



Blackrock Tidy Towns



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LOUTH LEADER PARTNERSHIP
Building Community & Enterprise



Blackrock Tidy Towns: 3-Year Plan (2020 - 2023)





Welcome to the Blackrock Tidy Towns 3-Year Plan

This plan is to be used to guide the work of the Tidy Towns for the next 3 years.

The plan was drawn up following consultation with members of the Tidy Towns group and a number of surveys undertaken in Blackrock in 2019 and 2020.

The plan does not set out to include all of the excellent work carried out by Blackrock Tidy Towns but to provide direction for the group

over the next few years. First of all we set out the Key Projects – major projects that will have greatest impact for Blackrock. Then we have a yearly schedule of tasks that will address all of the aspects of the Tidy Towns categories.

Finally, a series of ongoing tasks and projects is given. These include multi-annual initiatives that may extend beyond the 3-year span of this plan.



Acknowledgements

Blackrock Tidy Towns would like to thank all of their tireless volunteers for their work over all our years of Tidy Towns involvement. Thanks to our many supporters, including our businesses and Louth County Council.

This Tidy Towns Plan was created for Blackrock Tidy Towns by Billy Flynn of Flynn, Furney Environmental Consultants Ltd. The author would like to thank the volunteers of Blackrock for all their advice and support.

The committee made great efforts to provide guidance and information throughout the process. Special thanks to Mr Larry Magnier for all his time and effort.



Overall Impression of Village

As part of the process of formulating the plan, the author carried out a number of walkover surveys throughout Blackrock.

The initial impression on approach to the village is of very neat and orderly roads with a distinct lack of commercial signage clutter, derelict sites or waste ground.

The planting schemes such as those at the name signs would certainly be more striking in summer months but were seen to be well-maintained and neat. The contemporary signage (fingerposts) are helpful for orientating oneself if not familiar with Blackrock.

The Community Centre and Park are thus easy to find. The promenade is the 'core' of the village and is of course also a boundary. Over a number of visits, this was excellently maintained and the committee



and other volunteers are to be lauded for this. The businesses along this Main Street have a very high level of presentation and are generally very attractive premises. There was a lack of clutter around these and the pavements and footpaths were clear and almost all litter-free.

By far the greater majority of the housing areas were well-presented and some were exceptionally neat. Several green spaces which would

benefit from tree-planting were noted in and around these. Excellent interpretation of wild species was noted and there is little need to add to this at this time.

While it is clear that the Tidy Towns Group put great efforts into the maintenance of Blackrock, there is a dearth of signage that 'claims' this work or any other way for a casual visitor to know how much work Blackrock Tidy Towns put in to keep up this high standard.

Summary of Surveys Received from the Community

The highlights

The highlight for most respondents is the Promenade area with easy access to the clean and family-friendly Priests' beach. People appreciate the improvements over recent years that make the area more attractive and inviting, including the high standard of cleanliness and maintenance of attractive flower beds. The new seating areas are a welcome addition and these along with the popular sea wall enable residents to sit and enjoy what Blackrock has to offer – amazing views across Dundalk Bay to the Cooley Mountains. The coastal road got special mention.

Good connectivity between the beach, promenade and local offerings is appreciated. 'Seaside' type shops add to the atmosphere of the place as does the wide variety of services nearby. Several respondents mentioned the walks in Blackrock – along the sea front but also 'commuter' walks through the beautiful park to the community centre. Lit-up areas further promote safer walking, though there were calls for more lighting to be provided in certain places.

People like the fact that Blackrock maintains its village feel with its good assortment of cafés, bars and restaurants. All are well-kept by proud business

owners. There is an awareness of the importance in preserving this special atmosphere for the future. This is helped by the fact that there is no heavy traffic travelling through the village.

Sculptures and street furniture are appreciated whilst the public park is another village gem, with its well-maintained and colourful floral displays. Other places noted positively were the church, playground and community centre.

There is a strong community spirit in Blackrock. For many it's the people who make the village, including the friendliness of the village



businesses. The hard work of the Tidy Towns committee was mentioned as was the desire to strike the right balance between change and preserving the character of the village. There are lots of events and activities in the area so there is something for everyone.

Things that could be improved in Blackrock

Certain themes kept emerging as to what could be improved in Blackrock, including:

More and better quality/more accessible footpaths and walkways, in particular highlighting the walkways and old laneways along the coast and off the Main Street. More



street lighting along some pathways and in the Park is desirable. A nature walk and bird-watching area were also mooted as was the idea of a beach wheelchair being made available.

