

# Tidy Towns Competition 2022

## ***Adjudication Report***

Centre: **Swords - Sord**

Ref: **160**

County: **Dublin**

Mark: **339**

Category: **H**

Date(s): **15/07/2022**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2021</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2022</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	52	51
Streetscape & Public Places	80	42	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	43	45
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	37	38
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	61
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	37	38
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>339</b>

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

Fáilte chuiig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hionrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. We would like to thank your committee of 13 members for your participation in this year's competition as your involvement is appreciated. It is pleasing to see that there are 35 volunteers who regularly help you out but given the large size of your town, we wondered if this number could be increased? Consider going on a recruitment drive – sports clubs (such as GAA, soccer and rugby), social groups (the active retired, walking and gardening clubs) and interest groups (residents associations, historical societies and environmental groups) are often rich sources of volunteers so why not approach them and ask if they would like to get involved? Well done on developing strong links with Fingal County Council, Fingal Leader and Prosper Fingal and we urge you to continue with these partnerships in the years ahead. We are also glad to see that there are good working relationships with many local businesses as this demonstrates that your work and projects are valued by the business community in your town. We are also most impressed by your comprehensive communication strategy as this is vital for getting your message out. It is heartening to see that connections have been formed between your committee and the local schools with some great joint projects in place that focus on litter picking, cleanups and planting. We recommend that you continue to try to identify projects that will be suitable for collaborations with the schoolchildren. Thank you for your entry form and we have no doubt that it took some considerable time to prepare. But be aware that it doesn't follow the guidelines for the competition and this has reduced its clarity. At it extends to 100 pages, it simply cannot be described as concise and it needs to be dramatically reduced in length. This could be achieved by avoiding repetition and simply presenting the projects that have been completed and maintained - there is no need to provide extensive commentaries at the beginning of each section. As stated by the adjudicators in 2019 and 2021, you need to redouble your efforts to distinguish between new (N), maintained (M) and future projects (FP). Failing to do this creates confusion during adjudication as it is difficult to work out exactly what work has been completed. Don't forget that a project cannot be described as new (N) unless it has been completed by the time that you have submitted your entry form. Projects which have received funding / approval but have yet to commence should be clearly described as future projects (FP). Lastly, we prefer that projects are only presented once as repeated references give rise to repetition and this reduces your ability to submit a concise entry form. Why not set yourself a target for next year? Confine yourself to 5 pages for each category and (believe it or not) this will still generate a hefty application form that runs to a minimum of 40 pages. Better integration is also needed between your entry form and map as many of the projects detailed in your entry form are not marked on the map that you submitted.

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

Swords looked great on adjudication day and we spent an enjoyable afternoon strolling around the town centre and surrounding area where many interesting historical sites and buildings could be seen. We began in the town centre

and we are pleased to report that the standard of presentation of the shops, businesses and commercial developments was high. While it is not possible to review them all, a number stood out. Colourtrend, Forty Four, Betsy, Morton & Flanagan, All Care Pharmacy, the Swords Shopping Centre, Centra, Permanent TSB and the Pound and Attic Bar all looked exceptionally well and we are delighted to read that two new businesses have opened on Main Street (the integrity gym and the arch bar) - and we wish them both well for the future. Praise is also due to Crosscare (a lovely modern building), Fingal County Council (on the appearance of their modern office building and grounds) and the Youthreach Office in the Old School House – as all looked exceptionally well. We were most impressed by the range and quality of historical buildings. Swords Castle is a striking structure and it looked very well with its new seating. We noted that new toilets are under construction in the town Park and we look forward to seeing these completed next year. The Carnegie Library, Swords Courthouse, St Columbas Church and the Fingal County Council archives building also drew positive attention. The Heritage trail provides detailed information on the important buildings to be found in your town and well done on producing an audio guide as it is a great resource – for local people and for visitors. We were pleased to see that community and public buildings were well maintained - with the Fingal Community College providing an excellent example of this. The committee and volunteers are commended on the high standard of presentation of public areas with the public spaces found along the marked route on your map appearing well-kept and in excellent condition. We particularly liked the careful attention given to historical features like St Colmcilles Well (which looked fabulous in its new coat of paint) on Well Road and to the public seating areas on Main Street (which looked bright and fresh). We note from your entry form that a number of projects have been completed for this year's competition while others are at an early stage of development or have yet to commence. We acknowledge that improvement works are proposed for Swords Castle, the Fingal cultural quarter, the round tower and St Columba's church, the Carnegie library and the historical structures at the old Mill. Be sure to clearly mark each of your projects as N, M and FP in your entry form next year and include them on your submitted map to assist your adjudicator.

