare green hub project has been so well received by local businesses and that the numbers of buildings in Adare being retrofitted and upgraded is increasing every year. The upgrade of public lighting in Adare to LED bulbs and contribution of the gardai to this category (who have chosen to use an electric car) are also acknowledged. We were particularly interested to read about the yellow bus clean air project and we urge you to think of practical and effective ways of monitoring how many drivers use the stop \ start or idle stop function in their vehicle when traffic is stationary in your town. It may also serve as a useful pilot project for other urban areas. Has any consideration been given to monitoring the air quality during times when motorists are participating in the stop \ start or idle stop project? This type of data is likely to be required to convince authorities (and motorists) that the initiative is worthwhile and that it is having positive impacts on urban air quality. Why not ask the engineering staff in the roads section of Limerick City and County if they would like to get involved in this project by monitoring air quality? Well done on continuing to operate second hand swap shops and for engaging in upcycling. The commencement of your voluntary local review into sustainable development goals (SDG) engagement in Adare is acknowledged and we would be interested to hear the results of this exercise next year – so be sure to include them in your entry form. As the schools are often hot beds of ideas for sustainability projects, we would also welcome an update on their activities in 2025.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The excellent track record of Adare in litter control was clear to see on adjudication day with the majority of areas appearing litter free. Your consistently good performances in this category are all the more remarkable given the high number of visitors and vehicles that pass through your town on a daily basis – so well done to everyone involved in your litter picks and clean ups. Despite all your efforts, some challenges remain in heavily trafficked areas such as the bus stop outside the Heritage Centre, around the seating areas (and bus stop) in the car park adjacent to the Dove Cot and in Garveys car park. Is it possible to get local businesses to monitor these specific areas at lunch times and early evenings? The management of some of your bins may also need to be reviewed as the bin at the bus stop outside the front door of the Heritage Centre was overflowing and causing litter to accumulate. Receptacles for cigarette butts may also assist in keeping litter levels down at the bus stops. The standard of tidiness is also very high and it is obvious that your committee are working very hard on tasks such as weed removal and street cleaning. The decluttering project (which is focussed on removing redundant items like signage and phone boxes) is considered to be a very good one and we wondered if the cast iron poles for hanging baskets are under consideration for removal as they were empty during our visit? Bear in mind that some improvements are possible. We recommend that an audit is done of the litter bins as some untidy examples were spotted at the heritage centre bus stop, beside the Broad Street place name sign and beside the Avenue place name sign. A number of the light blue seating benches in the car park to the rear of the heritage centre also need repairs and painting. It is also recommended that some of the lovely wrought iron gates on key attractions (such as the gate to the Dove Cot, the gate to the access lane to the Dove Cot, the entrance gate to the car park (opposite Ramona's) and the entrance gate to Our Ladys Abbey School need to be spruced up with new coats of paint. The sign surround for the washing pool sign also needs some fresh paint while the town park sign (front and back) would benefit from power washing. The bring bank was in reasonable condition but it would benefit from a sweep as some debris and broken glass had begun to accumulate around the base of the bins.

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

The diversity of architectural styles that were visible in the housing areas and residential estates in Adare is remarkable. We loved seeing the different styles which range from the traditional two-storey cottages (such as Rutbles and Bluebell cottage) that were on view along the entrance to the Avenue to modern suburban housing at Manor Fields and the Heritage. Park Avenue was a highlight with its very immaculately maintained central green space, lovely mature trees and well kept traditional style single storey houses and gardens. The Cottages and the Town Hall also provide an attractive central focus for your town. While the housing areas differed in their architectural styles, it was observed that all achieved a notably high standard of presentation. Although it is not possible to refer to all of the good examples here, a number stood out with both Abbeyville and Manor Court looking exceptionally well with their trimmed grass communal areas, mature trees, neat name stones and attractive entrance landscaping. Embury Close, Desmond Drive, Woodlands (with its natural stone walls, entrance planting and mature trees), Deer Park and Black Abbey Gate also looked particularly well – so well done to everyone who was involved in achieving these high standards.

