

Tidy Towns Competition 2025

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballyhaunis - Béal Átha hAmhnais** Ref: **506**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **350**
Category: **D** Date(s): **11/07/2025**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2024	Mark Awarded 2025
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	46	49
Streetscape & Public Places	80	49	50
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	49	51
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	42	45
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	26
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	58
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	36
TOTAL MARK	550	335	350

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.

You have a good-sized committee, and a lot of volunteers who help out with your projects. You work closely with the Community Council, and the Abbey Partnership as a lot of your projects are held here in the grounds of the Augustinian Friary. How lovely to read of the close links with them and so many bodies and businesses around the town. We were impressed with the high number of youth projects being actioned with the Youth Service, Foróige and both the National and Community Schools in Ballyhaunis.

It was a delight to see a lot of social media posts highlighting recent activities. Many of which relate to the newer competition categories of biodiversity and sustainability. Likewise on your website we viewed your plans for the group. A quick tip may be to have a link to your socials, on the news page of your website. This would save you having to double post.

Your work is clearly thought-out and well planned – thanks to workshops completed to develop a long-term plan for Ballyhaunis Tidy Towns. Your entry is tabulated and details clearly when actions were completed. Throughout your entry form there was a clear understanding of how your actions on the ground, help advance the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. You have outlined clear steps to build an informed community to achieve your circular economy vision. This was all very good – thank you.

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

Walking around Ballyhaunis it was wonderful to see so many premises under renovation. Around The Square we saw a number of building works nearing completion that looked great, including The Old Butchers and the former Bank of Ireland. We were delighted to read that a grant was awarded to create a community art space at the Court House. Scaffolding covered the end gable of the main building at the Square— what a pity the trees boxes were not moved prior to the fencing being erected. Are you still able to water and service these?

Sadly, the two large imposing buildings of the former Old Convent School were boarded up. Have you been in discussions with the Derelict Buildings Office at the County Council to help advance works on this. We did see some demand notices on a number of derelict sites. You are urged to push for action on these buildings and keep the momentum going to have them brought back into use.

Keep a tally on the % of empty properties as we suspect there will be great changes in the next few years in Ballyhaunis as more are renovated and occupied.

We couldn't figure out when walking around on a wonderful sunny day why we could hear children's laughter everywhere – turns out you have an amazing outdoor swimming pool. It was lovely to hear all the giggles and fun being had as their voices carried across the area. How nice to see the name over the entrance 'As Gaeilge'. Outside the steep bank had been replanted and lavender was lovely here.

The period window display of Hopkins looked lovely – well done to whoever pulled this together. Duffy's pharmacy nearby also looked well, and the reuse of the old Ulster Bank as the Medical Centre was admired. The modern façade of Eddie Murphy's shops with its large windows allowed us to clearly see their nice window displays. Tribe coffee shop caught the eye with nice outdoor seating and baskets.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Your submission was full of images of your volunteers planting flowers, distributing trees during National Tree Week and of your 'Woodland's Maintenance Group' in action. There are so many different faces in all the photos showing the wide numbers of volunteers involved with your work.

Last Summer the playground was upgraded and a wheelchair friendly roundabout was added to the Friary's grounds. The large expanses of grass were separated into distinct areas. In some the grass is growing longer in a pollinator-friendly mowing regime and trees have been planted. The bandstand, playground, polytunnels and gym equipment all contribute to a wonderful amenity at the Friary for the community.

Bluebells were planted by Scoil Iosa in the grounds of St. Patrick's Church - these are very pretty and excellent for our pollinators also.

The new landscaping at the entrance to Aldi was lovely – indeed all of this area was eye catching. Primrose cottage looked so nice and we really liked the lovely gates and the bank at the rear was planted with native trees. The only minor point was the addition of a new hedge of cherry laurel which offers little for wildlife. If you could loosen the support straps on the trees please as they are now rubbing the bark.

Flowers at The Court House Bar looked great, and also at Paddy's Bar. Hanging baskets were appreciated at Vanessa's Nails, and brought a pop of colour at The Bridge. The riverside walkway with its chain mail fencing was underwhelming – and the potential to create a fantastic riverside amenity is great. Hopefully this is part of the proposed pedestrian improvement scheme planned at the bridge. The raised planters around the market square, and street trees all added to the ambience of this civic space. Do you grow these flowers in your polytunnel? Do you use your own compost in your hanging baskets?

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

You have a Biodiversity Action Plan that directs a lot of your work – excellent. This ensures that all work enhances the local ecology appropriately. Your entry was full of examples of projects related to this category of the competition from workshops, to planting schemes to the creation of a wonderful video with aerial images of the main watercourse through Ballyhaunis.

You have taken part in the 'Hare's Corner' project - an initiative to make more space for nature. The inclusion of native heritage species of fruit trees here is applauded as these species are best suited for our pollinators.

Good luck with the newly installed swift nest boxes in the town. The loud speakers broadcasting a recording of their calls, should attract them to the new nests. These amazing birds fly non-stop for 3 years once they fledge, eating and sleeping in the air. Be patient as they can take a number of years before they take up residence.

Since 2023, your volunteers regularly monitor the water quality at the Dalgan river and well done on getting the Local Authority Waters Office to run a training course for more volunteers to learn this skill. You are the first in County Mayo to engage communities in such a way. Having volunteers submit readings on the quality of our water to a central team allows for easier monitoring of the health of our biodiversity. You also installed trail cameras along The Dalgan – do share some of the photos

The video you produced of the story of The Dalgan is a lovely project – it is a mixture of poetry, artwork and ecological information - what an excellent project. This was only published in October '24 – have you plans to showcase it at any film festivals.

