

Tidy Towns Competition 2025

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Belcarra - Baile na Cora** Ref: **508**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **376**
Category: **A** Date(s): **12/06/2025**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2024	Mark Awarded 2025
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	52	53
Streetscape & Public Places	80	48	50
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	51	53
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	43	45
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	22	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	67	69
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	37	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	42
TOTAL MARK	550	361	376

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 application form, beautiful hand-drawn map, and Three-Year Plan 2025-2028.

For a village of 164 you have a committee of 8 and a regular voluntary group of 10. This is quite a sizable proportion of the population and you tell us that new residents have expressed an interest in joining you which is wonderful to hear. You have a Facebook Page which has 608 followers. We see that the last posting was 19th May. To be honest this isn't sufficient. Social media needs to be updated regularly in order to keep up the interest of your 'followers'. Your Belcarra.ie website is also out of date – this too needs updating with information about the village etc. As a youth to do this – send him/her photos and comments and ask them to become your PRO. Good on their C.V. – PRO for Belcarra Tidy Towns. Your application is very long – 44 pages this year. Please reduce this for next year and be more concise with your information. Long detailed paragraphs about activities are unnecessary for this application form. Your Community Involvement Section is 13 pages long too long. In addition, please carefully select the best category for activities/projects and put them there. It will avoid unnecessary repetition which will help reduce the size of the application form. You have a large number of projects mentioned but unfortunately at times failed tell us if they are New or Maintained – see concluding remarks. We read that you have been active in the village since 1962 – that's a wonderful commitment to you community. You celebrated 60 years participation in the competition by hosting a community exhibition in the Community Centre, showcasing historical photographs and archived newspaper records. A lovely idea ... a celebration for all.

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

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

The intersection of the two roads and the central location of the Manulla river makes for an interesting layout of your village. Your village, like many Irish villages, consists of single and two storey vernacular structures. Add to these the Sports Centre, the National School, St. Anne's RC Church, the Community Centre, and the old Arcadia Ballroom to complete the architectural merit of the village. The bridge over the Manulla river looked good – to repaint it every year is a commitment for your volunteers but the result is worth it. We noted you are seriously addressing the unoccupancy/ dereliction in the village and have undertaken work to improve their appearance. In addition, you have contacted Mayo Co Co about these properties. We're delighted to read that you discourage street clutter and signage, as these detract from the beauty of a streetscape. We see that you are alert to the sensitivity of new developments and wish to retain the village's rural ambiance. Truthfully this will be important as, in recent years, your village has seen developments - new estates etc. Good to read about the work undertaken at the

basketball/tennis court. This is an amenity which must to be kept clean if you hope your youth to use it. The Eviction Cottage and Tigín were visited. We read that these buildings are being care for by the Tidy Towns and nearby Elmhall residents. We suggest that grass is planted in the area around the battering ram as there was considerable weed growth here which made it very untidy. Grass is easier to maintain than gravel. We also strongly recommend that the ivy be removed from the walls of Tigín and elsewhere in Belcarra where it is growing on stone structures. Ivy should never be allowed to grow on stone structures (it's perfect for plastered/rendered walls) as the roots penetrate between the joints in the stonework final leading to the collapse of the structure. It should also never be allowed to grow on thatch – which we saw here. We liked the Shoeing Pit – good to see it in its original position beside the Forge. There are some very beautiful piers, wall and railings on one of the entrance roads – it would be wonderful to see these gates and railings repaired and repainted and the ivy removed from the walls. The pump wall needs a slight repair and then to be whitewashed.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

What a wonderful new facility you have in your village. A Multi-Use Games Area is brilliant for a village of your population (164) and it shows the great commitment of the villagers to improve facilities for all. The adjacent playground with the adjoining picnic benches is another success for the community. We admired the natural features and having sensory activities in addition to play activities is always good to see. You are involved in restoration work to the Church of Ireland graveyard and to the Elm Hall graveyard and have used goats from the Mulranny Society Old Irish Goats. We regularly recommend communities to use goats as they eat everything without causing damage to the structures. They are wonderful to graze and clear overgrowth and this has sometimes resulted in hidden gravestones being revealed. There are some wonderful stone-surround planting beds and hanging baskets around the village some of which are maintained by local residents. We see that you advise them on the planting which is important as sometimes flowers/plants have been selected by residents which are wonderful for colour but unfortunately are not pollinator friendly. The work which we read you undertook in The Common is admirable and now you maintain this communal space for all to enjoy. Next year take a photo of the muscari, snowdrops and daffodils and include this in your application form. We love to read of residents' associations planting trees so compliments to those of Elmhall for the mountain ash. Please encourage other associations to plant trees in community areas not required for ball play. You also maintain flower tubs around the village. Remember the best plant containers are those which are concealed by the plants so next year add some trailing plants to these. Waiting until end of May before cutting grass is something that many Tidy Towns committees are undertaking and we read that in Belcarra you too are encouraging this amongst your community. The Pride of Place tree no longer exists - plant a new one?

