

# Tidy Towns Competition 2019

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Arklow - An tInbhear Mór** Ref: **264**  
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **335**  
Category: **F** Date(s): **06/07/2019**  
**25/07/2019**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2018</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2019</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	48	50
Streetscape & Public Places	60	39	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	47	49
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	36	37
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	20	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57	58
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	37	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	40
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>335</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Arklow – an tInbhear mór páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Well done Arklow on a great report, you have clearly put in a huge effort to clarify and organise your report this year and this is much appreciated. Let me just make a couple of further suggestions to help with future submissions. Please use the same font size as in the form because the small fonted (and narrowly spaced) text in your submission was a little hard to read. Also in your submission you list a lot of local place names - unfortunately this adjudicator is not familiar with Arklow and doesn't know where a lot of these places are - this is where your map comes in! Your map is clear but a little too basic in that many of the places listed in your submission do not appear on the map. By all means use the same base map next year but improvements could be made using small coloured coded stickers or write on the map using different coloured marker pens indicating projects in the different categories (colour coded). In this way you are enabling your adjudicator to be sure that they see everything you discuss in your submission. It is only fair after all the hard work you have put in! The long list of groups and businesses with whom you work with is very impressive, well done on all this community cooperation - which was definitely reflected in the busy community atmosphere of the town on adjudication day.

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

The fruits of all the above-mentioned cooperation are very clear to see on the streets of Arklow which presented itself very well on the adjudication day. Your painting project has made such a difference, this adjudicator did not fully realise at first the extent of vacant premises on the main street as it all looked so well maintained. The main street is easy to navigate with its well-spaced pedestrian crossings and well-kept pathways. Keep minding those beautiful granite kerbstones! Arklow is blessed with many small green public spaces. Having these dotted around the town is a wonderful feature. The area around the swimming pool is well maintained. In particular, the children's playground and mini-golf area looked well with all its brightly painted different colours. This adjudicator was delighted to see that much of the planting in these public green spaces is pollinator friendly. There are also plenty of benches and all seen were in good condition – the new age friendly benches looked very well and mean so much to the weary walker. All this gives the impression of a user-friendly town where consideration is given to both the resident and the visitor.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

Your Xeriscape garden is very impressive and clearly a huge amount of effort and work went into putting it together. All the different information notices are very important in getting the sustainable gardening message across. The only drawback I see for this garden is that it is tucked away at the back of the playground and I wonder how many people realise this gem is here? Also it is a shame that the old mini-golf access gate is chained up behind the

garden. Perhaps this could be opened up and it would entice more people in to enjoy this lovely space? The Moments in Time garden is absolutely beautiful with herbaceous perennial flowers in gorgeous full bloom and lots of them were humming with bumblebees and hoverflies on adjudication day - amply demonstrating how pollinator-friendly they are. This garden is in a nice prominent spot which is fitting for such a beautiful and thought provoking installation.

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

Your awareness of the conservation areas in and around Arklow is impressive. Helping to spread this knowledge is another way TidyTowns can help the local community. This is demonstrated by your public awareness campaigns. The involvement of local children especially sounds terrific with the local children getting very much involved. You clearly have a wonderful diversity of wildlife and habitats in Arklow. This is a great feature capable of attracting both residents and visitors alike to Arklow through the lovely walkways you are managing. The duck pond area is a beautiful biodiversity oasis. The area of broom and gorse bushes at the back of the swimming pool must be amazing in spring when they're in full bloom – this area is a variant of Dune heath habitat which is rare in Ireland so mind it! Fairy doors and bat boxes were noted along this walk and a word of caution is needed here in relation to nailing anything into living tree trunks: this is not a good idea as it damages the trees leaving them susceptible to infection which can sometimes lead to the tree's death. Also painting a living tree is not the best either as paint is full of all sorts of chemicals! If the cut area of the branches has been left to seal itself for a good long time after cutting then it should be safe to paint the cut surfaces – hopefully this is what happened here. The grassy banks leading up to the embankment at the seafront are very impressive with many wildflowers in full bloom on adjudication day. The occasional grass paths mown through are very attractive and practical at the same time as they lead up to the benches. Make sure to use all the great advice in the 'Pollinator Planting Code' freely available at [www.pollinators.ie/resources](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources). If you haven't used this already, you'll be delighted to see how it helpfully guides you to pick the right plants for the right situation re. sun, shade, dry, damp etc. whilst catering for our all-important pollinators. The Hog Houses project sounded like a novel way to get local school children involved and interested in biodiversity. It sounds like the future of Arklow's biodiversity is in safe hands!

