

Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Cong - Cunga Feicin** Ref: **558**
County: **Mayo** Mark: **400**
Category: **B** Date(s): **08/06/2026**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	50	52
Streetscape & Public Places	80	58	60
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	59	62
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	43	45
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	32	33
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	69	71
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	42
TOTAL MARK	600	386	400

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.

This was the first visit to Cong in the role of adjudicator which was an awakening to all the voluntary work your committee and community carry out to enhance your village and celebrate your unique built and natural environment. Your long experience in the competition, your capacity to collaborate with a range of community groups, local business and state agencies have resulted in the fantastic projects, a calendar of events and festival and palpable pride. You obviously recognise the value of good communication and use a range of media types to spread your news, showcase your work and lobby for support. Looking at your Facebook page reveals the popularity of your following at a grand 2.4K, understandable owing to your regular, colourful informative posts. The posts reflect your close intergenerational and inclusive participation within your community involving you children, young adults and older persons. Thank you for taking the advice of last year's adjudicator on map preparation which made our orientation easy. Just to note it's preferable to include your future projects in a 3-year plan where locations can also be mapped rather than on the current competition map. On reflection of your special projects, you chose your first entry into the All-Ireland Pride of Place Competition in 2025 where you were a runner up in your population category. Well done no doubt your legacy of volunteer Tidy Town work was a critical contribution in your success which is also reflected in your achievement of the TT Silver Medal Award last year.

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

Cong streetscapes have a lovely waterway context nestling between the river and lakes. The streets being narrow demand a one-way traffic system. Buildings are mainly of a domestic scale, one and two storeys. The presence of Ashford Castle with extensive stone boundary wall and Cong Woods nearby also contribute to the character of the village. You tell us of your recent upgrades including the freshly painted commercial facades of Danaher's Ryan's and Lydon's and also a number of residential properties. These looked great and like a lot of properties in the village are well embellished with seasonal planting. Most other buildings looked smartly presented and we commend you on your endeavours to disguise occupied and vacant buildings well reflected in your photographs. Great to hear that these are diminishing in number and lending themselves to refurbishment and rebuild as demonstrated by your corner house on the bridge. For a small village you can boast of a significant historical, natural and cultural heritage. The Augustinian Friary, the old courthouse, The Church of Ireland, the old and graveyard proved very interesting visits. Fantastic to see the famous Harry Clark window in the RC church where modern architectural interventions contrast beautifully with the medieval abbey. Congratulations on putting your restored statue on display here. We see that you continue to improve your beautiful Dr. Lynn Park rendering it more accessible. It might be good idea to

get an accessibility audit carried out of the village to see if any similar improvements can be made in the village. Your large well maintained car park and other parking provisions to the rear of properties ensure cars don't dominate in your streetscape, however through traffic particularly the HGVs create an overwhelming presence, are there any plans for a relief road or a change in haul routes? The other small public spaces in the village - Hands of Fame and Meeting of the Waters provide good dwell points off the footpath. Key community buildings such as the school and community centre present well. It is a pity that the footpath does not extend out to the Crossroads Community Centre. Super that you have access to Lisloughery Pier, GAA facilities so close by and good luck with the construction of the Daisy Lodge therapeutic centre in this area.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

You are truly advantaged to have such a rich natural environment on your doorstep including the extensive Cong Wood with its nature trails and a riverside location that offer quite spaces but lots of great opportunities to interact with nature. Your village was a floral treat with the countless wall baskets, planters and generous bedding. All well embellished with a mix of pollinator friendly annuals and perennial. The planted area at the main car park was particularly impressive as was the area on the Cornamona approach and at the Lisloughrey junction. Well done on emblazing this junction with spring bulbs your as your photography show. It may be good to introduce a mix of more pollinator friendly bulbs too such as Grape hyacinth, crocuses, snowdrops and alliums. The Dr Kathleen Lynn garden is very innovative in concept and a welcome relief from more conventional village gardens. It was a great lesson in botanicas and history. It was attracting a lot of visitors on the day of our visit which is testimony to its cross-cultural interest. As you indicated the renovation of the house and sloping garden close by complements the context well and adds to the setting of the bridge. The red valerian coating the pedestrian bridge gives fantastic colour to this walkway. We are sure you have to discipline its growth to prohibit it spreading as it does aggressively to adjacent areas. We noticed your bespoke planters on the bridge, well done on the designer /maker. If these are to replace former hanging baskets you should remove the existing fixtures on the bridge. Your pocket spaces at the Hands of Fame and the Meeting of the Waters allow for good interaction and afford dwell opportunities. Perhaps a timber topping on the stone seats at the latter might render this seating more comfortable. The dry canal is of great interest, and we enjoyed perusing the Peter Dillion book on it. It would be great to have a more developed trail although good to see the information panels. Lisloughrey pier is pleasant and good to have toilets and picnic seating.

