

Tidy Towns Competition 2025

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Shrule - Sruthair** Ref: **1516**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **314**
Category: **B** Date(s): **15/06/2025**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2024	Mark Awarded 2025
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	38	40
Streetscape & Public Places	80	42	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	42	44
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	39	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	20	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	46	48
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	38	40
TOTAL MARK	550	300	314

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 which included maps, photos and a three-year Enhancement/Action List. Your committee of four is joined by eight others when help is needed. Are there any people who've recently moved to the village to live? This is a great way to get volunteers as new residents want to get to know people in the village but may not be interested in joining sports clubs etc. Your social media accounts of Facebook and Instagram need to be regularly updated to keep the community interested. Post photos of flowers, views of aspects of the village, bees /butterflies, volunteers engaged in litter pick-ups, etc. etc. There should be at least one posting every week. We feel it's time you had a youth as your PRO who could assist you with this job. PRO for Shrule Tidy Towns will look good on their C.V. We liked the photo and post on Facebook of 29th March – post more like this. We're delighted to read that the community's pride of place has increased due to the participation in the Tidy Towns competition. There's no need to tell us about events that happened in 2017, 2019 etc. Just let us know of recent accolades/awards/events. The reference to the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals has been positively noted.

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

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

As we approached Shrule the wonderful castle and the derelict corn mill dominate the skyline. The village itself has single and two storey residences and commercial properties sitting comfortably side by side along the main street. This intermingling of residents and workers gives day and evening vibrancy to all villages including Shrule. To these we add St. Joseph's RC Church, Naomh Iosaf NS, the Community Centre and the handball alley to complement the architectural merit of the village. The Community Centre is a great facility and its location on the river bank at the edge of the village makes it accessible to pedestrians. The walls were a little grubby – time to repaint. Interesting reading about Shrule Castle, Rural Life in Shrule, Historic Sights and Steeped in History. Compliments to those involved in researching and presenting the information succinctly. The old crane house/ weighbridge building looked good. It's great to see these historic structures being appreciated and maintained by communities. Compliments on the bottle top murals – great bright colours on the stone wall. Unoccupancy and dereliction are a problem for you but those in this state were presented as best they could be – boarded windows and clean. We were delighted to see that business premises that had been converted to residential use still retained the fascia and name. This is part of your social and architectural heritage and we recommend that you encourage those converting commercial premises to keep up this practice. The labyrinth in the church grounds is interesting – is there a history

behind this? Nice to see the modern flat iron gates along the roadside – compliments to the blacksmith.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

We admire the low planters with a variety of pollinator friendly flowers and plants and admired that you had included trailing plants. We suggest however that permanent stone surround beds could be built in the place of many of these temporary planters. The three tier planters need trailing plants – remember the best plant containers are those which are concealed by the plants. We recommend that you undertake a survey of the village and only position planters in locations where they give maximum impact. The hanging baskets at the bridge were beautiful. While some of the flowers selected (petunias) aren't great for pollinators, they gave great colour and movement. We noted sucker growth on a number of your trees in communal open spaces. Remove these and also check ties and stakes. It would be good to see a few additional trees planted along your main street. They could be planted in build-outs between car parking spaces as you will see in other villages. The graveyard was very well maintained with a tarmac road and grass neatly cut around the gravestones. We admire your Village Green but suggest that some areas of the grass be allowed to grow to create a wildflower/wild grass nature friendly zone. Don't be tempted to put up signage – it will be obvious what you've planned.

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

Dry-stone walls, mature trees, hedgerows, large ruins, a river ... you have great locations of natural habitats, food sources and nesting sites. It was wonderful to read that you rebuilt the dry-stone wall at the Pound as these are wonderful habitats for insects and small mammals. The wildflower area here was admired but truthfully it should be much bigger. Just cut a border around this green space of 1M/1.5M and allow the remainder to grow as a natural wildflower/wild grass area. You don't need signs as it will be obvious with the neatly trimmed edge that the area beyond is intentionally let grow for biodiversity. Then when the seeds have scattered, cut the area and collect the grass etc. This will, in a year or two, develop into a wonderful wildflower area for you. You mention a Shrle Biodiversity Action Plan but failed to send it to us. Next year please send it as an appendix to the Application Form or as a separate document. We're delighted to read that Shrle Castle supports a population of swifts with a recent swift survey indicating six swifts nesting in the castle. The Black River 'supports rich biodiversity such as brown trout, salmon, heron, kingfisher and a variety of plant species.'

