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TidyTowns Family & Friends,

Welcome to our Christmas 2021 issue of the SuperValu TidyTowns Newsletter. It has been another strange year and indeed a difficult year for so many. We are delighted that the competition went ahead this year and sincerely thank each and every one of you for your patience, dedication and for your resilience to continue to look after your community and its people during these unprecedented times.

Christmas is almost upon us and we would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy, peaceful and safe holiday season. It is a time when we love to meet up with family and friends, some of whom, we may not have seen for some time. If meeting up this Christmas, we want you to first and foremost enjoy yourself but in doing so, be safe, the pandemic is very much amongst us and the new variant appears to be even more transmissible. Please continue to exercise caution in the areas of social distancing, reduce your contacts where possible and remember those face coverings and sneeze and cough etiquette. We need to be very vigilant in the coming weeks to do our best to minimise the further spread of the corona virus.

Thank you to all our sponsors and supporters all over the country who back our TidyTowns groups. We encourage you all to shop local, stay local and support local this Christmas, community markets and farmers markets are fantastic ways to support local producers and entrepreneurs and to meet outdoors in a safe environment.

SuperValu TidyTowns Newsletter

Issue 2021-11

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Think local crafts and produce this Christmas as a gift idea, in doing so you are supporting the circular economy and keeping local communities alive and sustainable.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter and the accompanying collection of poetry and prose from recent issues. Some of these poems and short stories are really fantastic and are so thought provoking. We feel the photographs included also add a sense of calm and reflection, these are from TidyTowns groups and have been submitted as part of the TidyTowns photography competition.

Thank you to each and every one of our contributors, this is your newsletter and we love to hear from you whether it is a poem or a short story or an update on one of your recent projects, please keep them coming in to us and we will happily share with the rest of the family.

Message from Minister Heather Humphreys TD

Dear TidyTowns Volunteers,

It has been a very challenging year for all sectors of society as we have had to live alongside the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been many positive developments during the year and the way in which we as a people have played our part is to be commended.



It was the right decision to proceed with the 2021 competition and I am glad that we did. I was delighted to announce the winners last month in the RDS and also to announce a funding package of €1.5 Million to support you, the TidyTowns volunteers, in the great work that you do.

Despite the obstacles Covid-19 presented, so many of you have continued to look after our towns and villages and over 840 of you entered the competition this year. For some, it was your first time entering and I really hope you enjoyed the experience.

I look forward to launching the 2022 SuperValu TidyTowns competition in the New Year with our sponsor SuperValu who this year celebrated 30 years of support and sponsorship for the competition.

Congratulations and thanks to them for all they do in increasing awareness and participation in the competition throughout the country.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you the volunteers once again for your support and to wish you and your families a very happy and peaceful Christmas and the very best for a healthy, happy and productive 2022.

Heather Humphreys

Poets Corner

This month we bring you a collection of poems from our very talented volunteers and Adjudicators. First off for this month, we head to Swords in Dublin and to Ken Duffy from Swords TidyTowns. Ken brings us some very thought provoking words here on the area of Repair and Reuse.

Repair and Reuse

Did households recycle, yes they did

It was normal, growing up as a kid

No plastic bags, cluttering things up

Nor a discarded takeaway, coffee cup

Bicycle wheels, they got used for a toy

In Finglas West, where I grew as a boy

Go carts were made, from an old pram

Onto which, all your mates would cram

Socks weren't dumped, yer ma did darn

Keep that door shut, you born in a barn

If shoe was worn down, hole in the sole

Cardboard we used, to plug up that hole

Hand me downs, from cousins and bro's

Accepted gratefully, no stuck-up nose

Torn trousers, got patched by your mum

Her repairs saved the family, a tidy sum

Jumpers were unpicked, then knitted new

Some garden plots, where vegetables grew

For fresh eggs, a few chickens were kept

Overcoats on beds, in winter as we slept

Yer ma cut your hair, be quiet don't sob

Buttons were saved, for a future repair job

Bath water we shared, to cut down on cost



Skills now forgotten, to a generation lost

Next this month we bring you a piece from a member of the national panel of Adjudicators. Mary Flynn has been on the national panel for many years. Mary submitted this piece to the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society for a competition they ran in conjunction with their annual Heritage Awards. The idea was to "marry" the arts and architectural/archaeological heritage. There were four categories into which one could enter a submission. These were Poetry, Prose, Photography and Song Writing. Huge congratulations to Mary for the Poem she penned on Inch Abbey and submitted to the competition. At the annual awards ceremony in Belfast City Hall on Tuesday 23rd November Mary's poem was selected as the overall winner in the Poetry section. We hope you all enjoy it at much as we did.