Some properties in the village centre would benefit from refurbishment or painting or even a basic tidy up of items such as signage. Careful consideration of an appropriate colour scheme would further enhance the streetscape. Large companies in the vicinity could be approached with regard to getting involved in community projects including painting and sponsorship of the paint. Several people mentioned their

wish to see the old boat shed and AOH Hall refurbished for community use. More trees along the streets and promenade would be welcomed. A more spacious café and more outdoor seating areas at the existing cafés would be of benefit. The Square could be much improved by the refurbishment of some houses there. The road surfacing of some of the smaller housing estates could be improved as could the appearance of the apartments at the old swimming pool, where screening could be considered.

More car parking is needed but needs to be balanced with better management – by possibly reducing and putting time-restrictions on Main St parking.

This would avoid all-day commuter parking and blocking of footpaths for wheelchairs and buggies. Better use could be made of the lower car park and more encouragement of pedestrian activity through the provision of a pedestrian crossing. Other suggestions included the modernisation of the public toilet facilities, provision of more dog waste bins and CCTV cameras.

At the promenade, a suspended boardwalk or pier type structure was suggested in order to maximise the view. There is also concern about building a sea wall to protect the village from the climate

change impact. More beach clean-ups and better facilities at Priests' beach such as litter bins, drinking-water and modernised toilet facilities. A dog park or designated area on the beach was also suggested.

There is concern regarding the rapid growth of the village, the resulting pressure on the local infrastructure and the need to preserve the village character. It was suggested that a group could monitor large planning applications. More co-operation is needed between the various groups working for the benefit of the village including the appointment of area representatives. A new central noticeboard would help encourage newcomers to get involved. Suggestions for future initiatives or projects include a Community Nature Project, more Christmas lights, community social media project and a Community 'Hub' or platform to raise awareness of all activities and to encourage new residents to get involved. More activities for teenagers, such as a Youth Café, was also suggested.

Sustainability projects were mentioned including a book-swap in the park, waste and energy-saving projects involving younger residents, community allotment area for vegetable-growing, better cycle lanes and planting of pollinator-friendly native flowers along the coastal approaches.

How residents feel they can help

There are a variety of practical tasks that respondents offered to help with, including litter picking, gardening, maintenance and painting. There were also offers of assistance in areas of administration and professional advice.



KEY PROJECTS

These are the Key Projects for Blackrock Tidy Towns for 2020-2023. These are the projects that will have the greatest impact on the village, its landscape and natural environment over this time. They are also the projects that will demand the greatest time and resources of Blackrock Tidy Towns and its supporters.

Key Project 1 – Love Where You Live



This will be an awareness-raising campaign that will highlight the role of the resident in a truly tidy town. BTT will seek local partners, e.g. local colleges and Louth County Council in researching and developing ways to promote residents' participation and encourage positive action. 'Live' case-studies and digital promotion may be a feature of this novel project.

Project Period: 2020-2021

Residential Streets and Housing Areas



Key Project 2– The Only Way Is Green



BTT is a dedicated supporter of the proposed Greenway from Blackrock to Dundalk and thence to Carlingford. The Tidy Towns Group will continue to lobby for the Greenway to become a reality and offer any support it can to Louth County Council and other stakeholders. BTT will also underscore its policy to encourage non-motorised, carbon-free travel modes for its residents and visitors and campaign for facilities to allow these.

Project Period: 2020 and ongoing

Sustainability – Doing More With Less

Key Project 3– Renewable Energy

BTT have secured funding for a unique installation for Blackrock Park. This will be a live demonstration of renewable energy technologies that will inspire and inform visitors of all ages. BTT will utilise this facility for public information and awareness events.

Project Period: 2020 and ongoing



**Sustainability –
Doing More With Less**

Key Project 4– Plastic-Free Seas



BTT plans a major awareness-raising project to promote good practice when it comes to plastic and our oceans. BTT will hold beach-clean and plastic-pick events, display information on the dangers that plastics present to sealife and set out ways we can all reduce the plastic burden on biodiversity. BTT will work with the National Schools on a legacy piece, an art installation that will remain to highlight the project's message.

Project Period: 2021 – 2022

Tidiness and Litter Control



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Key Project 5– Local Links



Louth's most successful Tidy Towns Group wishes to harness the talents of the local tourism group and other community organisations in helping them spread the environmental message.

BTT hope to partner with these groups in developing a digital media strategy, creating short films to promote local positive actions and to highlight the importance of our common environment.

Project Period: 2020 – 2022

Community – Your Planning and Involvement

Key Project 6– Right Trees, Right Place



This project will involve the planning and carrying out of an extensive tree survey of Blackrock. It will assess the numbers, quality, condition and suitability of the existing trees of our village.

