



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

SuperValu Tidy Towns

Caring for our environment

Administered by the
Department of Rural & Community Development

Supporting the
Sustainable Development Goals

Think Global – Act Local



SuperValu Tidy Towns Newsletter Issue 2021-1

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A Chairde,

We extend a very warm welcome to you all in this our first newsletter of 2021. We hope you all enjoyed Christmas although it was very different for so many of us. We wish you, your families, your volunteers and indeed your community all the best of health and happiness for a happy 2021.

Sadly, we find ourselves back in lockdown as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic that has been in our lives now for many months.

We all need to be vigilant in these coming weeks and months, hopefully much brighter days are ahead, already we can see a slight stretch in the evenings, spring is on its way, so too is the national roll-out of the vaccination which we hope will see this virus being beaten. The key to staying safe is to follow the public health advice, it may be difficult but as the campaign

slogan tells us, “it is in our hands” and so it is, if we exercise cough and sneeze etiquette, wash our hands, wear face coverings and really reduce our contacts, we greatly increase our chances of avoiding contracting Covid-19.

Supports are in place to help with delivery of essential items, groceries, medicines, fuel etc. The Covid-19 Community Response Forum helpline is still very much there to support you. Contact details for your local Covid-19 Community Response Forum helpline are contained below. Please share these details with your wider community and know that there is help there if anyone needs it.

We need to be mindful of those most vulnerable in our community, those in remote areas, elderly residents, those living alone, and those who care for family members or people who may be concerned about being out in public due to health concerns.

If residents in your community need to talk to someone or are looking for emotional support, ALONE can be contacted on 0818 222 024. Even a phone call to these members of your community might be just the lifeline they need to keep connected and know that they are being thought of.

COVID-19 Community Call Forum - Local Authority Helpline Numbers and Email Addresses		
Your Local Authority	Number	Email Address
Carlow	1800 814 300	covidsupport@carlowcoco.ie
Cavan	1800 300 404	covidsupport@cavancoco.ie
Clare	1890 252 943	covidsupport@clarecoco.ie
Cork City	1800 222 226	covidsupport@corkcity.ie
Cork County	1800 805 819	covidsupport@corkcoco.ie
Donegal	1800 928 982	covidsupport@donegalcoco.ie
Dublin City	01 222 8555	covidsupport@dublincity.ie
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	01 271 3199	covidsupport@dlrcoco.ie
Fingal	1800 459 059	covidsupport@fingal.ie
Galway City	1800 400 150	covidsupport@galwaycity.ie
Galway County	1800 928 894/091 509 390	covidsupport@galwaycoco.ie
Kerry	1800 807 009	covidsupport@kerrycoco.ie
Kildare	1800 300 174	covidsupport@kildarecoco.ie
Kilkenny	1800 326 522	covidsupport@kilkennycoco.ie
Laois	1800 832 010	covidsupport@laoiscoco.ie
Leitrim	071 965 0473	covidsupport@leitrimcoco.ie
Limerick City	1800 832 005	covidsupport@limerick.ie
Limerick County	1800 832 005	covidsupport@limerick.ie
Longford	1800 300 122	covidsupport@longfordcoco.ie
Louth	1800 805 817	covidsupport@louthcoco.ie
Mayo	094 906 4660	covidsupport@mayococo.ie
Meath	1800 808 809	covidsupport@meathcoco.ie
Monaghan	1800 804 158	covidsupport@monaghancoco.ie
Offaly	1800 818 181	covidsupport@offalycoco.ie
Roscommon	1800 200 727	covidsupport@roscommoncoco.ie
Sligo	1800 292 765	covidsupport@sligococo.ie
South Dublin	1800 240 519	covidsupport@sdublincoco.ie
Tipperary	076 106 5000	covid19@tipperarycoco.ie
Waterford City	1800 250 185	covidsupport@waterfordcouncil.ie
Waterford County	1800 250 185	covidsupport@waterfordcouncil.ie
Westmeath	1800 805 816	covidsupport@westmeathcoco.ie
Wexford	053 919 6000	covidsupport@wexfordcoco.ie
Wicklow	1800 868 399	covidsupport@wicklowcoco.ie

SuperValu TidyTowns 2021

As we work towards the launch of the 2021 competition taking account of all public health advice, we would like to encourage groups to be using this time wisely.

