

# Tidy Towns Competition 2021

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Blessington - Baile Coimín</b>	Ref: <b>713</b>
County: <b>Wicklow</b>	Mark: <b>318</b>
Category: <b>E</b>	Date(s): <b>11/09/2021</b>

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2021</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	46
Streetscape & Public Places	60	40
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	39
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>318</b>

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

Fáilte Chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu 2021. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn. Go raibh maith agaibh as ucht bhur dtacaíocht le linn na paindéime. Lean leis an dea-obair. Welcome to the 2021 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your entry and for your commitment to your place in these difficult times. Keep up the great work. Many thanks for your excellently presented competition entry form. It is very clear and easy to read with lots of photographs which are so important this year first (and hopefully only!) year of desk-bound adjudication. You have a huge list of volunteers and supporting businesses and groups. This all reflects a really strong community spirit in Blessington as well as reflecting the appreciation in the town for all your volunteer effort. Many congratulations to your Chairperson Jason Mulhall on being awarded the Supervalu National TidyTowns Community Hero in 2019!

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

We're delighted to see your Town Square Regeneration plans. It will make such a difference to hand back the beautiful centre of the town to the pedestrian and shopper! We are really looking forward to our next visit in reality now to see these plans realised. Your new panting at St Patrick's Well looks lovely and great to hear that the local residents were consulted with regard to a bench – true community work going on here – listening to everyone's ideas and opinions. Well done on all your continuous maintenance work on and around Main Street. It takes a lot of time and effort. Your display of old photographs in Tywford's window is a great idea. LED lighting is going in everywhere now and is so much better for our energy consumption although there is new research to suggest there may be negative effects on our night-flying moths! This is something we all need to look into so that we're not 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'! Keep firm in your aim for underground cabling as the architectural beauty of your main street deserves it! Great to see the photos of all your new planters – they must have added such cheer during the worst times of the pandemic. Your tree bases are a bit of a conundrum! We would definitely recommend that soil be retained here both for the health of the trees and also for natural water attenuation. Have you looked into 'rain gardens' or bioswales? These are hard working small spaces on our public streets that receive excess rainwater from our street drains and let it naturally soakaway instead of going into underground drain systems. It is worth investigating simple examples of these, [www.susdrain.org](http://www.susdrain.org) might be a handy place to start. Your Best Presented Business Award is a great way to keep up the high standards on your streets with a bit of friendly rivalry thrown in no doubt!

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

Your Disability & Age Friendly Garden looks terrific. We are sure it provided lots of peace during the pandemic –

such spaces have proved absolutely invaluable across the world. Lots of tree planting done all around Blessington since the last competition – a green future ahead for the town! The photos of your planting schemes are beautiful and full of colour! Your spring bulb planting project is a lovely one with the resulting spring flowers bringing so much hope at the end of winter not to mention food for starving bumble bee queens emerging from hibernation! Hopefully you're getting good value for money and the bulbs planted years ago are still flowering regularly for you. If not, seek some advice on this because it might simply be a case of altering grass mowing until their leaves have died back completely. Other great pollinator-friendly bulbs to add to your mix are Winter aconites, Muscari and Alliums – these will extend the colour from January through to June.

