

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: Rathbarry - Rath an Bharraigh	Ref: 689
County: Cork(West)	Mark: 351
Category: A	Date(s): 15/06/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	51	53
Streetscape & Public Places	80	43	44
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	48	49
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	36	37
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	18	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	72	72
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	44	45
TOTAL MARK	550	344	351

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Adh Mór.

Welcome to the Super Valu Tidy Towns Competition for 2022. We thank you for your entry, and wish you all the best in all your future work. Good luck.

- Rathbarry Rath an Bharraigh, a small village with a population of 66 people – has entered the competition for 40 years and has a committee of 12 members with support of another 8 volunteers.
- The committee meets monthly plus 10 work nights are arranged for volunteers from May to August.
- Support is received from a total of 24 different national and local agencies.
- You communicate with the public using the Arc Community Newsletter, Posters, Mass Notices Rathbarry Tidy Towns Facebook page, texting, Whatsapp and email and Website rathbarry.ie.
- There is strong engagement with the local school and you have close contact with the Green Schools Committee in Rathbarry N.S. who are seeking their 4th Green Flag. You also liaise with the school in relation to the Spring Clean, school garden and bee pollinator project.

The map provided with your Entry Form was a little unclear and it was sometimes difficult to identify the various features/project locations. It would be good to provide a legend either on the map or on a separate sheet showing the exact location and precise description of the various features/projects completed. The Rathbarry 3 Year Plan in Powerpoint format is an excellent piece of work and provides an important guide for your all your Tidy Towns activities, under the various categories, into the future – well done.

The quality of the application form is good with a clear bullet point - listing of items under each category. It would be good to see some more new projects listed under the categories as the majority of items in the application form seem to refer to more of the maintenance-type inputs. The separate document showing a range of photos highlighting your activities and the works undertaken etc. was very informative. The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the application form which is suitably concise at 19 pages long - well done. The text used on the form is also quite easy to read.

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

- Rathbarry is a very charming village and the adjudicator was pleased to visit on a pleasant sunny morning in June. The wonderful stone walls and mature trees on the approaches caught the eye, as did the very well-presented private gardens and verdant roadside boundaries. The Coffee Kiosk premises and Castlefreke Post office were a delight and the area was a hive of activity on the morning of adjudication. There is no doubt that this complex of historic buildings is the main focal point for activities in the centre of the village and the continued

presentation of the environs to a high standard, will be key to attracting more visitors in the future. It was good to see planting works in progress along the kerbs here which will provide an attractive colourful display over the summer months.

- The adjudicator admired the artistic sculpture feature called An Cáiteach, located on the grass triangle in the centre of the village, comprising sheaves of wheat and scythes cleverly designed as directional signs – this is a very distinctive and eye-catching feature in Rathbarry. It might be worth considering creating a suitable perennial pollinator-friendly planting scheme around the sculpture, whilst retaining a margin of grass along the roadside kerbs. This will reduce grass maintenance and provide a suitable enhanced setting for the sculpture piece.
- On the way down the Old Town Road the adjudicator noticed and attractively designed stone building located in the vicinity of the Coffee Kiosk premises, which appears to be unoccupied and lacking in the normal care and maintenance. One wonders about the history of this building and what the future plans are for its possible restoration/enhancement?
- The Sprigging School building was visited and was found to be beautifully presented and the information signage erected in this area was excellent. The works carried out by the County Council to stabilise the edge of the road adjoining the river were also positively noted. The adjudicator enjoyed a walk through the woodland area and along the river, looping back to the Sprigging School. One wonders whether it would be possible to extend the pedestrian path along the river to join up with the Coffee Kiosk premises, linking the Sprigging School on an off-road pedestrian pathway, directly to the centre of the village?
- The Catholic Church St. Michaels, which is a wonderful stone building located on the outer edge of the village and adjoining cemetery were visited and the building and surrounds were found to be presented to a very high standard. The grass maintenance regime here could be looked at again in terms of making some changes to encourage pollinators. There is a tourist sign in the vicinity here along the road, which could be relocated to a more suitable site away from the traffic entering in the village.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

- Your main area activity under this category includes liaison with Coillte with regard to the maintenance of the local wooded areas, picnic sites and walks. There has been significant storm damage in recent years which has necessitated clearance of fallen trees etc. which requires significant attention.
- You also carry out essential maintenance works in the vicinity of the Post Office Gardens including the planting of floral displays for the summer months, as evidenced during the visit. The Church car park areas are maintained using the community employment scheme staff, including the maintenance of the beech hedge and cleaning of banks and steps. Planting and grass maintenance works are also undertaken at the Dan O'Leary Walker memorial and at An Tobairín.