Perhaps it would be a good time to look at your three-year plan, of course the last year has not been what we had all hoped for. Many projects or plans you may have had in mind have not come to fruition, but please do not be disheartened by that, all groups are in the same situation and those plans can roll over to future years. Take a look at your plan and revise some of those timelines accordingly, your adjudicator will be very understanding of the circumstances so please don't be worrying about timelines and completion dates.

Photographs are the best way to record progress, we always advise groups, especially new groups or returning groups to take photographs of areas that they have enhancement works planned. This is the best way to show the adjudicator what you started with and demonstrate the progress made along the way. Photographs can be sent in with your entry, but they can add a great deal to your postage costs. Have you considered copying them into WORD documents? You can easily fit up to six photographs to a page, 12 with using both sides, this will demonstrate your work to the adjudicator in a much easier way for them to follow and these pages can easily be incorporated into your entry form at each relevant category. If you are submitting your form electronically, this is even more straightforward.

Preparation is key and sometimes it can be hard to remember all the various projects you have worked on, please remember you can include all projects and initiatives back to June 2019 for your 2021 entry. The categories have not changed since 2019 and the form layout will be the very same. You could start writing up some of your notes now, so as to be preparing for when the entry form arrives.

The Sustainable Development Goals will appear under each category on the entry form that will be the only difference you will see, we have been sharing information with you in recent times on these goals and we would encourage you to reference them as much as possible going forward.

Finally, in a bid to reduce your postage costs and indeed to become more sustainable, we would encourage as many groups as possible to enter the competition electronically. Many groups already do this but we would love to see more making greater use of this facility. We will of course accept postal entries so if you do not have access to the means to submit via email, please do not worry, we still want to hear from you.

We will be communicating further will all groups in this regard in the coming weeks in an attempt to reducing paper, postage costs for you and making the entire entry process as seamless as possible for you all.

Christmas – Tidy Up

With all the extra packaging and wrapping that can be created during Christmas, please remember to dispose of all the waste material in a proper manner.

Recycle as much as possible, separate the 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.

Unwanted Gifts

Although the Charity Shops are currently closed, they will soon reopen, so if you have received gifts you do not have use for, perhaps consider donating them, 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.

Summerhill Tidy Towns

Summerhill TidyTowns in County Meath had the pleasure of spreading a little Christmas cheer in their community in December. They collaborated with Vincent de Paul, Third Age, Summerhill Community Centre and Sona Sasta (Meals on Wheels) and distributed 255 book bundles locally. What a wonderful way to help people pass the longer winter evenings and the way the parcels are wrapped up and presented is really great.



In a separate initiative to spread some festive cheer Summerhill TidyTowns also worked with Dangan National School. They made up 210 packs of reindeer food and shared them with the pupils. The packaging was recyclable and the food biodegradable replacing previously used plastic bags and plastic glitter. So all in two very environmental and sustainable initiatives undertaken by Summerhill TidyTowns, well done to all involved.

TidyTowns Grant Funding 2020



Caring for our environment

On December 24th last, Minister For Rural and Community Development Heather Humphreys announced funding of €1 million for TidyTowns groups to help them to prepare for the 2021 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. This allocation will provide €1,000 for every eligible TidyTowns group in the country.

The funding announced by the Minister is in addition to €1.4 million allocated to these groups at the end of 2019, some of which will also be used to help them prepare for the 2021 competition.

In total, there are 987 eligible TidyTowns groups registered across the country. Pobal will be administering the payment of this grant on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development. In light of the current restrictions as a result of COVID-19, Pobal will be communicating where possible with eligible groups via email. It would be desirable therefore, if groups could submit their form electronically rather than going to a post office.

While we accept some groups do not have access to email, Pobal will post forms out to these groups. All eligible groups have now been contacted with details of how to apply for the extra funding. If you have any query with regard to the grant or have not received communication from Pobal at this stage, please contact them at tidytowns@pobal.ie or by telephone on 01- 5117 099.

We would encourage all groups who are eligible for this funding to submit an application form by the closing date of February 28th, 2021.

This announcement brings the total amount of funding issued to TidyTowns groups by the Government of Ireland, through the Department in recent years to €5.2 Million.