Inch Abbey - Mainistir na hInse

Mary Flynn – Adjudicator

Prologue

Lauds breaks the morning air

as I shuffle bare-sandaled

along the stone-flagged cloister.

I pull my cowl around my shoulder.

I sense Lord Abbot's disapproval

of my late arrival.

The ebbing moon ponders my dilemma

as stars contest the sunrise.

De Courcy's missal is not complete.

I must make haste

by Terce he will knock at Scriptorium door

attended by his retinue.

"What's happened Brother Conal?"

The dye's run out; the day is dark

the west wind rushes through lime-mortared walls

my eyes tire and the vellum is ill-prepared

under Patrick's eye.

Epilogue

Another dawn, another bus.
They troop through chapter house and cloister,
sleep walking through Day Four
of this all-Ireland journey.

The silence is broken by
the clicking of a shutter.

What do they know of frozen mornings
the whims of vellum, the foibles of quill
of dark pre-dawn in tower and choir
of ghosts that hover in nave and chancel?

Nor can they plumb the depths
Of Golden Age and Dissolution.

Try they may, but Wikipedia nor tourist guide
can re-engender the Pascal Alleluias
on Easter morn - at Matins
when earth's and heaven's antiphons rang out
and awe-struck monks filed in to honour Him
for whom they toiled and sang
under Patrick's eye.



Here we have some encouraging words penned by Marion Rose Horgan from Cobh Tidy Towns who were named as Ireland's Tidiest Large Town for 2021.

Going for Gold!

The Tidy Towns Team had a vision, a dream,
To conquer the skies and win the big prize

A decade ago, we were quite low
It's a hard place to start but twas done with a heart.

Twas steady, twas tough as we climbed our way up,
And at times it was rough as we cleaned our town up.

This group was no quitter they tackled the litter
And soon there were flowers hanging from bowers

The team made decisions with pride and with vision
And a swarm of TTs were as busy as bees.

The buzz in our town began to abound
And the medals arrived amid joy and deep pride

Cos this is a goal for body and soul
So much to achieve when we start to believe.

It's more than just optics and image, and box ticks
It's awareness, it's giving and a new way of living!

We are now on the breach, the goal's within reach
It's a noble endeavour, we can do this together!

Let's squeeze the last drop and aim for the top
With passion and zest let's give it our best

As we rise and we rise, towards the coveted prize,
Let the next stage unfold, we're going for gold!

Last but by no means least we return to Emly TidyTowns to our dear friend Denis Heffernan. Denis is a regular contributor to the newsletter and we love to feature his works. Very fittingly, here Denis takes us all on a journey back to;

Christmas in the Sixties

Oh how I remember Christmas 1969 my mam had died on Christmas Day 1968. So a year later I was still very lonely and living on my own. The year had been okay I had got a job as a gardener in Kilfrush Estate, I had good wages and got on well and was looked after by Jack and Sally Barlow RIP, they treated me like their own son they had no family. When I told them I was going to England on holidays for Christmas they weren't happy, still I decided to go I was only 19 years of age and I had never been further than Knocklong.

A friend took me to Shannon airport the excitement was wonderful. The size of the airport was amazing or so I thought until I got to London. The crowds of people the moving stairs, the big buildings I was afraid of my life I would get lost. Then I saw my brother Ailbe with a big smile, he had lovely red hair groomed well with byrlcream, and a smile that would charm the birds of a bush, he always wore a collar and tie, He died at the young age of 42 RIP. Anyway he whipped me off in a black taxi through the streets of London. The motorway and the sight of Christmas lights and decorations were overpowering this was the life to live. Back to his flat 4 blocks high I felt I could see the whole of London.

