

# Tidy Towns Competition 2025

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **The Neale - An Eill** Ref: **796**  
County: **Mayo** Mark: **339**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **14/06/2025**

|                                           | Maximum<br>Mark | Mark<br>Awarded 2024 | Mark<br>Awarded 2025 |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Community – Your Planning and Involvement | 80              | 49                   | 50                   |
| Streetscape & Public Places               | 80              | 42                   | 44                   |
| Green Spaces and Landscaping              | 80              | 50                   | 52                   |
| Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality  | 55              | 18                   | 19                   |
| Sustainability – Doing more with less     | 55              | 19                   | 20                   |
| Tidiness and Litter Control               | 90              | 70                   | 71                   |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas       | 55              | 37                   | 39                   |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes           | 55              | 43                   | 44                   |
| <b>TOTAL MARK</b>                         | <b>550</b>      | <b>328</b>           | <b>339</b>           |

### 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, map, photos and The Neale Heritage & Development Association 3-5 Year Fact Sheet. Your committee of four is joined by eight to ten others when additional help is needed. Other villages have approached people who've recently moved into their village, so perhaps you too could do this and ask that they become involved in just one project/event/activity. We see that your social media account of Facebook Neale Heritage, with 457 friends, hasn't been updated since 6th November 2024. If you want to keep the community interested in your work you need to regularly update your Social Media account. Post photos of community events, flowers, views of aspects of the village, bees /butterflies/insects, volunteers engaged in litter pick-ups, etc. etc. There should be at least one posting every week. We suggest you ask a youth in the village to take on the role of PRO. PRO for The Neale Heritage Tidy Towns will look good on their C.V. Good to see that in addition to state and semi-state organisations you also have support from local businesses. Don't forget to approach other voluntary groups in your locality too. We're delighted to read that you have been involved in the Tidy Towns competition for over twenty years and that with the involvement the interest of the community endures with a pride of place increasing every year. Well done and keep up the good work.

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

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

Your village has residences and businesses sitting comfortably side by side giving the street its vibrancy. Add to these the RC church of Saint John the Baptist, the O'Brien Memorial Hall, The Neale NS (the gates need painting), and Pyramid Pals to add to the architectural interest and merit of the village. You also have a handball alley along the main street as part of your social and cultural heritage. Great to see that it is still in use. We admired the kissing gate – to where did this give access historically? We were delighted to read that new benches were built for those using the Local Link bus service and making them from trees which fell during storm Eowyn is excellent. Compliment to those who made them. Please also compliment the businesses in the village who make an effort to present their properties to add beauty to your streetscape – Piccola Sophia/ Mellottes Bar. We visited the pyramid - what an amazing structure! Good to read that it was restored in the 1990s. The Neale Cemetery is unusual in that it is accessed through a neatly mown area/field from the road. The roofless, but otherwise almost intact, Neale CofI Church with its three-stage tower, dominates this well-maintained graveyard. We admired the piers and entrance gates and was delighted to see them free of notices which we come across on so many other graveyards. Compliments to the artist on the great work to the derelict house with the painting of Oífig an Poist - with man exiting

the building, the postbox, the bicycle, and the cat looking at the bird, etc. Great detail and very well executed. The grotto in the church grounds is a wonderful structure. In addition to the calvary scene etc the base with the stone mosaics is quite beautiful. Remove any vegetation which grows on this as, in time, it will cause damage. The trellis surrounding the cabin was very well made. The pump area is pleasant – we were happy to see that it wasn't cluttered with flower planters which we often see. The pump and wall are strong statements and don't need anything else.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

The green space with low stone walls at the L5659 junction was well presented (is this the O'Malley Park? You didn't mark it on the map). Here you have picnic tables and benches, litter bins and stone edged pathways in neatly mown green areas. The gravel had some weed growth – rake it regularly to address this. Your 'Urban Plantation' of native trees are doing well – check the ties and stakes and remove any sucker growth. In a small plantation such as this we wonder why you didn't plant all the same species? We admired the Long Stone area with the four red bucket planters. Generally, not a colour we'd recommend and yet here, with the grey of the stone, they're perfect! The raised stone surround planting bed near the O'Brien Memorial Hall was pleasant but we recommend that you plant tall flowers and also trailing plants for additional interest. At the moment the planting is quite sparse for such an imposing bed. We admire the timber planters at the entrance to The Neale Cofl Cemetery – off the ground they're more impressive. We admired that here you added trailing plants for impact. You have a number of planters on grass areas where it would be more suitable to have permanent stone-surround planting beds. In addition to being more suitable they also need less watering. We noticed a that a considerable number of trees in various open green spaces had suckers growing. These need to be removed to allow the tree to grow correctly. Great to hear that for 80% of the year there are flowers on show in your beds. Flowers are particularly needed in the early spring for our pollinators and also to cheer us up after the long dark winter.

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

The aim of this category is to encourage people to recognise, engage and celebrate the biodiversity and the richness of the wildlife habitats in their surroundings. With the great number of stone walls, hedgerows, mature trees and the churches and graveyard you have a great variety of habitats for insects, mammals and birds - the stone walls are a great habitat for insects and the many hedgerows and tall trees are wonderful nesting and roosting sites for birds. Knowledge of your area and promoting this knowledge to the local population and passing visitor are the key components of this category. Have you engaged with the community – had any visiting experts to discuss what's in your area? Have you organised a dawn chorus walk? Try to list the plants and animals to be found in your area here and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). This information can be fun to gather and you can involve the school children or other interested parties. Raise awareness through holding events such as hedgerow walks or bat walks. Contact the Irish Wildlife Trust for more information. We suggest that you use more pollinator friendly plants and flowers in your planting beds and window boxes and that you encourage the community to do likewise. 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 perhaps on the notice board in the church and on your Facebook page. The Heritage Council (2004) 'Conserving and Enhancing Wildlife in Towns and Villages – a guide for local community groups' is also a good guide. We noticed some bird boxes – have you had any success with these? Good to read that you've become involved in No Mow May – it's only for a month and until the summer flowers appear, the pollinators need help from us by keeping late spring wildflowers.