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



<https://twitter.com/TidyTownsIre>



<https://www.tidytowns.ie>

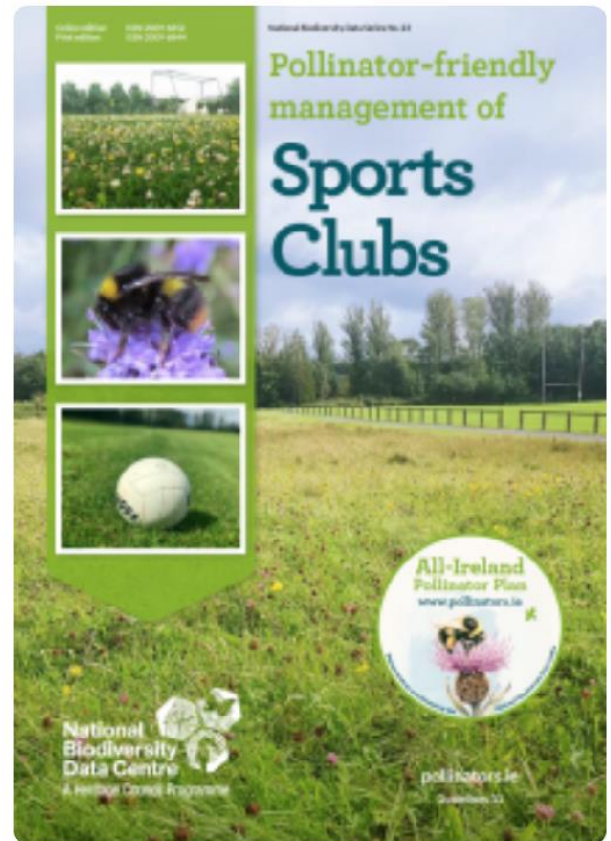


Remember to share the Newsletter with your wider TidyTowns group and volunteers through your own social media or through email. It's good to keep everyone in the Picture!!!

All Ireland Pollinator Plan – Sports Clubs

New guidelines have been published to help Sports Clubs become more Biodiversity Friendly. With approximately 15,000 clubs across the island, sports clubs can play a vital role in the conservation of our biodiversity. The newest publication from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, 'Pollinator-friendly management of Sports Clubs' offers 10 actions to help pollinators, ranging from reduced mowing on off-pitch grass to planting a native tree walking trail.

This guide is aimed at those who have responsibility for managing Sports Clubs and their surroundings. All these actions are evidence-based, i.e. scientific studies show these actions have a positive impact on pollinators. Pollinators need food, shelter and safety and fortunately, many of the land management changes required are really simple. They are also often 'do-not' actions rather than 'do', so that there is no cost and nature itself does the hard work. There are actions for all types of clubs, and both rural and urban, regardless of how much outdoor space a club might have.



For more information on this publication, please visit; <https://pollinators.ie/new-guidelines-published-to-help-sports-clubs-become-more-biodiversity-friendly/>

Some useful ways to make your local Sports Clubs biodiversity-friendly:

- Manage some off-pitch grass for pollinators by reducing mowing to every 4 to 6 weeks or long-flowering annual meadows.
- Manage existing native hedgerows for biodiversity by allowing native hedgerows to flower each spring.
- Plant biodiversity-friendly trees, shrubs and flowers. Consider planting additional pollinator-friendly trees, shrubs, perennials and bulbs around the grounds provides vital sources of food, particularly in spring and autumn.
- Reduce use of herbicides. Perhaps adopt a pollinator-friendly pesticide code and protect local water sources. Consider strimming instead of spraying around fencing, goals and lights. Avoid spraying the base of trees or hedgerows.
- Provide nesting places for wild bees such as hedgerows, mud banks, drilled wood and bee hotels.

Kilbride TidyTowns Co. Meath Village Christmas Decorations made from recycled material

In the lead up to Christmas 2020 the group decided to make a special effort to brighten up our lovely village, particularly as the Covid-19 virus was continuing to dampen spirits.

We picked up some abandoned tyres and with a little paint and ribbons added, turned them into 4 Christmas Wreaths, which were erected at the 4 approaches to the village.

The group then turned two pallets into a Christmas tree shape and added a few LED lights, which really brightened up our village garage forecourt and shop.



