

Tidy Towns Competition 2021

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bundoran - Bun Dobhráin** Ref: **697**
County: **Donegal** Mark: **298**
Category: **D** Date(s):

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	44
Streetscape & Public Places	60	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	37
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	29
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38
TOTAL MARK	470	298

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

Fáilte Chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 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. It was great to see that despite the huge difficulties created by the Pandemic, your committee and volunteers have continued to do what you do best - which is work hard and continue to improve Bundoran. It is also pleasing to see that participation rates have remained constant and that your dedicated committee of 7 members and 20 volunteers have adapted to the 'new normal' and found safe ways of progressing your projects. We note from the application form that this would not have been possible without the assistance of the business people of Bundoran who are a constant source of help and many of whom have offered to send their staff to help out with your projects. The support provided to your committee by Donegal County Council, Irish Water, Discover Bundoran, the Bundoran Town Team and Sustainable Bundoran is also acknowledged. As noted in the 2019 adjudicator's report, we looked to see if your committee had approached other voluntary groups and community-based organisations such as sports clubs (e.g. GAA or soccer clubs) and active retirement groups to help out with your work. However, no references could be found and we wondered if any contact has been made with them? Perhaps you could let us know in 2022. It is clear from your application form that social media has emerged as your primary means of staying in touch with your volunteers and the wider community and that traditional media (i.e. notices in the Donegal Democrat and the Donegal Post) is also used. Your continued links with Irish gap year (the local company who bring in American students for 3 months) the transition year of Magh Ene College are applauded and we urge you to explore the potential for collaborations with the primary school children in your town too. Thank you for your completed application form and your 3 year action plan. While the plan is generally considered to be good as it includes a range of good practical proposals for projects, it could be further improved by arranging these proposed projects under each of the 8 tidy towns categories. This will provide for a more balanced approach in your work programme and ensure that no categories are being overlooked or given less attention. We are delighted to read that your participation in the competition is proving to be such a positive experience for your committee, volunteers and town. It's particularly heartening to read that your hard work is also being recognised by many of the businesses in Bundoran and that they are getting more involved in your projects. Keep up the good work!

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

It is clear from your application that the Pandemic has created enormous challenges for Bundoran due to its profoundly negative effects on tourism. However, we were delighted to read that your town is working hard to ensure that it can overcome these barriers as best it can and continue to make progress. This is evident from the number of businesses who have enhanced their premises, converted car parks and invested in facilities that create attractive and safe experiences of Bundoran hospitality. These businesses include; Maddens bridge bar,

McGarrigle's restaurant, Caroline's Café, the Allingham Arms and Stakes Restaurant. It is great to see that many other shops and businesses have also improved their properties and they include; BMG Hardware, Macks Amusements, Strands Gifts, the Viscount Lodge and the Backpackers Hostel. The range of other improvements to public areas in your town were appreciated. The restoration of the long walls at Main Beach warrants strong praise and it is great to see that the pier wall has been refurbished and the shelters at the West End Walk have been repainted. You are commended on adding a new photo and seating area (which is comprised of an old disused boat) at the pier entrance and we have no doubt that this new amenity is greatly appreciated by residents and visitors. The new outdoor seating areas beside the bridge (completed with the help of Irish Water) are warmly welcomed – particularly as there is such a high demand for spaces where people can meet outdoors. The provision of the angel wings mural at the salty shell coffee shop is a lovely idea and we are pleased to see that it is also proposed to provide a mural at the long walls of Main Beach. We would also like to congratulate you on the successful award of €500,000 in funding from the Failte Ireland destination town programme. While we note that the expenditure of the funding has been delayed due to the pandemic, we understand that the improvements to take place will be outlined in the Master Plan (which has yet to be drawn up) and they are expected to cover areas like sculptures, the public realm, upgrade of sidestreets and wayfinding / signage. As funding has also been allocated for a watersports facility to be built in the Tullan Strand area (under the platform for growth programme), these are clearly exciting times for your town!

