

Tidy Towns Competition 2025

Adjudication Report

Centre:	Ballyheane - Béal Átha hÉin	Ref:	1854
County:	Mayo	Mark:	304
Category:	B	Date(s):	10/06/2025

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2024	Mark Awarded 2025
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	35	36
Streetscape & Public Places	80	40	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	41	42
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	29	30
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	15	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	68	69
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	35	36
TOTAL MARK	550	295	304

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.

Thank you for your completed Application Form, photos and hand drawn map. While your map is very basic, it clearly shows the key buildings/areas and also your projects numbered – so almost perfect for our needs. We had a look for your Facebook page but didn't find any and your Instagram Account was last updated in 2023. Get one of your youths to become your PRO and help you with social media. Social media is a great way to connect to the whole community, and especially to the youth. In addition to those you mention who assist you, don't forget to also contact Mayo Co Co – Heritage Officer, Conservation Officer, Climate Action Officer, Environmental Officer, Area Office etc. etc. You'll need the help of your Local Authority to progress many projects. You have entered the Tidy Towns competition for six years so fairly new to the competition. Participation encourages a pride of place amongst the residents, which is the true spirit of Tidy Towns. We are delighted to read that the community engage with the projects which are undertaken. These have resulted in the visual improvement of your village which encourages a pride of place for all.

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

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

Located on the busy Ballintobber Castlebar (N84) road, the central core of your village consists of the old graveyard, the Ballet School, the Community Centre, the National School and the Church. With the exception of these community buildings, the structures are generally vernacular single or two storey. Was the Ballet School (old community centre) built on the grounds of the 1887 National School? We noticed the name plaque on the boundary wall. The solar panels were noted on the Ballyheane name signs. As it is daytime when we visit, we didn't see the lighting produced by them. Maybe next year insert a photo into the application form of the signs lit up at nighttime. The small white stenciled murals on the green wall of the ballet School are quite beautiful – we feel they could be bigger for maximum effect. Unoccupancy and dereliction is a problem for most rural towns and villages, and every Tidy Towns committee struggle trying to get the owners to carry out routine maintenance. Let's hope those in Ballyheane will be occupied again as it's a shame to have unoccupancy in any of our towns when housing supply is needed. We admired the flat iron gates – some along with the adjoining piers need painting.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

It would be wonderful if Ballyheane had a communal green space where the community could meet outdoors and which could be used by adults and youth to meet friends, have a picnic and chat. With home working and the isolation that brings we need to meet face to face and talk. It's great that the Foróige Club assists with planting and maintaining your flower beds/pots. We love to read that the youth partake in the upkeep of the village no matter how small a project, as it gives them an appreciation of where they live. Keep up this relationship with them. We admired that the kerbstones (where existing) along the roadside were visible with neatly trimmed grass. This takes time so compliments to the volunteer(s) who undertook this task without reverting to chemical weed control. There are some planters sitting on the grass in the centre of the village - they're superfluous. If you feel you need additional colour in this area add this to the adjacent planting beds. The old graveyard in the centre of the village is an important space for your community and it's good to see that work was undertaken to begin making this green space as asset to the village. Interesting structures in the graveyard and we look forward to learning about them in future applications. Have you any plans for the handball alley? Another part of your social history.

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

Your location in rural Mayo with stone walls, hedgerows, mature trees open pasture land and now your Biodiversity Garden ensures a great variety of habitats for insects, birds and mammals - the stone walls are a great habitat for insects and the many hedgerows and tall trees are wonderful nesting and roosting sites for birds. The hedge rows were very colourful with a variety of wildflowers in bloom and were buzzing with insect life – dog rose, honeysuckle, foxglove, ox-eyed daisy etc. all in bloom when we visited. You have introduced more wildflowers into the biodiversity garden. Remember the best wildflowers to plant are those which grow wild along your hedgerows. Collect the seeds and plant them and your biodiversity garden will thrive. In order to advance in this category, it's important to know what's in your locality. Knowledge of your area and promoting this knowledge to the local population and passing visitor are the key components of this category. This could be done by installing information panels in some central location in the village – perhaps a poster in your community notice board. We read that the bird houses were replaced due to the damage caused by Storm Eowyn. Have the new bird boxes been used?

