

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Rathmore - An Ráth Mhór** Ref: **940**
County: **Kerry** Mark: **241**
Category: **B** Date(s): **24/06/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	33
Streetscape & Public Places	60	32
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	33
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	21
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	10
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	31
TOTAL MARK	470	241

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Rathmore An Ráth Mhór páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019.

Welcome back after a gap of one year's participation. Well done on having a five-member committee supported by a core group of 16 volunteers from Rathmore Community Council. You are fortunate to have 14 different organisations which support your work, contribute to its cost and provide voluntary assistance when needed. Chief among these is Kerry County Council whose elected members and officials provide much needed assistance. For communications, you use a local newsletter, which is also published online. You also have a WhatsApp Groups & Facebook Page and occasionally you put out traditional signs in Polish and English inviting people to help. What a novel idea. Bird boxes are provided for schools to encourage children to take an interest in wildlife. Many thanks for the information on the innovative Rathmore Social Action Group (SAG). Their success in fund raising, providing local services and construction of day care facilities and sheltered housing is very impressive. Well done also to the staff of Danu Childcare for availing of funding to arrange nature walks and increase awareness of biodiversity. Many thanks for attaching a map of the area with project locations marked for our attention. We encourage communities to aim for a 3-year plan because it is not possible to achieve everything in one year and it is good to aim for targets over a period of years.

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

Rathmore is fortunate to have a wide Main Street that has great potential for an urban streetscape plan. While car parking would obviously have to be catered for in such a plan, there is plenty of space for them and for street trees, street furniture etc., and to place overhead cables underground. We wonder where it sits with Kerry County Council in terms of priorities for an urban renewal scheme that would make it attractive for pedestrians and shoppers. Many parts of the streetscape has poor quality road and pavement surfacing, so we suggest you contact the Council to ensure that such a scheme can be considered at the first opportunity when appropriate funding becomes available. Meanwhile, it would be wise to start the process of design to have some ideas if and when it will be considered. In the next criterion, you mentioned a roadworks and redevelopment plan for the whole length of Rathmore and we presume that it will include more than just road surfacing. Premises we admired include Linda's Restaurant, Cahill's Bar and Connie K's. The Circle K occupies a prominent position in the streetscape. O'Keefe's shop is highlighted in cream with yellow and green lines. Rathmore Community Centre and Ladbrokes have chosen similar paint colours. Hickey's Applegreen service station has good planting on the front boundary. We realise that you are dealing with derelict buildings, some of which we saw during our visit. Well done on that initiative.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Thank you for the information here on the roadworks and redevelopment plans and you are wise to wait until they are progressed further before implementing any landscape improvements, because it would be a waste of money and effort. Bear in mind however, that the main structural elements in the landscape are trees and these should form an important component of any new scheme.

It might be possible to retain existing trees on the street but that will depend on the design and the nature of the construction. It might be a better idea to start afresh with a new line of trees in the new scheme. In planting new trees, it is best to use a single species on a road or street for uniformity and in your case, each tree will require the preparation of a special tree pit. Also, it is important to ensure that the base of new trees is maintained free of weeds, grass and flower beds to ensure early establishment. McCarthy's Butchers have more than a dozen window boxes on the ground in front of their premises. Their buildings also looked well. Guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible; they should not in themselves attract any notice. It is better to have fewer well planted containers than a large number in which the quality of plants is inferior. If considering more seasonal flowers the use of permanent planting including herbaceous perennials for floral displays is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming.

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

Well done on highlighting the importance of controlling the invasive plant Japanese Knotweed. Bird boxes are important for raising awareness of our feathered friends and we note your decision to refrain from using the herbicide Roundup. You have a rich natural area surrounding your community and it is important to promote an awareness of its many traits and to map these habitats as you are doing for example in the wildflower awareness campaign on your Facebook page. Appreciating your local wildlife resources is vital in order to achieve under this category. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. Try to list the plants and animals to be found there and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). This information can be fun to gather and can involve the schools or other interested parties. Raise awareness through holding events such as hedgerow walks or bat walks. Contact the Irish Wildlife Trust for more information.

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a global and a local problem. To save the Earth we need to move quickly to a zero-waste society.

The emphasis here really needs to be on reducing the volume of waste produced rather than recycling (which is taken for granted). At this level the adjudicator wants to see innovation in tackling bigger issues of food waste, plastic disposal and energy use. In Rathmore, you have surveyed the volume of coffee cups dumped on the roadside and after encouraging local coffee sellers to offer discounts for reusable cups fewer such cups were dumped. Well done. You also have a plant sale from the polytunnels to raise awareness of sustainable planting and to raise funds.

There are several other measures that your town can take regarding sustainability.

- One third of our waste is organic in nature, such as grass clippings. You can avoid collecting mown grass by more frequent cutting and using mulching mowers which shred the clippings and facilitate faster decomposition.
- Regarding water usage, self-watering hanging baskets are a help in reducing the amount of water used and the task of watering.
- Reminding people to re-use shopping bags.
- In response to an overuse of chemicals for weed control, many useful products of the past are no longer available and therefore communities are encouraged to use other means such as hoeing to maintain weeds.

In some cases, allowing wildflowers to develop is an acceptable alternative. These activities will highlight the fact that you are focussing on this category and when you develop more projects in the future your marks will increase. For more helpful tips and case studies from other Tidy Towns entrants please take a look at <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Participation in the annual County Clean-Up Day is a great contribution for environmental improvement and well done to the Holy Family National School for collecting litter for a 1 km radius around the school. Have you kept an account of the amount of rubbish collected and was the material segregated for recycling purposes? It is interesting to note that a scrap metal collection raised some funding for your regeneration programme and also had social benefits as well.

Unfortunately, we saw many weeds at the base of buildings, walls and kerbs throughout the village and around the base of trees and poles in the Main Street where there is no footfall. Some signs needed cleaning.

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

Ard Mhuire residential estate is 'U' shaped scheme and is distinctive because of the large cross on the building at the end. The central open space is an important focus for community activities and desultory play for children. Some trees here are well established but at least one younger specimen needs attention. The supporting stake should be removed as it no longer serves any purpose. Sadly, this tree seems to have suffered damage. Shrubs on this space have been maintained by clipping which is not as satisfactory as pruning to reveal the desired

characteristic for which these species were chosen. Some kerbside weeds were present and while most gardens have hedges and are maintained, we observed one garden where this is not the case. The 1916 commemorative panels are well done. Many private houses in Rathmore are in good condition and well-maintained. Gleann na Gréine estate has a large open space with well developed planting which greatly enhances the scheme.

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

We were pleased to see that grass maintenance is not closely mown but we suggest that a reduced mowing regime would facilitate the development of wildflowers on more margins. It might take a while for the plants to establish, but they will reseed themselves after that.

Concluding Remarks:

Well done on your efforts to improve your environment. We hope this report provides some guidance to continue this work.