Ailbe's wife Pam and 3 children made me very welcome, the whole room was heated with the press of a button not like home, where we had more smoke than heat. The next 5 days, they took me to London and on the underground to Kew Gardens, Buckingham Palace, Oxford Street and Madame Tussaud's Museum where the statues were so real looking you would salute them. I kept my money in my top pocket of my shirt and I put a safety pin on it to make sure it stayed closed, I checked it often to make sure it was still there I always heard London was full of pick pockets. Then it was time to move on to my sister's home out in Surrey for the Christmas Holidays.

I got a coach from Chiswick Station, Pam made ham sandwiches for me to have on the journey. Every town and village was full of Christmas lights for the festive season. The public houses and the country side is a memory I will never forget. When I got to Camberley my stop was the Jolly Farmer, I sat up near the coach driver to make sure I wouldn't miss my stop. My 3 nephews met me, where they lived was a very big estate set in the middle of wonderful woodland, where you could walk for miles. My sister Bridie and her husband Battie had been in England for a very long time. Both have passed on now and are laid to rest in Emly and Abby graveyard Ballyorgan.

They made a big fuss of me while I was there. They had a lovely old record player so I played Jim Reeves Bridie Gallagher and Céilí music every time I was indoors. Battie Hayes my brother-in-law was a very pleasant man with a great sense of humour, he liked his few pints of porter.

On Christmas Eve we were all up very early Battie said he would take me to the market in Aldershot about 20 miles away so off we went on the Coach. There was a light sprinkling of snow the night before so everywhere looks so Christmassy. The pine trees along road were tipped with snow and an east wind blowing a cold chill. When we got to the market place it was packed with people of all colour, I had never seen a coloured person in my life before.

My sister gave me money to bring back a chocolate log and to be home for our dinner by 4 o'clock. Battie said we would go to the Blue Kettle pub for one drink and then we would take a look around the market. Several hours later and many pints downed by Battie we were still in the Blue Kettle, myself drinking lemonade. Battie was worse for wear and it was getting dark. Anyway we left the pub and had to go and get the chocolate log. So we found a cake shop and the fattest man I had ever seen was inside the counter. He had a black moustache as big as a yard brush and a white hat on his head. What can I do for you my friend says he. Can I have a chocolate log says I. Well says he you are just lucky I have one left and says he you left it very late as you can see the shop is nearly empty. The log had a little Santa Clause and a bit of fresh holly, it looked lovely. He put it in a white cardboard box and tied it up with a tartan ribbon. Have a great Christmas he said as I paid him and the same to you sir I said. Battie then was bursting to go to the toilet I was frightened he was worse for wear and he laughing and cracking jokes. We finally got to the coach and headed home.

Well Bridie wasn't impressed when we got in, she said the dinner was gone for nothing, sure Battie just laughed and said give us a kiss. Bridie replied I will give you the saucepan down on your head keeping my poor brother out in that cold all day long. Well Bridie said she would make some ham sandwiches for us, even though she said the ham was still hot, well we ate them down sweetly. Battie was coxing her to give us a bit of chocolate log well with reluctance she got out the bread knife and opened up the white box. She said it is a pity to cut it. Will you come with it says Battie or it will be the New Year. Well she stuck the knife in the log and what do you think, it was a log alright, a log of wood, well my sister was in a right fodder, Battie just sat back and laughed and fell asleep.

I gave them a present of a hedgehog clothes brush that Christmas, it was still there many years later on the sideboard, small things often meant more than we think. We had a great Christmas and indeed I went back many more times after that. But the memory of 1969 is still very precious to me. I suppose Christmas has changed since then. Nowadays the whole meaning of Christmas is sometimes lost in the hustle and bustle of the modern world.



Love This Place Campaign 2022- Leave No Trace

Ireland's **Love This Place** 2022 campaign to inspire and empower people look after our outdoors has begun. Led by Leave No Trace Ireland, the new 2022 campaign is working to encourage general users to participate in and enjoy the outdoors, whilst protecting our beautiful habitats by applying simple minimum impact techniques.



Over the last several years, and most markedly since the start of the Covid pandemic, more and more of us are spending time outdoors, reconnecting with nature and experiencing the beauty and variety of habitats on our doorstep.

