

Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Belcarra - Baile na Cora** Ref: **508**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **389**
Category: **A** Date(s): **21/07/2026**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	53	54
Streetscape & Public Places	80	50	52
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	53	55
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	45	47
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	25	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	69	71
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	39	40
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	42	43
TOTAL MARK	600	376	389

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. Welcome Belcarra, amazing that you have sustained energy for over 60 years participating in the competition, deserving of an endurance prize if we had one. For a small village you have a committee of 8 members including two representatives from Foroige and a dedicated core of 10 volunteers. You tell us you have a much wider reach for the larger events. You have developed great a collaborative network within your community with schools, business and other local groups. You also get advice and support from specialist officers in MCC, state and public bodies and you also can call on environmental experts – a reflection of both your long-term experience and enthusiasm. You nurture a special relationship with your young community who are quite active in a number of similar focused projects, and you tell us also that you include them in your own activities – great for their and environmental development and your succession plan. You selected your Belcarra Community Energy Master Plan, recently prepared in conjunction with SEAI as your special project for this year and a fitting one for the sustainability category. You indicate that you communicate through a number of channels including print media and social media and face to face. Your application was very clear and easy to follow and your map a great path for orientation and we also appreciated your supporting photographs. Your plan was not included but we know from last year's adjudicators report there is one in place up to 2028. Thank you for all that

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

Belcarra reflects the pattern of a typical crossroads village with the main community buildings concentrated around the junction and the commercial and domestic type uses grouped along the road. It has retained this nice historic character and the newer infill developments, mainly housing have contributed to the compact nature of the village. St Anne's Church is a lovely anchor and the clustering of recreational facilities nearby, such as the playground, Muga and pitch along with the Community Centre and Sports Hall all provides for easy access between facilities. You tell us these are being maintained and improved and indeed all did look well. We appreciate that you value keeping a clean appearance on vacant and derelict properties as this has a great visual amenity benefit for the streetscape. You tell us this is an ongoing job for a number of properties and we see your work. In particular the painting and installation of floral window boxes on the Arcadia, old dancehall makes it so much more appealing. Hopefully now that it is up for sale these investments will make it more appealing. Fantastic to hear some of the vacant properties are scheduled to be renovated for social housing soon too. However, the streetscape is more defined by the other occupied smartly presented properties such as Flukies, Moran's, Carra Kitchens and Costcutters who host good opportunity for outdoor seating. Nestor's large premises is very tidy, and Carra Camping has an attractive entrance area. The palette of paint colour used in the village street on both residential and commercial properties creates a good sense of animation in the streetscape. It would be good to fix the missing

lettering on the fascia at Corleys. We liked the emphasis placed on the attract bridge at the junction. The children's history storyboards tell an interesting tale. The three additional panel signs here are very dominant though and we would advise reducing the scale and amalgamating the information into one panel if needed or re-locate the signs to the park area. The carpark area is well located to service all community amenities. It is nicely designed being broken up with tree planting, good surfacing, boundaries and safe access points to adjoining pitch and play facilities. The Church has an interesting architectural style and sits on lovely grounds. The adjacent community centre and sport centre appear well used and are in great condition. The school reflects a happy appearance with the mix of colours used to animate the elevation. We liked the discreet commemoration area and the dedications nestling in the rose bushes to Ceannt, Connolly and Clarke. We visited the Eviction cottage and associated Tigin. It tells a sad story of local history but is a great model of period thatched vernacular housing well done to the residents and yourselves who are maintaining them in such a great condition.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

What a lovely mix of green spaces you have in the village. You are proud of your recreational facilities which include a Muga adjacent to a lovely natural playground with timber equipment sensory equipment and partial grass surfacing. In addition, we enjoyed room to sit and picnic under the canopy with the nice big reading chairs. Graveyards are generally underestimated for their natural value as well as their historic and contemplative benefit. You tell us that you have an ongoing project of restoration on two in the village using grazing wild goats for maintenance and more recently planting yellow rattle to suppress the grasses and encourage wildflower growth. It is good that you are already experiencing the benefits this method of management is delivering. You are certainly busy keeping the village full of floral delights. Everywhere we looked there was more to see – planters, hanging baskets, bedding rambling roses. The baskets and planted beds at the bridge were especially impressive. It was a treat to walk along the Common, see your new tree planting, the dedications and read your information boards on the Common and Mill. Assume you are going to put something new on the blank sign board? Loved the large painted stone. Over the bridge (great new mats) we saw your orchard, your children's GIY raised beds, please pass on our praise on these. How unusual the Belvedere Apples are, interesting to read the stories of the apple tree provenance. It is great that you have adopted the 'low mow' approach to grassland management, and we noticed that you have a dedicated approach to including pollinators in your planting scheme. Congratulations to your work too at Grianán Mhuire Social Housing Scheme, the planted areas look so wonderful here. The two shrines looked good too in the village and the one at Elmhall. We did admire your pump, and you tell us you are going to give the whitewashed walls a refresh too.

