

# Tidy Towns Competition 2019

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Avoca - Abhóca** Ref: **250**  
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **305**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **12/07/2019**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2018</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2019</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	41	42
Streetscape & Public Places	60	41	40
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	42	42
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	26	27
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	15	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	35
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>305</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Avoca - (Ábhóca) páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Welcome Avoca and thank you for your entry form complete with helpful photographs and information leaflets. In next year's application it would be very helpful for the adjudicator if you could please have your map on a page separate to your entry form for use on its own. Also sequentially number your projects through your entry form text and then put these numbers on your map. In this way the adjudicator can focus on what projects you want inspected and ensure that nothing is missed. We also like to see a Three or Five Year Plan for your work. A simple table is enough listing your ongoing and proposed future projects, what stage they're at and how the work is being delegated. You have great community involvement with a good number on your committee and the most numbers of volunteers ever seen on an application – 100! You also have a great list of supporters in local businesses and public bodies. Well done on all your liaison work with the local school and Scout group – lots of potential future Avoca Tidy Towns members here!

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

Congratulations on your well-deserved award in the Wicklow County Council Main Street competition. Your main street is beautiful and was looking very well on adjudication day. It features lots of examples of Irish vernacular architecture that are most importantly well-kept and maintained. The main entrance to your village across the beautiful stone bridge is iconic and a huge feature in the character of your lovely village, so it was very disappointing to turn onto the bridge and see that it had been sprayed with herbicide leaving the wildflowers and plants hanging dead and brown. Then a visit to the People's Park featured more dead, brown grass verges which had been sprayed. Your entry form and facebook page feature lots of mentions of looking after our pollinator species so you are aware as a group of the importance of our role in Tidy Towns in doing all we can to look after our beleaguered pollinator species. In Ireland we have lost 17% of our bumblebees alone since 2012. It is a responsibility of Tidy Towns groups who are maintaining public areas to do what we can by providing lots of pollinator food by way of planting long-flowering herbaceous perennials, leaving grass verges for their nesting habitats, letting wildflowers bloom instead of mowing and strimming them away and not using poisonous herbicides. The misuse of herbicides over recent decades in Ireland is directly contributing to the loss of pollinator species. In a village such as Avoca herbicide use is only necessary for the control of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and this must only be done by professionals. In public park areas, road verges and housing estates a healthy green grass verge or bank is much more pleasant on the eye than a dead brown one and that is just aesthetics – even before you consider the damage to your local biodiversity! Please have a think about changing your view on managing grass verges and wall wildflowers and take a look at the Community version of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan freely available to download at [www.pollinators.ie/resources](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources) and hopefully next year's adjudicator will see lots more green in your beautiful village in 2020. Well done on your maintenance of the Old Courthouse. It is a lovely building and

great to see that you have got it registered as a listed building.

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

You have a lot of work maintaining the many beds and pots around Avoca. All were looking colourful on adjudication day, however, very few pollinator friendly plants were seen. Following on from the point made above about providing as much food as possible for our much-needed pollinators have a look at the 'Pollinator Planting Code' freely available to download at [www.pollinators.ie/resources](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources) for extensive lists of plants that look gorgeous as well as provide much needed food for our pollinators, many of whom are dying of hunger as the annuals and hybrids that we've been planting such as roses, pelargoniums, petunias, begonias and lobelias are of no food value as they are either so highly bred that they no longer have pollen or their huge double flowers mean that the insects can't physically access the pollen! Herbaceous perennials such as hardy geraniums, achilleas, geums, astrantias, alchemillas, penstemons and lavenders will all give months of colour and will grow every year thus saving Avoca Tidy Towns time and money.

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

Great to hear your National School is pro-actively carrying out a biodiversity project. Have they got their schools version of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan? Having a look at [www.pollinators.ie/resources](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources) will give them lots of ideas for projects all based on the scientific research carried out by the National Biodiversity Data Centre. It is very important that the wildflower seed used is sourced from a provider of Irish native wildflower seed. Most of the 'wildflower' seed packets sold in shops and garden centres are not native to Ireland and run the risk of introducing invasive plants to your locality. Unless the area has been fertilised then very often little input is needed other than managing an area as one would a hay meadow – leaving the first cut until late June/early July, lifting the cuttings and then a final cut in September again lifting the cuttings. After a few years you should see several wildflowers flowering in the area. Sometimes the addition of yellow-rattle flower seeds is a good idea if grass growth is too strong as these semi-parasitise the grass roots and slow down its growth thus leaving more room for flowers.

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

Great to hear you use water butts and to collect rainwater for your watering needs and are not using any treated water. Well done to Avoca Recycling Centre winning the National Recycling Award for 2018. Last year's adjudicator suggested you break down this category into four sub-categories: waste; water; energy and transport. This will help to realise all that you are currently doing in your community and also where there's potential to improve.

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

Well done on keeping up the Pure Mile project. This has been a huge success across Co. Wicklow. The village was litter free apart from the People's Park on adjudication day, this is an unfortunate by-product of what had been a lovely hot, sunny day and people not heeding your take your litter home philosophy.

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

As mentioned above a tour around the housing estates saw some ugly, sprayed grass verges. This is unsightly and unnecessary. Other areas had some nice planting and some lovely pollinator-friendly planting was noted at the end of Woodview Park.

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

Avoca's beautiful situation nestled in the wooded, river valley means that sylvan approach roads are a lovely characteristic of your locality. They were looking lovely on adjudication day. The freshly-painted bus shelter was noted looking good – this in itself is a 20th architectural heritage feature so it's good to see you looking after it so well.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Avoca is a beautiful spot beloved by poets, Ballykissangel viewers and tourists for many years. It is clear by your active and energetic Tidy Towns group that you love your homeplace too. Well done on all your hardwork and we look forward to Avoca looking that little bit greener on our next visit!