

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Rathkeale - Ráth Caola** Ref: **466**  
County: **Limerick** Mark: **299**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **05/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	42	43
Streetscape & Public Places	80	41	43
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	42	43
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	29	30
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	19	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35	36
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>299</b>

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2023. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Adh Mór.

Thank you for the very concise and to the point entry form plus the map of Rathkeale.

The Sustainable Development Goals are at the heart of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Tidy Towns has now fully integrated them into the competition with the objective of asking groups to demonstrate how SDGs impact of their activities.

Just a comment about the map maybe the committee might consider getting dedicated map of the town drawn up rather than using the Google option which is not recommended.

No doubt there are people with a creative or artistic skill or indeed with cartography skills within the community who might be approached to take on the task.

The Committee number seems to have been reduced since last year for whatever reason but it is hard to retain personnel in voluntary groups.

That said you are very proactive group with strong links to Limerick City and County Council and other public agencies and local business groups like Team Rathkeale.

Most importantly you have the support of all local organisations, sports clubs and the community as a whole.

Your methods of communication are both traditional combined with the modern social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram and course the most tried and trusted of all – word of mouth.

For next year's entry give consideration to developing links with the local primary schools St Annes and Rathkeale No 2 as well as the Post Primary Colaiste Na Trócaire.

Well-done on re doing your specific project of a wildflower bed after taking in account the difficulties encountered last year.

Where will the new bed be located as you have many suitable locations on the extremities or within core of the town.

Give an update on progress in next year's entry form and also indicate how long you have been entering the competition.

Well done on the planning work that you have done over the last year.

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

You have completed a large body of work under this category in the last year and you are to be commended for that.

The Paupers Grave is a little outside the adjudication catchment but the adjudicator visited and saw the clean-up work that you have done as well as the new rose bed.

Sustainable watering is near essential in the present day as it saves resources and is of course environmentally prudent.

The Marian Shrine is a special place and the adjudicator saw a photograph taken last year at an open-air mass with a Limerick Flag flying high.

The work that you have planned will enhance the shrine even more

Flower up Rathkeale will be assessed in the next category.

Excellent work was done on the Christy Lynch Bridge which is called after the celebrated local tenor.

The 10 hanging baskets will be a welcome addition.

The following are a few personal observations during a wide-ranging walkabout.

Public buildings were presented to a high standard the Town Fire Brigade Station is a new modern building, St Marys RC Church has an imposing presence on Rathkeale's highest hill, St Annes NS on the New Road, and the No 2 National School on Church Street that has an association with Holy Trinity C of Ir were all presented to an acceptable standard.

Colaiste Na Trocaire in Ballywilliam is a fine Co-Educational establishment that serves a wide area.

Mick Neville Facility is the development base of Limerick County GAA and Rathkeale Youth Space is a well-run facility and had a clean and tidy frontage that gave the premises an appealing look.

The Community Centre which of course was the old Victorian Courthouse is a building with a rich architectural history as well as heritage history of Rathkeale

There is a wonderful history of this and similar buildings by Patrick Comerford Historian.

The adjudicator wonders what's the situation with the Palatine Museum as it seems to be temporarily closed or if it is to become part of the Greenway project as a visitor attraction.

Rathkeale has some unoccupied buildings in the centre of town and I'm sure that the committee has engaged with the owners of these to see what the long-term plans are.

The start point of the new Greenway is being developed incrementally and there is a fine car park facility in place that will probably undergo further upgrading shortly.

The Greenway has the potential to be the main economic driver in the Town.

The modern county buildings and library were admired for design.

Tadgh O Connor Ltd is a large commercial premises and yard that was well managed on the day in question.

Bloomers Café and Restaurant has a very vibrant shop front with a few planters that add a bit of colour. Deelside Veterinary Premises on the Askeaton Road is a very well-managed establishment that has ample parking for users

The Credit Union which looks as if it has recently been in bright blue and a contacting navy sign is another premises that deserves recognition.

The standard of road surfaces and footpaths, with a few exceptions, was good

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

The Paupers Grave was mentioned in positive terms in the previous category.

The Flower Up Rathkeale initiative seems to have had the desired effect as there were many examples of pleasant planting arrangements in the centre, extremities and on approach roads

Organising a volunteer event twice a year is an onerous task so well done to both the organisers and the participants.

Providing new planting beds at the entrances to the Town has enhanced these areas no end and again well done the volunteer core who give of their free time to do this as a contribution from the community.

Thank you for recognising the wonderful contribution of the CE Scheme workers who provide support for so many community councils and tidy towns groups around the country.

The roses and buxus permanent bed gives a very good impression as one enters from this N21 entrance.

It took me a little while to find the Rathkeale Beefields at Monks Hill and again this will enhance the entrance into the town from the Adare side.

Topiary Buxus is an excellent choice of shrub as it is a hardy box hedge type that if it needs pruning or shaping it should be done in late May or June

Well done to the members who painted the cottage and the cow a feature that seems a part of the Town.

As for Hydrangea, they do best in well-drained soil in dappled shade.

The adjudicator viewed many attractively arranged planters and window boxes around the town.

Presentation of landscaping features at all entrances into the town adhered to good practice and has been alluded to earlier

As part of the guidelines under this category, you are asked to provide pictorial evidence to demonstrate all year round impact of landscaping and planting features.

