Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre:	**Athy - Áth Í**	Ref:	**354**
County:	**Kildare**	Mark:	**370**
Category:	**F**	Date(s):	**20/07/2026**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	54	56
Streetscape & Public Places	80	50	53
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	48	50
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	41	42
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	26	28
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	58	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	39	41
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	39	41
TOTAL MARK	**600**	**355**	**370**

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Fáilte go Comórtas Bailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2026. Go raibh maith agaibh as bhur n-iarratas a chur isteach. Maith sibh as an obair atá déanta agaibh in bhur gceantar go dtí seo - guíonn muid gach rath oraibh in bhur dtionscadail amach anseo.

Athy Tidy Towns is very welcome back to the National Tidy Towns Competition, you have been a very active participant in the competition for 28 years, which is a marvellous record for you to continue to maintain.

For 2026, Tidy Towns have entered into Catergory F Large Town population between 10001 and 15000.
Your current active committee of 7 members and an incredible number of up to 100 volunteers work regularly on your projects, including your big clean up and river clean up days. You are also supported by a CE worker in helping keep your town in good condition.

Thank you to Athy Tidy Towns for your excellent submission, it is fully appreciated that putting an entry together for any community requires a lot of effort. Thank you also for taking account of the organiser's request to limit the length of your submission, that is much appreciated.

You have highlighted that many organisations, agencies and numerous committed individuals have contributed to the Athy submission.
Tidy Towns have worked with the local Green Schools, especially Scoil Phadraig Naofa. The Athy Youth Café, Athy Skate Park and the Junior Dragon Boat Club have all supported the work of the Tidy Towns.

In December 2025 Athy Scouts were named winners of the Tidy Towns Youth Endeavour Award in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the Spring Clean and their continued efforts in recycling and reuse projects. Well done also to the scouts and their leaders on also winning the south Kildare county shield, which was held over three three days at Lough Dan in Co Wicklow. The scouts are always prepared to turn up either in Athy or Nationwide.

Without exception all of the entrants from Kildare, including Athy Tidy Towns, identified the support and assistance of Kildare County Council - the high standard achieved by the county's Tidy Towns family both in the past and in 2026 are a testament to the ongoing commitment and energy of the County Council.

You have also attached your very detailed 2021- 2026 Plan which sets out the timeline and current status of projects in the town.
Your attached map is also included with your entry which usefully identifies some of the key projects identified in

your submission.
The enclosed photographs also added to the level and detail of information provided.
Great job, well done to all who helped out, especially those many hardy souls who turned up for the annual Athy Blueway river clean-up.

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

Athy is a historic maket town, very well located on the banks of the Barrow and also sitting on the Grand Canal. It has great streets, many public squares and places, and a collection of fine buildings, housing, retail and hospitality businesses, a number of shopping cenrtres, and many schools and churches. Athy is also served by mainline rail.
Without doubt or question the single most important urban regenerarion project to take place in Athy or indeed in Kildare in recent years is the delivery of the Shackleton Museurm remodelling the Town Hall and the upgrading of Emily Square to a very high standard, complete with statue of Shackleton, high quality street furniture and seating, heritage trail and information signage, very good art including murals (Sweet Athy amongst others), and for this adjudicator one of the many highlights of the whole project, the 40-metre-long centrepiece, a continuous stone installation stylised outline of the River Barrow, traced through the limestone paving. The relatively minor disruption and inconvenience of having this project completed in the middle of a busy town was well worthwhile.
While the Museum is the stand-out landmark of the regeneration, the Court House and the Bank of Ireland building and the other buildings including retail and hospitality businesses all add to the general positive atmosphere of this particular part of the town.
It is also acknowledged that the 2025 adjudicator's comments were taken on board by the Tidy Towns - on the day of inspection the painting of the Grotto was underway.
Your submission identified the major renovation of the victoria tudor Old Model School, at Dublin Road and it is an excellent example of recycling a building which is no longer fit for it's original stated purpose, congratulations to all involved in this project, on the fine sunny day of inspection it looked to be a great place to go to work in.

Another brilliant example of Athy repurposing a landmark building is your library building of very modern architecture that previously housed a Dominican church. To get some idea of Athy's historical legacy the Heritage Trail sign notes that the Dominicans first established a church here in 1257. Athy is truly standing on the shoulders of giants. From the outside the 1965 building is an architectural and engineering wonder. Inside, the remodelled library has kept virtually everything the same as it was before, including the cross and the beautiful stained glass windows. This library deserves to be properly signposted. It is at the end of Convent Lane overlooks the Barrow.

