

Tidy Towns Competition 2025

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Swinford - Béal Átha na Muice** Ref: **361**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **334**
Category: **C** Date(s): **17/06/2025**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2024	Mark Awarded 2025
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	49	50
Streetscape & Public Places	80	46	48
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	43	46
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	39	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	26	28
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	32	34
TOTAL MARK	550	321	334

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 contained a map, plan, and photos of some of your projects. Your committee of six is joined by the Green School volunteers and also by new residents in the town which we're delighted to hear. Very often new residents want to become involved in their new home but don't want to join sport's clubs etc and Tidy Towns is an ideal prospect for them. We love the photos on your website showing all the volunteers involved. We also opened your Facebook page which has 1.7K followers and see that you post regularly which is vital to keep up the interest of the community. Good to hear that you involved the transition year students in projects – it's great that they become in doing something positive for their community as it gives them an appreciation of their area and a pride in their town. State, semi-state, voluntary clubs, and businesses support you with advice or financially which is perfect, as many projects need collaborators to see them being advanced/completed. Having a local area office is helpful as you can bring issues to them directly. We're delighted to read that being involved in Tidy Towns for over 29 years has given the community a cohesion which has resulted in physical improvements in the town over the years and also a sense of pride of place in the residents. Great that new businesses are attracted to the town which ensures its vibrancy for the future.

See Concluding Remarks for additional advice.

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

We entered along the N26 passing the well-maintained Swinford Football Club grounds with the freshly painted blue and white building and post and rail fencing. We're assuming it has been decided to leave the kerbs unpainted and to allow the existing white paint wear away in time. Swinford has, like many other Irish Towns, grown from a tight nucleus of single, two and three storey vernacular buildings, to one which has industrial, sports and residential accommodation dotted along all the approach roads. This growth sometimes creates suburbs which are independent of the main town – sometimes good, sometimes bad. You also have the RC Church of Our Lady of Christians with its adjoining presbytery, the Courthouse, the Town Hall, the old Union Workhouse, some wonderful bridges, the buildings of Swinford Railway Station etc adding to the beauty and merit of the town's architecture. We loved the entrance to the Swinford Union Burial Ground – the bright red metal plates are a wonderful notification of this site. The fast-growing laurel etc. on the passageway leading to the Burial Ground needs to be trimmed back so that it's inviting to walk along this narrow access route. You have made considerable efforts this year in presenting unoccupied/ derelict building and the fresh paint made them very presentable on your streetscape. Compliments to

all concerned. Unfortunately, there are more in need of your attention – so another job for you before next year's submission date. Many of the street names signs also need to be painted – some were virtually impossible to read. Please commend the many businesses and industrial units whose properties added to the overall beauty of the streetscape.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You have a great number of communal green spaces available to you. We loved Brabazon Woodlands and with its children's playground it's a wonderful area for everyone. We meandered along the paths and admired that while they are accessible gravelled pathways, the area still retains its woodland aspect. The Butterfly Garden was very pleasant. We admired it all – the timber edging to the planting beds, the selection of plants, the sculptures, the butterfly mural, the seating etc. Paint the name on the stone sign as it is worn. The Fairy Trail is overgrown – it needs your attention. We noted that quite a number of trees were uprooted in this woodland during Storm Eowyn and are still being cleared. This is something we've come across in other villages and towns. Compliments to all involved in the Wood Well project. Thank you for the before and after photos. We visited the area - what a transformation! The Swinford Amenity Park is wonderful – a busy spot when we visited. We visited MUGA Park which had quite an amount of litter/debris/weed growth. This area needs to be regularly maintained, as if not, it won't be used by your youth. We advise that a 1.5 meter grass margin is trimmed at the path edge to make this area more inviting. It would be great if a skateboard park could also be included in this area. The space is there for one so something for you to consider with Mayo Co. Co. There is quite a lot of sucker growth on your trees in communal open spaces – public and residential communal open spaces. These should be removed as they compete with the main tree for resources, and may harbour pests or diseases. Get advice on the correct way to remove them. It was wonderful to come upon large colourful planters which you've placed in strategic locations and which gave great impact to the streetscape. This is the best way to present planters so compliments to your landscape specialists. Next year we'd recommend adding some trailing plants to these to make even more of an impact. The hanging baskets added great colour and movement to your streetscape. The Youth Memorial Garden is quite special – we sat for a while and just listened to the birds.

