Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre:	**Arklow - An tInbhear Mór**	Ref:	**264**
County:	**Wicklow**	Mark:	**409**
Category:	**F**	Date(s):	**14/06/2026**
			30/07/2026

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	57	58
Streetscape & Public Places	80	48	49
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	58	61
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	46	48
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	31	33
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	44	45
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	47	49
TOTAL MARK	**600**	**396**	**409**

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

“Fáilte go Comórtas Bailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2026. Go raibh maith agaibh as bhur n-iarratas a chur isteach. Maith sibh as an obair atá déanta agaibh in bhur gceantar go dtí seo - guíonn muid gach rath oraibh in bhur dtionscadail amach anseo.”Thank you very much for your entry into this year’s competition, and for including so many lovely photographs, map and three-year plan, greatly appreciated. It was very interesting to read your introduction giving this adjudicator a sense of the work that you are doing and your ethos ‘Together We Achieve More’ a great philosophy and one that is very evident through the work you do throughout your town. You appear to have a very strong and proactive communications strategy that includes information as well as looking for feedback and ways to improve, and you utilise a range of traditional and social media, including your weekly short video clips, a really nice way to showcase all the work that you are carrying out.
Well done on your retention of gold medal status in 2025, and it is lovely to hear that attending the awards ceremony offered an opportunity to share tips and tricks and connect with other Tidy Towns groups. In addition, more recognition for your work includes the Arklow Community Excellence Awards Gala where your work on keeping Arklow ‘clean, warm and welcoming’ was praised, not to mention your nomination to be included in the all-island Best kept Towns Competition amongst other accolades. The value of the work you carry out is valued by those who live and work in Arklow which is shown through the support and sponsorship you receive from a wide variety of local businesses and your community.

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

There are some fine buildings to be seen throughout Arklow including the Old Court House, the Anglican Church of Ireland building, along with the Methodist and Catholic ones all very attractive, along with some very fine residential buildings. Many of the local businesses are also very well presented, those that caught the eye included the Bridge Hotel, the Arklow Arts Centre, the Victorian Tea Times and Fayebella amongst others.
Unfortunately, a number of vacant and derelict properties were seen throughout your town, a sad sight all too common in many towns and villages across the country. A lot of great work being done however by local businesses to ensure that their premises are looking fresh and bright and hopefully something can be done soon to rejuvenate some of the more forlorn buildings. And even if not possible to fully transform these, some fresh paint with the permission of the owner, if possible, could dramatically help improve the streetscape. Also, as mentioned by last year’s adjudicator, the use of shutters inside a building rather than the outside could also help the visual appeal. However, the work that you are doing through litter picking, painting, planting, cleaning, etc does help make a difference, so please keep it up. The annual pole and sign audit is also a great way to do a stocktake of visual clutter in the town and how to reduce this.
On the more positive side, the Parade Ground area is a pleasure to behold, the landscaping here (both hard and soft) is excellent.

Similarly, the Abbey Lane Kitchen Garden area was a lovely space to come across, a little oasis just off the main throughfare. There was very good signage to be seen advertising the various Heritage Walks and Trails to be found throughout the town which I very much enjoyed reading.
I spotted the ceramic edible Arklow map, along with the illustrated plates showing strawberries, wild garlic, elder flowers etc. which were charming.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Despite being a busy urban settlement, Arklow has a wide range of green spaces to enjoy, from larger areas such as the Avoca Riverwalk, Nature Preserve and the South Beach Walk to the little 'pocket gardens' etc. Arklow has been rightly named 'The Town of Gardens' and there is some very good information and a map showing the whereabouts of the 7 gardens in the town in the window of a building which would otherwise be a blank window. It is laudable also that you are endeavouring to ensure that these are as age and accessible friendly as possible.
The Arklow 2016 Urban Garden is a lovely little oasis just a short step away from the hustle and bustle, and the signage and wall painted with flowers and butterfly to guide you towards it is very nicely done. I also admired the landscaping near the bandstand/old cemetery area, and great to see that you make sure to incorporate pollinator friendly plants. It is also noted that you have taken advice in relation to how climate change can affect the traditional flowering time of plants and are being strategic with your planting to ensure the best possible availability of nutrients for our bees and butterflies and other pollinators.
Project Sunflower is a wonderful idea where a packet of sunflower seeds (sustainably harvested from last year's crop) were
primary schools with instructions on how to grow them, a lovely way to get children more aware of their environment and what they can do to contribute.
It is very impressive that around 3,000 trees have been planted throughout the town and that you endeavour to replace dead trees and also tend to them by pruning when needed and taking care of ties and stakes

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

Arklow is blessed with its location which provides a wealth of nature, from its coast to its proximity to the Wicklow hills.
It is great news that the new Wastewater Treatment Plan is giving the Avoca a chance to breath and return to a cleaner state, and wonderful that the return of fauna such as Kingfishers, Salmon, Trout and Deer has already been spotted. Well done on your involvement with the documentary on the benefits of this plant in conjunction with the OPW. We look forward to seeing the map of the 3km Avoca Riverwalk once this has been completed. Some of the natural amenities that can be enjoyed in the area includes Glenart Forest, the Marsh area, the beach and coastal areas and we look forward to the Greenway from Arklow to Shillelagh.