The Augustus Bridge over the canal and the very fine and very unusually named Croom A Boo five arch bridge over the river also deserves positive mention offering excellent views over the waterways and buildings. Whites Castle remains an imposing landmark for the town.

The signs on the bridge need to be repainted as do the finger post signs at the rear of the Courthouse and sign directing visitors to St. Michael's Medieval Church in the graveyard.

While there is some evidence of vacancy and dereliction Athy has so much to admire and value. Many of the shopfronts are excellent. The fact that grants are available for improvements, particularly the Council's Athy Building Enhancement Financial Support Scheme, is very much welcomed.

It was also encouraging to see that many businesses has made provision for outdoor seating and dining facilities on the streets, most notably around Emily Square. While this option presents challenges and needs to be managed, particularly with regard to litter control, it will encourage increased pedestrian traffic and result in increased footfall for all businesses in the town.

Space does not permit this report to identify or detail every highlight of the town of Athy but the classic railway station building (and it's connection with the renowned railway engineer William Dargan), the Gate Lodge at the Peoples Park, and the simple gothic Presbyterian Church must to be mentioned.

Athy fully deserves it's Heritage Town status.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The Peoples Park at Church Road across from the Railway Station is the jewel in the crown of the town's green space, and it is no surprise that the Tidy Towns group has helped maintain this wonderful amenity. The Tree Trail was excellent, with information on the species of trees in the park is contained, in Irish, English and Latin on the boards placed throughout the park. showing off the wonderful tree cover that the park enjoys.
Apparently the park has 40 species of trees and quite a few of the tree species (including giant redwood and holm oak) in this park are not seen everyday in Ireland. The ground planting and grassed areas were also of a high standard.
Even though the signs are new some of them seem to have aged rather quickly.
The park and playground were being fully enjoyed by a lot of young and old on the day of the visit. It was also encouraging to see the installation of a communications board in the park .
The barrier and gate to the Park car-park are in poor condition and need to be re-painted.
The stone walls to the Park and car-park are in very good condition. As your plan observes, the existing stone walls are a recognised urban habitat.
Congratulations to the Peoples Park Committee on their winning the Tidy Towns Community Award - well deserved.

The primary focus of your efforts this year relate to the not insignificant work of maintaining the car-parks, and cleaning and painting of litter bins and benches in the town, replacing litter bins where necessary, maintaining and looking after the planters and maintaining the shrubs at the landmark Leinster Street roundabout.
The river Barrow and the Canal both offer green spaces to the town even though access is limited in some locations. It is very encouraging to hear that the river clean-up is followed by a number of very interesting events so that the waterways become another great facility for the town and for the visitors to the town.
It was probably as a result of the extended period of dry weather but the planters to the front of the Municipal Offices were suffering on the day of the visit.
It was very encouraging to see the great work continuing at St. Michael's Old Cemetery.
Well done also for the innovative use of a repurposed red canoe flower planter filled with grasses sitting on the green space outside the main entrance of the Athy Library. You might look at the canoe again to see if it needs an upgrade.

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

The increased importance of Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality for all communities is recognised in the increased scoring for this category for the 2026 Tidy Towns competition.
Your major new biodiversity project in the last year was working with the students and teachers of Scoil Phádraig Naofa on the planting of native hawthorn, crab apple, blackthorn, guelder rose and spindle - hopefully the planting thrives and survives.
As part of your education and outreach activities you organised a very successfully night-time bat walk and talk which was fully booked out - this shows that there is a lot of interest in nature and biodiversity in the community - hopefully you will be encouraged to host similar activities and walks and talks in the coming year.
You have previously assisted the installation of swift boxes at the Old Model School, has there been any monitoring of the boxes during the year?
To care for bird boxes you should clean them out annually between October and November, use boiling water instead of harsh chemicals, and apologies for stating the obvious, but please avoid disturbing active nests during the spring and summer.
Athy is very well placed to take part in the numerous citizen science programmes and Tidy Towns members might be interested in exploring these options.
You might also consider preparing an updated Biodiversity Action Plan for Athy, the Council's Biodiversity Officer will be able to help.