With the surge in numbers of us all heading outdoors for recreational activities significant social and environmental impacts continue to be visible. We've all seen the most prevalent issues disrupting our natural beauty spots include littering, dog waste, livestock worrying, disturbance to wildlife, irresponsible car parking, overcrowding and damage from wild camping and wildfires.



With this in mind, Leave No Trace Ireland and its partners* are aiming to build on the momentum of the 2020 and 2021 Love This Place campaigns to continue to reinforce the message of exercising care and responsibility in the outdoors.

How Can You Help?

If you are interested in supporting the campaign, please get in touch via email rachel@leavenotraceireland.org and we will provide you with a free campaign partner pack to share messaging and build campaign reach through your social channels.

Leave No Trace Ireland would also like to extend an invitation to all groups to join as [free community members](#). You can join as community members through the Leave No Trace Ireland website and access your membership materials through the portal.

By joining Leave No Trace you'll have access to our monthly member newsletters and a range of other resources. You'll also be supporting the work of Leave No Trace, promoting responsible outdoor recreation across Ireland.



Stay Healthy this Christmas

Christmas is a time of celebration and as such, there is the tendency to treat ourselves to some of the nicer things in life, and why not, after the year everyone has had, the few treats are more deserved than ever.

It is important though to think about what we are eating and to do our best to eat healthily, remembering our 5-a-day and to exercise every day to keep us healthy both in mind and body. We hope the following helpful hints might be of use to you in the run up to Christmas and indeed beyond.

Healthy Ireland

Keeping fit and healthy is key to staying active and well. Starting with a plan to do one small thing that will keep you well is a great way to look after your mental health and wellbeing. Find ideas from all our partners on what you can do and what's available in your local community please visit; <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/healthy-ireland/>



Shop Local

This year more than ever is the time to Shop Local when buying products or services this winter, you will be helping local businesses, supporting local jobs, and your community. Check out your Local Enterprise Office for more information of local suppliers' *#LookForLocal*.



Remember to buy Irish, not just at Christmas and in doing so your support will make such a difference to our economy.

As we enter the festive season, our thoughts turn to food and delicious treats. There are some great websites with loads of hints and tips on food not just for Christmas but all year round, with meal planners, vegetable seasonal calendars etc.

<https://stopfoodwaste.ie/>



STOPFoodWaste.ie

Planning & Shopping

By making small changes to how we plan, shop and prepare food we can cut our food waste and save money at the same time. Reducing food waste should start before we even go to the shops! Please see attached link for more details regarding planning your shopping & making a meal plan.

<https://stopfoodwaste.ie/resources/planning-shopping>

TidyTowns & Community Groups

They also have a section dedicated to TidyTowns & Community Groups, to help spread the word about food waste prevention, also included is a section on home or community composting. Please see the attach link for more details

<https://stopfoodwaste.ie/resources/communities/tidy-towns-community-resources>

Christmas

There is also a section on Christmas, tips to help survive the Christmas Grocery Shop, a Christmas Recipe booklet to download and tips on what to do with the Christmas Leftovers

<https://stopfoodwaste.ie/?s=christmas>

Safefood

This is another valuable resource regarding food safety & healthy eating, this website also contains tips on batch cooking, how to improve your kitchen skills and loads of recipes. Maybe check out their 30 minute dinner sections and if you feel like something tasty while you sit and write some Christmas cards, why not try their Yuletide Iced Muffins or Spicy Christmas

Biscuits, they do look very tasty.

<https://www.safefood.net/>



Unwanted Gifts & Packaging

With all the extra packaging and wrapping and the few treats, we must remember to dispose of all the waste material in a proper manner.

Recycle as much as possible, separate your waste out for your bins and make use of your compost bin if you have been provided with one. Visit www.repak.ie to find out what you can recycle. Many towns and villages have community compost facilities; check them out in your area.



Bottles and jars are widely recyclable, if you visit your bottle bank and they are full, please be responsible and bring your items away with you and try it another day, this time of year, they can fill up very quick, be patient, it will be worth it knowing you have done your bit. Think about upcycling also, I recently saw where old Delph teapots were mounted on timber supports and used as bird feeders and bird-boxes, remember to feed the birds too especially during any colder spells.