With Covid-19 restrictions at our village Church restricting access to the beautiful crib erected each year, we decided to make an outdoor nativity scene/crib, which people could see and visit more safely. On a discarded whiteboard sourced from our local Scoil Bhríde and with a little black paint we sketched an image of the nativity scene onto it and mounted it on a discarded pallet and erected it at the front of the church in the centre of the village. The aluminium stars for the Christmas Tree and the Crib were even recycled from a dumped piece of metal.



Christmas is really a magical time of year for children and we could not let the season pass without doing something for our village school community, Scoil Bhríde, (with whom we have many lovely joint projects). One of our group found an abandoned large toy car, which he painted in the local Kilbride GAA club colours, added a very festive polar bear teddy from the local charity shop, some colour and a flag and the result led to great excitement once it magically appeared outside the school. The car and teddy are now going to the GAA Club to be rolled out as a mascot before big matches, club fun days, etc.



All in all, the group were very happy with their efforts and amazed that a few recycled items and a little imagination, could brighten up the village and in a small way the lives of those who live, work, go to school, visit or simply pass through our beautiful village. Very positive reaction and feedback from everyone. Details and photos were put on our Facebook page and people with links to Kilbride, who unfortunately were not able to visit the village this year from far off destinations, got to hear about and see the village around Christmas time.

Best wishes from all at Kilbride Tidy Towns. Stay Safe.

<https://m.facebook.com/kilbridetidytowns/>



Ennis TidyTowns – Factsheet No. 8 – Sustainable Development Goals

During 2020 in a bid to assist groups understand how their everyday projects and initiatives were supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), our friends in Ennis TidyTowns provided us with a series of Fact Sheets. In total last year 7 of these easy to follow factsheets were prepared, each outlining different projects undertaken in recent times by Ennis TidyTowns and on each sheet the number of SDG's that were achieved were given.

Ennis TidyTowns have now prepared a two-page fact sheet, not specific to any one project but referencing the general areas of activity for TidyTowns groups, including Biodiversity, Volunteering, Litter and Waste Management and the area of Pollinators.

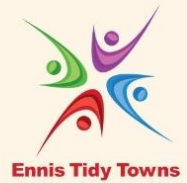
Under each of the general headings, the number of different SDG's that can be achieved is shown, as demonstrated by the various fact-sheets shared in 2020, we can see how even 1 project can assist a group in achieving several of the goals.

As we head towards the 2021 competition, the entry form will look a little different in that these goals will be linked to each of the various categories and groups will be invited and encouraged where possible to reference the various goals that are being met under each project or initiative being progressed.

As always we extend our sincere thanks to Ennis TidyTowns for sharing this information with us, so we in turn, can share it with you. If you want to view any of the recent fact sheets, they can all be found in the 2020 Newsletters, which are all located on the TidyTowns website, simply visit <https://www.tidytowns.ie/about-us/newsletters/> to access past issues. Together these fact sheets really give an excellent overview of how the goals can be met, the reality is all groups are delivering on many of the goals already; we just need to think of our projects in a different light going forward and apply the goals to each one.



EVERYDAY SDGS



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BACKGROUND

As Tidy Towns groups we all, whether we realise it or not, embed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in what we do. As the competition is now asking that we reflect this in our submission this factsheet aims to shed light on common tasks we do and how they help implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals

POLLINATOR GRASS MANAGEMENT

By changing how we manage grasslands (e.g. road verges, parks, estate green areas, etc.) for pollinators and biodiversity we are positively impacting life on land, climate action (less mowing means less emissions and more carbon being sequestered), working in partnership such as with local councils and promote sustainable cities and communities. One action with lots of associated goals!



LITTER PICKING

A cornerstone of every Tidy Towns group, from small to large, this act not only has a positive visual impact on our towns and villages but protects local wildlife (on land and in water) from choking hazards and small plastics, promotes outdoor volunteering which is good for our health and well-being and also promotes sustainable communities.



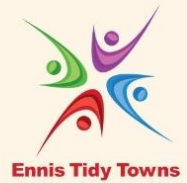
WASTE PREVENTION PROJECTS

Whether you run a Repair Cafe, offer recycling days for large objects, promote 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' in your local school as part of the Green Flag or advocate for renewable energy all this helps deliver SDGs.





