

Tidy Towns Competition 2021

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Rathmullan - Ráth Maoláin	Ref:	906
County:	Donegal	Mark:	287
Category:	B	Date(s):	

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	41
Streetscape & Public Places	60	42
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	41
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	24
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34
TOTAL MARK	470	287

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

Fáilte Chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2021. 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. We would like to begin by thanking your committee and volunteers for your participation in the 2021 competition as we understand that the pandemic has created huge difficulties and disruptions for communities across the country. Your resilience and commitment to strengthening your community and improving your area is admirable. We are delighted to read that the level of participation in Rathmullan remains high with a total of 30 volunteers assisting your hard-working committee of 10 members. It is also pleasing to see that you have retained your extensive links with a host of local shops and businesses who provide you with excellent support and that you have continued to work closely with your strategic project partners such as Donegal County Council, Coillte, the Donegal Local Development Company, the Community Employment Scheme, the Probationary Service and the HSE. We were also struck by the strong partnership between your committee and many community-based social groups and sports clubs in Rathmullan that include Rathmullan Celtic, CLG Baile na Galloglach and the local cycling and tennis clubs. You are also commended on undertaking collaborative projects with the sports clubs – as two of them participated in your spring clean event. Your communication strategy appears well thought out as it focuses on social media, newspaper notices and announcements on radio and in Church. Well done also on avoiding the use of printed materials such as flyers where possible. Your plan to engage in a public review in order to try to align the priorities of the committee with the priorities of the community is an excellent idea and we would be grateful if you could include the results of the review in your application in 2021. The Donegal County Council PPN Officer or the Inishowen Development Partnership may be able to give you advice on how to carry out a consultative exercise in your village. We were delighted to read that the work of the tidy towns committee has been integrated with the Green Schools committee of St Josephs national school and we would encourage you to try to put similar arrangements in place with other schools in your area. Thank you for your completed application form as it was helpful to the adjudication process and it could have been further improved with the inclusion of photos of some of your projects. The 3 to 5 year action plan is considered to be a very comprehensive strategy with actions identified under each of the tidy towns categories. We would also like to thank you for your kind words on the competition and it is marvellous (but not surprising) to read that the hard work that you have undertaken on your many projects has generated many benefits for your area and strengthened community spirit in Rathmullan.

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

An impressive range of projects were completed under this category for this year's competition and they provide an excellent demonstration of the ambition and determination of your committee and volunteers. The completion of the conservation stages of the Abbey is warmly welcomed and we are delighted to see from your photos that a number

of buildings (including the gates of St Joseph's RC church and cemetery) as well as the Kerrs Bay Cottages have been freshened up with new coats of paint. The photos that you submitted also demonstrated that many other building owners had followed suit and revamped their properties! You are commended for securing funding for conservation work on the Battery Fort which we understand involves block pointing, roof repairs and general structural improvements. The provision of a number of new benches around your village (at the Abbey entrance, at the pier and the flight of the Earl's sculpture) is applauded as we have no doubt that the new seating areas were much appreciated by residents who wanted to meet up for outdoor chats during the Pandemic. The positioning of new information boards at historical points of interest and the production of local walking trail maps (in partnership with Rathmullan The Way Forward) are great initiatives and we are confident that they will prove useful to both visitors and residents. The future projects that are proposed under this category are also acknowledged and they include; engaging with the owners of vacant properties to secure improvements, the installation of a plaque for Cathal MacGarbhaigh, the provision of a mural at Kerrs Bay Cottages and the siting of the new Mally Stanford memorial bench. We were interested to read that a five lamp light post has been donated to your committee and we look forward to seeing this being located in the new landscaped garden in Rathmullan.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

It is clear from your application form that there is a clearer emphasis on implementing the recommendations of the all Ireland pollinator plan in your new landscaping projects. This can be seen by your decision to allow a number of areas to go wild (such as roadside verges at McHughs Loft, the circular beds on batts walk, the beds at the base of trees in the beach car park and the boatyard wall trench bed) and to plant an 8 additional beds with wildflower seeds. We were particularly interested in the six-week meadows shown in the photos that were submitted as it was striking to see how many pollen rich flowers were present. It is strongly recommended that this approach is followed on an annual basis and be sure to add the 'managed for wildlife' signage to raise community awareness of the need to encourage pollinators. Well done also on maintaining your existing landscape beds at a range of locations around your village including those at the Rathmullan and District Resource Centre, the red boat and the Battery Fort. The introduction of pollinator friendly varieties into these permanent beds is welcomed and we recommend that all ornamental plants in your landscape schemes should be phased out in favour of pollinator friendly species in the years ahead. The use of spring bulbs in some of these beds is noted. Be sure to use a mix of spring bulbs which include pollen rich tulips, crocuses, alliums and snowdrops as they provide vital early sources of pollen for bees and other pollinators. We are delighted to read that there are a range of other projects proposed under this category that include developing additional wildflower beds, increasing the number of grassed areas that are left uncut, commencing a native tree planting programme and developing a new public garden. We look forward to seeing these exciting projects get underway in the near future.

