



Knockananna Tidy Towns completed the restoration of the old blacksmith's house.

# Challenging year for Tidy Towns groups

By MYLES BUCHANAN

WHILE the national Tidy Towns competition was postponed in 2020 due to Covid, Wicklow County Council still decided to go ahead with its annual Tidy Towns and Environmental Awards, the winners of which have just been announced.

The Local Authority wanted to recognise the work carried out by Tidy Towns groups who have remained active during the pandemic, especially those who have delivered new projects on sustainability and biodiversity.

John Paul Ave in Arklow won the Local Authority Tidy Estates award, while Brennan's Parade, Bray was the private estate winner.

Cllr Pat Kennedy, the Cathaoirteach of Wicklow County Council said: '2020 was challenging for communities. Restrictions and social distancing limited what we could achieve at times and also called on us to provide support for family, friends and neighbours as well as the vulnerable in our society. We responded well as a county.'

'The National Tidy Towns Awards could not take place but the work continued in towns and communities across the county with groups delivering new projects. Wicklow County wishes to pay tribute to the people who helped to care for our environment and build a more sustainable future for all. These awards recognize your continued endeavours during 2020.'

Frank Curran, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council said: 'These awards are an opportunity to celebrate the great work that groups throughout the county delivered in 2020. While Covid 19 disrupted all our lives it did bring communities together and it did strengthen the relationship between communities and Local Government.'

'2020 was also a year in which Wicklow County Council established a new Climate Action Team. It was a year when we worked with communities

on Climate Action through Sustainable Energy Communities with the first group Glenmalure completing their Energy Master Plan in November.'

In the Tidy Estates competition, Mallens Woods in Grangecon was second in the Local Authority Estates section and Gleann Chill, Glenealy was third. Fernhill, Arklow was second in the Private Estates category, while Ashton Blessington was third.

In the Main Street competition, Hollywood was first in the small towns category, followed by Ballycoog in second and Grangecon in third. Dunlavin won the medium towns award, with Avoca second and Delgany third. Greystones won the large town award, while Arklow was second and Blessington third.

Greystones Tidy Towns won the Biodiversity award after the Shoreline Centre was planted and managed for biodiversity. It was planned with the zoning of habitats and maintenance programmes. They are also incorporating biodiversity into all planting schemes around the town.

The Biodiversity In Schools Award went to Sacred Heart, Aughrim, for tree planting undertaken with the support of a local business. It involved the development of a wildflower garden for bees and the creation of a vegetable garden from which the produce was used for soup and salad.

The Built Heritage Award was won by Knockananna Tidy Towns who completed the restoration of the old blacksmith's house, restoring from dereliction a key historic structure in the centre of the town.

Poppies Café won the Environmental Business Award, having been nominated by Enniskerry Tidy Towns. Health Matters was commended after being nominated by Bray Tidy Towns. Poppies Café invested in solar panels, LED lighting, and rainwater harvesting. Discounts are given for reusable cups and they have a focus on sustainable packaging. Coffee is sourced from a carbon neutral source.

Local suppliers are used, while Healthy Matters offer a range of refill options when purchasing in-store.

The Coast Care Award went to Wicklow Aquanautics. They undertook citizen science monitoring of species re-establishing in Greystones Harbour. They also carried out invasive species monitoring, divers did under water litter picks and they developed a biodiversity information leaflet on their findings.

The Communal Gardening Award was won by Greystones Kilcoole Community Garden for the renovation of the Shoreline Community Garden creating a thriving hub for GIY. The garden had been neglected but has now been remodelled with a new focus on vegetable production.

Laragh Tidy Towns were the winners of the Energy Award. They are undertaking a Sustainable Energy Communities Energy Master Plan, and auditing energy usage to identify the best energy saving options for the community. Public engagement with the community in surrounding areas will also take place.

Arklow Tidy Towns were the recipients of the Climate Change Award. They are working with industry in the town to offset carbon emissions through tree planting. Partners include Servier, Echelon, Merck, Irish Water, Leon Recycling. They are developing a neighbour wood on 7 Ha with Sunbeam Services and Coillte. Planting in public spaces with residents and schools was carried out and they worked on a new Community Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Local Food/Fairtrade Award winners were Wicklow Wines nominated by Enniskerry Tidy Towns. Wicklow Wines are a member of the steering group and champion for Wicklow Naturally as well as participating in Origin Green. They use Bord Bia approved suppliers. They focus on energy efficiency and waste prevention. Pulp is composted for use in food production.