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

We admire that your aim is to create a village with a 'strong sense of community, vibrant and inclusive with respect for the environment being a key priority'. You take advice from the NPWS with regards to maintenance of your Riverside Walk and Biodiversity Trail. Good to see that intervention is minimal and yet good that you have made these trails for the community to enjoy. You don't need to inform us of the benefits of wildflowers – Tidy Towns adjudicators are aware of these. We loved your heat-sealed maps – we borrowed one and then returned it as requested. It's also great to see a local farmer has kindly provided access to Walshpool Lough and so you have another route for the community to enjoy. Nice to read that the local children are learning about the environmental damage caused by chemical pesticides. You use 'Organic Weedkiller' but didn't elaborate – tell us next year. The propagation of Ox-Eye Daisies is something you've undertaken and planting them in new areas will result in a wonderful array in future years. Great to read about the three local bee keepers and having the honey available in the local shop is excellent. We noted the swift boxes and read that so far you've had no success. Perhaps change the type of swift boxes as the new design isn't popular with house sparrows or starlings. As you know you'll need three of these as swifts nest in colonies. Maybe also purchase a lure/caller. See Birdwatch Ireland's website <https://birdwatchireland.ie/product/swift-nest-box/>. Good to read that Foróige were involved in making bat and bird boxes – we did spot a couple. What a great idea to install bee boxes in the new dry-stone wall – a first for us. Dawn Chorus Walks have become popular all over Ireland and we see that following the sighting of the yellow-crowned night heron, you too organised two walks. It was wonderful for those who attended that you had a local wildlife expert to answer questions. So, have you still got the heron? What a wonderful sighting and then the influx of birders from Ireland and abroad showed the community the rarity of the sighting.

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

Isn't it wonderful the you have been approved for grant assistance to develop a Community Energy Master Plan for the village and also that you have an expert mentor. Next year's adjudicators can read about progress. We love that you have a mobile water unit and we assume you use the rainwater harvested in this? To be honest nobody should leave their cars or busses running unnecessarily so maybe this is something you could promote seeing as how the NS has started the idea in the vicinity of the school. Good that the local butcher is sourcing the meat locally. Does he have his own slaughtering facility? These are now very rare in towns as usually the meat is brought to a meat plant or abattoir. Great that the NS is working towards their 6th Green Flag. We thoroughly support this programme. We read that they also took part in the Orchards in the Community Initiative which you organised and planted a mini orchard in the school grounds. It would have been good to see the water conservation promotion leaflet which you made – next year put a picture of it in you application form. We hope this reminder is during the summer months when water conservation is crucial and when many communities have hose pipe bans. We like the idea of the edible landscape in the village centre where members of the community have the freedom to pick fruit as they need it. Freshly picked fruit is so much tastier than fruit bought in a shop. Good to see that raised beds have been added as part of the Edible Landscape to publicise the Grow It Yourself campaign and we read that these

have been successful. The herb window boxes on the Community Centre were noted.

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. Compliments to the RSS team of workers and to your volunteers. Having residents from the surrounding townlands involved in litter picking etc in their own area is a great idea as it eases the burden on you and the volunteers while also alerting the wider community on the need for vigilance on litter, fly-tipping and weed growth. Although not a 'main road', your village is located on a busy road, and so like many other communities, you have additional work from passing motorists litter tipping. Compliments to the local businesses who clean and remove weed growth outside their premises. Rather than 'Scoop the Poop' posters we suggest that you paint 'Scoop the Poop' on the pavements/roads where dog fouling is a problem. This is more successful than signs. Also ask Mayo Co Co to provide litter bins at the beginning and end of these walkways. Good to see that you have a designated area for poster advertising local events. We love the idea of a Community Notice Board where posters are placed and then removed when the event is over. While it's great to have signage informing the community and visitor of sites, biodiversity, walks etc please don't clutter your village with signs. Signage clutters a streetscape and should be discrete in size and then carefully located.

