

Tidy Towns Competition 2025

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Ballycroy - Baile Chruaich	Ref:	505
County:	Mayo	Mark:	292
Category:	B	Date(s):	08/06/2025

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	44
Streetscape & Public Places	80	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	34
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	31
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	29
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	38
TOTAL MARK	550	292

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Bailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2025. Go raibh maith agaibh as d'iontráil a sheoladh chugainn. Maith sibh as an obair atá déanta i bhur cheantar go dtí seo - guímid gach rath oraibh i bhúr thionscadail amach anseo. Ádh mór.

Welcome to the 2025 SuperValu Tidy Towns competition and thank you for your very clear and well written application form, your Five-Year Plan, your draft Biodiversity Plan and your map. We enjoyed meanderings around the village and needless to say we also made a visit to the Ballycroy Visitor Centre promoting the Wild Nephin National Park. This was our visit to your community and we were delighted to see the work and activities being carried out - well done to all concerned. You are a small committee and we're delighted to read that you have thirteen regular volunteers who help when asked/needed. You have a variety of links with businesses, Mayo Co. Co and others. Every voluntary group needs collaborators and we're delighted to see you wide connections. We note you have a Facebook page and we saw that it has 257 followers. The last posting was 13th March and the posting before that 4th February. Facebook and all social media accounts need to be updated on a regular basis. We suggest you get a local youth who will keep it up to date with photos (flowers, butterflies, trees, local events etc.) and links to others (seminars by Mayo Co Co, local voluntary groups, the school etc.). This will look good on their C.V. – PRO to Ballycroy Tidy Towns. We're delighted to read that the 15 years of your involvement with the competition has brought an enhancement to the village in addition to a strengthening of the social fabric of the village.

See Concluding Remarks for advice on filling out the application form and producing a map.

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

Your village, extending along the N59 and the L5277 (your main street), consists primarily of single and two storey vernacular structures interspersed with modern single and two storey structures. The dominate structures are Ballycroy Community Centre, the RC Church of the Holy Family, and Ballycroy NS Scoil Naomh Bríde, all which add to the architectural merit of the village. In addition, you have the wonderful Ballycroy National Park Visitor Centre which is a wonderful asset to the village. Maintenance of the sculptures along the path which links it to the village is good to see as they represent your local culture and fauna. You have had new footpaths recently installed by Mayo Co Co making your streets safer for the pedestrian. We noted the rumble dipped paving in a few locations to warn those who are visually impaired and to facility those who use wheelchairs or mobility scooters in addition to those pushing buggies. We love that your lighting throughout the village is now fully compliant with Dark Sky Friendly Lighting. Public street lighting and the lighting of businesses need not be bright so it's good that Mayo Co Co and local businesses have adopted this approach. The freshly painted walls to the church and the seating area with bicycle stands looked good. We recommend that the gravel should be removed and instead a large stone surround

planting bed with high and low planting for maximum impact be installed – this could be a project for the future.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

What wonderful green spaces you have in your village which are accessible to the local community and visitors. The garden at the Community Centre is quite special and it makes a pleasant entrance to the village from the N59. Here you have planted fruit trees and native hedging. The green spaces surrounding the NPWS Visitor Centre are particularly special – a variety of neatly mown grass areas, meadow areas filled with wildflowers with paths meandering through, and Tóchar Daithí Bán etc. etc. What an asset to your village - a wonderful building and surrounding area in your village. We noted that your volunteers maintain the planters and flowerbeds along the streetscape. Please compliment them as we very impressed with their appearance. We suggest that in the larger beds you add some plants for height and movement – grasses are an option you might consider. We're delighted to read that you are phasing out planters in favour of planting beds. Containers should only be used for impact and drama where a bed isn't possible. And remember the best plant containers are those which are concealed by the plants. It will be wonderful when the 600 saplings trees planted in 2023 grow. Some will undoubtedly fail but with 600 planted a sufficient number will survive to make an impact. We read that you continue to check tree guards, stakes, ties etc. We didn't see any place where you plant the seed you harvest. Have you a polytunnel for the Tidy Towns groups or is it done by one of your volunteers? Cleary's corner with its 'Is glass iad conic i bfad uainn' stone was quite beautiful we admired the mix of flowers and shrubs. The row of trees along the N59 are well maintained and add greatly to the village aspect. Compliments on maintaining the green space and flowerbed in Scoil Naomh Bhríde.

