

Tidy Towns Competition 2025

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballina - Béal an Átha** Ref: **766**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **383**
Category: **F** Date(s): **18/07/2025**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2024	Mark Awarded 2025
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	56	58
Streetscape & Public Places	80	49	51
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	52	55
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	47	50
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	28	30
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	58	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	40	42
TOTAL MARK	550	366	383

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Bhailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2025. Go raibh maith agaibh as bhur iarratas a chur isteach. Maith sibh don obair atá déanta agaibh in bhur cheantar go dtí seo - guímid gach rath oraibh i bhur dtionscadail amach anseo. Ádh mór.

Thank you for your entry form collated very professionally and packed with pictures of your work. Your social media posts were recent and celebrated the effort of your volunteers. And you have a lot of volunteers – over 400 help out in your various activities. We loved the advert in the local newspaper with images of your key projects over recent years – directing people to follow you on social media. What a clever idea.

Something went astray with the map numbering and the corresponding legend so we had to locate projects using google maps which was difficult at times. One to double check for next year. This didn't detract from your scoring so don't worry.

You have a long-term plan which is clear and considered. This should not only focus your work but will allow you to measure your achievements. Overall, this was a very strong entry.

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

Your public realm has been transformed bit by bit and these incremental changes have been matched by the high presentation or renovation of private business premises. It was a delight to arrive during the Salmon Festival – bright flags adorned the streetlamps up and down the river, and premises had heritage window displays. We loved those at Ballina Photo Centre, Adamson Chemists and Rouses. The Hugh Ruddy advertising was also great. The Mary Robinson Centre is a great renovation project and it was good to read of the various conferences etc hosted here. Likewise, the repurposed bank which now hosts the Jackie Clarke Museum was busy with visitors and the garden here was beautifully tended. The former Moy Hotel is now a busy community library – a great sustainable use of this building.

Three storey premises on Toolan Street were noticed – the Rory Quinn Jewellers was wonderful. Hanging baskets and lovely window displays meant we stopped to browse at 'Oliver's Menswear'. We were also attracted into a number of pop-up shops which have helped offer retail space on a trial basis. Balconies and four-storey premises on Pearse Street and Walsh Street have great potential.

Like many towns in Ireland, you have some vacant or derelict properties. We were pleased to note that quite a number have notices on them regarding the Vacant Homes Notice or Derelict Sites Levy. And many such premises

were in the midst of renovation. But on the Bunree Road some of the notices were over three years old – it is important to keep the pressure on to advance the changes.

Similarly, you are recommended to monitor renovation rates. How many of the upper floors of premises along the main streets of Ballina are occupied? Herrernans and O'Malleys were two of these that we wondered about. Another property caught the eye with warehouse doors and a pulley brace on second and third floors that was 'for sale' building on James Connolly Street.

The first two terraced houses on Bunree Road with damaged corrugated iron roofs, we being maintained by yourselves. We noticed in your long-term plan an action to have these thatched which would make a great entrance to Ballina. The lovely Rose and Mews Cottages further up this road set a high standard.

The fire station appeared a little drab and in need for some attention. Can the concrete façade be power hosed? The 'Old Shebeen' had great window displays and hanging baskets. Even on a wet morning, the red and white property looked great. Likewise, the flowers growing about the name sign, and the heritage window displays of Harrisons drew the eye up Market Street.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Street furniture, trees and raised floral baskets added to the new wider pavements of Upper Pearse street. The new public realm areas at IQ Ballina, and Market Square is a great area. All around here we could see the backs of buildings and each were painted and well maintained. The pollinator-friendly planting at the new entrance to Tesco is a great improvement.

We found the outdoor swimming pool at Downhill - what a gem – no wonder you have no sign on the outside wall – you want to keep it a secret! The aptly named 'Twin Bees hotel' brought a smile to the face of your adjudicators. The bird boxes are not suitable – there are great templates and information on the correct design and where to locate bird boxes at the www.birdwatchireland.ie website. The use of the tractor tyre for planting is also not recommended – the micro-plastics continue to leech so they could be recycled at a facility. There is a variety of planting here – the bees were all over the native plants. The storm-drain pipes are very obtrusive but you could embrace this and create some street art with them – one could form the trunk of an elephant for example! Is the water tested regularly here? If so – can the results be displayed here, or have a QR code to a website where they can be viewed. Can some species names in Irish and English be added to the pictures of the badger, kingfisher, fox squirrel etc? The higher area is a wonderful area for contemplation so a lovely miniature library could work well here with children's books for a story telling area.

