

# Tidy Towns Competition 2017

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Avoca** Ref: **250**  
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **297**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **08/07/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	40	40
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	41	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	40	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	25	25
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	35	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	34
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>297</b>

### Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

You are very welcome to the 2017 SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition and we thank you for continued participation in the competition and for all the work carried out by Avoca Tidy Towns and the Community Courthouse over the last year. You have twelve Committee Members working on the various Tidy Towns and community related initiatives and a further 30/35 who volunteer for specific jobs. In 2016 you acquired the Old Courthouse- this is a great achievement and will provide a focus point for Tidy Towns activities in Avoca for years to come. We wish you well with your plans to further develop the Courthouse into a Heritage/Tourist Information Centre with old mining artifacts on display. You have organised a Relay Race on the Red Kite Walk to raise funds for your activities and a similar event is planned this year. We note that a wide range of bodies, businesses and clubs provide you with invaluable support throughout the year such as the Men's Shed, Wicklow County Council, Shelton Abbey, Arklow Municipal District, Avoca Handweavers, Fás, Wicklow Rural Partnership, Golden Eagle Trust, Coillte, Avoca Scouts, Avoca Community Hall, Avoca GAA and Camogie, and Avoca Community Employment. The Avoca Handweavers Complex and the Meeting of the Waters sites have become significant tourist attractions in the Eastern Region in recent years and they attract large numbers of visitors particularly during the summer months. No doubt this can create pressures locally with regard to car parking issues, litter, overnight accommodation etc. The overall presentation of Avoca Village is therefore, important to the economic/social development of the local Community but it is also crucial in dealing with these pressures and retaining the continued attractiveness of your village as a significant Tourist hub in the Country. In this context, it is good that you continue to foster strong linkages to local businesses such as Avoca Handweavers with the opportunity to provide for improved mutual supports and benefits. In terms of communication with local residents you have weekly notes in the local newspaper and have a Facebook page with 2000 likes. You have forged good links with local schools and young people and school children and Scout Group assist with litter picks. Have you considered preparing a 3-5 Year Tidy Towns Plan for Avoca. It would be good to develop this further for next year with reference to planned projects/proposals and timelines under all the Competition categories with sustainable Avoca Tourism as a central focus. It doesn't have to be a complex or lengthy document! We used the sketch maps submitted with your Application Form and found them to be of some help in finding the various sites of interest. However, the main map was quite faint which made it difficult to read and identify specific items of interest and places. It would be good to provide a clear map showing those projects completed during the year clearly marked, together with a numbered legend and completion dates etc. Perhaps this could be considered for next year, as it assists in the adjudication process greatly.

### Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

Fitzgerald's Bar was beautifully presented as was Hendley's Shop, the Avoca Pharmacy, the Isaac Lett Victuallers and the Garda station. The bilingual signage at Hendley's was particularly admired. The BK Gift Shop could be enhanced with some painting and a revamp of the shop sign. The presentation of the Courthouse Building was

superb and we were disappointed it was closed on the day. It is good that you have installed a new heating system in the Courthouse to protect the structure of the building. The Margaret Nagel building has strong architectural merit but would benefit from some painting -perhaps this could be taken up with the owners. The quality of the new seating placed around the village was admired. We called to Avoca Parish Church and noted the very neat and tidy presentation of the grounds here. Perhaps consideration could be given to re-marking the car park area as some of the markings have now faded. We called to the Community Hall building and again admired the presentation of the grounds, where everything was very neat and tidy. The steel Mesh fence to the front of the building could do with a little refresh. We noted the lovely stone wall along the road on the approach to the Avoca Handweavers Complex. The presentation and setting of these premises was superb and this is a wonderful attraction to have in your idyllic village. The Holy Trinity Church of Ireland Church was visited and we noted the grounds and Churchyard were maintained to an excellent standard. The National School, Scoil Náisiunta Phádraig Naofa, was admired and in particular the colourful fence along the road frontage. The windbreak fencing has fallen in places and could be re-tied and the Perspex Cover on the bicycle shelter is discoloured and would benefit from cleaning or renewal. The grounds of the School were maintained to a good standard. The new timber planters on the bridge were noted positively and they have been very well constructed and fixed in position and will provide a feature here for many years.

### **Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:**

We admired the presentation of the Car Park at the Post Office and on the day of adjudication a volunteer was busily strimming the grass bank. Of particular positive note here was the floral display using the old bicycle. The window boxes on the Old Courthouse enhanced the building's presentation greatly and the grass in the adjoining Park was well maintained. The recycled plastic planters use throughout the village were noted positively and they significantly enhance the appearance of the village streetscape.