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

We read that Ballycroy is near the Owenduff/Nephin Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) and with the diversity of habitats here, including watercourses, heaths, grass lands, and bogs, the area is important for biodiversity. In addition, the Wild Nephin National Park Visitor Centre and the diverse habitats that surround it are an extra bonus to the village. Your Draft Ballycroy Community Biodiversity Action Plan has very detailed records of your area. You have a range of trees, grasses, wildflowers etc found in your area, all, in addition to the fauna and birds, which are listed. This is a great start for Actions as it is important to know what's there in order to protect it. We assume that insects etc will also be listed prior to it being finalised? On one of the websites we accessed we were told to 'Keep an eye out for insect-eating plants such as sundew and butterwort, as well as hares, hen harriers and peregrine falcons.' We see that you have Biodiversity walks and Mayo Day Celebrations – let us know more about these. Take photos and let's see where they were brought to the attention of the community (posters/ Facebook/ newspapers?). Having the youth involvement is excellent as this will not only encourage voluntary work but will also inform them of nature and biodiversity in their area. The National School teachers are also involved and so we commend them too. We see that there were Bee and Insect Surveys – let us see the data collected in next year's application. It would be great if this was carried out annually to see the increase/decrease in their variety and numbers. Is this something you would consider as a project?

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

This is a category where many Tidy Towns groups struggle but truthfully, it's one where there are a large number of simple projects/activities that many communities are doing already without realising it. You need to be proactive and encourage the community to inform you. Is there anyone in your area who repairs things – dressmakers, carpenters, painters, etc? Do you swap plants? Have many got water butts at their houses? Do they make compost? Do they have vegetable gardens, fruit trees etc? A quick survey will tell you all. We see that 'Native Seed Harvesting' and reuse occurs. Where have you reused them? Take photos and let us see. With the large roof of the Community Centre, it will be great to see rainwater collection installed in large rainwater receptacles at the various rainwater outlets. The ones for domestic houses wouldn't be suitable as you have quite a number of planting beds, fruit trees etc which will need water if we continue to have dry weather in spring and summer. What is the local National School doing in terms of sustainability? Could you become involved in growing vegetables in raised beds, in say 5th class, on an annual basis? This way every child leaving the school will have planted and seen seeds grow and who knows it might encourage them to bring the idea home to their parents. What does the Visitor Centre do with the waste coffee grinds? Perhaps ask them to put them into bags which visitors and locals can use in their compost.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your village was extremely clean and tidy when we visited which is a commendation of how the villagers view your work. We assume, like many community groups, you take part in the annual An Taisce Spring Clean? This annual event helps to alert all on the need to be vigilant on litter, fly-tipping and weed growth. Your volunteers segregate the waste when collected which is good to read. What happens to the waste? Does Mayo Co Co collect it or do you bring it to a recycling centre? Let us know next year. We see that you use vinegar and hot water methods for moss and weed control on paths and kerbing. While this must be repeated regularly to keep moss and weeds at bay it 'replaces chemical weedkillers and reduces runoff into local habitats' which is good. We see that dog fouling is a problem for you. We suggest you paint 'Clean Up after your Dog' signs on the paths where people walk their dogs. Make a stencil which you can reuse. We have seen this in other villages and have been told that it works better than signage – which as we know is clutter and detracts from the streetscape. We're delighted to see that a redundant pole and signage survey was completed. Let us know of the success you have on getting these removed. Hopefully before and after photos are available. These too clutter the streetscape and detract from it. Compliments to your volunteers and especially your youth on the presentation of the village. Some lighting poles need to be repainted especially along the entrance road from Mulranny. There was considerable weed growth around the

'Turas Na Gaeltachta' sign and along the path near the playground. The timber area near the boat seat and the boat itself are in need of attention – could this be your priority project next year?