Baltinglass Fairtrade was



Greystones Kilcoole Community Garden.

commended for maintaining Fair Trade status and celebrating Earth Day. They also held a swap your basket challenge and have ongoing school campaigns running.

The Landscaping Award goes to Ballycoog Tidy Towns for their landscaping of the Graveyard, the carpark, and their work with the school on creating a garden. Pollinator friendly planting was used. Perennial planting ensures longevity. The beetle banks were also well presented and landscaped.

Blessington Tidy Towns was commended for creating a new disability and age friendly garden cared for by local residents.

Stephen Brennan, nominated by Scoil Realt na Mara, won the Local Champions Award. He has led on many PURE Mile campaigns in the Brittas Bay area and worked to explore and document local heritage. Each year he involves local students getting them to learn about their heritage documenting and presenting it in school.

Sharon Plunkett was commended, having been nominated by Bray Tidy Towns. Sharon has been instrumental in leading local residents on a clean up and revamp of their estate and went on to further afield in the community of Bray on several campaigns with Bray Tidy Towns.



Planting carried out in Newcastle.

Also commended was Eoin Llewellyn, after being nominated by Greystones Tidy Towns. Eoin has worked to document local biodiversity and strengthen awareness on it. He has led on projects including planting a community orchard.

The Local Heritage Award goes to Baltinglass Tidy Towns, who worked on a new walk in Lord Woods, including paths and wooden infrastructure for visitors.

Schools Award went to Scoil Realt na Mara of Brittas Bay who were recognised for their work in exploring their local heritage through PURE, their productive vegetable garden and their planting for biodiversity.

Ballycoog National School won the School Garden award. Ballycoog have worked to establish a pollinator friendly garden to the front of the school and a fruit and vegetable garden to the back with support from parents.

Lacken Tidy Towns won the Sustainable Tourism Award. Lacken have restored their old mass path creating a lovely walk which can be looped back round to the town and which will create a great addition for visitors to the Blessington Greenway when it comes through.

The Trees Award was won by Greystones Tidy Towns for a

campaign called 20 trees for 20 which was delivered with local sports clubs. A tree planted for each child who visited Santa resulted in 215 trees planted. Extensive planting of trees was undertaken at the shoreline centre as well.

The Water Conservation Award winners are Arklow Tidy Towns. Threatened with the loss of newly planted trees during the hot spell they used piping to create irrigation channels direct to the roots keeping trees alive while minimizing water usage.

The Water Protection Award winners are Delgany Tidy Towns. They undertook a citizen science based study to examine water quality in the Three Trouts River building up local knowledge and identifying options to improve water quality. Regular clean ups were also undertaken.

Reservoir Cogs are the Waste Minimization Award winners, having been nominated by Blessington Tidy Towns. A through greening of the annual cycling event was carried out. No plastic bottles were used, with only biodegradable materials used.

All waste was segregated for recycling and a goodie bag was swapped for litter at the end. Bray Crafters, nominated by Bray Tidy Towns, were commended.

# Bray Tidy Towns to hold art competition

BRAY Tidy Towns is inviting young people to take part in its schools and youth art competition for recycled goods.

The aim is to inspire a generation of students with a passion for the environment and to help them become aware of how much people throw out every day that can be turned into beautiful and useful objects.

The organisation hope to arm them with experience and knowledge in waste reduction, resource recovery, and leadership in the environmental field.

Entrants can make art from anything including plastic bottles, bottle tops, cans, CDs, old clothes or fabric and any other trash they can find.

Art pieces can take the form of wall art, sculpture and design pieces such as mirror frames, trays, tables, fashion and more. All primary and post primary schools as well as youth clubs in Bray are invited to take part. There will be three categories - primary, and junior and senior post-primary.

The prize will be a trophy and entry into the national Tidy Towns Schools and Youth Awards.

Submissions should be comprised completely of recycled or reused materials.

The closing date for entries is Friday, May 14. Winners will be announced on May 28.

Go to [braytidytowns.com](http://braytidytowns.com) to enter.