EVERYDAY SDGS



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VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering has been proven to be beneficial to our health and well-being. In addition, being part of a Tidy Towns committee means you are advocating for your local area. By encouraging a wide diversity of volunteers from the active elderly, young people, those with disabilities and new Nationalities to your area you are breaking down barriers around inequalities.



BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS

This is probably one of the most proactive and impactful aspects of the competition. From tree planting (great for climate action) to biodiversity signage to wildflower meadows to lectures and outdoor classrooms biodiversity is a core aspect of all our submissions. In doing so we help promote wildlife in our towns and villages and create 'stepping stones' so they move freely throughout the landscape.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES

Be it partnering with your local GAA club, advocating to support local 'green' businesses or welcoming new residents from Direct Provision Centres the role of a welcoming Tidy Towns group cannot be underestimated. Depending on each project there is scope to add or remove goals e.g. supporting your Fridays for Future group would also help deliver Goal 13: Climate Action!



NOTE: This factsheet is not intended to be a one-stop-shop for the SDGs but more so a starting point on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and how they apply to all our work. Key thing is - putting our communities and environment first will always help deliver the SDGs - including them in our submissions will just take practice! Best of luck...

Feed the Birds

January can be a cruel and unforgiving month for birds. While we complain about the supposedly most depressing Monday of the year and struggle with keeping our resolutions, the trials of Veganuary or a 'dry' January, many of our birds are struggling for their lives. Much of the food that nature provided last year is now exhausted. Berries are a vanishing resource and there are very few insects out there for the taking. In order to keep their metabolisms active, our native breeding birds will have to forage harder for dwindling resources. Add to that the weather – at time of writing it is just below zero here in Co. Monaghan. It's bright and sunny but while the sound of songbirds is very cheerful this morning, these are all species that are finding it harder to get at the food that's out there.

One of the most useful tasks humans can undertake at this or any time of year is to lend the birds a helping hand and providing them with some supplementary food. It has to be said that this is far from pure altruism as the rewards that the human receives are great. You get to see close-up some of the most fascinating creatures we have on our island. Put out the right grub and you'll get a real-life wildlife documentary in your garden or yard. Last Saturday, the author counted 7 species of native birds around the two feeders closest to the window over a 10-minute period. The best thing is – that's nothing remarkable – you might easily get another half dozen or more species by providing nothing more than the right food in the right way.

So, what food? This used to be a subject of debate and more than a little misinformation was knocking around. Now we have the Internet and for all its shortcomings, it allows us to access information from expert sources. This author recommends the websites of Birdwatch Ireland (www.birdwatchireland.ie) and the RSPB (www.rspb.org.uk) for best advice. Time was when throwing breadcrumbs outside was the height of what we did for bird-feeding. Now we know that high-energy, fat and protein-containing foods are what best benefits birds. Once only, to be found in pet-shops, they are now also widely available in supermarkets, garden suppliers and hardware shops. It is highly recommended that you take time to examine what's on offer as the cheapest is rarely as good as the pricier options. Take the fat-balls. Go for the least expensive of these and you may find that birds discard a lot of the material as it is of no use to them. Some brands bulk up the balls with inedible material, even sand! Think cheep, not cheap. Look for brands with an endorsement from a bird conservation organisation like RSPB or Birdlife International. This will mean that not only is the food of good quality but it is more likely to have been sustainably produced. The brilliant Niall Hatch of Birdwatch Ireland once educated this author on the perils of purchasing seeds or nuts from unknown sources. He explained that in some instances, native birds in the food's country of origin were exterminated in order to produce crops we end up feeding to Irish birds. Talk about unintended consequences... I spend a little more on bird food now.

Peanuts are a good, reliable source of fat and protein and they will not break the bank, especially if you buy in bulk. Large tubs of peanuts produce less waste than plastic bags and leave you with a useful tub for other tasks. Birdseed mixes are now very common and a good quality mix should list what is in there. Look for mixes with sunflower seeds or hearts, niger seeds, millet, oats and kibbled maize. Mixes may also be 'high-energy' with added suet. Some may come with bits of mealworms – if you don't mind that and the birds surely won't. You can of course feed kitchen scraps to the birds, if you know which ones. Breadcrumbs are okay but not in huge quantities. Cooked sweetcorn and peas will also be

happily devoured. Chopped up bacon rind and other animal fats are also a great source of energy. Make sure not to leave this on the ground where four-legged visitors – including cats – will get at it. Don't feed them butter or soft greases because they won't be able to clean this from their feathers.

