

# Tidy Towns Competition 2022

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Rathkeale - Ráth Caola** Ref: **466**  
County: **Limerick** Mark: **289**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **15/06/2022**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2021</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2022</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	42	42
Streetscape & Public Places	80	39	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	40	42
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	28	29
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	18	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	49	51
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	28	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	34	35
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>289</b>

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

Fáilte Chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn. Go raibh maith agaibh as ucht bhur dtacaíocht le linn na paindéime. Lean leis an dea-obair. Welcome to the 2022 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your entry and for your commitment to your place in these difficult times. Keep up the great work.

A committee of 6 members are supported by a further 14 people including CE scheme and Community Council workers. Meetings are held monthly, and clean-ups are held weekly. You are well supported by Limerick County Council and other agencies. The schools are involved in a number of biodiversity projects and the school caretaker of the primary school is a committee member. Your aim for this year is to create an Instagram and twitter account and a few other ideas. Being in the competition for 50 years, you feel the town has improved and people are more aware of the need for litter control.

Thank you for your maps of the area with project locations marked for our attention. As a tip, may we suggest that you have all of Rathkeale on one map and with the legend on the same page. It makes it a little easier for us to gain a picture of the total area without flipping over and back through pages.

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

St Mary's church is a fine big limestone building which looks splendid sitting on high ground when viewed from New Road. The railings on both roads would benefit from painting. We admired the several mature maple trees (and some evergreen species) on one side of the church and along the boundary with the cemetery. The large cemetery north of the church is well maintained and we liked the fact that there are some mature trees in the grounds. The presence of tree stumps on the southern boundary of the church grounds indicates there were more trees there at one time. If it is not intended to replant these trees, then we suggest that the boundary wall with the school could be softened with some climbing plants such as ivy planted at the base about 2 metres apart. We were very pleased with the delightful colourful linear planting of perennial plants along the southern side of the church. It is very well done and well-maintained. Some of the commercial premises which caught our eye included Giltenane's Pharmacy, O'Sullivan's Pharmacy, Hackett's Bookmaker, Bloomer's Restaurant, Glow, Scanlon, the Credit Union building and Deel Bakery. Well done to them and several other traders for having their premises looking so well. The old Augustinian Abbey ruins is a wonderful structure which is nice to see to gain an understanding of what life was like centuries ago. It is well maintained. We noted that weeds in the pavement were being strimmed – which looks much better than using weedkiller – perhaps that could also be done along the base of walls where dead weeds are less presentable. Near here we were delighted to see public toilets – a rarity in Irish towns – well done. The Fire Brigade Station is an impressive building, and the Community Centre also looks well – the information board outside the latter is of high quality. Across the road, the Community Charity Shop was well-painted. Near here is an open area which functions as a car park – perhaps it is called the square. There is great potential to have

this part of the town designed to be a town square with a feature, trees, seating etc. The few plant containers placed there at present look more like bollards. We admired the complex of buildings forming the County Council offices and the Library. The car park is nicely located within the landscaped grounds and there are fine specimen hornbeam trees in the paving. On the opposite side of the road, an old concrete block wall could be improved by planting climbing plants at the base about 2 metres apart and in a few years' time they would soften its hard appearance. The Palatine Heritage Centre building near the Greenway is a lovely building and is well-maintained.

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

Well done for taking maintenance of the Pauper's Graveyard which is about a mile north of Rathkeale. It is important that this little cemetery is respected and maintained as a little park, and you are to be commended for this work. To make it easier for the adjudicator next week, please just have one map showing everything in Rathkeale. It was thanks to Google that we were able to find it. You are fortunate to have an attractive town park with fine existing trees along the road boundary and a modern playground. There are also pathways for pedestrian use. We suggest that the park can be further improved by the addition of seats and more trees closer to the houses. In regard to grass maintenance, large sections could be managed for wildflowers by just cutting grass on a border around and through the park. It would make it more interesting, and the pollinating insects would be very happy. The main structural elements in the landscape are trees and you have many good examples in Rathkeale. In planting new trees, it is best to use a single species on a road or street for uniformity. Also, it is important to ensure that the base of new trees is maintained free of weeds, grass and flower beds to ensure early establishment. When trees are established, it is important to remove the stakes as the stems can get damaged from the ties or stake. We have noted the use of concrete pipes of different types and sizes being used as plant containers in Rathkeale, Unfortunately, from our viewpoint, they look like pipes and fail to function as plant containers, according to best practice guidelines. Guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible; they should not in themselves attract any notice. The most successful plant containers are those which are hidden beneath the foliage and flowers of the plants they contain. It is better to have fewer well planted containers than a large number in which the quality of plants is inferior. Empty or poorly planted containers are less effective than no plant container at all.