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The evolution of your planting scheme in Bundoran to take account of the exposed nature of the coastline and hostile coastal salt laden winds is well documented in your application form. We salute your organised approach to finding the most resilient types of planting to suit your local environment as well as the most suitable arrangements (i.e. with shelter belts etc) for them. Noting your extensive experience on finding resilient plant types (which is informed by your own records of what plants have thrived and which haven't, your analysis of relevant research articles and your discussions with experts), we urge you to share the inventory of plants that you are preparing. We have no doubt that this information would be useful to many other tidy towns groups, local authorities and gardeners in coastal locations (particularly if they are on the western seaboard). The plan to grow hardy shelter belts is understandable and it seems a logical step given the difficulties that your plants face in exposed coastal locations. Once again, we would welcome further details on this in 2022 and we wondered of what form the shelter belt is likely to take? Would it be native hedgerows, shrubs or trees or a combination of these? The question of whether the shelter belt could be stocked with pollinator friendly species is also relevant. Aside from the issue of finding suitable resilient plants, we are pleased to see that you have also continued to work on existing and new planting schemes throughout Bundoran. We applaud the changes that you have made from seasonal bedding plants to annuals in a variety of locations including the tourist office area, the West End walk and car park and the Peter Brady car park. We would also welcome details on what proportion of the annual plants used are pollinator friendly. The sprucing up of the cinema and health centre roundabouts with fresh taram and new rose bushes is welcomed and we acknowledge that the sponsored planters that are positioned across your town are the backbone of your year round planting. Given the need for additional pollen rich plant types, consider reducing the number of daffodils in these planters in favour of crocuses, alliums and tulips – as all of these varieties are favoured by pollinators. The emphasis on tree planting in your planting scheme warrants strong praise due to their significant number of benefits that trees can deliver (and which include habitat provision, clean air and carbon capture). We are delighted to hear that your committee are proposing to run treeplanting workshops and a logical next step would be to identify areas in your town that will be suitable for additional treeplanting.

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

The broad range of projects presented in your application form reveals that your committee and volunteers have been particularly busy with your nature and biodiversity initiatives. Your community garden clearly forms the hub for many of these activities. Well done on creating 10 new allotment spaces and given the circumstances of the past 18 months, we have no doubt that they have proved popular and are in high demand with Bundoran families! We are also pleased to read that more space has been made available to the community by adding growing beds in the garden and creating additional space in the glasshouses. The introduction of hens sounds like a great idea and we loved the addition of the model kitchen garden to demonstrate what it is possible to grow in private gardens and small spaces. Perhaps workshops and demonstrations could take place at the model kitchen garden with the schools? We were interested to read that a wildflower area has also been created in the community garden. Praise is due to your committee for following the advice in the 2019 adjudicators report as we note that 3 new biodiversity Meadow areas have been planted. Given that the exposed coastal location of Bundoran creates unfavourable conditions for a range of pollinator friendly plant varieties, the sowing of wildflower meadows is seen as an excellent alternative to boost the number of pollen rich plants. We urge you to consider carrying out bee and butterfly counts in the wildflower meadows in order to assess if they are attracting pollinators. The upgrading and updating of the bird mural at Main Beach (to include a downloadable version) is commended and we look forward to seeing this when we return to Bundoran. We note that the collaborative activities between your committee and the school were cut short by the pandemic but we urge you to re-establish your links with the school once it is permissible under the public health guidelines. Collaborative activities between the tidy towns groups and the school children are seen as particularly important to raising environmental awareness and boosting local participation in environmental projects. It is pleasing to see that a range of future projects are being developed under this category and they include preparing a feasibility study for a proposed river walk along the river Bradog, providing education and biodiversity through information signage and social media.