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

Plenty of good quality landscaping schemes were visible during adjudication. We loved seeing the linear shrub beds which were visible to the front of the cross care building and we were most impressed by the high standard of landscaping of the internal courtyard here. A lovely landscaped bed was spotted at the junction of Church Road and Well Road and we admired the pollinator friendly varieties of lavender and sage that could be found here. Numerous planter boxes, pots, hanging baskets, lamppost and rail baskets were in evidence on the Main Street - the junction beside Apache pizza on Main Street was a highlight. A very attractive landscaping scheme was spotted outside the Garda station while the gravel-based garden area between Apache pizza and Morton and Flanagan looked stunning with its hydrangeas, buddleia and summer flowering plants. The contribution of individual businesses to this category is acknowledged with attractive floral displays on view on the front façades of the Forty Four and the Pound and Attic. Large tiered planters with cascading summer flowers could also be seen outside the Castle and the Fingal County Council offices. Noting that both your committee and Fingal County Council provide planting in the town centre, it is strongly recommended that your efforts are coordinated. Attractive landscaping schemes could also be seen at the welcome to Swords signs and on the entrance roundabouts. The seaside daisies, sage and shrubs were admired on the approach to the estuary roundabout while the wildflowers here were particularly eye-catching. Your committee, volunteers and residents are also commended on the fabulous maintenance work that you have undertaken on your existing schemes – which include the small planted area at Seatown, the wildflower garden at Drynam and the planting of the senior citizen centre at Foresters Way. We also enjoyed visiting your parks and green spaces during adjudication - the remembrance garden proved to be a highlight with its trimmed grass areas, seating and trees. The town park is similarly impressive with its many lovely mature trees and meandering pathways. The frontline workers garden at the Balheary road junction (opposite the fire station) is a pleasant addition to your area with its trees, pollinator planting and neatly trimmed grass. We were delighted to learn that your committee and volunteers do not use any chemicals and remove weeds by hand. Well done also on growing your own plants from cuttings and seeds and using donations from Supervalu, B&Q and Lidl.

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

It is clear from your entry form that there are a range of rich habitats in (and in the vicinity of) Swords with include parklands, low land depositing rivers and the Broadmeadow estuary (a designated SAC and SPA) which contains sand spits and salt marsh. We are delighted to read that there is a comprehensive biodiversity plan (in three parts, surveys, education and actions) awaiting approval. Be sure to use this plan to provide a focus for your many projects under this category (which include surveys, tree planting and providing pollinator friendly species) and ensure that the biodiversity of your area is conserved and enhanced. It is noted that your committee have taken part in the water blitz event (whereby the water in the ward and broadmeadow rivers is tested) and that you have also participated in the Irish garden bird survey. We applaud your decision to join the Swords Woodland Association to plant 1400 native trees (comprising oak, common and silver birch and alder) - this is a considered to be a great project and well done also on involving the teachers and students from Gaelscoil Bhrian Boromhe in it. We are glad to see that you have chosen pollen rich spring bulbs for your planting schemes but we advise against clearing vegetation from river banks to spread wildflower seed as this is contrary to the guidance in the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. Well done also on making your own compost (leaf mould) and allowing the grass to grow long in the Broadmeadow community garden. The residents of Windmill Lands and Glasmore Park are commended on their provision of two greens – one for our healthcare heroes and the second as a remembrance garden for local people. The moves by Fingal to reduce mowing and to cut out spraying are welcomed. Perhaps more local residents can be encouraged to do the same? We are pleased to see that your resident liaison officer has been working very closely with residents associations and that a number of them have nominated areas in their estates that they would like to see managed for biodiversity more effectively. Be sure to keep us up to date with this important project next year. It is also great to see that your committee have been very active with many awareness events taking place under this

category over the past 12 months.