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

The designation of Arklow as a pilot Decarbonisation Zone (DZ) is an exciting opportunity for the town to expand on all the work that you are doing in relation to sustainability and combating the effects of climate change, and we look forward to seeing some statistics on this in years to come and the impact it has had. It would be a good idea to establish some baseline data now so that it will be very clear to see what the results of this initiative are and to compare the benefits and effects in years to come.
Some of the other positive initiatives in this area have included the installation of solar lights in the Dog Park, practical information clinics on topics such as better insulation for homes, solar panels, and the Warmer Homes Scheme with participation by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). Other measures include Water Refill Stations, rainwater harvesting water reduction as well as utilising 'Freecycle' pages to obtain equipment that may be useful, a very practical way to do your bit for the circular economy. Arklow Tidy Towns espouses sustainability through the 5 R's (Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle, Reuse again) and great to see the participation in the Green School Flag Programme by local schools.
You also ensure that as much as possible that your planting is done in as sustainable a manner as possible through the use of rainwater harvesting, seed harvesting, composting and the use of your new Geothermal Tunnel which will help you with growing plants, herbs and vegetables. It is great to see the spirit of giving with your local Aldi donating a quantity of bulbs and seeds, and that Arklow Tidy Towns has given 100 native tree sprigs and other saplings to Ballycanew Tidy Towns for their Miyawaki forest.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Overall litter control in Arklow was very good on the day I visited despite it being such a busy bustling place. This does not just happen by accident but takes a lot of work by ATT and the local community to ensure this. Along with all the litter picks carried out by volunteers, local schools and clubs, along with commercial premises and businesses such as Servier also get involved. Good work on reducing unnecessary signage and ensuring that Arklow is a poster free zone during election time. Specific measures done in this category includes regular litter picking, pruning, cleaning of stone walls, cleaning and painting of street furniture, graffiti removal as well many members also being involved with Arklow Coast Care.

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

There is a wide mix of residential types in Arklow, from some of the traditional town houses to be seen on St Mary's Terrace (though the majority of these now seem to be commercial rather than residential) to new estates and apartment blocks. It is good to read that grass cutting is now adhering to 'No Mow May' in order to help our pollinators and keeping 'wild' areas to provide nutrients. Well done on the encouragement of estates to spruce up

their own areas through the ‘Residents clean-up-day’ with assistance offered if needed and the availability of funds through the Estate Development Funding scheme. Some of the residential areas visited included Woodlands Avenue estate, Churchview Estate, Meadow Vale and Cluain Árd, and all look well maintained and cared for.

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

The roundabouts as you enter Arklow create a great first impression, in particular the SKUA Lighthouse one is very striking. Likewise, the boat planters as you enter the town give a nice nod to your nautical roots and these looked fresh and well-tended to. It is good to see the extension of the footpath on the Vale Road is being addressed, which will help improve safety and access in this area. The work carried out on the R772 road was noticed, including new footpaths, cycleway as well as the traffic calming measures and landscaping. It is a pity to read that the ‘pulpit planter’ as it is known was accidently damaged, but great to see that this has been put to rights and is back in full strength complete with floral display.

Concluding Remarks:

It has been a few years since I last wandered around the streets of Arklow and it was lovely to see that the area around the old courthouse was still looking as well as I remembered and that the community spirit and great work by ATT and all your supporters is ongoing.

Second Round Adjudication:

Thank you to Arklow Tidy Towns so much for all the work that went into your entry into the Large Town Category F section of this year’s National Tidy Towns Competition. Your 57 page entry was very clear and detailed and amply illustrated with many photographs of your activities throughout the last year. You might consider if some duplication or repetition in your entry might be reduced. You are also reminded that there is a request for a limit of 500 words of text for each category.

Your “before and after” photographs demonstrate an improving situation on many fronts for your town.

Thank you for the map and accompanying legend that allowed us to navigate Arklow and get to see what you have achieved. Your map was supplemented by the very helpful and detailed maps of the Arklow Heritage Walks and Trails and Arklow Town of Gardens made available by the very helpful staff of the Tourist Information Office at the Parade Ground.