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

This is a category where many communities struggle but truthfully it is just about being aware of how we use the resources of the planet so that we cut down on our waste. This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. This category is about looking at how the community as a whole can reduce waste and save on water, energy and transport. We read that you try to source materials locally for your work e.g wood chip for bedding areas is provided by James Staunton. Marain Deasy gives flowers from her green house and resident provide leftover paint. Good to see that there is a water tap at the soccer pitch to refill bottles. Is there not one at the GAA pitch? Plant swaps, and sharing flowers and vegetable are all superb saving measures which can be undertaken by the wider community. Is the school involved in the Green Flag Programme? If not, this is something you could initiate and the pupils would benefit hugely from your help. You could make raised beds and grow vegetables and flowers from seed with the various classes. Or perhaps go on foraging walks for wild mushrooms, strawberries, etc.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Being situated on a busy road is a challenge in terms of cleanliness and litter for communities and you have the busy N84 passing through the centre of the village. We are delighted to report that your village was extremely clean and tidy when we visited. Compliments to your volunteers. Weed growth was noted but not too much. It would be great if you also asked the volunteers to deal with this too. A hoe and stiff brush are also needed when they do their litter pick. There is litter pick by your volunteers on Sunday mornings where Foróige and Active 55's help. We're happy to hear that both Ballyheane and Breaffy GAA clear up litter and rubbish within their respective grounds. It would be most unfortunate if they expected others to do this. You mentioned your main project this year was to tidy the old graveyard and remove briars. We have regularly recommended that Tidy Towns groups borrow goats to undertake this work. Goats eat everything and when tethered can be moved around the graveyard to tidy it. This is an environmentally friendly method and it uses goats' natural grazing habits to remove vegetation, especially in areas where machinery might cause damage i.e. areas with fragile headstones. The Heritage Council have produced a fine document 'Guidance for the Care and Conservation and Recording of Historic Graveyards' which is available to download from their website. If you intend undertaking any 'repair' work in the graveyard, you must get advice from the National Monuments Archaeologist for your area before doing anything. The area around the pump and the biodiversity garden needs attention. We suggest that the gravel is removed and grass seed with wildflowers be planted as it's easier to maintain than gravel. The fencing and seating (which we loved) also need attention.

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

Your village located on both sides of the busy N84 consists of single and two storey vernacular houses set back from the road in large gardens. The standard of presentation of individual houses within the village environs, and along the approach roads in Ballyheane was generally very good and we congratulate the many home owners and occupiers who clearly take pride in their property and keep their houses, gardens and boundary walls well-presented and neatly maintained in support of your work. Many gardens had flowering shrubs and some had colourful herbaceous borders. On the approach roads farmhouses surrounded by outbuildings and neat yards were in the main and here too the standard of presentation was excellent.

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

We approach Ballyheane along the L1700 and were surprised to see how busy the N84 was; perhaps it was the

time of day. The grass margins on all of the approach roads were neatly trimmed and hedgerows had been cut back to give good visibility. We recommend that instead of the wide mown grass margin which we noted, a narrow strip of mown grass along the outer edge is cut to show that the wilderness behind is deliberate. This method of presenting a roadside frontage is a great example of how to effectively present a semi-wild habitat in this type of setting and it also alerts the motorists that they are entering an urban setting and to reduce speed. We loved that pavements extended along some of your approach roads. If pavements exist, it encourages those living on the outskirts of the village to walk in to attend functions in the village. You have great stone walls along some of the entrance roads which were well maintained and which we admired. Village name signs, direction signs and speed signs were all clean and legible and easily read with nearby branches trimmed back. The solar panels on your name signs were noted.

Concluding Remarks:

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

- Insert photos into the relevant categories in the application form. Another job for your new PRO youth.
- We encourage you prepare a Five-Year Plan with projects under each category. Don't make it too onerous, one or two projects/activities under each category is sufficient. Just list what you know is feasible to achieve. You should add partners to this plan who will help with the projects as for many of them you will need help. Ask for advice/help from the Environmental Officer/Heritage Officer in Mayo Co Co.
- In the Application Form please number the projects New (N1, N2, N3 etc) and M (M1, M2, M3 etc). This same numbering system to be used to indicate the locations of these projects on a map – N1, N2, N3 etc. and M1, M2, M3 etc. This helps the adjudicators negotiate their way around your village and see the various projects. We have no doubt that you are doing more than you are telling us. Ask individuals/the community and see what's been done locally and then put those projects/activities in your application form. If you don't tell us we won't know. 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. This was our first visit to your village, and we wish to compliment you for the care and attention you give to your local community. Keep up the good work and we hope that this report provides some guidance for your programme next year.