It will also examine areas where trees are not but should be. Following this, a Tree Management Plan will be drawn up that will include recommendations for the planting but also removal of unsuitable trees and their replacement.

A focus on biodiversity and longevity will guide this plan.

Project Period: 2021 – 2022

Green Spaces and Landscaping



OUR PLAN: Projects Planned for Year 1 (2020–2021)



| PROJECT | CATEGORY |
|---|--|
| A Blackrock Tidy Towns digital media strategy is to be devised. Local colleges and community groups will be invited to assist with this project. | Community – Your Involvement & Planning |
| AOH Hall is to be prioritised for action on its appearance, including its gables and curtilage area. Some minor repairs such as removal of loose cables, tape and broken light fittings should be sought. A simple interpretative sign or plaque should also be considered. | Built Environment and Streetscape |
| BTT is to devise a template (planting plan) for pollinator-friendly planting schemes for a variety of settings. | Green Spaces and Landscaping |
| Invasive Species Know-How: BTT is to engage an ecologist to hold focused workshops on how to tackle the spread of invasive species in Blackrock. | Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality |
| A project promoting rainwater harvesting is to be devised in conjunction with the local authority and (if possible) a supplier. This to include some prominent rainwater harvesters being installed. | Sustainability – Doing More with Less |
| A 10-Minute beach clean event is to be made part of the calendar of Tidy Towns events and promoted for weekend casual participation by visitors and residents. | Tidiness and Litter Control |
| Native tree-planting (e.g. birch) should be proposed to the residents of The Links, making efforts to obscure the wall here. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |
| BTT is to engage students or professionals to carry out a Footpath and Pavement Survey. The results of this are to be made available to the local authority and are to be submitted. | Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes |
| BTT are to lobby for the ruins of church at Haggardstown graveyard to be made secure and this site promoted. | Built Environment and Streetscape |



OUR PLAN: Projects Planned for Year 1 (continued)

| PROJECT | CATEGORY |
|--|--|
| Plans for planting at Community Centre to be drawn up. This area is to be made pollinator-friendly by 2021. This could include, for example, beds of Nepeta, Lavender and Salvia as well as information for visitors on how these little plants are making a big difference. | Green Spaces and Landscaping |
| Small tree or native hedgerow planting should be incorporated into the boundary area between Cois Farraige and the planned adjoining housing development. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |
| BTT are to research the feasibility of incorporating a mammal ledge under the bridge carrying the Dublin Road across the Fane River | Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality |
| BTT are to be actively involved in the finalising of the design of the CFRAM works where these might impact on visual or other amenity areas (e.g. on promenade). | Built Environment and Streetscape |
| The hand-made wooden signage at St. Fursey's Terrace should be renewed. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |

OUR PLAN: Projects Planned for Year 2 (2021–2022)

| PROJECT | CATEGORY |
|--|--|
| New posters 'bill-boards' highlighting the work of BTT should be designed. This could be in conjunction with Supervalu and the County Council. | Community - Your Planning & Involvement |
| A new bus shelter is to be sought. Examples from Meath and Clare to be used as possible models. | Built Environment and Streetscape |
| BTT are to draw up a schedule of areas where non-natives/non-pollinator-friendly planting are to be replaced with natives/pollinator-friendly planting. | Green Spaces and Landscaping |
| Hamilton Marsh is to be highlighted as a Biodiversity Hotspot – being of particular value to native species. The local authority should be involved in this process. Work on removing unwanted woody species from here to begin. | Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality |
| BTT are to work with Louth County Council to link the old swimming-pool path to footpath at entrance to Priest's Beach. | Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes |



OUR PLAN: Projects Planned for Year 2 (continued)

| PROJECT | CATEGORY |
|--|--|
| Water bottle refill stations (2) are to be sourced and set up. Corporate sponsorship may be sought. | Sustainability - Doing More with Less |
| An annual inter-estate competition is to be devised. All estates will be automatically entered. A number of categories will feature, including improvements, initiative and involvement. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |
| BTT is to host a medium-term (1-2 years) project celebrating the Louth Bank Wall and promoting its protection and conservation. This to include the landscape and ecological value of these walls. | Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes |
| An award scheme for the businesses that support BTT is to be devised. | Community - Your Planning & Involvement |
| Invasive Species: BTT is to set a goal of being Invasive Species Free by 2030. This project will include the drawing up of a schedule of actions in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. | Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality |
| Tree-planting is to be planned for the large triangular green at the south-western end of Fane View. This will obscure the wall as well as deaden traffic noise. Tree-planting should also be considered at the front green to the right of the entrance. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |
| ESB to be asked to install new E-vehicle chargers in Blackrock | Sustainability - Doing More with Less |
| A rotation of BTT 'Helping Hand' teams to visit estates to be set up to carry out brief but regular and focused tasks in selected estates. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |
| Blackrock on Foot: (perhaps as part of the above) BTT is to research and map the rights of ways that exist within the village and linking of these to adjacent areas. This is to be submitted to the local authority. | Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes |
| [Building on the above survey] BTT are to lobby for the provision of footpaths at a number of locations. These may include (but not be limited to): Ardshee to Greengates, Cahir Linn apartments to Barrack Corner and the southern side of Seafield Road. | Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes |
| A long bed of crocus and tulips, incorporating pollinator-friendly species and striking colours is to be created at Gort na Glaise. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |
| A new planting scheme for the name-stone at Ard Shee should be devised. The evergreen tree here should be replaced. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |



OUR PLAN: Projects Planned for Year 3 (2022–2023)

| PROJECT | CATEGORY |
|---|--|
| A Tidy Towns promotion board is to be considered for the outside wall of Supervalu that faces the hotel. | Community – Your Planning & Involvement |
| A mosaic or mural – perhaps historic – should be suggested to St. Oliver Plunkett National School for the front façade. | Built Environment and Streetscape |
| Wildflower planting is to be established in the grassed area outside Cois Farrage at the junction of Rock Road and Old Golf Links Road. This is to be complemented by wildflower planting in the grass verge opposite outside Gort na Glaise. | Green Spaces and Landscaping |
| A ‘Low-Mow’ strip on the edges of the green at Ard na Mara is to be suggested to the residents’ association here. The poorly-sited or stunted trees here should be removed and replaced. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |
| In conjunction with Louth County Council BTT is to carry out or commission research into composting options for seaweed/algae jetsam as part of the solution to the ongoing problem on the main beach. If permitted, the group should draw up text for signage to illustrate this and the ecological functions of this algae. | Sustainability – Doing More with Less |
| Proposed designs for an upgrade of The Square are to be sourced. Town & Village enhancement funds may be sought for this purpose. Road surfaces and wall finish to be included. Some restoration to the former shop premises here is also to be scoped. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |
| The southern verge of Old Golf Links Road (e.g. opposite Haggardstown Old Graveyard) should be pollinator-friendly with a ‘Low-Mow’ regime and/or wildflower seeding. | Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes |
| Some areas of Low-Mow should be trialled at Gort na Glaise. The sleeper bed is to be repaired and some of the non-native plants here to be replaced with native woody species. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |
| Work toward removal of woody species from Hamilton Marsh to continue. | Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality |
| The planting at the entrance area of The Loakers and Greengates is to be upgraded. The name-stones here are to be re-engraved and Irish names incorporated. | Residential Streets and Housing Areas |
| Efforts to ‘rewild’ the stream at Blackrock Park as per the Local Biodiversity Action Plan to begin. This will be a multi-annual project that should feature in subsequent Tidy Towns Plan. | Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality |



Annual and Ongoing Projects

These are the projects that are either multi-annual or are ongoing.

| PROJECT | CATEGORY |
|--|--|
| All BTT plans and survey reports are to be submitted to Louth County Council along with short summaries of each which are to be given to County Councillors and appropriate officials. | Community - Your Planning & Involvement |
| Above plans are to be made available digitally, along with summaries/abstracts and suitable illustrations | Community - Your Planning & Involvement |
| BTT are to ensure that the planned flood defence works incorporate a Greenway from Soldier's Point to Blackrock. | Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes |
| Further off-street car parking is to be sought. Consultation with Louth County Council will be required. | Built Environment and Streetscape |
| Buildings at Murphy's Lane are to be considered for a painting scheme when an opportunity arises. Murals may be considered for the corner gables. | Built Environment and Streetscape |
| The road surface at Kearney's Lane is to be improved as soon as an opportunity arises. | Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes |
| Formal submissions to Development Plan to be annually reviewed by sub-group and altered as needed. | Community - Your Planning & Involvement |
| The woody vegetation on the riverbank at Fane View may be managed (by trimming) but not removed. The signage is to be kept visible. | Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality |
| BTT are to support the crossing of the River Fane for pedestrian and cyclist access. This should link with the proposed Greenway and the Riverside Walk. | Sustainability - Doing More with Less |
| BTT are to ensure that the planned CFRAM flood defences incorporate the restoration of the northern section of the main beach | Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality |
| BTT will advocate for the overhead cables on Sandy Lane to be routed underground. | Built Environment and Streetscape |

Blackrock Tidy Towns