Thank you for your 3-year plan included in your entry. You might consider including a time-line for each of the projects identified in your plan so that progress can be tracked, and amendments made as time progresses.

The first adjudicator has set out a detailed report above which identifies the many highlights of your submission and Arklow town which do not need to be repeated in this second report. However further acknowledgement of your nomination as one of the contestants in the all-island Best Kept Town’s Competition for 2026 has to be made. You will do well.

Our visit to Arklow was blessed with good weather and it was lovely to be able to walk around the town and especially the Riverwalk and appreciate all that Arklow has to offer. There were roadworks under way and diversions in place, the streets were busy throughout the day, particularly at the Nineteen Arches bridge, and town roundabouts.

Two public communication initiatives from Tidy Towns caught the eye of this adjudicator :- firstly, the large banner showing your 2025 points total and increase, together with note of your gold medal win and the onwards and upwards message for 2026, which indeed has been delivered, and secondly the Support Arklow Shops board, Tidy Towns supporting those whose support is critical to the Tidy Towns, that is a form of circular economy in action.

The first adjudication report noted that in common with many other towns, there are vacancy and dereliction issues in the town which do not help but it is obvious that a lot of good work is being done and there was evidence of some houses and retail units being recently renovated and a number of infill construction sites currently under way. The current landmark Ormonde Cinema site can only be improved by some work, it is noted that there is a preservation order on the facade, it appeared as if works were imminent. Hopefully this site will become one of the future before and after success stories for the town.

In addition to the very good shop fronts already mentioned, the multi-coloured Corner House group at the Pulpit roundabout at one end of Main Street and An Cisean Arain at the other add to the street, as does Nr. 39, The Mans Shop amongst many others. The Taste of Italy at the river along with the other businesses on this riverside were also good in a modern streetscape. Given the year that’s in it, mention must be made of the fact that Ronnie Delaney’s birthplace at Nr. 3 is appropriately marked. It was also noted that public facilities were available - an important feature for any town of this size. Your street furniture including the Pound Hill, benching, bins, and including the Duck Feed generally appeared to be maintained in good condition.

One of the advantages of Arklow’s location is that you enjoy the benefits of a river and coastal location with the Wicklow hills in close proximity. Apart from the Avoca Riverwalk already mentioned, the town and environs enjoy a great number of green spaces for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. All of the green spaces visited on the

day of inspection were in good condition and well maintained. Given the current heat waves in the summer of 2026 Arklow Tidy Towns were certainly far-seeing when the Xeriscape Garden was developed and built on what was waste ground, it may well become a regular feature of our future in time of climate change. Through it's various programmes and activities, whether it be seed planting or tree planting or all steps in between and afterwards, Arklow Tidy Towns have demonstrated the best practices in the greening of their town. There was plenty of opportunity for sitting in the quiet and enjoying a peaceful lunch away from the bustle and traffic.

In terms of sustainability, congratulations on the extension of your geothermal Tunnel - this will allow you to expand your many activities and the development of the new Greenway cycle route will offer great opportunity for increased active travel. It was noted that as well as having the rail station, Arklow appeared to be reasonably well served by regular bus services.

In addition to the schools having green flags [well done to all the pupils, teachers, parents, mentors and all who worked on winning and keeping the green flags flying] the 2 large billboards opposite the Church of Ireland corner promoting the Sustainable Development Goals for all is applauded.

In terms of litter control and tidiness you have demonstrated the contribution of all of your community, well done to the Sea Scouts, the senior students from the CBS, the toddler group, the Sonas volunteers, the monthly clean up by employees from the Servier company, and all others who made their contribution, including those hardy and brave volunteers who worked on keeping the river clear. Unfortunately there was some litter and graffiti in evidence, including the steps down to the Riverwalk from The Coomie.

Arklow Tidy Towns have also been working with and assisting the residents of the housing estates both older and newer close to the town and further out. In addition to helping with regular clean-ups by the residents, the fruit tree planting programme is a great initiative.

Special word of mention to the CE workers, and the employees of Arklow Municipal District.

The approaches to Arklow are generally pleasant and well-kept. The new cycle track and pathways along with the tree planting from the Knockmore Roundabout make for a very clear entrance into the town from the Wexford side.

The planters placed on both sides of the 19 Arches Bridge also add colour to all users of this essential piece of your town's infrastructure, for so long part of the main artery for the sunny south east.

Overall, this was a pleasant visit and this adjudicator is very happy to affirm the conclusions and scoring of the first round adjudicator. Well done to Arkow Tidy Towns and thank you for your work.
Best of luck in the Best Kept Towns 2026 Competition.