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

The high quality of the approach roads into Adare help to create a good first impression for visitors to your town. The approach from Rathkeale is lovely with its row of majestic mature trees, neat roadside verges and tidy signage. The approach from Limerick (over the 14 arch bridge) is equally impressive with its fabulous views of Adare Castle and the Franciscan friary. The mature trees, natural stone walls and well maintained roadside verges also contribute positively to this key entrance to your town. The Station Road approach looked well with its eye catching linear landscaping bed (adjoining the entrance to the river walk), natural stone walls and new street lamps. We applaud the addition of new safety features outside the entrance to Manor View and Abbeyville [comprising of a ramp and new lights] as these measures are important in slowing traffic down and creating a more pedestrian and cyclist friendly environment. We are delighted to read that the measures have been successful to date and we would encourage you to identify other locations in your town where you feel that these types of interventions are required - particularly as the planned bypass of your town is expected to get underway in the next few years. The addition of a new pedestrian crossing on the Rathkeale Road is also considered to be a positive development. We were pleased to see that some work has also been done to promote active travel with the inclusion of a cycle lane along a section of the Black Abbey road and we wondered if there are plans to add cycle lanes to other parts of your town? You are also commended on your 'reclaim our walls' project (which involves removing ivy from natural stone walls in the park and the graveyard) and cleaning up Dove Cot Lane.

Concluding Remarks:

We would like to thank Adare for the opportunity to visit your lovely town and to see the many innovative and practical projects that you have carried out for this years competition. As always, it was a most enjoyable experience and praise is due to everyone who contributed to this fine performance. It is particularly pleasing to read that there are many more exciting projects planned for the coming years and we look forward to returning and seeing your town again in 2025.

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a delight to visit Adare and we thank you for your continued participation. We note over 90 volunteers and wonderful support from over 34 local groups with advice, funding and sponsorship. Over the years you have developed a strong network of partnerships working together for the benefit of the entire community.

The creation of the Adare Brand Mascot is something to be proud off and engagement with the student's augers well for the future of Tidy Towns in Adare.

With just one main route option all of the traffic is forced onto a single street and automobile traffic dominates the space and precludes the comfort of other modes. That said it is convenient to public transport and the new by-pass will make it easier and be more people focused.

The streets provide amenities to support a variety of activities. Shops create valuable experiences on both sides of the street. A pleasing mixture of superbly presented buildings flank the streets. Many properties offer enticing holiday accommodation like the Dunraven Arms and we are delighted they received recognition for restoration works to the fountain. Across the way the street is enhanced by vibrant begonias and charming yew cones displays. This not only draws the eye but intensifies the visual appeal of the mighty gates into Adare Manor. Thatched cottages are like something from a fairytale and some are open for business allowing visitors a glimpse inside. As the first adjudicator highlighted a high standard of presentation has been achieved and businesses elevate their behaviour to this vision and it adds to the sense of place. Central to this success requires not only keeping the spaces clean and tidy but managing spaces to generate activity which the group does well. Congratulation to everyone involved.

Trees add scale to street edges. Benches, landscape planters, attractive signage, information panels, pedestrian crossing and lighting all aid pedestrian activity. Some benches do need maintenance (and we would like more). We hope the railway gets back on track.

The park is easily accessible and a great place to meet people from all walks of life within the community. The new natural play area is good for children and the group places high value on community health and well being as well as general aesthetic. Here the edible corner is a chance to learn about gardening and get hands-on learning.

We admired landscaping at the AIB and it is a restful spot to watch the river on its journey. Sustainable planting is laudable and is very enjoyable in the summer when flowers are in bloom. Bulb planting is a great way to increase local biodiversity and will provide a wonderful winter and spring vistas.

Adhering to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is praiseworthy and to measure success it is now necessary to collect local data for the Biodiversity Centre. You are lucky to have a diverse range of areas to host biodiversity events, get citizens involved and create more awareness.

We strongly believe a renewed momentum to make SDG's a reality is important and a local review is commendable.

It was a pleasure to note the litter free status of the village centre and approach roads. Just a little bit of weed growth around bus stop near park and recycling centre wood panels could do with painting and green bench placed elsewhere. Bin was overflowing at Heritage Centre unfortunately. A big Thank You to everyone involved – it is a superb effort and requires endless hours of dedication.

Dwellings everywhere from the main street to many estates were admired and our appreciation is offered to householders who maintain their homes and gardens to a great standard.

The visual appearance and attractiveness of approach roads is strongly influenced by the maintenance of green spaces and natural stone walls. We cannot forget the panoramic views of the Abbey and the River Maigue. A lot of effort has been put in and it is a great achievement for the committee, volunteers and LCC.

Concluding remarks

The village is almost impossibly pretty and we explored the historical structures on foot taking in some shopping and dining between sites. We had such a lovely morning in Adare and it was a joy to witness your achievements. Many thanks once again and all the best for 2024.