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

It was great to experience the proximity Cong has to high-quality habitats that supports a rich biodiversity recognised by the area having the designation of two Natura sites. You are fortunate to have the facility of Cong Woods with the range of trails to experience nature; our time only permitted a taste of what is on offer there. Good to hear too that you are involved in restoring native heritage trees to woods on the Ashford castle estate following removal of invasive species. Great also to see the new tree planting at the car park boundary. At the Duck Pond we read about the range of birds and fauna that can be seen in Cong and enjoyed experiencing the duck and black headed gulls intermingling and the arrival of a majestic Heron. We also got to see your new panels marking the recent declaration of the Joyce Country UNESCO Geopark acknowledging the unique geology in the broader area and the contribution it makes the local lake and river formation. Your extensive planting and landscaping activities are well executed to support bees and pollination. Congratulations to your young community on the Bee Hotel. Do you involve the children in nature monitoring or using the FIT count app? It would be good also to have feedback on the results of your insertion of the bat and bird boxes. Well done on engaging with Hometree and organising community information walks with them in the woods.

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

We welcome that you have taken the initiative to develop a sustainable energy community particularly by informing and encouraging the community with regarding to sustainable energy use. We will be looking forward to seeing how this evolves in the future along with your other planned sustainable projects. Good that both the school and Fisheries have already taken the initiative with regard to the use of solar panels. Your large recycling hub at the car park along with participation in the WEEE annual re-cycling event is commendable. Water conservation is important and you indicate that you use river water for your baskets and planters. You also indicate that you segregate waste you collect. Have you any more circular economy ideas. Repair and upcycling events have worked well elsewhere. Good to see that commercial coffee grinds supplement your compost. Have your children been involved in developing art from waste materials? You could also examine the potential of a shared resource hub, which might work well for your community centre, school and calendar events. We see that you have a food festival in July perhaps at this and in conjunction with local businesses you could review the potential for more sustainable actions such as preventing food waste, reducing plastics etc. Sustainable transport is also a key issue in this category. We did notice some cycle racks. The bus stop appears to be outside of the village on the main road. Is there a capacity to move this to a more central spot that could afford seating and shelter such as the car park?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have to be applauded for your rigorous litter control regime. It is quite a challenge to have sufficient voluntary support to collect litter 7 days a week. Your RSS workers must be a great resource too. The number of bins in the village were impressive so hopefully these tackles most of the litter. Good to read that you can rely on electric mechanical help with the weeds and also that the local quarry business carries out a weekly sweep too. With all that focus and energy invested in keeping your village clean it was no wonder that we experienced a pristine environment including in areas such as the car park and recycling hub which can sometimes attract wind-blown litter. The only exception we found was on the Lisloughery Road. The plastic recycle bin at the GAA club was

overflowing and the wind was scattering the bottles. Also, down at the pier there was a lot of bagged dog foul stuffed back into the clean dog fouling bag receptacle. Similar to last year's adjudicator comments we have to mention the multiplicity of signs within the public areas of the village and on the main approaches, particularly the commercial ones which appear superfluous with the trail ones needing a refresh. The signs on actual buildings within the village are of general good design but there is a need to cull some unnecessary duplication. This is sometimes the challenges experienced by highly touristed areas like yourselves. In general, though village name signs, directional signs and speed limit signs were all in good condition. Also, the barrier design on the front of the building on Main Street just over the bridge is very industrial in nature. We can understand the need owing to traffic but there is potential for a better design resolution. The playground has a very sympathetic style to the local environment and was litter free during our visit – well done to the little patrons. Can you please relay how impressed we are to your volunteers, young and older and the RSS workers, with your high standard of village maintenance.

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

It is great to see high occupancy including many residential premises along the village streets. The recently refurbished houses along Main Street are a huge vote of confidence in Cong as a good place to live, their tasteful restoration work contributes well to the streetscape and general environs. We can see that the residents pride extends throughout the village where their contribution has greatly enhanced the village streetscape with freshly painted facades, windows and doors, complemented by window boxes and hanging baskets that add great vibrancy and colour to the street. Well done for addressing the pockets of vacancy and dereliction, a simple painting of elevations has resulted in a dramatic improvement. The riverside lane by the duck pond could be improved if better screened from the adjacent garage business by extending the treeline along the rear of that premises. On the periphery of the village there are two small housing developments. The Beal na Coille on the Neale Road where houses present well and have lovely stone wall created from large limestone rocks. The other development still generally under construction Ashford Pines is a very low-density development. Perhaps there is some possibility of influencing the landscaping development of the open space to enable continuity of wildlife corridors in the area.

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

All the approach roads presented a pleasant entry to Cong. The approach road from Cross is particularly attractive flanked by estate stone walling, mature trees and the welcoming bed planting at the junction with Lisloughrey Road. It is great to see that you and the hotel visitors have the benefit of a footpath extending out this far from the village. The stately entrance to Ashford castle adds to the drama of this approach. Road signs are in good condition and verges trimmed neatly. There is good road separation for pedestrians at the main junction on entry to the village from this side ensuring safety and a good public realm experience. Approaching from the Cornamona /Clonbur side is also enhanced by the junction bedding, the stone sign for Cong is a bit buried in the vegetation though. It's nice to see your restored historic forge along this route. It is unfortunate that there are no footpaths or refuge from the heavy traffic until the bridge is crossed. The road surface area near the garage at this location is quite broken. Again, a reduction in signage clutter along this approach is needed.

Concluding Remarks:

Cong was a treat to visit in the role as an adjudicator. It afforded a fresh view of the village and an opportunity to dwell longer than usual, to learn more about the built heritage, including the historic dry canal, religious settlements, the wonderful natural context and to be enlightened by the mysteries that the newly UNESCO designated geopark. Best of luck with your future adventures. Great if you can develop a structured plan for the next few years.