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

On the approach road we admired that sections of the grass at Swinford Football Club have been allowed to grow and now wildflowers and grasses grow as a source of food for insects and a habitat for small mammals. Elsewhere in the town you have great mature trees, stone walls and waterways which gives you additional habitats and food sources. We read that you have a biodiversity plan and that you grow 'more wildflower areas on our approach roads'. We didn't see the plan so next year add it as an appendix. Many communities have engaged with 'No Mow May' which allows our spring flowers to continue to bloom as a food source for our insects before the early summer flowers are open. Maybe this is something you could do along the roadways and also encourage the residents to do? Good to read that one of the Tús workers is a horticulturalist and advises you on your planting regime and on the implementation of the Biodiversity Plan. Perhaps it's time to organise some nature walks? A tree walk in Brabazon Woodland springs to mind and should be easy to arrange with your Tús worker taking the lead? We're delighted to read of the success of the swift project. When we were there, at one stage we heard the swifts circling around. Have you data for before 2024 in order to compare? If not just compare 2024 and 2025 in next year's application form and hopefully you'll have equal success this year. We suggest that you inform the residents' association of suitable pollinator plants to grow – visit the National Biodiversity website and examine the booklet 'Local Communities: Actions to help Pollinators' and put a list of the plants which are good for our pollinators on your website page and perhaps on the notice board in the church. Another good publication is the Heritage Council (2004) Conserving and Enhancing Wildlife in Towns and Villages – a guide for local community groups.

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

The little Free Library - Take a Book Leave a Book - was noted. Again, with the butterfly theme. Nice to see a seat beside it so people can have a quick read before they select their book. There was quite an amount of weed growth in the raised planting beds etc. in the National School – we think they could use your expertise and help. We suggest that every year you invite the children of, say 5th class, to plant flowers and vegetables and then every child will have the experience, before they leave National School, of growing seeds and seeing flowers and vegetables grow. This might encourage them to do this at home too. Good to see the new Community Orchard planted with native Irish apple trees. Is it planned to make a Community Garden in this area? It's quite a large open area near housing estates so it would be an ideal location. Your Tús horticulturalist is advising you on growing your flowers and shrubs from cuttings and seeds gathered from the locality. Where is this being done? We'd like to visit the polytunnel next year. You mention that the watering needs are met by 100% harvested water. We looked for rain water harvesting tanks on community buildings but didn't see any. Where are these harvesters located? Do you have plant swaps with the community? Add photos if you do. Do you know of other community groups/ businesses in Swinford and their approach to Sustainability. Let us know what others are doing and how you've interacted with them. What are local shops doing with food waste, packaging etc? We liked that your website has facts and tips about sustainability. Keep adding to this area to keep the community informed.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We're delighted to read that you take part in the An Taisce annual Litter Clean-Up and you hold it annually on Easter weekend with the main volunteers concentrating on Good Friday. Your town was fairly clear of litter when we visited but weed growth was noticed in quite a few areas – boundary walls, roadside kerbs, paths etc. We read that you have a road sweeper who clears the weed growth once a year in early spring. Unfortunately weed growth occurs throughout the growing season, so you need to ask your volunteers to bring a hoe and stiff brush with them when