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

In this category you have a lot to tell us and understandably as you are located in a rich natural area which is blessed with the Manulla River trees hedging, grasses wildflowers and stone wall habitats. You are close also to Walshpool Lough which is a blue dot site – how fortunate to have this and you are working on linkage and access here. We took a walk along the river and had a fantastic encounter with damselflies, bees, birds and numerous butterflies. We noticed your careful management of the grassed trail and brambles. We saw all your informative notices – whisper ..the Emperor Moth one needs fixing. The Yellow Crowned Night Heron arrival must have been exciting, a stray all the way from North America picked your village. You tell us of the Butterfly Garden and there were plenty of plants there and nearby to support their full cycle of life. Overhead we see the swift boxes on the wall of the community centre – with house sparrows renting the premises at the moment, great to have occupancy regardless. Lots of other bird boxes too at the sensory garden and elsewhere – thank you Foroige members. The wildlife trim along the edge of the pitch looks great too and close to the lovely mini-Orchard and GIY beds. You obviously recognise that a very important aspect of management for biodiversity is to raise the awareness of the people living in the vicinity and also of visitors to that area. This you are doing through public talks, guided walks and laminated river guides and extensive signage and no to herbicide use. You also promote training for Citizen Scientist projects on the Manulla River. You tell us too of your annual Dawn Chorus walk, your Bat walks and especially your work with the schools and Foroige. You have great expert advice with ecological experts on your doorstep as well as good access to LAWPRO, NPWS and relevant specialists in MCC. All of these combined with your participatory activities are encouraging the community to feel In this category you have a lot to tell us and understandably as you are located in a rich natural area which is blessed with the Manulla River trees hedging, grasses wildflowers and stone wall habitats. You are close also to Walshpool Lough which is a blue dot site – how fortunate to have this and you are working on linkage and access here. We took a walk along the river and had a fantastic encounter with damselflies, bees, birds and numerous butterflies. We noticed your careful management of the grassed trail and brambles. We saw all your informative notices – whisper ..the Emperor Moth one needs fixing. The Yellow Crowned Night Heron arrival must have been exciting, a stray all the way from North America picked your village. You tell us of the Butterfly Garden and there were plenty of plants there and nearby to support their full cycle of life. Overhead we see the swift boxes on the wall of the community centre – with house sparrows renting the premises at the moment, great to have occupancy regardless. Lots of other bird boxes too at the sensory garden and elsewhere – thank you Foroige members. The wildlife trim along the edge of the pitch looks great too and close to the lovely mini-Orchard and GIY beds. You obviously recognise that a very important aspect of management for biodiversity is to raise the awareness of the people living in the vicinity and also of visitors to that area. This you are doing through public talks, guided walks and laminated river guides and extensive signage and no to herbicide use. You also promote training for Citizen Scientist projects on the Manulla River. You tell us too of your annual Dawn Chorus walk, your Bat walks and especially your work with the schools and Foroige. You have great expert advice with ecological experts on your doorstep as well as good access to LAWPRO, NPWS and relevant specialists in MCC. All of these combined with your participatory activities are encouraging the community to feel ownership of the village's rich natural heritage which in turn creates a certain enthusiasm for protection and enhancement. Well done on all these efforts.