### **Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:**

We called to the Red Kite Walk and noted the significant work undertaken to develop this wonderful recreational amenity. The way-marking posts made from recycled plastic were positively noted. We note with interest that Avoca is the home of Red Kites in Wicklow. Perhaps bird-spotting guided tours to the area for schoolchildren and visitors could be arranged with the advice of local ornithologists – it would be great to catch a glimpse of this rare species in Ireland. We hope you are successful in extending this walk in the near future.

### **Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:**

We note that you have purchased a water butt and pump to enable you to use harvested rainwater to water flower boxes and baskets located throughout the village – this is a good initiative. Perhaps residents could be encouraged by the Committee to do this as well in relation to the maintenance of floral displays in their own gardens. The Men's Shed might also help install the butts, where appropriate. It is noted that local school children are environmentally aware and encourage their families to be green and recycle and the school has a Walk on Wednesday initiative in place. This category aims to encourage Tidy Towns groups to move beyond recycling, to reduce the amount of waste produced by the community in the first place, and to best manage the resources used by the Community. Your group might therefore, consider further initiatives under this category for future years such as sustainable energy and transport actions e.g. extending car- pooling and walk to school initiatives, cycle tour/rental facilities for Tourists, possible new off-road tourist/cycle routes in the area, encouraging the development of small solar farms on appropriate sites, the use of solar panels on roofs, heat exchange units to reduce energy consumption by households/businesses etc. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland website has good information in relation to the development of Better Energy Communities. You could also speak to the Environmental Officer at the Council on possibly participating in the European Week for Waste Reduction which takes place in November each year. Visit [www.ewwr.eu](http://www.ewwr.eu) for more information. [www.stopfoodwaste.ie](http://www.stopfoodwaste.ie) is a website that you may also find helpful. The Green Home Programme may also be of interest to your Group ([www.greenhome.ie](http://www.greenhome.ie)). Grant funding may also be available to provide energy efficiency upgrades for community and commercial facilities.

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

We noted some litter on the approach roads into Avoca although the likelihood is that this may have come from passing cars - 12 individual pieces of litter were counted along a section of the Woodenbridge Road from the Cemetery into the village. The village itself was neat and tidy and largely litter free. We noted some Takeaway litter at the picnic benches in the riverside Park near the Courthouse Heritage Centre. This may have been discarded on Friday night as we carried out or adjudication on Saturday morning.

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

We admired the plantings at Station Road. The village dwellings and gardens here are presented to a very good standard. Millmount Meadows was visited and we noted the attractive presentation of the entrance. Marian Terrace was visited and we would suggest that the open spaces in the estate would benefit from more intensive maintenance work. We called to Ballanagh Close and admired the internal open space and the overall presentation of the estate -completely litter free. Brook Meadow estate was also visited and we found that the standard of maintenance here to be very good - we liked the natural vegetation on the slopes facing the houses. Attention should be given to the clearance of weeds along some roadside kerbs here as this can detract from overall presentation. Avoca Wood was admired for it's presentation and of particular note were the timber planters/retaining structures in the estate. We also liked the use of large boulders as individual features. The railings at the entrance to Avoca Wood would benefit from some painting/cleaning. Despite some searching we were unable to locate

Woodview Park. Rooster Park housing estate was admired in relation to the standard of maintenance and in particular the flower beds near the Community Field although signs on the estate would benefit from cleaning. The painting of the Road safety fence at the entrance to Rooster Park would enhance the appearance of this area.

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

Approach Roads to Avoca are generally of a good standard although resurfacing work is required in a number of locations. Roadside margins are well maintained with no evidence of herbicide usage or excessive commercial signage. Vigilance is needed to ensure that the strong growth of hedgerows and trees during the summer months doesn't affect the visibility of road signage. The cleanliness of road signage was generally to a good standard. The fence at ESB substation would benefit from painting or treatment. The existing car park area at Castlemacadam Cemetery would benefit from a gravel top up using Ballylusk or similar type gravel or macadam surfacing in the longer term.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

It was a great pleasure to visit Avoca Village on a sunny Saturday morning - it is an idyllic setting surrounded by hills and woodlands and overlooking the beautiful river landscape. The traditional streetscape and character in the village remains fully intact and with the support of local business and property owners, Avoca has great potential to progress to the upper echelons of the Competition. It is great that you have an active Committee committed to presenting Avoca to the highest possible standard and we hope you find the comments in the report helpful and wish you well with your future endeavours.