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

This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a global and a local problem. Tidy towns committees are encouraged to try and prevent the generation of waste when carrying out their day-to-day activities. You need to get the basics right and focus on simple but effective measures. We read that this year, using left over paint, you have painted planters along the streetscape which were made using discarded palettes. We also read that you have a village herb planting box. Have you thought about having a community garden? This is becoming very popular in villages where neighbours come and grow vegetables etc in raised beds, share cuttings, plants etc. or just sit and relax over a cuppa when the work is done for the day. Nice idea for you to have made the steel Christmas tree ... but we're traditionalists and love the real thing! The photos of the tree lit up at night time looked good. Do you help in the National School? It would be great if you became involved annually in, say, planting vegetables with 5th class, so that every child would have experience of growing vegetables etc. before they left National School. What has the GAA Sustainability Officer done since being appointed? Find out and tell us next year. We think the idea is wonderful and encourage more community groups to follow their lead.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your village was clean and tidy when we visited which is a commendation of how the villagers view your work. Compliments to you and to your volunteers. We liked your Shrle Village Enhancement Community Clean Up poster on your Instagram page. Hopefully you had additional volunteers as a result? We admired the GAA sign which clearly and discretely gave information of upcoming fixtures. Very often these signs are scattered and unnecessarily big. We compliment you on the removing of weed growth from your streets. Your pavements are cobble lock which we know is extremely time consuming with regards to weed control so we commend you volunteers for their work. A regular attention to weed growth using a hoe and a wire brush works wonders on cobble lock. But as you know it's ongoing - so well done. It would be good to clear the grass and weed growth from the steps leading to the river beside the Community Centre. To safely view the river up close would be excellent. We also recommend that you paint the metal gate which gives access to the steps. Remove all posters (including those of politicians) which are along the streetscape and which add clutter to a streetscape. We noticed ivy growth on stone walls and other stone structures including the castle. While ivy is wonderful for insect life and is acceptable/good on rendered (plastered) walls, it is not acceptable on stone structures as the roots penetrate between the joints in the stones, making the walls unstable and leading to their collapse. Natural stone constructions are in themselves great habitats for insect life and also very beautiful in the streetscape. Cut ivy at the base and when it is dead CAREFULLY remove it. Get advice from Mayo Conservation Architect and National Monuments before you attempt to remove the ivy from the castle, as we assume this is a National Monument.

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

The houses along the main street of the village are single or two storey, with access directly from the pavement. Many of these had been freshly painted and presented well. Colourful plants and flowers in window boxes or planters adorned some, which added to the beauty of the streetscape. On the entrance roads many of the houses had large gardens surrounding them which had wonderful pollinator friendly herbaceous borders and shrubs. You

have a number of houses in and on approach roads which are of historic interest and which we admired. These, set behind walls and railings and in mature tree lined gardens give opulence to the village. The name St. Ledger's Court should be repainted to make it easier to read. We admired the mature trees in the communal green space. Perhaps add a picnic bench to encourage residents to meet and mingle? Some of the gardens had a great display of catmint, lilies etc while others had specimen trees giving drama to their gardens. The large sloping green communal space in Churchfield should be allowed to grow and produce wildflowers and wild grasses. This space is unsuitable for ball play due to its contours and would be ideal for biodiversity. Paths could be cut through the long grass to allow younger children to run through and play. Good to see the trees along the grass margin on the entrance roads in this estate. In the immediate vicinity of the village and along the main road and local roads, there are farm houses with farmyards. Some had stone outbuildings while others had modern sheds and barns and, in the main all, were well maintained. Some of these farm yards had flat iron gates both old and modern which added to the streetscape. Boundary hedges were neatly trimmed giving good visibility to the motorist.

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

Being located on a National Road is a challenge for all communities in terms of through traffic and litter control and you are located on the busy N84 Galway to Castlebar road which brings its challenges to you. We entered from the south where we had with great views across the fertile lands of south Mayo. The Shrule village name signs are clearly visible but we were surprised to see them so close to the village. The treelined grass margin with stone surround pollinator friendly planting beds north of Dalgan Road is very impressive and adds greatly to the streetscape. Compliments to those who maintain this area. But remove the three-tier planter – it's incongruous here and definitely not necessary. We liked that the path width varies along the main street which adds additional interest to the streetscape. We noted some dipped paving at road junctions which gives those with mobility issues and those pushing buggies an easier passage. Compliments to Mayo Co Co. We admired the pedestrian ramp from Churchfields onto the pavement giving residents access to the church and surrounding areas. We noted an ash tree in the green space at the road junction to the north of the village which has ash die-back. Unfortunately we will lose many of our ash trees and our landscape will undergo a considerable change. Time to think about a replacement.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your village ... in addition to the above we have a few extra suggestions for 2026.

- Please provide a Legend with your map which will greatly assist future adjudicators.
- We note you have a Shrule Village Enhancement List with activities/projects using the categories in the Tidy Towns Application Form which is great. We recommend that you make it a 5-Year Plan as many projects take longer than three years to reach fruition. Add the name of one committee member to lead/advance the project as this will divide the workload more fairly. Put a tick after the activity annually, to say if it has been delivered. An Excel format is best for this Plan rather than a Word document as we suggest that you put a tick in a column annually after each project to say if it has been advanced or completed.
- ALL FUTURE PROJECTS will be in your plan. When they have been completed, then, and only then, will you include them in your Application Form, and then as a NEW project.

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 Shrule. Keep up the great work which is reaping its just rewards.