Check out Birdwatch Ireland <https://birdwatchireland.ie/> for hints and tips on feeding Garden Birds

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/irelands-birds-birdwatch-ireland/garden-birds/>



I'm sure many people and Tidy Towns Groups are participating in the Irish Garden Bird Survey which runs from 30th November to February 2021, please see details

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/surveys-research/research-surveys/irish-garden-bird-survey/>

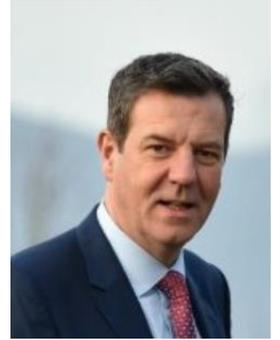
Unwanted Gifts

It can be a time of plenty for some but not for others, so if you have received gifts you do not have use for, perhaps consider donating them to charity, your local charity shop would love to receive your unwanted items which they can then turn into cash to support those in your community who are in need.

Message from Mr Ian Allen, Managing Director of SuperValu

Over the course of the pandemic we can see a renewed sense of appreciation for community and the positive impact communities have on our lives.

We have been sponsoring the SuperValu TidyTowns competition for so long simply because we believe in strong and vibrant communities, we believe in the power and joy of people working together and we believe in creating better communities for our children and our neighbours.



SuperValu independent retailers live and work in their local communities. Community matters to them and therefore SuperValu stores are well placed to support the 1,000 plus TidyTowns committees.

At its heart, the competition is the public expression of the work countless individuals undertake to build community spirit and make their local area a better place in which to live and work. The incredible committee members, in collaboration with our network of independent retailers, share our desire to build thriving, sustainable communities.

In fact, in many ways, SuperValu TidyTowns could be considered the embodiment of the Government's new and important rural development policy. Our Rural Future envisages a thriving rural Ireland, which recognises the centrality of people, the importance of vibrant and lived-in rural places, and the potential to create quality jobs and sustain our shared environment. There can be no doubt that the SuperValu TidyTowns competition has a vital role to play in bringing that vision to life.

It is also important that we recognise the importance of TidyTowns in the area of building more sustainable communities. As long-term supporters of TidyTowns, we at SuperValu have seen first-hand the competition grow and evolve over time. This year, more than ever, we have seen a growing number of inspiring initiatives that focus on the biodiversity, conservation and resilience that are critical to creating sustainable communities. This is something I would like to see more of, and I believe there is still room to increase the focus on sustainability for TidyTowns, because our communities and future generations are relying on us to leave a lasting positive impact on the planet.

Bringing younger people into TidyTowns is important for our future. That is why I am excited when I see some of our plans in SuperValu to launch a school's programme, which highlights the importance of biodiversity to our communities and the direct link to TidyTowns. Collectively we have many challenges and opportunities in Ireland to make the way we live more sustainable for all.

This starts at home, right on our doorstep. The inspiring thing about SuperValu TidyTowns is seeing so many people passionate about their local area, making small changes which collectively add up to a big impact.

It could be creating wild areas to encourage biodiversity, or adding bug and bee houses to support pollinators. It could be clearing litter or encouraging recycling – whatever it is, it all makes a difference and inspires all of us to take more pride in the place we live.

It was fantastic to celebrate the 2021 winners of SuperValu TidyTowns last month, their awards were incredibly well deserved. This year, with the pandemic keeping people apart for so long, coming together as a community has had much more meaning for people.

So, congratulations to the winners and everyone who entered or got involved, because your actions have made a big difference.

Season's Greetings to all our TidyTowns Volunteers from



TidyTowns Grant

Speaking at the recent awards ceremony Minister Humphreys announced a funding package of €1.5 Million to support over 1,000 TidyTowns groups in their preparation for the 2022 competition.

1,022 eligible groups will be contacted by the Department in the coming weeks. In order to be eligible, a centre must have entered the competition in either of the years 2018, 2019 or 2021.

The closing date for receipt of application forms for this funding will be February 28th, 2022 and funding obtained must be expended by July 21st, 2022.

