

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Rathdrum** Ref: **998**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **254**
Category: **D** Date(s): **29/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	31	31
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	33	34
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38	39
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	28	28
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	8	8
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	49	49
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	32	32
TOTAL MARK	450	251	254

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Rathdrum Tidy Towns is very welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2017. Well done to your committee for all the work undertaken over the last year, as set out in your Application Form. It is noted that you have 10 Committee Members on your Committee and at least a further 25 local residents who volunteer to carry out Tidy Towns works on an ongoing basis. It is noted that your Committee meet on a monthly basis and that Committee Members also contribute to Rathdrum Business Committee Meetings. As noted in last year's Adjudication Report consideration should be given to setting up a Junior Tidy Towns Committee as this will help foster a greater engagement with local schools and families in the work of Tidy Towns. It is good that you are taking a pro-active role in promoting and organising tourist related events such as the Cartoon Festival in July. These types of events together with incremental physical on-site and improvements to the Town, will eventually yield significant dividends for the people and businesses in Rathdrum. A significant issue is finding a solution to the problem of vacant and disused properties which are hindering the future development of the Town. The preparation of a 3-5 Year Tidy Towns Plan for Rathdrum, in consultation with all major stakeholders would be helpful in this regard. This is a very important step, as it will provide focus and guidance for your Committee on the implementation of necessary town improvements which will help you make further progress in the Tidy Towns Competition and the further development of your tourist product.

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

The information Panel erected in the Town provides great insights into the history and development of the town of Rathdrum. The sign was clean and the general area around the base etc. was neat and tidy. Rathdrum being a typical Irish Market Town is characterized well-appointed buildings and the use of granite to form doorsteps, door surrounds and sills. It was good to see Mary's New and Pre-Loved shop and the Wise Owl, which enhanced the streetscape. The Stirabout Lane premises was well presented as was the Jacob's Well premises. There is an issue with the parking of vehicles on footpaths in Rathdrum which would be a problem for disabled and visually impaired people and more regulated parking could be considered for the centre of the Town. Tierney's Pharmacy with its colourful shopfront particularly impressed - including the gargoyles on the roof! The window stickers on the Centra Store detracts somewhat from the streetscape in this part of the town. The shopfront at Apache pizza and Peking/Asian Street Food could be improved in terms of its presentation, as could the Eurbet premises. The row of dwellings at Lower Street Hill facing the car park were admired. However, the façade of one or two of these buildings has deteriorated and would benefit from some re-painting work. The Church of Saint Mary's and Michael which is located on the hilltop overlooking the town was visited and the wonderful panoramic views across the landscape here were admired. The standard of maintenance in the church grounds was very good. The mature trees here including a Giant Redwood and Eucalyptus were admired. The capping stones on the wall opposite the church have become loose and some are missing and would benefit from re-pointing and restoration work. It is

noted that you are holding a Cartoon Festival in Rathdrum in July- hopefully this will bring many extra visitors to the Town. The Carton Inn and Bates Restaurant premises which have a charming frontage onto the street, were admired. Unfortunately, the adjoining premises Paddy Power have installed the ubiquitous window stickers, which detract somewhat from the quality of the streetscape here. It was a shame to see some unfinished developments remaining at the rear of Market Square. It is presumed that these sites will be re-developed in the near future and hopefully these and the other disused buildings in this area will receive a second lease of life. The new paving scheme in Market Square appears to be unfinished and may be awaiting the installation of a monument/sculpture. It is not clear what is the current status of these works? In the interim, it would be a good idea to have some green elements such as small trees introduced here to soften the overall impact of the paving. Saint Saviours Church of Ireland Church was visited and the grounds were very well tended and neat and tidy. It is noted that you are currently carrying out a review of signage and road markings in the Town with local Councillors.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