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

- It is good that Rathbarry has prepared a Biodiversity Plan (albeit in draft form) and hopefully when completed this will lead to the development of an overall village Habitat Management Plan in due course, which will guide all your future activities in this area.
- There is great potential for Rathbarry to develop its own wonderful natural habitats – the wetland area along the Milltown River is worthy of consideration in this regard. This area which has a range of wildlife habitats, could be reserved as a future 'Nature Park' for the village with potential for pedestrian linkage along the river to join up with your existing forest walks.
- Your committee may be aware that the New All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) 2021-2025 has now been launched and it is particularly concerning that one third of bee species in Ireland are now threatened with extinction. As well as this Plan useful guideline documents are now available to Tidy Towns committees to increase the numbers of pollinators in your local area, including guides which are specific to local communities, farmers, councils, transport corridors, sports clubs, businesses etc. Different 'How to Guides' are also available showing how to establish pollinator friendly planting schemes, pollinator friendly roundabouts, use of 'Managed for Wildlife' signage etc.
- This year the AIPP is focussed on gathering survey data to assess the impact of all the good work groups are carrying out across the country. The National Biodiversity Data Centre has developed a new app to make this survey work easy for groups through the use of 'Fit Counts'. FIT stands for 'Flower-Insect Timed Count'. FIT Counts are very simple and are a very useful tool for TT groups to measure change in their local biodiversity, especially when they have taken action already for pollinators. By carrying out FIT Counts throughout the year and across future years, it will help track the impact of your actions on insect numbers and diversity as well as providing important data for the National Biodiversity Data Centre (biodiversityireland.ie). It would be good to get local schools involved in these counts. Please follow this link for further information Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) - National Biodiversity Data Centre (biodiversityireland.ie)
- The sowing of wildflower seed has become very popular with some Tidy Towns committees in recent years. However, this may not be the best course of action as some of the 'wildflower' seed is imported and may contain invasive species. The preferred approach is the 'Don't Sow let it Grow' principle. In other words, where there is a bare patch of ground or grassed areas let the seed/plants occurring naturally in the soil/sward develop and mature as this will have the best ecologically sound result. The removal of clippings at the end of the season with appropriate machinery will impoverish the soil over time encouraging greater species diversity. More information on this and other items under this category can be found in the updated Tidy Towns Handbook.

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

- You are dealing with sustainability issues in Rathbarry village namely through engagement with Rathbarry National School in relation to their green flag initiatives and the preparation of a sustainability road map in

conjunction with Sustainability Clonakilty. The use of water harvesting techniques for the watering of plantings is an excellent way to conserve water and no doubt you can increase the number of water butts available to you over time. It is good to note that you plan to hold workshops during the winter months in relation to energy, water and food waste issues as they affect your village and it will be interesting to read about these events in next year's application.

- Other areas worthy of future consideration by Rathbarry Tidy Towns Committee under this category, which is in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals, include the securing of funding for local sustainable energy projects using Community Energy Grants, the Warmer Homes Scheme, Better Energy Homes, Renewable Energy Support Scheme etc. – provided by the SEAI.
- It is also worth considering the development of small electric microgeneration schemes for Wind, Solar and Hydro, perhaps in partnership with the Cork County Council and these may also attract suitable SEAI or Leader funding.
- You might also pursue the installation of a public e-car charge point at a suitable location in the village. The provision of additional bicycle parking facilities might also be considered.
- The ongoing management of rainwater and floodwater in urban areas in the context of climate change is an important topic which can be considered under this category. It would be good for the committee to be aware of the nature-based solutions to the management of floodwater and surface water run-off, water sensitive village design, best practice etc. A recent publication by the Dept. of Housing Local Government and Heritage is available and provides important guidance in this regard.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

- We note that you have been engaged in a number of initiatives under this category this year including the Annual Spring Clean in conjunction with St. James GAA Club, the 24/7 Litter Watch by a member of your committee and the ongoing maintenance of kerbs and footpaths in the village. Well done to the transition year student who assisted you with litter picking along the approach roads as part of her Gaisce Award.
- On the day of adjudication, the central part of the village was found to be very clean, tidy and completely litter free. Some litter was noted along the margins on the Rosscarbery approach road and the 50km speed limit signs here would benefit from cleaning. Some of the tourism fingerpost signage in the centre of the village also need to be renewed by cleaning/repainting.

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

- Rathbarry is fortunate to have so many wonderfully presented private residences on the approaches to the village. The extensive well landscaped gardens, mature trees and attractive stone wall and fenced boundaries, profuse growth of natural vegetation all help to considerably enhance the appearance of the approaches to the village.
- A project for next year under this category might be to look at ways to deal with any remaining unoccupied houses in the village and how these can be brought back into residential use. In the current housing crisis across the country, there may be suitable grants available to assist you in this work. Any restoration work carried out will also help to preserve these buildings for the future.

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

- The adjudicator was very impressed with the overall presentation of approach roads into Rathbarry. Each approach road presents a different aspect to the visitor. The combination of foxgloves and oxeye daisies which were in full bloom along the margins of the Clonakilty approach (Chapel Road) together with the old stone walls here were a delight to behold.
- Along the Tubareen approach road, the stone marker for the road was admired as was the lush boundary hedgerows consisting mainly of Fuchsia.
- The Castlefreke or Rosscarbery approach road, characterised by mature trees overhanging the road, stone walls and the large well-tended private gardens, presented a very different but equally very pleasant scene for the visitor.

Concluding Remarks:

Rathbarry has much potential to progress even further in the competition and you are lucky to have unique heritage and natural features which make your village a wonderful place to visit. You are wished well in your future endeavours.