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

You are very enthusiastic about the cross-community attendance at the recent launch of the Belcarra Community Energy Master Plan which was developed in partnership with the SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities Programme. You tell us that the plan provides a practical roadmap to reduce energy use, lower carbon emissions, improve home energy efficiency, and strengthen local climate resilience. Interest in this plan you say highlighted strong local commitment to a cleaner, more sustainable future which was encouraged also through specific sessions with the SEAI mentors who gave advice on reducing energy waste and increasing efficiencies as well as directions on grant applications. Nice idea to link this with appropriately themed artwork for local children and Foroige. LED lighting has become the norm for public facilities too. Good if you could monitor how effective the plan is advancing over the next year and if this can be expressed in carbon emission reductions/other measures. Noted your photos included recording of these project meetings – lots of optimism expressed. On water conservation which is topical this summer you act wisely by harvesting rainwater at the community centre to water your planters and you use some self-watering planters. Your group water scheme includes for leak detection. You tell of the new water re-fill station in the park, we noticed it located nicely near the Foroige wellbeing posters. Your school has many sustainable initiatives including WOW/COW. You encourage composting, seed saving and use of perennials, great stuff. You have two community orchards, a polytunnel in the school, berry bushes, GIY beds and a local prolific beekeeper – all reducing food miles. The NS has secured a number of Green flags, and wonderfully an amber flag too. You have a bottle bank locally too and your shop discourages single use coffee cups. Is there any public bus service in the area we did not note any bus stops – as local links are such a success elsewhere.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

After 60 years in the competition, you certainly have fine-tuned the control of litter and keep a tidy regime in the village. We only saw one lonely piece of litter, everywhere was spotless. This you indicate is a result of combining anti-litter education with regular maintenance and whole community participation. Your volunteer and RSS workers are to be commended. You tell of daily litter picks and twice weekly clean ups. You participate as a community including the village environs residents in the annual Spring Clean-up, with school children armed with picker friends and Foroige members in action too. Your businesses take pride in monitoring their patch. Weeds are controlled manually and with organic weed treatment, which is hard work but recognises the value of your natural environment. Blackspots areas are normally the bottle banks but yours was clean. Applaud to all.

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

There is obviously great community pride in the village and the upkeep of dwellings in the village reflects this communal approach to contributing to and maintaining a high public realm standard. Ashview and Bun Na Droma are great examples of successful infill housing with car parking corralled off street. The use of colour on elevations and discreet planters and shrubs to the front conveys a clean, bright uniform style. Grianian Mhuire tucks in nicely beside your community buildings and we did note as referenced the recent maintenance of the housing. The front bedding being generous, of good mix and colour gives great drama to this little enclave. Coise Baile has nice boundary treatment, well maintained large housing and a good open space layout with the benefit of trees including the mini orchard. Bruach na hAbhainn have a super niche spot to accommodate their community garden, picnic area and a lovely link with the river. The new housing development Sli na hAbhainn is advancing well, great location overlooking the river and so close to the school and village facilities, retaining existing low stone boundaries does assimilate the development into the village and reflects good sustainable compact growth. Peripheral individual housing at Elmhall and on the Ballinafad road too maintained a high standard and in general are well landscaped.

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

The approach roads into the village are generally well maintained. From the south there is a nice character established with the low stone walling which you indicate that you look after and integrate bee boxes into. The approach from Ballinafad has a nice sign painted at the junction towards the Walshpool Lough and we liked the discreet village sign and low planting here too. Your upgrades to the vacant Arcadia building on the northern approach improves this approach significantly. Village signs on both the Castlebar and Ballyglass roads looked well with the supporting planting – you do need to trim planting more regularly to ensure the name sign is not obscured though. You reference the upgrade of the tennis courts on the main road as a new project; this will tie in nicely with your future plans for Ger's Garden. You are conscious of through vehicular traffic in the village and we noticed your traffic calming measures – speed bumps and pedestrian priority crossings. Good to have the network of footpaths and the bulk of housing concentrated and having close access to the main village facilities. We did notice that surfacing of roads and footpaths are due an upgrade to modern standards though for safety and accessibility. Great that the car park can service a lot of needs including the park and stride initiative. We admired your Foroige mural and the series of drawings erected in the community park for wellness. The Forge mural too tells a story with the children's chronological interpretation of the village history. You see the bridge as a key area in the village and paint it annually – well done as it does function as a good orientation spot in the village. The MUGA, playground, Botherin na Paisti and canopied seating area must certainly be a source of village pride. They offer a good range of recreational opportunities and are taken care of very well too. You mention a future project for the production of a Village Enhancement Plan hopefully this will include for a movement (transport) audit that will ensure safety and efficiency of movements as well as landscaping ideas – good luck with this one.

Concluding Remarks:

Great to have an opportunity to visit your village and see all the work you have completed over the years. You have

a lot of new ambitions and hopefully new residents to help you deliver on these. A note on the map – it might be useful to label projects M maintenance and N new on the map legend. Also helpful to include housing estate names. As referenced, there was not a long-term plan included, please ensure it is attached new year. Thank you.