they are litter picking. It takes a little while longer but it'll make a huge difference to the presentation of the town if the weed growth is also removed. We read that you have been in contact with all businesses and householders to help to keep the weeds and litter at bay outside their premises. While most of the business community are doing this, unfortunately only some residents are doing it. We recommend that you ask the residents' associations/residents again. You've done wonderful work on trimming back the overgrowth along the stream/river along Riverside etc. This work is necessary to maintain the health and flow of the water. We were delighted to see that ivy growth was removed from the old workhouse (the remains of the dead stems can be seen). Elsewhere ivy was noticed on stone walls which we advise should be removed. While ivy is a wonderful for insect life and is acceptable/good on rendered (plastered) walls it is not acceptable on stone structures. Ivy causes damage to stone structures as the roots enter between the joints in the stones, making the walls unstable which leads to their collapse. Natural stone constructions are in themselves great habitats for insect life and also very beautiful in the streetscape. Good to see you have a WEEE collection. Quite a number of poles need to be repainted e.g. Swinford Loop Walks (The Fairy Village) etc. Unfortunately, the bring banks were quite untidy – litter, weed growth, cardboard boxes, plastic bags, fly-tipping etc.

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

Along the streets in the centre of the town there are single and two storey residences which have a great variety of architectural styles and details. Some have dripstones, others dominant door cases, while others have oriel windows; all adding beauty to the streets. Please commend those who made an effort and had freshly painted facades, window boxes or hanging baskets which added to the presentation of the streets. We love to see when commercial properties have been converted for residential use that the fascia and name are retained e.g. O'Haras. Please commend the residents who have done this. These are part of the architectural, artistic and social history of your town and so we encourage you to protect this history. We admired the variety of trees lining the communal open spaces at Cois Abhainn, Rathunas and Dún na Rí and Rath Dubh estates. We read that the housing estates have residents' associations and that they receive a small annual grant for the maintenance of their estate. Compliment to the residents of Brabazon Heights – we loved that some of the communal green space had been allowed to grow and so, as a result, we noticed buttercups, clover etc, growing and butterflies visiting. Many of the estates need to have their names repainted as they were difficult to make out. Have you a Best Kept Estate competition? As you have quite a number of estates, most of whom have residents' associations, this is something you might introduce – nothing like a little friendly rivalry. An awards presentation evening could be arranged where you could invite elected local representatives, Co Co officials and the local press. Some additional publicity for your volunteers is always helpful.

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

We were happy to see a narrow grass margin cut along the entrance roads to Swinford informing the motorist that they are entering an urban settlement and so need to reduce speed. We admired the tree lined entrance roads with wildflowers growing beneath. Road signs and directional signs were clean, easily read and informative. The planting beds at the bases of road directional signs were very good – a variety of tall and low shrubs and flowers always contributes extra interest to planting beds. Disappointing to see that the letters on the stone 'Welcome to Swinford' were in need of painting and also the sign was beneath low hanging branches and slightly hidden from view. The grass margin along this stretch of road also needs to be cut regularly. In the town we noticed quite a few areas along the streetscape where there were potholes and edge break up. Also, road markings were worn. Do you know if you're in line for repair works? Something to check with the area office. We noted quite a few areas where there were rumble strip and dipped kerbs making it easier for those with mobility issues and those pushing buggies to cross the roads. Good to see the disabled parking space clearly marked outside the National School gate.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your town ... but we have a few additional suggestions for 2026.

- Insert the photos into the relevant categories in the Application Form. As we no longer have a hard copy it's quite awkward to scroll up and down when we're on site, to see photos and projects referrals.
- We see that you have a five-year plan (ending this year) with actions/projects under various categories which is great. We suggest some improvements for your next five-year plan. Instead of having short, medium and long-term projects, just list the projects vertically using the categories in the Tidy Towns Application Form. Then add the name of one member of the committee who will lead/advance the action/project so that the work load is divided amongst the members. Next add the names of collaborators, as many of the projects will need others in conjunction with the committee. Next, annually put a tick in a box to say if the project is complete or advanced. This way you see progress over the five years. It's best to do this in Excel rather than in Word as you'll need vertical columns.
- 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)

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 adjudicate Swinford. Keep up the good work and we hope this report is useful as you plan your work for 2025/2026.