Maybe you could consider this for next year.

Overall an additional mark is awarded for the work done this last year.

It was suggested in last year's report that you access the Tidy Towns Handbook and the section on this category where very pertinent and professional advice on planting and managing green spaces is available.

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

It was noted that there was no input under this section which was surprising and the adjudicator checked a couple of versions including, one in pdf format that was submitted to him.

Last year's report gave you a lot of food for thought and indeed helpful suggestions.

The adjudicator is not going to revisit this except to say that Rathkeale has a myriad of wildlife habitats within the town area itself and on the banks of the Deel River.

The key to this category is knowing what habitats exist and where they are and also knowledge of Special Areas of Conservation and National Heritage Areas

It is equally important to be aware of the law and biodiversity before undertaking any new projects.

The adjudicator feels that as a Committee you should consult with the County Biodiversity Officer to see what advice in terms of how you could go about developing a biodiversity survey of the immediate area. This in turn could lead to a mini biodiversity plan from which some projects could be developed. You have three excellent schools, two primary and one post-primary, within the town and links should be established with the principals of these. School children and older adolescents would have a lot of enthusiasm and creativity to offer to biodiversity projects and besides it's a hot topic these days. For further ongoing updates on matters of biodiversity [www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie) where one can access the National Pollinator Plan and information on pollinator-friendly planting codes [www.pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie). Also recommended is the section on Nature and Biodiversity in your locality in the Tidy Towns Handbook a source of ideas for future projects.

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

It is important to state that the main objective in this category is the reduction of the production of waste at source that impacts a community's local environment.

This category has been evolving in keeping with current EU and government policy.

It summarises how we try to minimize our use of all resources within the community so that we reduce our environmental impact.

It is a broad category and one that many of the ordinary things you do regularly contribute to the main objective.

"Doing more with less" is not just a catchy slogan it is now a necessity.

You have listed measures that you are involved in within the entry form some of which are particular to Rathkeale and others that are replicated around the country

No point in relating these to you or going into a long descriptive narrative on how best to make the most of this category.

There are a number of contacts that are worth engaging with.

First off contact the County Environmental Officer to see if there are environmental day seminars or talks that are being planned for this autumn in the county.

Has Limerick a County Tidy Towns Network and if so consider joining it and sharing ideas on this category and others.

Link into these websites to get more out of this sector in terms of creating even greater awareness of all things that contribute to a more sustainable environment [www.localprevention.ie](http://www.localprevention.ie), [www.greenhomes.ie](http://www.greenhomes.ie), and [www.sustainableprocessing.ie](http://www.sustainableprocessing.ie)

At the risk of sounding like a long-playing record do consult the excellent section on this category in the Tidy Towns Handbook.

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

Well done to Tidy Towns Group who go out at least twice a week litter-picking all over the town and designated areas that seem to be blacks

Spread the word to create awareness that littering is not accepted in the Town and its environment this can be done via your communications network both by word of mouth and the forms of social media.

Some instances of dog fouling were noted during the walkabout and there was a lack of anti-dog fouling notices around the town.

A few simple stencils on the footpaths in the core and at the outskirts would be practical and less costly alternatives and just as effective in getting the message of anti-dog fouling across to the public.

Consult with the county engineer responsible for the district on the matter and see if can be put in the budget for works within the town for next year

General tidiness was acceptable because, with a few exceptions, both businesses and private residents are keen to pursue a Pride of Place policy.

A few cracked footpaths and faded safety road signs were observed and these few issues should be added to the meeting with the Area Engineer.

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

The town has a large cohort of housing developments in the town some are well established and others are comparatively.

The first comment and indeed the question is what is the situation with what seems like an abandoned housing estate of 33 houses on the Ballingarry Road R518 are they subject to a dereliction order?

An update for next year's entry would be welcome.

The adjudicator visited a cross-section of estates around the town including :

St Marys Park which has an excellent children's playground, Fairview, St Mary's Terrace, Deel Court with an unusual feature, Orchard Avenue with a big green area that could benefit from some additional planting, and Abbeylands across from the Fire Station.

All were relatively well presented with some fine houses and gardens.

There were a few non-conformists but overall the standard was very good and deserving of an increase in marks.

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

Entrances into the town were more than acceptable and the planting arrangements that have been put in place have enhanced these areas no end.

These have already been commented upon under Landscaping and Green Spaces.

There is a fine new stretch of footpath from the Askeaton entrance into town and the fact that some very fine private

residences populate this road also.

New paths and a lovely little amenity enhance the R518 from Bruree/Ballingary.

The permanent planting arrangement at the roundabout from the Askeaton link off the N21 was a little untidy and slightly overgrown.

It needs a little replenishment.

A narrower road from Ballingarrane was up to an acceptable standard.

All entrances were kept as per good practice for the preservation of wildlife.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

The adjudicator had not visited Rathkeale for a few years and was delighted to be able to have an extensive walk about.

Many positive changes have occurred in the town and the Tidy Towns Committee has been a key player in bringing these to fruition.

I would concur with last year's adjudicator that more information in some categories to maximise the obvious potential that the town has.

You are wished well in the years ahead.