Villages will be entitled to a grant of €1,000, small towns €2,000 and large towns €3,000. Large Urban Centres will be entitled to a grant of €4,000. All eligible groups are encouraged to enter using the form that will be issued electronically in the coming weeks.

If you do not receive an email from us with regard to the grant aid, please get in touch with the unit and we will ensure one issues to you.

This is a fantastic opportunity to assist you in progressing some of your initiatives and in preparing for the competition next year. The €1.5 Million in funding announced by Minister Humphreys in November brings the total funding provided to TidyTowns groups to €6.7 Million since the Department of Rural and Community Development was established in 2017.



Email Contacts



We currently have 1,022 active TidyTowns groups around the country. This is the first time this number has exceeded 1,000 so it really demonstrates that TidyTowns is very much alive in our communities. As we move to new ways of doing things and in our aims to be more sustainable, contact with groups will continue to be via electronic means in so far as possible. We have email addresses on file for close to 1,000 groups, if your group has not yet shared your email address with us or if you have changed your address, please get in touch so that we can update our records.

Going forward this will be the main method of contact, in the coming years we will move away from printed material, this year we moved from the printed entry form and while that was a challenge for many groups, we commend you on the manner in which this was embraced. We will, in the coming years move from printing adjudication reports and results booklets, these are always available on the website and by not printing this amount of material, we are reducing our paper requirements and being more sustainable.

Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)

Last month the legislative framework underpinning the forthcoming Irish Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) was signed into law by Minister Eamon Ryan.

A DRS works by the concept of putting a deposit on drink containers with the objective to increase collection and recycling rates, and ultimately build a circular process for beverage containers. Besides the obvious benefits of reducing litter, a DRS can also reduce carbon emissions.

The DRS systems in the Nordic states are all highly successful with collection rates above or just below 90% – equal to the collection target by 2029 of 90 % set by the EU. A common key success factor is an extensive network of Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs). RVMs safeguard the quality and purity of the collected material through effective recognition and fraud-proofing - providing the perfect conditions for high recycling rates. It is estimated that DRS Systems in the Nordic countries save 600 000+ tons of CO2 emissions per year. To put this into perspective, this equals annual CO2 emission reductions equal to the emissions of a commercial wide body aircraft doing 1500 return flights between Paris and New York

As previously documented in this newsletter, two years ago Carrickmacross TidyTowns were the first Irish organisation to pilot a reverse vending machine in Ireland. One of their ambitions was to prove that a deposit return scheme could work in Ireland. In the first three months of the scheme all expectations were exceeded with 100,000 plastic bottles recycled. Kudos to them.

Keep a watch out in upcoming newsletters with regard to a possible special award aligned to DRS for the 2022 SuperValu TidyTowns competition.

SuperValu Gift Card Winners

Thank you as always to our sponsors **SuperValu** who have again this month given us some of their Gift Card to give away to groups who have had their stories featured in recent issues of the newsletter. One of the managers in the Department kindly reviewed the material in issues 9 and 10 of the Newsletter. Thank you Lèon for selecting our worthy winners.

In Issue 10 we brought you the following stories;

Baile Slachtmhar
Bhéal an Mhuirthead
Belmullet Tidy Towns



The Mullet Peninsula is home to Ireland's rarest bee – the Great Yellow Bumblebee and is one of very few places in Europe with a sustainable population. **Belmullet TidyTowns** have been endeavouring for some years to create an awareness of the wealth of wildlife to be found in

the area, the importance of bees to pollination, and are concerned about the decline in bee populations. Working in conjunction with UCD, the National Biodiversity Data Centre, Mayo County Council and Birdwatch Ireland, the community group have been doing everything they can to show what can be done to help the Great Yellow Bumblebee and other pollinators. Therefore, it is a fantastic achievement for the area that Mayo Co. Co. and Baile Slachtmhar Bhéal an Mhuirthead have together launched a European Innovation Partnership Project (EIPP) for conservation of the Great Yellow Bumblebee.

Dromiskin TidyTowns in Co. Louth were determined to acknowledge the 30th Anniversary of the formation of the committee as well as three decades of participation in the National TidyTowns Competition. A large interpretative sign was commissioned highlighting the key projects undertaken in each of the three decades and together with regular Facebook posts, creates awareness of how TidyTowns projects have transformed the visual presentation of the village.



