

Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballina - Béal an Átha** Ref: **766**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **397**
Category: **F** Date(s): **07/07/2026**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	58	60
Streetscape & Public Places	80	51	53
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	55	57
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	50	52
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	30	32
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	61
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	37	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	42	44
TOTAL MARK	600	383	397

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. Ádh mór. Ballina Tidy Towns we are heartened to hear of your resilience following the theft of your tools and equipment built up over your 36 years in the competition. The silver lining as you discovered was the appreciation and support you received that allowed you to rebuild and realise the value of your work in the community. It obviously didn't deter you submitting a clear, well-illustrated entry supported by your 3-year plan. Your core committee works hard to motivate up to 400 volunteers and nurture good collaborative links with schools, local community groups, state agencies and businesses interests. You operate a wide communication channel through print and social media platforms, and you also use direct contact. The specific project that you have identified for particular effort this year is the Cascade Project - Reimagining Ballina's Laneways for Climate and Community. Involvement in the competition you tell us has elevated town pride and improved Ballina socially and environmentally and has had positive economic benefits.

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

Ballina has a fine streetscape and riverside setting which tells of both prosperity and decline and in more recent years a swing again towards a renaissance. No doubt these have been accelerated by various incentives and investment in the public domain, but your efforts are a strong contributory factor too. We visited your Arts Centre which regenerated the old mill and provides an impressive catalogue of events. The Jackie Clarke Collection on Pearse Street is a great revival for the bank building and in the sunshine the delightful garden was proving to be a little haven for locals and visitors alike. You referenced your new adjacent project, the restoration of the old Garda barracks which is both a dramatic change as your photo tells and a great investment in the arts we read. Likewise, the careful restoration and re-use of the military barracks is very impressive, perhaps a little more colour through soft landscaping to enliven the space. Pearse Street was very lively supported by good surfacing, and street furniture. Rouse is a unique shopfront, Loved Quinn's old pharmacy and Ivy and Bow looked good pity no upper floor occupancy, Dealz could do with a paint re-fresh. The library is unavoidable owing to its attractive adaptation of the Moy Hotel and the key location on Pearse a Street which contributes significantly to successful place making as told by the huddle of people seen at this location. On Tone Street The Junction captures the corner well as does the O Dowd's American Bar we liked the clean modern Grub too. Oliver's is so neat and applaud to the proprietor who was out tidying his patch. Heffernan's with its candy stripes was buzzing on Market Square. We had to take a peek into Cafferkey's too following the lure of the interesting frontage. Overall lots of colourful elevations. The attractive stone-faced Aldi sits nicely adjacent to what is a well delivered surface car park with lots of access points including good pedestrian points, nice peripheral bed planting too. The Murals fronting the car park and on adjoining Teeling Street give it animation and interest. We liked the other murals too - Charlton, Biden and the Maser one

especially, good to have the mix of professional street art and community guided one also as seen. Pop up shops too we noted add to vibrancy. Appreciate that eliminating dereliction and vacancy is a challenging and slow job but keep up the painting of elevations and the installations of items of interest – found Old Pearse Street a very interesting one. Fantastic to see refurbishment and restoration of properties for residential use on Abbey Street and Garden Street. We noted your new stylish planters off Kathleen Lynn Lane, time to remove the damaged tree here and maybe give Kathleen's story a noticeboard.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

We visited Tom Ruane Park which was full of children using the well-maintained playground and Muga. Sat in the new sensory garden for a bit admiring the beautiful layout, seating, surfacing design, planting selection and range of colours. Together they certainly all stimulates the senses. We can see the phase 2 emerging well and we noticed the interactive and inclusive elements. The old seating in the park does need some care and it would be good to see permanent toilet facilities too with baby changing facilities We noted a parent struggling with this challenge as the portaloos don't really accommodate for this.? The beautiful Bishops Field, well maintained and attractive and suitable too for a different demographic than T. Ruane park still remains closed unfortunately. You have commenced planting on the railway embankment – great work. Fantastic that you could as voluntary collectives give the grounds of your local District Hospital a re-fresh. It certainly looked well with fresh painted walling, neat lawns and upgraded bedding and seating. The swimming area at Downhill, following a search (sign needed?) was discovered. It is a nice oasis and has good seating and nature signs however some planters looked tired, the bin was overflowing and what looks like a leak in surface water drainage was leaving a discouraging looking wet trail. Crossing the footbridge, we wandered up to the park near Morrison Terrace – this has nice trees great location onto the Moy and convenient car parking nearby. Within the town we noticed lots of nice street trees, bedding areas and flower boxes and baskets. Well done and to your business folk too for their efforts at contributing to vitality and vibrancy on the streets.