All open spaces and grassed areas in Rathdrum, including the grounds of the Catholic Church, are currently being maintained by Rathdrum Tidy Towns and Rathdrum Development Association, with Tús workers assisting with grass cutting and litter picking. The heather bed at the sweeping junction near the entrance to the Town provides a strong focal point and was admired. However, some road signage in this area would benefit from cleaning. The car park area beside the recycling facility was visited. The overhead barriers here are in poor condition and consideration should be given to improving the general presentation of the entrance here. We are not aware of the status of the derelict building situated to the rear of the car park - perhaps a Fás Scheme to restore this building as a Community facility could be explored. Otherwise some information could be provided on the history of the property, to enhance the experience for visitors to the area. The floral displays on the private dwelling opposite McAdam's premises were admired. The Fair-green was visited and would benefit from more intensive maintenance. Consider having some areas developed for wildflower meadows here, possibly under the trees, which would reduce maintenance costs. The 1798 Commemorative Monument at Fair Green was noted positively. Perhaps some floral displays could be provided outside the railings here. The Parnell Memorial Park was visited and the facilities, the general standard of upkeep and maintenance of the Park impressed. However, there was some disappointment at the use of herbicides along footpath edges and along the stream which runs through the park. This stream is an important wildlife corridor. Consideration could therefore, be given to reducing the area of grass cutting and to encourage wildflowers to establish. This would be quite appropriate near the stream and where there are steeply sloping areas of grass. Once carried out in a managed away and with proper notice to the public, there should be no difficulty with this type of approach. Some litter in the park was noted on the day of adjudication. Some of the seats in the park have deteriorated in condition and would benefit from painting. The wonderful stands of trees in the park were admired as were the outdoor exercise equipment, which no doubt is well used. A section of timber fencing here has partly fallen down and could be repaired. The stately Cedar tree situated close to the Parnell Monument was particularly admired.

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

It is noted that Rathdrum Tidy Towns organised an Inaugural Walking Festival based at Boy's National School aimed at promoting local walks and natural amenities and was widely supported by walking groups. You are also working with the Council's Heritage Officer to develop rights of ways and trails in the vicinity of the Urban Woodland located at the top of the Lower Street Hill. Some further initiatives to consider under this category would be to develop areas of wildflower meadows on open spaces in the Town with the aim of encouraging wildlife and reducing maintenance costs. Nest Boxes, Bat Boxes and Insect hotels could also be considered at appropriate locations. A survey of the wildlife in the stream at Parnell Memorial Park could be undertaken in conjunction with Local Schools.

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

Early in 2017 the waste bin located at the recycling facility was removed and this has significantly reduced the amount of casual dumping here – a good outcome. To gain extra marks under this category you may need to consider further initiatives such as encouraging local people to engage in further sustainable waste, water, energy and transport actions e.g. car- pooling and walk- to-school initiatives, using low carbon vehicles, providing cycle parking facilities in the Town, the development of greenways and 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, use of water butts for watering gardens and town plantings incl. window boxes and tubs, organising stop food waste seminars 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 for more information. 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). Grant funding may also be available to provide energy efficiency upgrades for community and commercial facilities. A 'Free Wee Library' project could also be considered at an appropriate site in the Town.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You are engaging with the local Youth-Reach programme in an effort to raise awareness and tackle the litter problem in the Town- this is a worthy initiative. Regular litter picks are undertaken in the Town. Despite this, some dumping of bags of bottles at the recycling centre was noted on the day of adjudication. There was also evidence of some littering in the centre of the Town and a number of litter bins were full.

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

Rathdrum Tidy Towns supports the annual Garden Competition and liaises closely with individual housing estates regarding maintenance issues, as the need arises. The Committee also supports estates with requests for tree planting etc. Parnell Park estate was visited and the planted beds at the entrance of the estate and the general standard of maintenance impressed. The presentation and frontage of the dwellings at Gilbert's Row was admired. Kingsbrook housing estate was visited and the residents may require further assistance with regard to the maintenance of this estate. View Mount estate was visited and would benefit from a more intensive maintenance regime as would Woodbine Grove. With regard to Woodbine Avenue and Grove it is important to try and prevent weed growth along kerbs as this can detract considerably from the overall presentation of estates.

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

It is noted that your Tús workers primarily carry out maintenance works along approach roads to Rathdrum, including cutting of grass margins, litter picking etc. The planting and natural vegetation along the approach road to Rathdrum from Arklow was admired. The pollinator friendly lavender planting at the road junction near the HSE property at Saint Colman's in the Town also impressed. The obscuring of signage by tall vegetation was noted on the approach to the Town from Glenealy. Also along this section of road, vegetation is encroaching on the footpath and weeds are growing along kerbs which detracts somewhat from the approach here. Road markings in the vicinity of the car-park at Lower Street Hill were quite faint and would benefit from renewal. There is a missing section of stone wall on the approach to the Catholic Church and this could be reinstated at an early date. We look forward to the completion of the new footpath from Market Square to Avondale House – this will greatly improve local accessibility to this wonderful amenity.

Concluding Remarks:

Rathdrum has significant potential to progress well in the Tidy Towns Competition. A 3-5 Year Tidy Towns Plan for the Town would assist greatly as a first step. The Plan need not be too complicated -just key actions under the various categories over the Plan Period, with realistic timeframes. Some detailed comments have been provided as to how the physical presentation of the Town could be improved- we hope you find them helpful and we wish you well for the future.