The **Baltinglass TidyTowns** project to install swift best boxes began in early 2021. The swift is on the amber list of birds of conservation concern in Ireland because its population has declined by over 40% in the last 15 years. The Baltinglass TidyTowns Swift nest project team have installed swift nest boxes and a swift calling system in four locations in all. The most visible of these is the nest box at the side of our busy town library on the town's main square

Lèon was very impressed with each of these projects and has recommended a prize of a €50 **SuperValu** Gift Card for each of you.

In Issue 9 we brought you a story from **Cloontuskert TidyTowns** in Roscommon. Cloontuskert is a jewel in the crown of rural Roscommon. Lying at the foot of the Sliabh Bawn mountain, the village holds an exciting past. The village is situated in East Roscommon, close to the county Longford border. In 1952 the village was built as one of the original Bord na Móna housing schemes, the only one of its kind developed in Roscommon, which catered for the families of workers who came from all over Ireland to gain employment on the bogs and to begin a new life in Cloontuskert. Seven of these villages were developed by Bord na Móna nationwide during the early 1950s.

Cloontuskert Community Orchard is our most recent flagship project. Our Orchard is situated on a site to the rear of our village that was traditionally used for dumping of all types of wastes (building materials, old electrical waste, everyday household waste), dating back to the 1950s up until recent times. With minimal funding and resources, over the course of a five-year period, and despite the impact of the lockdowns we faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, the community has shown huge resilience in cleaning up this former waste ground and transforming it into a much-loved community facility where we aim for biodiversity to thrive, and for residents to have their own source of fruit, berries, and vegetables through the creation of allotments on site from upcycled wooden pallets.



To acknowledge the great work being done we are delighted to present you with a €100 **SuperValu** Gift Card. Congratulations to all our winners, keep those stories and poems coming in, who knows a **SuperValu** Gift Card could be heading your way.



<https://www.facebook.com/OfficialSuperValuTidyTowns>



<https://twitter.com/TidyTownsIre>



<https://www.tidytowns.ie>



Remember to share the Newsletter with your wider TidyTowns group and volunteers through your own social media or through email. It's good to keep everyone in the Picture!!!

Dublin Naturalist's Field Club - Wildflower Seeds

My name is Rosaleen Fitzgerald and I am writing to you on behalf of the Conservation sub-committee of the Dublin Naturalist's Field Club <https://dnfc.net/>

In recent times we have become concerned at the use of Wildflower Seed Mixes in public places in very many towns and villages all over the country.

Our concern is based on the fact that these seed mixes contain species that displace the native flora, often permanently.

The plant species that these mixes contain are often not of local or Irish origin and, while they may be colourful, they may offer little advantage by way of pollen or nectar to our native insects. In addition, they are not capable of sustaining themselves where they are planted because it is not their natural habitat.

Even where the seed mixes contain species of Irish origin, they can still have a negative impact, as the seed may have been gathered in a completely different part of the country. Sowing this seed will introduce plants that may have a different genotype to those growing naturally in your area.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre, the promoters of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, has now discouraged the use of wildflower seeds. Its advice may be found at <https://pollinators.ie> (*See the Buzz and Wildflower Seed*)

By simply changing the mowing regime, amazing wildflowers like Dandelion, Clovers, Self-heal, Cowslip and Bird's-foot-trefoil may naturally pop-up year after year at no cost. These common flowers will provide nutrients for our pollinator-insect needs. Remember that the majority of our native insects and other fauna are neither consumers of pollen nor nectar and so have their own criteria for beauty!

Similarly, if you have an area that has been disturbed or remodelled just leave it to colonise naturally. The initial pioneer species will soon be succeeded by a range of plants that are well adapted to your local conditions. You also would be helping biodiversity. You may have to slightly modify your concept of a weed! By reviving pockets of natural grassland meadows and verges, no matter how tiny, the collective benefit to wildlife would be enormous.

Our committee has produced a Position Paper on 'Wildflower Seed Mixtures', which is available on the DNFC website. I would urge you and your colleagues to inform yourselves on the subject of Wildflower Seed Mixes with a view to more sustainable preparations for TidyTowns competitions.