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

This category is one where many communities struggle, but it's just 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 lead the community and to try and prevent the generation of waste when carrying out their day-to-day activities. We advise that you get the basics right and focus on effective, simple measures. We admired the new seats in the Cofl graveyard and in the village centre; the split logs seats with tree trunk uprights made from trees that fell during storm Eowyn. We're assuming you've applied some sealant to them so that they won't rot? We noticed the abandoned raised planting beds on the gravel area in the school grounds. Perhaps offer to undertake planting of vegetables and flowers with one class (say 5th) each year. This way every child will have experienced growing vegetables and flowers from seed before they leave national school. If there is a suitable area in the school grounds fruit bushes and fruit trees could also be planted. Good to see some bicycles in the bike shed in the school grounds. We see that a footpath extends from the village to the school which makes it safe for the children and parents to walk. We were happy to read that you make your own compost for your planting beds. This cuts down on the waste associated with bought compost. We liked the idea of recycling the meal buckets – but remember a permanent planting bed is what we'd recommend over temporary planters. When you use planters, such as these, group them together for impact. We admired the photo of the boy using the drill. Good to see them learning skills at a young age.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

We see that like most Tidy Towns committees you took part in the An Taisce annual Spring Clean-Up event, where bin bags, gloves etc are supplied. Great that you had a great turnout for the day as this event focuses the attention of a village community on the need to be attentive to litter, weed growth, fly-tipping and tidiness. When we visited the village was virtually litter free so compliments to your active -retired members who undertake this weekly job. Unfortunately weed growth was noticed in some areas - at kerbs, base of walls and in open gravel areas. Ask the litter pick-up volunteers to also address weed growth. Visibility of the weed barrier membrane somewhat detracted from the overall finish in spots but this is easily resolved with increased depth of the gravel. The ivy on the walls at

The Neale Cofl cemetery and elsewhere around the village 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. Here the ivy roots penetrate between the joints in the stones, make the walls unstable which in turn leads to the collapse of the structure. Remember that natural stone constructions are in themselves great habitats for insect life and also very beautiful in the streetscape/landscape. We noticed an empty notice board and wonder what do you intend posting here. The bottle bank area was quite untidy – bottles and litter on the ground and the sign should either be removed or replaced as it's very worn. We also wonder why is it SO big?

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

The houses in the village centre are vernacular single or two storey, with access through small gardens. Some of these had been freshly painted and presented well. Some had stone boundary walls to the road with tall hedging giving privacy and a sound buffer from the road. Some had colourful plants and flowers, which added to the beauty of the streetscape while others had great mature trees surrounding them. Along the entrance roads many of the houses had large gardens surrounding them which had wonderful pollinator friendly herbaceous floral borders and shrubs. We particularly admired the presentation of the large house on the Ballyshingadaun road – well maintained stone boundary wall, recessed splayed entrance and well-presented pollinator friendly garden. In the immediate vicinity of the village, along the main road and local roads, there are farm houses surrounded by neatly kept farmyards. Some of these had beautiful stone outbuildings while others had modern sheds and barns. Roadside boundary hedges along the fields were neatly trimmed giving good visibility to the motorist.

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

Your main approach road the R334 has neatly trimmed grass margins and we love that the footpath extends beyond the village sign encouraging your community to walk in safety along this road. The village name signs and treatment of the approaches to the village are clear visible symbols that motorists are entering a urban settlement and so they need to reduce speed. Your road directional and speed signs were clean. The letters of the village name and Fáilte sign on the Ballyshingadaun road needs to be carefully painted in white as they are illegible at present. It's wonderful to see footpaths extending from the village to the outskirts and beyond to encourage the community to access the Community Hall, National School and Childcare facility on foot. We admired the stone kerbs along the footpaths which ensures that the adjacent grass is contained. In the village along the main road and at road junctions you have a number of stone-surround planting beds which were very beautiful. We see that in these you had planted some pollinator friendly plants and flowers which were buzzing with insect life when we went closer to admire them. We noted a dropped kerb; good to see these, as they give those pushing buggies and those with mobility issues an easier way to cross a road.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

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

- You will have seen in the Tidy Town's application form that we request applicants to number their projects as, new projects (N), or improved/maintained projects (M). You are to give each action/project a number as New (N1, N2, N3 etc.) or Maintained (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 is to help the adjudicators to negotiate their way around your town and see the various projects or locations of projects. Please also provide a Legend with your map which will greatly assist future adjudicators.
  - Insert the photos into the application form under the appropriate category – another job for your new young PRO.
  - We see that you have a 3-year Factsheet with some activities/projects listed. We recommend that you make a 5-Year Plan as many projects take longer than three years to reach fruition. Use the categories in the Tidy Towns application form and add one or two actions /projects under each. Don't make it too onerous- just what you feel you can deliver with help from collaborators e.g. Mayo Co. Co. etc. 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 or if it is on-going.
  - 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 The Neale. Keep up the good work which is reaping its just rewards.