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

Individual traditional and modern, single and two storey houses, make up your housing stock. The residents of the village have contributed positively to making the village extremely pleasant with shrub and herbaceous borders noted in many of the gardens. The visitor is welcomed by freshly painted boundary walls and fences and neatly kept gardens. Along your approach roads we were also greeted by well-maintained houses set in neat gardens and many of these in addition to lawns and flowers beds had trees. We read where several homes now have carved or painted nameplates. This is a lovely idea but please inform the owners that these will require ongoing maintenance to be presentable. Do you have a best kept garden competition? This is something simple to organise. Ask the Environmental Officer or some other such knowledgeable person to be the judge, and then make a presentation (a framed Certificate is sufficient) at an event in the Community Centre with local press and politicians invited. A little bit of friendly competition is a bit of fun. Unoccupancy/dereliction exists like most Irish villages – all you can do is approach the owners and tidy up as best you can or ask Mayo Co Co to issue a Derelict Sites Notice.

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

The approach roads into the village had well maintained hedgerows cut to allow clear visibility. This form of roadside management informs the motorists that they are entering a community and need to reduce speed. We recommend however, that a minimum 600mm wide strip of grass along the edges of all approach roads be trimmed as this too helps inform the motorists of the presence of a settlement/village. The 1km looped walk to the village from the Visitor Centre is a great idea as it will encourage the community to embrace the Visitor Centre and its surrounding landscape while taking exercise. We read that your volunteers supported the 'trail cleanup, wayfinding, and promotion' – compliments to all. We also note that the road between the village and Visitor Centre has been resurfaced. This road will be busy with tourists entering the Visitor Centre and when we were there, we noted quite a number of internationally registered cars. The first 'Welcome to Ballycroy' painted stone sign coming from Mulranny is a considerable distance from Ballycroy. Maybe put a distance on this to help the visitor? Would you consider making a stone surround planting bed in the gravel area between the new footpaths near the N59? It seems ideal to us and could be quite beautiful beside the grotto area. Road markings and signage on the N59 were clear and legible. While some road repairs have been carried out in the village you are in need of more, particularly around the cemetery. Well done Mayo Co Co on the raised areas coloured red at the Community Centre and Church making it safer for pedestrians to cross the roads and access these facilities.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your village and compliment you on your application ... but we have a few suggestions for 2026.

- Your map is very clear but you only told us the location of eight projects. Next year we suggest you colour code the various categories and then use the colour and numbers N1, N2 etc M1, M2 etc and transfer these to your map. In this way we can find the projects easily – it took us quite a while to locate some of them this year. You can simplify the numbering system – no need for NB25.1, AR25.4 etc. The photos are unnecessary on the map and should be included in the various categories in the application form. Lastly, please also add a legend (just a list) of the projects added to the map.
- Like the 2023 adjudicators, we too recommend that you revise your plan to concur with the categories in the Tidy Towns application form. Don't worry if you don't have projects/activities under each category. We recommend a Five-Year Plan rather than a Three-Year Plan as many activities/projects take longer than three years to be completed. The plan can show who on the committee will lead the activity/project, which will divide up the jobs, also collaborators names, and it will also show progress each year with a tick saying it was undertaken/completed. We suggest this is better than short/medium or long term as it will show progress annually. Excel is best for a Plan rather than Word.

We wish to state that this is not a criticism of your work but to explain to you that as adjudicators we rely on a clear application form and accompanying map to inform us of your projects and make our visit rewarding.

Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2025 competition. It was a pleasure to visit and adjudicate Ballycroy. Keep up the good work which is reaping its just rewards.