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

Ballina is located in a rich natural area centred around the Moy River and Estuary which is a Special Area of Conservation and adjacent to the extensive woodlands at Belleek with its native wildlife. It was a first visit to these woods, and we appreciated what a natural asset it is for the community with forest trail options, duck pond, wildlife – a great location too for the fantastic new scouts' den so conveniently located for outdoor nature activities. You indicate that there is red squirrel research ongoing here – great to hear about the results next year. Any citizen science projects ongoing ? You tell us of your Town Biodiversity Plan – let us know what specific actions you are implementing. Great to embellish the cross -county track with trees and wildflowers at station road and Sligo Road. We noticed a number of your Beelieve Ballina signs about the town and beds in the grounds of the blue painted derelict house just over the footbridge. Good that the local authority has been encouraged to keep a no mow area within the green spaces. We noticed the benefits of this on the banks of the Moy which was alive with butterflies, bees and birds while we strolled into town from the Quays. You tell us also of the diversity of species found at Greenhills following the Grasslands Study an amazing 428 pollinators, this you attribute to positive grassland management of the green space for pollinators. Keep it up. You indicate that you also maintain and carry out conservation work on the Brosna River and 'Central Island', we did see those ducks. You also tell that you participate in clean ups of the banks of the River Moy which we observed was in good shape with no debris or dumping. The new bee hotel at the swimming area was noticed also. We see the illustration of your swift survey – no year of survey included? Fantastic to have such occupancy in the town in natural and fabricated nests. How frequently do you survey, perhaps annually? You also tell us of your new herbicide free foaming machine that treats weeds and gum, good news for nature.

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

You are striving to make Ballina Ireland's Greenest town, great that you have garnered 200 signatures from business and groups to the green charter with a commitment to act – it would be good to see how you monitor this and if it can be quantified somehow with carbon emissions reduced and other measure of progress. Fantastic to have 11 schools in the Green Program and to have the initiative for young adults on waste. Having secured the Mary Robinson Centre in the town gives some momentum to your green ambitions, particularly in that you tell us the venue supports conferences relating to climate justice and biodiversity. In addition, we saw that the centre supports Fas Bia Beo, urban farm. We also visited the Karen Garden – GIY which was alive with busy gardeners on the well organised garden, assume the participants attend your regular Farmers Market. You tell us also of the collaborative waste management programmes with your secondary schools and Unesco workshops with a young adult target group too and your local GAA club on the Green Clubs programme. We notice investment in active travel, cycle lanes, stands and EV chargers. Lots more actions in this category too and worthy future projects noted. You tell us also of water conservation regarding the washing of municipal vehicles, good news, we did notice the watering of hanging baskets by your CE workers – is this harvested from rainwater – let us know next year. Your lane project which is an exemplar in climate change adaptation is discussed in the last category.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You tell us you have huge participation of over 500 in your large litter collection campaigns for the Spring Clean Up/Mayo Day and also carry out weekly and daily litter picks. Three schools are involved in the Picker Pal project – plans to extend to others? You have enthusiastic ploggers and you and other groups have been involved in river clean ups, upgrading the appearance of derelict buildings and Ballina district hospital. Your photos tell of a lot of activity by your members, CE workers/MCC and other community groups and residents. Applaud to all for this hard work. However, Ballina was not litter free on the day of adjudication. Litter was in evidence at a number of locations

