

# Tidy Towns Competition 2019

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Rathdrum - Ráth Droma** Ref: **998**  
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **269**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **13/07/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	32	33
Streetscape & Public Places	60	36	37
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	40	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	29	29
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	9	9
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	34
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>269</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Rathdrum - Ráth Droma páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Welcome Rathdrum and thank you for your entry form, 3 Year Plan and helpful photographs. You have a healthy number of committee members and volunteers together with great support behind you from local businesses and public bodies. Well done on your work with so many T.Y. students from Avondale Community College – this is very heartening as the role of volunteer work in our society is generally very undervalued and yet absolutely vital to the proper functioning of our society. This is why working with the younger generation is so important so they'll realise this importance - so with three primary schools in Rathdrum there is scope for lots of Tidy Towns interactions that will be of benefit to both parties e.g. are any of the schools entered into the Green Flag competition?

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

Rathdrum has to be one of Ireland's most beautifully situated towns. You are blessed with a profusion of vernacular Irish architecture with houses and cottages set into the hillside. The original building conditions must have been so difficult! The Farmer and his sheepdog statue is beautiful and a wonderful recognition of Rathdrum's rural hinterland heritage. The two planters beside him were looking a little sad on adjudication day – they would benefit from some colourful herbaceous perennials such as Ladies mantle and Hardy geraniums with some nasturtiums trailing over the edges – the 'Pollinator Planting Code' for an extensive list of all sorts of plants suitable for Tidy Towns groups to be planting. It is freely available to download at [www.pollinators.ie/resources](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources) The area around the Mill Building at the bridge over the Avonmore river is very charming. The new mural looks terrific and this adjudicator was delighted to see the bridge's stonework being the habitat for many beautiful wild flowers including the rare Wall lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*) that looked to be doing very well. Make sure to mind this stonework into the future and don't let anybody spray it or pull 'weeds'! All these plants have very shallow roots and will do no damage to the structure of the bridge. Your planters along here are very attractive, however, they featured very few pollinator-friendly plants. See the Pollinator Planting Code listed above and try and to have 100% pollinator-friendly plants in your planting schemes. The herbaceous perennials especially will reward you year after year with a great show for little effort or cost. Well done on all the new seating placed around the town. There are so many lovely viewing points with it being located on a hillside that all are very inviting!

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

The azalea bed at the back of your Parnell monument is beautifully landscaped featuring the handsome local granite. It must look wonderful in springtime, however, in midsummer it looks very drab and needs an injection of colour and flowers not least because this is the time that are hungry pollinators are active and need lots of pollen.

This bed is an opportunity to add lots of colour by way of pollinator-friendly herbaceous perennials. These could all be planted in and around the azaleas neither interfering with each other or looking in this important entrance bed to the town. Good colourful suggestions for here would be: lady's mantle; hardy geraniums (aka cranesbills) of various colours; astrantias; shasta daisies and penstemons with tall fennel and Verbena bonariensis at the back. The above-mentioned Pollinator Planting Code will have lots more inspiration and ideas. My visit to Parnell Memorial Park was very disappointing at the awful use of herbicide. Wide bands of unsightly dead, brown grass were seen around every edge and most shockingly along the banks of the stream. Herbicide is poisonous not just to grass but to most forms of life – including humans so its overuse in a public park is not a good idea and particularly along the banks of a river, its use will kill important aquatic creatures as well as pollute the very water running into the Avonmore below where people are hoping to catch fish! 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 town such as Rathdrum, herbicide use is only necessary for the control of invasive species 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 one considers the damage to local biodiversity! It is unclear who is actually maintaining the Parnell Memorial Park but we gather with the Tidy Towns 1916 Garden in the Park that as a group you may have some input into how it is managed. Please talk to whoever is doing this unnecessary spraying in your locality go through the Community version of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (freely available to download at [www.pollinators.ie/resources](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources)) with them and hopefully next year's adjudicator will see lots more green in your beautiful town in 2020. This Park has all sorts of potential for several biodiversity enhancing projects that could turn it into a haven for human, bird, pollinator and wildflower biodiversity in the future if more thought was put into its management. Several stumps of mature trees were seen in the Parnell Memorial Park. With nearby Avondale being a famous place for tree research and growth for over 200 years going back to the days of Samuel Hayes, it would be great to see these dead trees replaced with local Oaks.

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

The new lavender (very pollinator-friendly!) beds outside St. Colmans are beautiful and make such an attractive entrance to the town from this side. Likewise, the area across the road where the grass has been left grow long has a lovely, peaceful air to it. There is long grass all along the left-hand side opposite St. Colmans, making great pollinator nesting habitat and then because this is an entrance road to the town mowing a narrow verge along the roadside edge will give a lovely impression. You can print out a 'Managed for wildlife pollinators' sign freely available from [pollinators.ie/resources](http://pollinators.ie/resources) for this area to explain what you are doing and why you are managing it this way. The Jacob's Ladder Urban Woodland project sounds very interesting and we look forward to the fruition of this project in forthcoming competitions. The new Wildflower area on the Wicklow Approach road was still under development on adjudication day. Sown wildflower meadows can take a while to get established. Consult with the All Ireland Pollinator Plan for more information.

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

There is lots of potential for projects in a town the size of Rathdrum in this category. Consult with the Environmental Awareness Office in Wicklow County Council for ideas as well as the various websites suggested in your 2018 adjudication report.

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

Many congratulations to Rathdrum on winning a prize in the Pride of Place Awards. That's a great testament to your local community spirit. The town was very busy with the Cartoon Festival on adjudication day but everywhere was looking very clean and tidy and litter free so well done on this huge effort.

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

All residential streets and housing areas around the town were looking very well. Parnell Park Estate was looking great with the lovely wild meadow sloping down from it to the south and some nice planting at its entrance road.

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

Rathdrum has a lot of approach roads into it – all roads lead to Rathdrum! All were looking well and litter free on the busy weekend of adjudication. You don't mention a Pure Mile project in your entry but a Rathdrum Pure Mile of a few years back is referred to on a Wicklow heritage website? If it has lapsed maybe it would be good to start one up again as this project has been so successful, all around Co. Wicklow – with some communities even managing to get their Miles to meet!

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Rathdrum is a lovely town in a beautiful location with a history and heritage behind it of national importance. Its streetscape is of great vernacular, rural character complemented by woodland and river habitats and next year hopefully Parnell Memorial Park will be looking very green to add to this lovely picture!