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

The strong focus that could be seen on promoting pollinator friendly plant species and habitats in the landscaping category is also in evidence in your nature and biodiversity projects. This drive to boost the range of pollinator friendly plants and the number of pollen rich areas is warmly welcomed as it demonstrates that your committee and volunteers are serious about implementing the recommendations of the all Ireland pollinator plan. We applaud your decision to adopt a 'don't mow, let it grow' approach all of your communal areas and greens (to create six-week meadows), some of your road verges and along the entirety of Batts Walk. As this meant that an extensive grassed area was left uncut, it is likely that this could be considered a 'high impact' pollination project. However (and like the adjudicator in 2019), we would like to know if these projects are having the desired effect. A logical next step would be to survey the pollination area by carrying out a bee and butterfly count (instructions on how to do this can be found on www.pollinators.ie). Perhaps the school can help you with this task? It is recommended that the survey takes place on a number of occasions to enable you to work out if the number of pollinators spotted is increasing, decreasing or staying the same. Consider also mapping the pollination corridors and zones in order to see if there are any gaps that need to be filled with additional planting. You also commended on the installation of a number of bee and insect hotels in the village and for providing bird and bat boxes on Batts Walk. We wondered if the bird and bat boxes are being monitored and if they are, can you tell us the results? Well done on (safely) continuing with a range of awareness raising events (such as promoting natural alternatives to chemical herbicides and pesticides and information campaigns on invasive species). The future projects proposed under this category are also acknowledged (and they include; creating designated coastal pathways, planting additional native trees and installing interpretive plaques at the trees along Batts Walk). Once again, we look forward to seeing them get underway in the near future.

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

We would like to commend your committee and volunteers for prioritising up cycling, recycling and repair projects in Rathmullan this year as a means of promoting sustainability in the community. We applaud your decision to turn old bicycles and wheelbarrows into a series of planters which are stocked with pollinator friendly species and positioned in different locations around your village. We heartily agree that the brightly painted bikes and wellies looked very well and added pleasant features of interest. The hosting of a repair workshop to restore the benches at Millennium Park is also a sound idea and the repainted benches and seats looked great in your photos. Is there potential to hold a repair workshop event (for bikes and other items) on an annual basis? An event of this nature would help to promote the theme of repair, reuse and recycle. Consider also taking note of the numbers who attend and participate in your awareness raising events (like the workshop) as it will help you to work out what impact these events are having in your community. Well done on using waste and surplus wood to create illustrated signs that are positioned around your area to highlight the importance of pollinators. Strenuous praise is also warranted for continuing with your existing projects under this category that include; operating a community swap book library and

beach toy library, encouraging people to use charity shops and running an alternative materials campaign on social media over Christmas 2020. The work that you have done in local schools to raise awareness of the need to reduce plastic waste is also appreciated. We were interested to read that there has been an increase in the number of children using bikes and walking to school so why not get the schools to carry out a survey of transport behaviour? A survey could also ask students to specify what improvements are needed to the cycling and walking infrastructure in your village to further boost the numbers engaging in active travel. We are also pleased to see that there are a good range of projects proposed under this category and we look forward to seeing them progress as soon as possible.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We note from the 2019 report that Rathmullen normally achieves a high standard of litter control and tidiness and given the range of litter control activities that were undertaken over the past year, we are confident that this high standard has been maintained for 2021. It is clear from your application form that regular litter patrols and cleanups take place in your village and that they also extend to the beach. We are pleased to read that the patrols are a collective effort with groups such as the coastal warriors (who undertake weekly beach cleans), local sports clubs, staff from businesses and the Community Employment Scheme workers all assisting your community and volunteers. It is great to see that the levels of litter collected are recorded – in order to monitor whether volumes are increasing or decreasing over time so be sure to keep this up. We are delighted to read that your community engage in litter awareness raising tasks such as; running school litter prevention campaigns in the three local schools, encouraging people to take their litter home and promoting responsible dog ownership. These are important initiatives as it is understood that awareness raising helps to educate communities and reduce litter levels over time. The litter management plan that you submitted with your application was read with interest – it is a very comprehensive strategy and we look forward to seeing it implemented and hearing about its results in 2022.

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

The maintenance work that the Community Employment Scheme workers regularly carry out on the public green spaces in your village is appreciated. However, we wondered if there are groups or associations of residents in the housing estates and residential areas who could be drafted in and help with grass trimming (where appropriate) and landscape planting in their own areas? Please let us know in 2022. You are commended on following the suggestion of the adjudicator in 2019 and leaving the green areas uncut (at certain times of the year) in a range of residential estates in order to enable the growth of wildflowers and provide a source of food for pollinators. Strong praise is also warranted for the committee and volunteers who maintain the playground on a regular basis.

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

We would like to congratulate the committee and volunteers for securing funding (in partnership with Donegal County Council) to resurface the road and footpaths on Wesleyan Street as we understand that this project has improved the appearance of this central part of your village. We concur with the adjudicator in 2019 and strongly endorse your decision to introduce a restriction on event signage to a single location in your village. It is great to hear that this has worked very well and significantly reduced unauthorised signage in other locations. This is a great initiative and we encourage you to take the next step and share your idea with Donegal County Council as they may wish to introduce this initiative in other towns and villages in your county. Well done also on promoting the 'don't mow, let it grow' approach on all approach roads as a means of boosting biodiversity.

Concluding Remarks:

We were interested to read in your application form that your committee and volunteers are comprised of enthusiastic, driven individuals who have a passion for community development and improvement – and we could not agree more! The projects that you have undertaken for this year's competition are very impressive and we have no doubt that they have made a very positive difference to your community and to the village of Rathmullen. Keep up the good work and we look forward to seeing you again in 2022.