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

There is no doubt that your committee have been busy with projects under this category with 19 pages of your entry form detailing a range of projects that focus on conserving energy, reducing resource consumption and avoiding avoiding waste generation. Well done on making compost as this is a great way of avoiding commercially produced fertilizers which are often peat based. The use of rain water butts for rainwater harvesting is applauded and we wondered if the 4 that you are using are sufficient to meet your needs? Your commitment to 'upcycling' is demonstrated by the projects which are on display in the patch on the corner of the Morton and Flanagan site on Main Street (and which have included a witch, snowman and Easter Bunny made from recycled tyres) And by making use of waste wood (old railway sleepers) in your landscaping schemes. We are delighted to read that you are engaging in environmental initiatives with other community groups (such as the residents in Broadmeadow and the Swords Woodland Association) and the schools - we urge you to keep this up. It is great to see that there are also plenty of businesses in Swords who are anxious to do their bit and cut down on unnecessary waste and packaging – with 153 businesses taking part in the Repak scheme. A range of good projects are also underway which are designed to reduce the energy that is consumed in your town. Noting the wide range of projects that are ongoing under this category, we recommend that your committee should take stock of each one in order to find out if they are effective and achieving their desired impacts. This review will enable you to work out which projects you should continue with and which projects need to be adapted or improved. We would appreciate if you provide us with the results of this review next year.

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

We were most interested read about the litter strategy that you follow in Swords and you are commended on tracing the major sources of litter and devising targeted responses to deal with them. It is great that residents associations in different parts of the town have stepped up to adopt a patch and freed up your members for other tasks. Well done also on involving the transition year students in litter collection tasks. The standard of litter control was generally very good with the vast majority of areas appearing litter free and well maintained. We were especially pleased to see that the Town Centre and the Castle Park were very neat and tidy. There were a small number of exceptions to this with litter spotted on the approach to the estuary roundabout (this is marked as the Spittal Hill Roundabout on your map), on the entrance road to Glasmore Road and on the open space adjacent to the car park at JC's. We are pleased to report that the standard of tidiness is generally high and the work undertaken by your committee in cleaning up the river, removing graffiti and freshening up murals is appreciated. Well done also on maintaining your streets and footpaths as the vast majority were neat, tidy and weed free. Small improvements remain possible. Consider undertaking a signage audit to identify all the signs that need to be washed, repaired or replaced as untidy signage could be seen at the entrance to Glasmore (a sign restricting heavy goods vehicles), outside JC's (a sign pole with no sign) and at Rathbeale Crescent (an untidy cul-de-sac sign). Sign poles with no signs were also seen on Church Road. On Main Street, an untidy planted bed could be spotted beside Colourtrend while some of the blue bollards around the planted area beside Apache Pizza will need a fresh coat of paint in advance of 2023.

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

It is pleasing to note from your entry form that the residents of estates are primarily responsible for looking after their areas but assistance is also provided by Fingal County Council and your committee. We are glad to report that a good standard of maintenance could be seen in the residential areas of Swords during adjudication. Well done to the residents of Glasmore Park for completing their frontline heroes planted area which looked very well during our visit. It is considered to be a great idea to include the lasting message (Thank you Healthcare and Frontline Workers) on the central feature as an acknowledgement of their commitment to keeping us all safe during the pandemic – and we look forward to seeing the planting here mature in the years ahead. Rathbeale also looked very well with its attractive name stone, mature shrub planting and trimmed grass margins. Praise is due to the residents of Castle Grange Green as their area looked lovely with its (new?) entrance name stone, colourful box planters and newly planted trees. Castle farm looked nice with its trimmed grass margins and mature trees and we are pleased to see that sections of the green area here provided for longer grass growth along its boundaries. In addition, we would like to commend the residents of River Valley on their high quality landscaping scheme and the improvements to Seatown Villas are noted. We are delighted to hear that the tidy estate competition is set to resume and we look forward to hearing the results in 2023.

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

We were impressed by the considered approach taken by your committee and volunteers to the approach roads in Swords. Given the location of the 4 roundabouts at the entrance to your town, it is not surprising to see that a great deal of work has gone into their presentation and your committee will be pleased to hear that they looked very well during adjudication with combinations of planting, sculptures (Pinnock Hill Roundabout) and deer figures (Estuary Road roundabout) helping to create a positive first impression for both residents and visitors. The committee and volunteers are also commended on their clever use of pollinator friendly landscaping to draw attention to entrance signage as this further enhanced the key approaches to your town. It was great to see that your focus on biodiversity is also influencing the management of roundabouts and roadsides - with meadow grasses (and some natural wildflowers) seen on the estuary road, along the banks of the Balheary Road and on part of Watery Lane. Don't forget to include signage which states that the areas of uncut grass are being 'managed for wildlife' as it demonstrates to residents that this is a deliberate (and necessary) approach to promote biodiversity.

**Concluding Remarks:**

The committee, volunteers and residents of Swords are commended on a very good performance in this year's competition and we are pleased to see that your projects are continuing to improve your lovely town. Be sure to take into account the feedback that is included in this report in 2023 – particularly when preparing your entry form.