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

You've done a huge amount of work in this section and have clearly learnt an awful lot by experience over the last year. You show a good understanding of a difficult topic in the way you split up this section into: Our sustainability; Water; Transport; Waste, Energy and Climate Action. Well done on all the work getting the Riverwalk back into regular use. To think that local schoolchildren are now walking to swimming classes along here rather than taking the bus is wonderful! It must be a great feeling to see your hard work paying off in this way. Your waste section in your submission made very interesting reading and your reuse of people's discarded things is inspiring. Well done to Glenn Art College on the conscious cup campaign. Congratulations to the six coffee shops leading the way by only using compostable coffee cups and straws for takeaway - now the other 42 coffee outlets can follow their good example!

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

It cannot be easy trying to keep such a large and busy town as Arklow tidy but you have clearly done a huge amount of work over the last year. Your liaising with several different groups is very impressive on this front. You appear to be very organised with different types of litter control as you have to deal with marine litter, street litter, graffiti etc. Also well done on no more herbicide use. The only time TidyTowns groups should use these chemicals is in the control of seriously invasive species such as Japanese knotweed and even in these cases TidyTowns groups need to be seeking the aid of professionals (usually through their County Councils). Unfortunately, on adjudication day, dog dirt was noted and had to be avoided on several different paths and walks around the town. No doubt Arklow TidyTowns ran a campaign on this issue in the past but it looks like Arklow's dog owners need a few reminders about taking responsibility for their dog's activities in your town! It is clear that Arklow's residents care about their town through all the hard work achieved with your various clean-ups throughout the last year. Take heart from the large number of volunteers who came out to help showing true community spirit at its finest.

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

Arklow has many different estates and a few were driven through on adjudication day. You appear to have a very strong support network for all the different residential groups. The town has a good mix of long-established housing estates and newer apartment and housing complexes and you have clearly put lots of thought into a strategy to deal with the different needs of these different types of residential areas. You cover a large area with a big population but your list of projects is impressive and comprehensive going from dealing with overgrown gardens to planting fruit trees and the all-important pollinator-friendly flower beds. This support network is great to see and is what TidyTowns is all about. It is of ever-increasing importance in Ireland as more and more people end up living in areas they are not familiar with and a friendly welcome from the local TidyTowns group is invaluable.

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

The old lightship Lantern at the new Exit 20 roundabout is a wonderfully apt entrance to Arklow echoing all your maritime heritage and providing a suitable welcome beacon to your town. Going on from this roundabout the road is charmingly festooned with wildflower verges with a neat mown grass edge - it looked beautiful on the dull July day of adjudication. The maritime theme was again picked up with the reuse of the two old anchors decorative displays further along this road. Make sure to consult the above mentioned Pollinator Planting Code when choosing plants for your flower beds along your approach roads. TidyTowns groups all over Ireland can play a big role in helping our

beleaguered pollinator species by always using pollinator-friendly plants in their planting schemes. In your report you refer to treating Japanese knotweed on the Wexford Road – please make sure to seek professional help with this plant through Wicklow County Council – this may already be the case but it isn't clear from your report. This noxious weed needs very specialised treatment unfortunately in order to ensure its clearance. Several narrow Lanes and Alleyways are a feature of Arklow's Main Street. These add character and hint at the long history of the town. Several of these laneways lead down to the lovely river walk. Might a possible future Project involve erecting some small finger signs to the riverwalk and to encourage pedestrians to use these characterful laneways?