Oak trees were growing in the nursery at the Ripples project – do you plan to have residents' plant these around the community? Maybe school children could be presented these on their graduation from school? The willow archway was growing well, as were the red currants on the bushes – we harvested some for you!

Hydrangeas do provide a wonderful burst of colour but offer little for wildlife so do spread the word to intersperse these with pollinator-friendly shrubs.

The Stations of the Cross / St Patrick's Well was nicely presented and you provided pictures of your volunteers working hard to maintain the back wall of this area. The entrance gate and wall needs some repair.

The Bishop's Field was a beautiful managed park area but as mentioned last year – what a pity we could not visit it to enjoy it. Is it only open on special days? Next door the Tom Ruane Parke was busy with visitors, and contractors transforming a large part of the area.

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

To celebrate 300 years of Ballina you planted one tree for every single resident of the town – impressive. And looking at the pictures – nearly everyone from the town helped out with the planting!! Driving around, there are some lovely mature trees in Ballina so this will add to them.

Well done on having a Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Ballina. This is important to know about the local ecology and how to enhance it appropriately. Well done. With such economic importance on The Moy, perhaps a water-related project could be advanced. For example, we have seen lovely images around storm drains highlighting their links to water courses and the need to not dispose waste down these.

Your main project was the Paradise Garden built at Greenfields. This was a climate-friendly intergenerational amenity space and wildlife haven, where rainwater is slowed through a series of rills, wells and natural attenuation on its way to the river. We found it, by accident when looking for the Downhill swimming pool, and it was delightful. The beds, stones, and seating area is lovely. The grass here consisted of a diverse sward of pollinator-friendly flowers that could be even better with a varied mowing regime. It was packed with knapweed, clovers and plantains.

It was a delight to hear newly fledged swifts flying around near the Garda Station. This is great news and you can build on this colony by adding more swift boxes to buildings on the taller properties of Ballina. You have already got 57 natural nest sites occupied so well done. Swift Conservation Ireland must be delighted with this.

Red squirrel sightings are being recorded – have you been involved with any citizen-science projects?

Sadly, all along the Killala Road, many of your roadside trees have succumbed to 'ash-die back'. You are recommended to get advice- some shoots seem to be growing from the base – can they survive?

You have many future projects planned. Working with the community to advance these is recommended – perhaps the Men's Shed can cut out templates for the bat boxes and members of the community could personalise and assemble them. They could then be erected in Belleek woods by your volunteers or Coillte.

The riverside car-park at Molloy Terrace provides lovely views over The Moy with nicely positioned benches. The salmon weir footbridge was crossed and we were surprised and delighted to have amazing views of a seal right up here feeding away! (We decided not to tell the people fishing nearby though!). The bee-friendly landscaped beds in the grounds of the derelict house by the car park looked lovely. Have you thought about providing some wildlife information here?

This is a strong submission for this category- well done.

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

With the Mary Robinson Centre located in Ballina, it is not surprising that you have also made a strong submission for this category of the competition. Here the Youth Climate Change Festival was held last Autumn, where you helped out. Also the Climate & Nature Conference in May. We cannot mention all of your work – so have highlighted a few below.

There are well managed cycled areas out to The Quays, and to Dernan Grove. Ballina Rugby Club launched the active travel project to encourage cycling to their amenities. Likewise, Ballina Town FC, and the running track is some distance out of town, so it was great to see bicycle racks provided here, as well as the Return Banks for empty bottles. Have you organised any cycling proficiency classes?

Well done to the library for providing reusable party kits for the community - with enough utensils and plates for a gang of 30! A great idea – do the family resource centres know about this.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Two local schools are involved with the 'Picker Pals' programme getting families to litter pick together. This helps engender pride but also benefits wildlife through the removal of litter from water courses etc. Your entry provided pictures of your volunteers painting street furniture and railings, cleaning signs, and plogging. This was a new one for this adjudicator. Definition: 'Plogging' – pods of people running and picking up pieces of litter as they run/jog. Fair play to your ploggers.

Bottle banks on Market Street were clean and nicely presented – the County Council notice board here though should be removed. The writing is too small to read and the sign is very faded.

The gates to the overflow carpark for the hotel on the Downhill Road could be enhanced.

Newly painted dog waste stencilled notices were observed on the walking routes at the back of Greenhills. One of many lovely positioned benches at the playing area of Greenhill could be repainted and repaired. There were 4 lovely wooden planters at the Bunree / Tubbercurry Road junction– a roadside bollard needs straightening here.