including the Augustine Abbey grounds, Abbey Street along the footpath, the swimming area bins overflowing and Dr. Lynn Courtyard. It might be good to have a blackspot focus on these locations. Weeds have been tackled well with strong effort and your foam machine. The exception was on Ridge Pool Road near Sonas nursing home. There was litter here on the riverside and also grasses growing up through seating. Elsewhere within the town there was a good standard of tidiness except for some cigarette butts which are a scourge for a lot of Tidy Town committees. The Quay area was exceptionally clean and well kept. As you have recognised and included for in your 3-year plan public seating, street and information signs, Brosna bridge sign and some bollards and other street furniture do need maintenance and should be given priority.

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

You indicate that you have an annual residential estate competition, great as this gives an incentive for residents to focus on their own patch. It is a good idea to introduce an additional category relating to biodiversity and you tell us you will be organising activities and workshops on how to support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. We visited a number of residential areas, good to see a 30kph in some like Riverside Drive, a neatly presented estate with nice trees, as was Riverside Grange. Quignalecka had lovely stone boundary walls and houses supported generous landscaping. What is notable is that these have a great swathe of open space that should be encouraged to include for increased diversity /set aside for wildlife. Greenfields has a lovely landscaped vehicular entrance, choice location near school and neighbourhood facilities. It too has a huge quantity of open space and good linkage to Downhill road. The expanses of open space here were being mowed quite tightly though. The recreational facilities although wonderful on a sunny day were empty? Housing is well maintained and we noticed their tiered herb planter in the central open space. Great potential for a community garden here. The adjacent Oaktree Drive too was in good order – we admired the head sculpture. You mention restorations of residential properties and the photographs of before and after are telling. Hopefully the trend for restoration with national grant support will continue and strengthen. In the interim you are improving the visual impact of quite a number. Watch out for weeds on guttering of those on Pearse Street and let us know if the derelict site levies /new legislation advancing has results for those on Bunaree Road. There are some nice, terraced housing we noticed on James Connolly Street and Mc Dermott Street. Looking forward to your planned improvements to the Brook area next year.

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

You proudly tell us of the work you have done on the extensive embankment at the railway station, and we were delighted to see that tree planting has started too, well done. The adjoining approach road from Foxford is very attractive with some dazzling planted beds, well-kept grassed areas and maturing trees. The Killala Road approach as referenced by last year's adjudicator does need the dead trees to be removed and replaced. Coming in along the Quay road is a very dramatic and attractive journey with views over the Moy estuary. The Quays as previously indicated have been nicely transitioned to accommodate recreational as well as popular commercial uses – great coffee there. You reference the active travel walkway here which provides safe crossing and park and stride opportunities and bike stands, good to see such access opportunities. The specific project that you have identified for particular effort this year is the Cascade Project - Reimagining Ballina's Laneways for Climate and Community sits in this category. We loved this project which combines creativity with adaptation to climate change induced increased rainfall making the lane an attractive climate-resilient public realm. Unfortunately, there were bins stored on O'Horas laneway on the day of our visit – so better management is needed. However, the vertical planting was gorgeous and the artistic downpipes into planters gave lots of interest. This project is a good springboard for similar work on your other lanes – including, Pawn Office Lane, Moy Lane and Dr Kathleen Lynn Lane which all looked well. Land league lane needs a bit of attention. It was good also to find information on Ballina at various locations on the town as we wandered the streets and laneways. We were very impressed by the ease of capacity to get to Belleek Woods especially by walking /cycling on the Greenway. We noticed new trees along the route on the section near the town. You also mentioned that a new footpath has been installed at Belleek linking into the Greenway. This and the improved pedestrian crossings, footpaths, cycleways and the improvement of the lanes all bode well for better sustainable accessibility options – all good news that will contribute to your active travel plans

Concluding Remarks:

Thank you for your entry and the opportunity to visit Ballina. We found it an interesting and attractive town which you are enthusiastic to maintain and improve. You have included for more great plans for Ballina, and we wish you well in delivering these with continued community support.