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

It is clear to the adjudicator that your committee and volunteers are taking your projects under the sustainability category very seriously and we are delighted to see that so many good quality initiatives are underway in Bundoran. The formation of the new 'Sustainable Bundoran Group' sounds like a very positive step forward and we wish them well with their ambitious plans to make the town more sustainable. The range of projects presented in your application warrants strong praise as you have included initiatives that are designed to raise awareness, ensure less waste is produced and measure your performance over time. With respect to the awareness raising activities, it is great to see that your committee have already hosted an online workshop (targeted at making businesses more sustainable), promoted the top tips for being more sustainable and the potable water tap, and that you have run a number of information campaigns through social media. The work that you undertook on your 'think before you flush' campaign has been particularly noteworthy and we would like to congratulate you on your success in being awarded the 'think before you flush' community of the year in December 2019. The projects in Bundoran to avoid waste generation and to sustainably use resources are also acknowledged. The work undertaken by businesses and entrepreneurs to make positive changes is most impressive and they include; conversion of lighting to LED (in the tourist office), using recycled plastic to make useful items (Darragh Gorman), installing a wood pellet burner (Eclipse Cinema), using rechargeable batteries (Waterworld), using recyclable containers (Bundoran Seaweed Baths), Avoiding plastic (Foam Café) and using washable couch and face hole covers (Bundoran Physiotherapy). The initiative by Green Ed Ireland to reduce carbon emissions associated with education travel is acknowledged while the contributions made by the St Vincents and Magh Ene College to recycling are applauded. Don't forget to tell us in your entry form next year about the actions that your committee takes to avoid generating waste when carrying out your day-to-day tasks.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your efforts to maintain high standards in litter control in Bundoran appear to have been undiminished by the pandemic – a fact that you credit to the sterling efforts of your tidy towns cleaning team (that is held up by councillor Michael McMahon) who partner up with Donegal County Council to carry out their regular litter picks and cleanups. We applaud your diligent approach to maintaining the high standard that you have set for yourselves and we are confident that your efforts are appreciated by residents and businesses. It is great to see that beach litter patrols also take place and that your '3 for the sea' initiative to remove plastic from the beach has been well received and that a Clean Coast group has now been set up. The steps that you have taken to promote responsible dog ownership (by posting notices in the newspapers and pasting tidy towns stickers on the dog poo bins) are also commended. We note that work has also take place on a signage audit and that action on this issue is awaited from Donegal County Council.

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

The formation of a new Residents Association at Drumacrin Avenue is welcomed and we are pleased to see that they actively engage in maintaining their area on a weekly basis by trimming grass, weeding and carrying out planting projects. Noting the comment in the 2019 adjudicator's report which referred to the number of estates with planters rather than permanent beds, we wondered if any changes had been made on foot of this suggestion? It is pleasing to hear that new bilingual signage has been provided at Gaelic Park Drive, Finner Ave, Ross View and Ross Avenue. We also note that additional new signage may be provided in the years ahead on foot of the survey that has been undertaken of street plaques. We are delighted to see that work on the ghost estate at Magheracar has resumed and that the necessary completion works for the crest of the wave estate are being undertaken.

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

Your application form reveals that a range of projects to be completed under this category in 2020 and 2021 and they include the provision of new road surfaces at West End, Magheracar and from the Bridge to West End. We note that more projects are planned with an upgrade of Rennison's Lane, Central Lane and Meehans Lane expected in the near future. As these upgrades will involve the addition of sculptures, new signage and public realm enhancements, we are confident that they will have a positive impact on the town centre of Bundoran. The provision of new signage or approach roads with the Bundoran tidy towns logo is also acknowledged. We note with pleasure that two of your future projects involve the provision of a Greenway (to Belleek, County Fermanagh) and a cycleway (to Ballyshannon) and we look forward to hearing more about these exciting projects in the years ahead.

Concluding Remarks:

Well done on an excellent performance in the 2021 tidy towns competition. While we always knew (from your past performances) that your committee and volunteers have a tremendous capacity for hard work, this year's performance has demonstrated your extraordinary ability to adapt to very challenging circumstances and continue with your many excellent projects for Bundoran. Keep up the good work and we look forward to seeing you again in 2022.