Bins were in place and in use in housing estates and along the streets and lanes of Ballina. One at the junction of Bury Street was in need of a clean. A number of other bins were covered in vape stickers. Watch out for a number of metal posts on which there should be a sign – but no signs were in place.

A public house on an approach road had permanently erected Christmas lights – they should only be erected during the festive season. Likewise – at the gorgeous Quays there is a permanently erected metal Christmas Tree frame for lights. This should be dismantled and stored outside of the festive season.

You have a great waste and recycling facility on the Killala road – very neat and most things can be recycled here – so we suggest you also recycled the large NDP funded signs on its approach road as they are nearly 20 years past the required display period.

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

Exploring the many roads and estates of Ballina, homes looked very well. In the longer term providing bilingual entrance signs is a consideration.

Arriving into Greenhill Estate there is a very nicely presented name stone, with white stones around the base. We liked the landscaping here –and across the road the long fence line is beautifully screened with a variety of shrubs. Raised beds in the middle of Greenhill allow for locals to access fresh herbs. These were lovely.

Works are underway at a site at the roundabout across from Judge's Garage and the road-side plot is a dumping ground. Once the building works are completed do keep a watch to ensure this area. which is seen on arrival into Ballina from the East, is tidied up appropriately.

The Heyday Hostel was very nicely presented – a clever re-innovation of this building. The painted cottages at the end of Pearse Street look so well – this concentrated effort makes a real impact. Homes on Corcoran Terrace looked lovely including two semi-detached homes with white windows, wreaths on the door and walls covered in trimmed ivy. Nearby homes on Morrison Terrace also looked very well. Nally Street had a number of premises undergoing renovations – and Number 3 here is another nicely presented home. The houses painted on Castle Street looked very well.

Overall a high presentation of homes in Ballina.

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

The flower beds on the Foxford Road were stunning and make for a wonderful welcome arriving into Ballina with nasturtiums, verbascum and 'black-eyed Susan's' to name a few flowers. We highly commend the effort you have put into here – the beds in full sun are easily viewed and this is a better location for pollinators. Likewise, if stepping off the train you will see some wonderful landscaped beds in the centre of the road under the trees here. This new work was recently completed and well done to all for the efforts here.

However, the 200m-long embankment on the left as you drive into town before the train station is dire. Recent clearance has left the area between the wooden fence at the top of the bank, and the roadside wall, looking apocalyptic. But we hope this is the area designed for a linear park as the site has fantastic potential and with your strong landscaping skills it could be transformed.

Downhill Road was lovely to explore – we went looking for the outdoor pool but first found ourselves admiring the Ripples Project at the pedestrian entrance to the Greenhills estate. The newly topped footpaths were popular with many runners and families enjoying this space. The footbridge here could do with some signage – maybe some children's art work of local wildlife would be erected here? Where do the paths lead? The nicely managed green grass area with its the curved mown design was lovely in Greenhills. A boardwalk is proposed for the Brosna River – will this be nearer the town centre or at this location?

On Bunree Road large pine trees form a line behind the school boundary properties but don't really add to the area. Jimmy's coffee was constantly busy with many availing of a take-away here in this nicely refurbished garage. Nearby 'Mam's' café on Cathedral Road also looked very well with flower baskets and nice outdoor seating.

The new historical paintings erected at Pearse Road, and all along the exterior wall of Dunnes are excellent – bringing to life the walls here. Well done to Dunes and to Hopkins & Sons cycle shop for allowing these to be erected. This, and the landscaping and bench at the roundabout, all make this area somewhere to dawdle and read about the history of the town.

Where pedestrians have to cross the road on Castle Road when the pavement changes from one side to the other side of the road – can crossing lines be marked on the road?

We encountered many lovely lanes and pedestrian routes around Ballina including French Lane, Pawn Office Lane, and Dr Kathleen Lynn Lane. Historical information, paintings or some simple hearts painted on the walls demonstrated so many of these were maintained nicely. You have plans to open a nature-based garden at the Kathleen Lynn Lane which will transform this space. The pedestrian gates at the end of Walsh Street are closed off – is this a right of way?

Finally, your murals were great to see including Jackie Charlton, and the wrinkles of the man at Land League Lane were so detailed – have you considered creating an art trail around the town?

Concluding Remarks:

For 35 years you have been involved with the National Tidy Towns competition. Your entry this year impressed us with the voluntary effort put into your projects with participants from all ages. You also put a lot of work into public consultations so that plans and proposals are with the agreement of the wider community. The work over the last 12 months has been very much a community effort – well done Ballina on a very strong submission this year.