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Your three year plan shows lots and lots more projects lined up for Arklow Tidy Towns on into the future. The best of luck with all this work and well done on the huge amount you have done so far – Arklow is lucky to have such a dedicated group of volunteers. We were delighted to hear that Arklow has just won the best large town award in the Ireland's Best Kept Towns competition of 2019 – many congratulations on this well-earned award.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

The Second Round Adjudicator was delighted to have the opportunity to visit Arklow again. This lovely town is a repository of many happy childhood memories of summers spent in and around this seaside town. As if by magic, the clouds cleared on approach and the Arklow Main Street was revealed in the same bright sunshine which features in all these recollections, however improbably. And it looked great! It's unlikely that Power's lovely old shop has remained identical after all these years but that's how it seemed on adjudication day, as we looked at the balls and beach toys in nets and the seaside souvenirs. Leaving memory lane for now, a word on your entry form. In complete accord with the First Round Adjudicator, your entry this year was really well thought-out and beautifully illustrated. There was clever use of graphics on your 'photograph pages' and this spoke many words as well as adding interest. We would agree though that a larger font size and a little bit more spacing would help as your entries under each category were very text-dense. Good text though, with no padding. Again, would concur with the First Round Adjudicator that you have a thorough grasp of what is and isn't required and expected within the categories of the Tidy Towns Competition.

On the ground is more evidence of your hard work and - just as importantly - good co-operation with other agencies and businesses. Several business premises impressed on the day. Joanne's Café matches the conservation of lovely old features with some stylish contemporary sign-writing. Not far away, Wild Ireland is set in a beautiful building and has put great effort into its display and overall presentation. Midway looked very well with its superb window-boxes. The street art opposite is bold and effective. The use of an empty window space by Arklow Tidy Towns to promote the River Walk was admired. The heritage information at Street Mary's Park Cemetery was read with interest (although one of the signs has fallen loose within the frame). The heritage walks and trails signage is well done and looks well in this important area of your streetscape. The former cinema - a place always dear to the author's heart - looked great! Brightly painted and amply planted, it was cheering to site a community taking care of this item of cultural heritage. The Bridgewater Centre was well-presented overall but the landscape planting here needs maintenance. Brady's murals looked really well. The Church, Court House and Library were all at a high standard. Well done, everyone.

Away from the main streets, it was the Moments in Time Garden that emerged as this adjudicator's favourite feature of modern Arklow. Fantastic work here. The pump wasn't working on the day, unfortunately, but all else was perfect. It was popular with pollinators too and the First Round Adjudicator's accurate comments on your plants and pollinators are echoed here. So, too those on tree care. The plant pots affixed to the trees on Seaview Avenue aren't necessary and may, unfortunately, do harm. A special word on your roundabouts - great! Thank you to the sponsors who support this - the Topline and Credit Union - sponsored roundabouts stuck in the mind, so apologies to other sponsors not mentioned.

A few things are worth pointing out for you. Litter control was not uniformly good on the day. There were areas that were bafflingly littered while your approach roads were substantially litter-free. Weed control could have been better in some laneways. Conversely, we'd remind those managing residential areas that use of herbicides at the base of trees is neither necessary nor beneficial to the tree. A bike lane seems to disappear near the Applegreen petrol station. The dolphin in the river isn't really adding anything. The railing at the Duck Pond appears to have been broken for a while. A beautiful Mute Swan and her seven cygnets didn't appear to mind. The information board here is excellently done. Is there up to date instruction of what to (and not to) feed wild birds? This is indeed a lovely area and was free of all kinds of litter on the day.

This was a great demonstration of your work and that your partner organisations and residents. Leaving with a whole slew of new good memories of Arklow, the Second Round Adjudicator is very happy to endorse the findings of the first round report.