<https://dnfc.net/2021/07/14/wildflower-mixes/>

If you have any questions on what is contained in the paper our committee is more than happy to answer them and I can be contacted at [rfitzger53 @outlook.com](mailto:rfitzger53@outlook.com)

Photography Competition

We recently opened up applications for the TidyTowns photography competition. This year, again, we were amazed with the quality and quantity of entries, you have all been out and about with the cameras at the ready, well done. We have now reviewed all the entries and are delighted to announce the results.



Just to recap on the prizes up for grabs; for our junior entrants up to 18 years of age, we have a first prize of €150 and a second prize of €75. The main competition will have a first Prize of €250, second prize of €150 and a third prize of €75. Total prize money of €700.

Our runner up in the junior competition shows the involvement of youth in TidyTowns which is a key action in #Our Rural Future. Here we see a young volunteer doing a beach tidy up in Ringaskiddy.



The photo was taken by Kellan who was 8 in November and shows my brother Liam when we were helping clean up the beach on a Sunday after some people had a party there.

The beach is called Loughbeg beach and it is in Ringaskiddy, County Cork. My brother Liam is 11 and we live in Ringaskiddy of course.

I hope you like my picture.

Well done Kellan and Liam, we are delighted to award you a prize of €75.

Our winner in junior section goes to Gurteen in County Sligo for their Mural wall. This photograph is of a recent Junior Tidy Towns project. A previously unpainted wall in the heart of the village was transformed by Fizz, an



accomplished artist. The theme for this wall mural was biodiversity and the vibrant colours and designs were based on ideas from our Junior Tidy Towns group. The wording "Our Strength Will Grow through Community" was very apt and inspirational. We were delighted with the outcome of this project. I hope you like our photograph.

Congratulations to Gurteen Junior TidyTowns, we are delighted to award you a prize of €150.

In the main competition we were impressed with the quality of images submitted as with the junior element, some fantastic eyes out there for a good picture.

In third place we bring you an image that sums up all that is TidyTowns. Here Orlagh Reid from Caragh TidyTowns in Kildare shows us the Litter picker having a well-deserved rest. We are delighted to award a prize of €75 to Caragh TidyTowns. Some lovely images submitted by the group showcasing the great work they are doing.



In second place Noreen Skelly from the Collon Community TidyTowns group in Louth submitted this wonderful image of one of our best friends. Our Pollinator friends, the Bee. Some very careful timing goes in to getting the perfect image, well done, a prize of €150 is on route to you.

Our overall winner of the 2021 TidyTowns photography competition and recipients of our €250 prize are Abbeyleix TidyTowns in County Laois who were this year named as Ireland's Tidiest Small Town. Robbie Quinn, Chairperson sent in a lovely selection of images which in his own words, "I think helps capture the spirit of tidy towns", is spot on. Here we see one of these images which is titled "Sign of the times". Well done Robbie, great photo.

Congratulations to all our winners, we will be in touch in the New Year in relation to your prizes. Keep capturing those images, they will be tremendous support for your 2022 entry.



2021 Competition Awards

Just once again to congratulate all of our winners in the 2021 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. We are currently arranging to have medals engraved and hopefully these will issue early in the New Year. Certificates will also issue by post this year, however, they will not be framed but a contribution towards the framing costs will be added to all cash prizes. We have commenced issuing award payments and some of you will receive your prizes before Christmas. We would ask you all to bear with us and be patient, we will endeavour to get all prizes out to recipients by the end of January.

Keep in Touch

Thank you for taking the time to read our Christmas Issue of the newsletter for 2021. Thank you to all our readers, our contributors and also to our sponsors **SuperValu** for their ongoing support and sponsorship.

Remember, that all issues of the Newsletter are on the TidyTowns website at <https://www.tidytowns.ie/about-us/newsletters/> together with our compilation of poems and stories from the last number of years.

Sending you all our very best Wishes for the festive season and every good wish for 2022 from Anne, Helen & John in The TidyTowns Unit.

Guímid Nollaig shona oraibh féin agus ar do theaghlaigh, agus sláinte mhaith do 2022

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