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

The increased importance of Sustainability for all communities is recognised in the increased scoring for this category for the 2026 Tidy Towns competition.
Most groups are very active in encouraging community members to make their area more sustainable by their actions and Athy is to the forefront in this category.
You have undertaken or participated in a wide range of activities and actions driven by the urgent need to become a sustainable community. Tidy Towns have recognised the need to partner and join up with like minded organisations so as to deliver positive results for the whole community.
Well done to all the Green Schools in Athy, well done to the outstanding Food Hub, and continuing the food theme, well done to The Community Garden being run by Our Shared Plate, and the other community gardens and allotments in the town, and well done to all who worked on Athy's participation in the Sustainable Energy Communities Network.
Last year's adjudicator noted the commitment of Tidy Towns to active travel, particularly increased cycling and using public transport and it is very encouraging to see that together with Kildare Sports Partnership there is a very energetic push for cycling opportunities. Is maith an-spraoi an rothaiocht as gaelige. It is important to encourage the provision of the infrastructure to encourage cycling in and around the town, Athy appears to have provision for bike parking in several locations in the town and the cycling routes along the canal and the river are very popular but perhaps more might be considered in Athy, to incorporated cycling into the daily lives of all, for example the promotion of Safe Routes to schools.
The versatile customised Town Tree initiative sounds very interesting - hopefully next year's submission will includ some photos of the various events during the year being celebrated.
The principle of a circular economy model involves sharing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible. Congratulations on the development of the Circular Economy Centre in St. John's Lane.
Your participation in the Regen Tech programme is also another example of where Athy is taking a lead - next year's submission from your town will be very interesting.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Athy Tidy Towns Committee and the dedicated volunteers from Tidy Towns and from the many other groups together with the employees of Kildare County Council have yet again put in an exceptional effort in 2025 and 2026 to ensure that Athy has a high standard of tidiness and litter control in all of the public areas visited including along the canal and the Barrow.
You have assisted with the clean-up after the many events and festivals that are a feature of living in and visiting Athy. You have also been proactive in addressing the issue of dog fouling

It appears that the installation of the CCTV cameras at the Recycling Centre at Edmund Rice Square has been effective - on the day of inspection there was no littering or dumping in evidence at either of the rows of bins here.

Similarly the AES Recycling Civic Amenity Centre and the approach road to the centre appeared to be well maintained.

Special word of mention to those who have helped keep the various church grounds and graveyards in good condition, particularly those who have worked on St Michaels Old Cemetery and St Michaels New Cemetery

The only exceptions noted to the generally high standard seen throughout Athy was some evidence of anti-social behaviour and litter left behind next to the graveyard wall at the end of one of Rheban Manor cul-de-sacs, and the other disappointing area was the pedestrian ramp down to the railway station from the Bothar Bui/Fairfield entrance. These particular instances of littering and dumping stood out because they were very much out of character with the rest of Athy.
Along with many other Tidy Towns groups, Athy Tidy Towns have undertaken to assist and co-ordinate the very successful KCC "Green Kilometre" initiative, which allows for an increase in scope of the work of the Tidy Towns outside the current town boundaries.
Congratulations on your work

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

The residents of the various estates and the wider community of Athy continue to maintain and keep their homes, gardens and streets to a very high level.
As the previous adjudicator has suggested, your Tidy Towns Best Kept Estate competition between estates is a great event which motivates and acknowledges the efforts of residents for their efforts. It is also a great opportunity for the various residents associations and representatives to socialise with one another which is all important for any community. The various categories are a good idea to allow the different estates compete on a relatively level playing field given the differences in the estates.
The Best Shop Front awards are also a great initiative, well done to O'Briens (love the mobile planters), the Central Bar and the Clanard Court Hotel
All of the estates visited including Ashville, Mansfield Grove, Rheban Manor, and Bothar Bui were well maintained with colourful gardens, some with flower boxes and hanging baskets. The green space, verges, and trees in the estates were all in good condition.
Some of the estates might be encouraged to follow a reduced mowing regime. A 6-week mowing cycle allows clovers and daisies to return for pollinators.
In some instances it might be time to make sure that the stakes and support ties to the trees might be inspeacted, and also ground planting is preferred to the use of planters and containers placed on grassed areas.
Well done also on taking pre-emptive appropriate action to either prevent or minimise bonfire damage at Halloween, excellent.

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

Initial entry into Athy was from the N78 Dublin Road roundabout, continuing through on the R428 to link up with the N78 again, and returning via the Distributor Road.

The approach roads into Athy are clean, with clear signage and markings and well maintained.

All approaches had neatly trimmed grass verges and well maintained hedgerows and trees.

Appropriate traffic calming measures are in place and while the entrances in and out of the town were busy, and traffic kept moving. There was also provision for pedestrian traffic in the town.

As mentioned previously the Tidy Towns work to the planters in the town and the re-painting of the Mornastervin Road grotto have added greatly to the town's appearance

Concluding Remarks:

Athy Tidy Towns can take much pride and satisfaction in the great work helping to retain the heritage of the town while at the same time planning and developing to cater for your expanding population.

Keep up the good work and thank you.

Go raibh maith agaibh go léir.