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

We were delighted to see that the residents of the village have contributed positively to making the village extremely pleasant. Many had freshly painted houses, boundary walls and fences and also neatly kept gardens. Shrub and herbaceous borders were noted in many gardens on the approach roads and some residents had mature trees as features. Single and two storey traditional houses are the predominant style of houses along the approach roads while in the village centre you have terraced housing. In addition to the individual single and two storey houses mentioned above you have a number of housing estates which we visited. The residents of Cois na hAbhann have a new community meet and grow space Bruach na hAbhann. It was interesting to read of the collaboration which was involved in bringing this project to fruition – compliments to all. In Grianán Mhuire Social Housing the residents water the flowers bed, carry out litter picks and monitor the playground for litter etc. Elmhall residents also assist your group and have undertaken the upkeep of the Eviction Cottage area (see above in Streetscape) and the restoration of dry-stone walls. We're hoping that cement mortar wasn't used in the restoration. Residents in your other housing areas/estates are also involved - Ashview and Bun na Droma, Ballyfarna, Slí na hAbhann and Cuillare and Cois Baile. We suggest that the names of the estates on the dark limestones be carefully painted white so that they are clearer to read. We visited on a sunny day but we'd say on a rainy day the names are impossible to read.

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

The approach roads into the village were well maintained with neatly trimmed grass margins and hedges trimmed so as to give good visibility to the motorists. Trim only a narrow margin and allow the remainder of the grass to grow and produce wildflowers and grasses. We admired, stone surround planting bed and formal hedge trimming on the approach road junction entering from the south. Here the neatly trimmed grass is ideal as otherwise the stone planting bed would be hidden. We admire that some areas have a six-week mowing regime but remember you must trim a narrow margin along the road both for safety and also to show that the area behind is intentionally let grow. Road signs were clear and road markings legible. Some edge break up and potholes on approach roads but we assume you've already informed the area office of these. We read that the traffic calming measures installed are inadequate. Traffic speeding is a problem for many communities so we hope that you have this resolved soon for the safety of the villagers. You have a new carpark located in the church grounds which is also used by those using the Community Centre and other adjacent facilities. The rubber matting on the footbridge linking the Common and the Playground Area is perfect. But it will have to be maintained so be prepared for this additional work. Well done on the repairs to the dry-stone walls which were damaged by Storm Eowyn. As these are vital to the beauty of your streetscape, we encourage this repair work which unfortunately will probably increase due to the number of storms likely to occur in the future. What a lovely idea – Bóithrín na bPáisti. The photo of the small children learning to cycle in the safety of this path is wonderful. Compliments to the Foróige members on the mural – Land, Space, Sky and Sea. The Belcarra name sign was admired but don't allow the plants to grow and so to obscure it. The little grotto and seat tucked in at the side of the road was admired.

Concluding Remarks:

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

- 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. If you wish you can colour code the various categories to make it even clearer. This is to help the adjudicators to negotiate their way around your village and see the various projects or locations of projects.
- Please indicate the road names on the main roads in your map – every road in Ireland has either an N, R or L allocation and these are shown on the road signs.
- While your plan is very detailed it would be better if you aligned your projects/actions with the categories in the Tidy Towns application form. We recommend that you prepare a Five-Year Plan as most projects take time to complete/advance. Then allocate a member of your committee to advance the project and add the collaborators who will assist you. Then every year put a tick in a box to say if it has been completed. Some projects will have a tick every year and some not until year five.
- Please put ALL Future Projects, no matter how small, in this Plan and NOT in your application form. They

will in time be in your application form as NEW projects.

Please note 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.

We also ask that you make reference to the Sustainable Development Goals. We encourage you to look at the presentation by Limerick Co Co as it is extremely helpful

The link is : [https://www.limerick.](https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/media/documents/2021-03/sustainable-development-goals-helpful-hints.pdf)

[ie/sites/default/files/media/documents/2021-03/sustainable-development-goals-helpful-hints.pdf](https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/media/documents/2021-03/sustainable-development-goals-helpful-hints.pdf)

Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2025 competition. It was a pleasure to adjudicate Belcarra and we hope this report is helpful to you.