If considering more seasonal flowers the use of permanent planting including herbaceous perennials for floral displays is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Green-Spaces-and-Landscaping.pdf>

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

We accessed the town via the roundabout and were impressed with the number of trees growing on the surrounding spaces. We note you have installed insect hotels and the CE scheme workers helped paint the house. We liked the access to the river and enjoyed the wildflowers there. You have a rich natural area surrounding your community and it is important to promote an awareness of its many traits and to map these habitats. Appreciating your local wildlife resources is vital in order to achieve under this category. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. Try to list the plants and animals to be found there and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). This information can be fun to gather and can involve the schools or other interested parties. Raise awareness through holding events such as hedgerow walks or bat walks. Contact the Irish Wildlife Trust for more information. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Nature-and-Biodiversity-in-your-locality.pdf>

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

You have cut down on paper usage by using electronic communications. Clothes recycling is practiced through regular collections at the boy's national school. Water butts are used in the schools and by some parents for collecting rainwater which is used for flower beds and containers. Battery collection is done, and a school book rental scheme operates as well as second hand uniforms. Collected litter is segregated for recycling. The recycling banks are located near the Council offices. When these were first introduced about 20 years ago, it was important to have them in public view. Now that they are so well used, they need not be so prominent. Therefore, we suggest that you moved them to a less conspicuous location. Well done on these activities. To help you devise more suitable projects under this heading we have the following advice.

This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a global and a local problem. To save the Earth we need to move quickly to a zero-waste society. Your town can play its part by first looking at the volume of waste that is generated. The emphasis here really needs to be on reducing the volume of waste produced rather than recycling (which is taken for granted). At this level of the contest the adjudicator wants to see innovation in tackling bigger issues of food waste, plastic disposal and energy use. What are homes and businesses doing to tackle these?

There are several other measures that your town can take in regard to sustainability. Contact your waste contractors and try to find out what is being thrown away and armed with this information you can start to think about how waste can be reduced. You can avoid collecting mown grass by more frequent cutting and using mulching mowers which shred the clippings and facilitate faster decomposition. Regarding water usage, self-watering hanging baskets are a help in reducing the amount of water used and also the task of watering. Other waste minimisation projects might include working with retailers to cut down on packaging, reminding people to re-use shopping bags, discouraging junk mail, encouraging the re-use of water bottles and coffee mugs at school and at work. In response to an overuse of chemicals for weed control, many useful products of the past are no longer available and therefore communities

are encouraged to use other means such as hoeing to maintain weeds. In some cases, allowing wildflowers to develop is an acceptable alternative. These activities will highlight the fact that you are focussing on this category and when you develop more projects in the future your marks will increase.

For more helpful tips and case studies from other Tidy Towns entrants please take a look at <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/>

For more information on project ideas for this criterion, we advise consulting the revised handbook which is available at the following link. <https://www.tidytowns.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sustainability-Doing-More-with-less.pdf>

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

You do a wonderful job by collecting litter on Tuesday evenings and other activities aimed at keeping Rathkeale clean and tidy. We found most places looking well.

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

We were impressed with the high quality of the many private houses within the town and on the outskirts. Some houses were also adorned with floral displays. Well done for putting in pictures of windows and doors in some vacant houses.

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

The Grotto on the R523 is a significant feature that is well-maintained. The road margin at the R518 and the L6024 is very well done. We like the old stone wall which is clearly visible to people in passing cars. Our only concern is the use of too much weed killer.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

In our view you are deserving of more marks because you have the town looking well and are continuing your efforts to keep it that way. We do advise that in order to gain more marks in the future, you will need to provide more information on projects relevant to each criterion. We hope that this report will help you in that task and look forward to receiving your much improved application in 2023.