

# Tidy Towns Competition 2019

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Stratford-On-Slaney - Áth na Sráide</b>	Ref: <b>849</b>
County: <b>Wicklow</b>	Mark: <b>321</b>
Category: <b>B</b>	Date(s): <b>14/07/2019</b>

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	43	44
Streetscape & Public Places	60	38	39
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	46	45
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	32	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	21	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40	41
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>321</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Stratford-on-Slaney – Áth na Sráide páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Welcome Stratford-on-Slaney and thank you for your comprehensive entry form complete with lots of wonderful (and characterful!) photographs and your local development company survey findings. All your maps were great but it would be really helpful if the map was separate to the report for future adjudicators, it makes life much easier when one is trying to flick between text and map and fighting with the wind and rain or stuck in a confined space in a car as adjudicators often are! Also with so many projects please number them sequentially in future reports and ideally colour code those numbers to the map according to which category they fall into – this will ensure your adjudicator doesn't miss anything! Use a key on your map to accommodate this – your map can be A3 size if needs be. Thank you for including the fascinating historical map of the village hinting at its interesting history. You have a great number of volunteers and lots of support from local groups and public bodies. It is obvious that Stratford-on-Slaney is missing a shop/café in which to meet and exchange community support. Hopefully your survey findings will help boost this proposed project and you can follow in the footsteps of your neighbours in Donard, Kiltegan and Rathdangan who voluntarily run their own very successful community shops/cafes. No doubt they will have plenty of advice and help for you.

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

Your new school was looking really well on adjudication day – very nearly finished and ready to welcome its excited pupils come the new school year. Its central location in the village is good and time will tell how this modern building will sit in with the older buildings around it but the sensitive restoration of the old wall around it and the old school plaque was a nice touch. Indeed, these stone walls are a lovely feature of your general area. The painted slate signs were seen and admired. Unfortunately, several of them appear to have suffered from weathering – some outdoor varnish might do the trick? They are a lovely idea so do pursue getting them right!

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

Your Community Garden is an absolute gem and looked beautiful on adjudication day. It is such a wonderful feature to have in your village and appears to be so well used and loved by all in the community – great to see how the local schoolchildren are also involved and they'll be even closer now in their new school. This said, it was very disappointing to find extensive use of herbicide throughout the village, along grass verges on approach roads and in and around the circus area and both churchyards and worst of all along the bank outside the Community Garden beside the new entrance gate. This area is such a lovely feature and could be a biodiversity haven but not if poisonous herbicide is used! Herbicide overuse in Ireland is a serious cause for concern in relation to the calamitous

recent decline in numbers of our precious pollinator species as it kills off their food plants and destroys their nesting habitats as well as actually poisoning many of the creatures themselves. You are at a high level of the National Tidy Towns competition now so please desist from unnecessary herbicide use in future – and if it's not Stratford-on-Slaney Tidy Towns who are spraying then please advise whoever is doing so as to why it is not a good idea. Download your free copy of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan at [www.pollinators.ie/resources](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources) for all sorts of information and ideas and alternatives to using herbicides. The only place in Stratford-on-Slaney where herbicide needs to be used is on the Japanese Knotweed plants that were seen growing at the entrance to the Nature Walk path downhill from the R.C. church. Indeed, this species needs professional eradication so make sure to inform the Environmental Awareness Office of Wicklow County Council so that they can look after this problem.

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

You appear to have great biodiversity awareness in relation to your community garden and this can definitely be enhanced throughout the village with the addition of nature walks. Creating a nature walk down to the River Slaney is a terrific idea because at the moment it is hard for the visitor to even locate the Slaney which is such an important feature of your village's name. The wildflower bed opposite the R.C. church was looking so lovely that we wondered at it not being extended further along the grass here? It was disappointing to see that the base of the hedge behind it appeared to have been sprayed as the grass was all brown and dead – the grassy bases of hedges and walls are where our endangered bumblebees make their nests so they must be protected. They need north-facing verges for hibernating in winter and south/west facing verges for summer nests. It's terrific to see how much work the local school children have been doing in this category. Make sure they have a copy of the children's version of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan as well as lots of other fun resources for children keen to learn more at [www.pollinators.ie/resources](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources)

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

Well done in this category you have lots of ongoing projects that feature a good use of imaginations when it comes to re-using and recycling!

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

Well done on all your litter collections and participating in the great Pure Mile project. Stratford-on-Slaney looked very neat and tidy on adjudication day with no litter to be seen! However, as mentioned above we don't consider ugly brown strips of dead grass along verges or around drain covers etc as 'tidy'. In addition to looking ugly they are contributing to polluting the environment we are trying to care for in Tidy Towns. It is time for us to change what we perceive as 'untidy' – some longer grass at a verge or around a drain is not untidy and our all-important pollinators will thank us for leaving it there!

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

All residential areas looked well on adjudication day. There's a great mix of building types in Stratford-on-Slaney which all adds to the interest of the locality making for interesting walking around the village. Managing green areas differently with pollinators in mind would make for a great future project. It often involves less work and petrol as areas need only be mowed a couple of times a year except for where lovely grass paths that entice the walker can be mown through. Have a look at the community version of your All-Ireland Pollinator Plan for lots of ideas.

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

The Pure Mile project has improved approach roads to towns and villages throughout County Wicklow and is a wonderful project. It is only, happening, however through the volunteer effort of groups like Stratford-on-Slaney Tidy Towns so take a bow!

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Stratford-on-Slaney is a fascinating corner of Co. Wicklow with a rich history and a strong community spirit. We wish you well with all your future projects as well as your ongoing ones and we look forward to our next visit – hopefully to get a coffee in your new community shop and café!