In terms of bird feeders, there is now a wealth of choice. Most are good quality and suitable. Only use a specific peanut feeder for whole peanuts as birds will benefit most by being able to peck little pieces of nuts from a mesh. Don't go for the less expensive plastic mesh feeders, stick to a more durable steel mesh. Don't use plastic mesh bags for these or indeed any bird food as it may become hazardous for the birds. Again, spending a little more on an approved feeder will pay you back in durability and safety.

You'll see all sorts of birdfeeders in some outlets. It's advisable to go simple on these. Also look to see how readily the feeder may be dismantled which will be important for cleaning it out. Better feeders tend to be easier to clean, a task you should take on as the feeder gets used. Washing it out every few weeks with boiling water will help to keep it free from bacteria and other nasties that might harm the birds. It's the same with bird tables – as we are causing birds to congregate in quite small areas, we are increasing the risk of bird-bird infections. So make sure to keep your bird table clean. A kettle is your best friend for this job. There are also specific feeders for fine seeds like Niger or pinheads. Don't mix n match the uses of these. Having once accidentally bought crumbed peanuts, I got home to find that I had no suitable feeder for them. A bird table or a similar flat surface is really the best place for food like this as well as for the kitchen scraps. You'll find bird tables for sale but these might be plastic that won't stand up to frosts and thaws. Wooden platforms are easier to keep and repair and best of all, you can easily make your own.

Locate your birdfeeders wisely. Don't have them miles out in the open as birds are wary of exposing themselves to predators. At the same time, don't hang them on a tree branch that will allow predators – including your beloved cat – to conceal themselves and pounce. We have most of ours suspended under one of the low eaves so the birds have cover getting to them, they aren't wind-blown and best of all they are out of cat range.

We discovered (when our youngest was in her play-pen) that birds would happily feed from feeders attached to the ground floor windows. Our toddler got to see Siskins, Red Polls and Goldfinches close up and the birds didn't seem to mind her close scrutiny. Wherever you put them, make sure that it's somewhere that you will get the benefit of watching the diners. It'll also make sure that you can see when they are empty or in need of repair. In sight, in mind etc.

On the subject of when you should be feeding birds, both Birdwatch Ireland and the RSPB are in firm agreement that if you put up a feeder, you should keep it fed year-round. Pay no heed to stories about birds feeding their young the 'wrong food.' This is nonsense. The parents know what they are doing. Feeding year-round brings challenges for TidyTowns groups. Never more so than in these COVID-restricted days. So when putting up feeders consider carefully how these will be maintained and who'll be doing it. One wonders how many Green Schools' feeders may have been unattended, through nobody's fault, since December last.

Yes, there is planning and effort involved and (like so much of TidyTowns work) there's always more that needs doing. It's not the cheapest either, 'Tuppence a Bag' won't get you much these days but it's really, really worth it.

Thanks to Billy Flynn one of our independent Adjudicators who prepared this piece for us.

Keep in Touch

Thank you for reading our Newsletter our first of the year, we hope to continue with a monthly newsletter to aim to keep you all informed and most importantly of all, connected. The Newsletter will only be as good as the material included, and for that, we rely on you, the groups who continuously strive to improve your areas. We totally understand and appreciate that the past number of months have been difficult but your stories and features have really helped groups through those difficult months, your poems, your enthusiasm and dedication all make such a difference.

In the coming issues, we will keep you updated on the 2021 competition and share information with you that may assist you in completing your entry form. We will also be sharing the stories submitted to us, so please keep them coming in.

Once again, can we encourage all groups who are eligible for the grant funding announced by Minister Humphreys last month to avail of the offer, remember that closing date of February 28th.

The Newsletter issues to close on 1,000 groups every month, we encourage you to share it further in your communities through notice boards, WhatsApp groups etc. We also share it with all our sponsors, the national panel of TidyTowns Adjudicators, Heritage Officers, PPN's and a range of other bodies who have expressed an interest in it, not to mention the TidyTowns website, Facebook and Twitter. So you can see by sharing your activities with us, the potential for getting your message out there is endless.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the SuperValu TidyTowns competition.

Anne, Helen, John and all the team in The TidyTowns Unit

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