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

Well done on completing Part 1 of your Blessington Bee Route Plan with a great online course attended. And you have followed this up with your Pollinator Packs. Your map is very interesting – this is showing real results. Don't forget to include all your own pollinator-friendly planting in public spots around Blessington as part of your bee corridors. We presume that you are sharing this information with the Biodiversity Data Centre so that it can be mapped with them too. Your Swift news is brilliant – they are a favourite of this adjudicator – the sound of a hot summer's day! Well done on pursuing this and hopefully it will become more and more successful with each passing year. Your description from Oran O'Sullivan of the Swifts nesting at a concrete bridge is very exciting. We also note how you are working with new developments to ensure that Swift bricks are included – far easier and cheaper than retro-fitting boxes. Wouldn't it be great if they were included in all buildings as a matter of course? Your Cogs, Birds & Bees roundabout looks terrific and we like how you've mixed flowers, grasses sunflowers and fruit trees together. We also love the cycling club's name! A lot of work has gone into your Wild Mile. Maybe some help in raising awareness about what you are trying to achieve is needed here. We do have a problem in Ireland in relation to wildflowers where what we humans see as being 'tidy and pretty' is not what is the absolute best for biodiversity! There is a lot of discussion about this on [www.pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie) where several helpful articles and videos have been made about the best wildflower meadows and verges. Wild verges with delicate Cow parsley flowers wafting each May are hugely attractive and there are no major complaints. It may well be that your verges were seeded with a grass mix when the road was last developed and therefore didn't have too many native species? It's hard to make out without physically being there! Unfortunately, it does look like herbicide was used in the preparation of the wildflower strip. This will have killed off many earthworms and other important soil fauna as well as severely damaging any pollinators in the vicinity which is a shame considering the wildflowers are being sown with the aim of being pollinator-friendly. Hopefully the seeds of native perennial wildflowers will come in to this area naturally over time as many of the wildflowers in the photo are annuals and won't make the same return next year! Biodiversity enhancement is not always easy and it also takes a lot of patience and a change in mindset for many of us humans! Your Sunflower smiles project is a lovely one and very sustainable with them all being raised from seed you have collected yourselves. Then the extension of this out to the wider community with tips and a tallest flower competition is brilliant! EDIBLEssington is another inspired project and we're delighted to see that new allotments have been developed. We look forward to hearing how they get on in forthcoming competitions. The Eating House Edible Wall is another great idea and so appropriate! Fantastic to hear of your 'Don't mow let it grow campaign'. 12km is a huge figure – just think of the difference this is making to pollinators in the great Blessington area and your good example will hopefully inspire many others to do the same! Your support of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is acknowledged. A great way to spread the word is to pass on many of their really helpful guides and information via links on your facebook page. Furthering awareness of important environmental information is a really important part of a TidyTown's role as you know so make use of your links to over 1200 followers!

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

You ran some really useful workshops before the pandemic. Hopefully now as our new normality begins you will be able to continue this great work. The Sustainable Charity Cycle with Reservoir Cogs sounds terrific with a lot of thought put into making it truly sustainable. Great to see from your Facebook page that it went ahead very successfully again this year. The best of luck with Blessington SEC and well done for all your hard work in the background to get the project up and running. You are full of good ideas in Blessington TidyTowns and the St Patrick's Day Sustainability themed Poster Hunt was another one! What a clever way of having a fun but safe event during a very hard time in our country's history. All these good things will be remembered with appreciation by Blessington folk no doubt! The crisp recycling project is amazing and involves a huge amount of work. Well done to the pupils of Blessington Community College who participated in the Fifty Shades Greener programme – maybe they'll be able to put their new skills to action for Blessington TidyTowns!

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

Blessington Canvas is a great project – another one that's raised lots of smiles locally we're sure. Well done on all your ongoing litter picking and tidying work – it's an endless task we know! The adopt a Patch approach has been successful all over the country during the pandemic. Hopefully it will continue and a few more volunteers for Blessington will result.

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

Wonderful photos of litter picks, clean ups and biodiversity projects from so many of Blessington's estates. The many no mow policies are heartening to hear about. Make sure to include these areas in your Bee corridor maps.

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

Well done on the launch of the Blessington Access Audit – it is going to mean so much for so many on into

Blessingtons' future. Lovely to see some old vernacular ironwork gates getting some TLC! Also well done on looking after all your roundabouts – it's no small feat.

**Concluding Remarks:**

Many thanks for a comprehensive competition entry Blessington TidyTowns filled with colour and wonderful community spirit in west Wicklow. Keep up your great work!