Overall, this was a very strong submission for this category of the competition. Well done.

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

A lot of your work is also on projects relating to this adjudication category. Last June, you held a Circular Economy Workshop in the Ballyhaunis Community Hall to develop ideas on how your community can work together to reduce waste, promote the concepts of reuse, repair, recycle and build a more sustainable future. And what a fitting place to hold these workshops as this building has been transformed – the roof was covered in solar panels to generate

electricity. The Community Hall also had its exits and disabled access routes modernised thanks to funding received. We would like to hear of the cost savings the panels have brought to the community. Is this one of the many projects advanced through your Energy Sustainable Community in Ballyhaunis?

Other projects include 'Speed Swaps' of clothes/toys/uniforms; setting up a tool library and the monthly board games night – where games can be borrowed also. All excellent ideas.

A fabric upcycling workshop was organised with your local Foroige club. Participants would have gained a lot of skills including how to use a sewing machine – a great life skill to have.

The Hospice Shop was one of a number of second hand shops to support the circular economy in the town. You also organised a bike repair clinic so riders can keep their bikes in good condition. Have you organised any cycling proficiency courses?

Ballyhaunis is lucky to be on the train line but we were disappointed with the provision for travellers. The car park was overflowing, despite a very large empty yard available at the station – can this not be offered for coach parking or additional vehicle parking? Similarly, there were no cycle racks or cycle shelters offered here. With plans to improve the access to the train station, we hope a cycle lane is part of the consideration.

Finally – one of the main work areas has been the expansion of a second polytunnel in the Community Garden. A lot of work has gone into this also.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

With over 30 volunteers taking part in your Spring Clean, and a series of collections for Christmas Trees, WEEE and hazardous waste – you have helped address littering in the town. Street signs and information boards were scrubbed and weeds removed by hand. A lot of effort has gone into this also. Your volunteers smiled for all the photos – even in the pouring rain!

The bars on the side windows of the Court House will look much better if painted. Some of the artists to use this space may be able to add some bright colours here.

The fun wildlife mural at the end of the Friary ground on the hoarding shielding a dilapidated building was lovely – are there any plans for this building (marked as a Scouts Den on your map)?

There was a neat line of bottle and clothing banks in the car park off St Gerald's Crescent but the County Council sign behind was in a bad condition and needs to be removed. Perhaps some children's artwork on the circular economy could be erected here instead to brighten it. The car park also has an EV charging point – this, and the others in the town, should be advertised where possible. The vertical posts of the barrier at the entrance to this car park were very rusty and need to be addressed and repainted. The lower-level carpark, off Lochán, looked better with white washed walls around the entrance landscaping. But here again the entrance barrier was also in a poor condition.

There were some left over cable ties from the election on street lamps and posts, such as at the entrance to Aldi. If candidates have to erect posters, can they be persuaded to use re-usable cable ties?

Bins were clean and in use though some were covered in vape stickers – perhaps a patch could be added to the bins where they can be placed. One derelict terrace shop on Bridge Street with a derelict levy notice had a lot of rubbish accumulated at its front door behind the security gate making it difficult to access.

It would be worth adding an action to your long-term plan to lobby for the undergrounding of over-head wires on Upper Main Street. Compare that road with the wire-scape in the centre of Ballyhaunis to appreciate the difference it makes when wires are ducted.

On the Sligo Road about a mile out of town, there's a very old 'National Development Plan' sign for the water sewage scheme that needs to be removed it's there it's 20 years out of date. The disabled parking bays at the library could be resurfaced in time.

The pictures included in your entry form showed your volunteers busy painting the walls at the town well, and cleaning the stone sun-dial. Thanks to the many who help your activities.

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

The landscaped bed makes for a nice entrance at St Gerald's Terrace. The hand-painted name shield at the entrance to Aisleigh Drive was indicative of the nice homes in this estate. There were lovely homes on Beech Lawn and at Manor Brook to name a few more. Indeed, you have close links with the Resident associations in place in the 9 local estates. The period terrace homes with arched window above the front doors on Abbey Street looked well.

Do add to your long-term plan the provision of bi-lingual entrance names to estates. Homes previously owned by NAMA are now finished and occupied -yippee.

Overall, there was a high presentation of homes though Ballyhaunis – and smiley, welcoming residents greeted us too as we explored the town.

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

Arriving from the west, Ballyhaunis Community School was a welcoming , freshly painted building, with nice maturing trees in the area.

Opposite there was a large steel posts, for a road sign that was missing.

The back car parks and access lanes are nicely painted with pockets of landscaping that make these areas feel safe and managed.

Other entrance name stones were clean, and nicely managed – the one at Ballinphuill nicely underplanted. The rural scene painted at the N60 junction here looked well and brightened up this area. Another mural caught the eye at Barrack street. Road surfaces at the top of Barrack street were in a poor condition. Properties across on Knox Street as you leave Lochán were freshly painted, even the entry doors, which looked well. Along here premises recently painted lifted the appearance of the street.

We were pleased to read of the improvement plans for the railway bridge to allow for safer passage of pedestrians in this area. Planning notices were also erected on Abbey Street for the pedestrian access to the park and improvements here will be welcomed also.

Concluding Remarks:

Your entry form was packed with photos of the many workshops and activities that Ballyhaunis Tidy Towns has supported over the last 12 months. Goodness, you have been busy. You are applauded for the way in which you have positively embraced the newer categories of the competition on Sustainability & Biodiversity. The River Dalgan video you produced last Autumn is excellent and various energy saving initiatives have been advanced. And ongoing renovations and plans will see a transformation of your main streets. Exciting times ahead for Ballyhaunis and well done on all your hard work.