Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre:	**Ballycumber - Béal Átha Chomair**	Ref:	**616**
County:	**Offaly**	Mark:	**393**
Category:	**B**	Date(s):	**09/06/2026**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	59	62
Streetscape & Public Places	80	52	54
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	53	56
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	38	41
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	30	32
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	36	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	45	46
TOTAL MARK	**600**	**376**	**393**

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.
Welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2026 competition and thank you for your application form, map, and accompanying documents. For such a small community you have a large volunteer force, including Junior Tidy Towns, which is wonderful. We read that you assign tasks to different committee members, which we encourage, as this ensures that projects are progressed efficiently and are not postponed/neglected. Good to see that you avail of funding from various organisation to support your work. But then the work has to be done; and you're doing it! From your initial event in 2022 you are now organising a number of annual events for all. We note you have a Facebook page and an Instagram account but remember it's important to post regularly on Social Media so as to keep up the community's interest. Ask a youth to be you PRO and just give him/her photos posters etc. of events/forthcoming events. PRO for Ballycumber Tidy Towns will look good on his/her C.V. Congratulations on the various awards which you have received over the past year. You have participated in the SuperValu Tidy Towns competition for over 25 years which is excellent and we are delighted to read that participation has played a central role into shaping your village and helping its community. Hopefully you've enjoyed it too!

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

You are dispersed community but we are happy to report that your neat, tidy roads give a very good first impression to the visitor. We were delighted to have received the three maps which gives a clear explanation of the geography of the village. The work to the former CofI church is excellent – we always advise to hold off on works until expert advice is sought. Compliments to all involved and in particular to the crafts workers. Good to see that you also combined this restoration with a Heritage Week event. The structures in the village itself are a mix of single and two-storey, and we noted there are some large five bay premises which add to the architectural merit of your village. These structures are primarily a combination of residential and business and it is lovely to see that this tradition still continues in your village. You tell us that the Pilgrim Statue is your focal point of your village and we see that this location, on the bend of the road, terminates the view from the south. We noticed the stone slabs are broken and we assume these will be repaired shortly. You also need to carry out repairs to some of the capping on the walls and to one of the benches. We admired the townland names; the signage is a little intrusive in the streetscape but it's good to see them being recognised and displayed. Your communal buildings are very well maintained. The church with its landscaped grounds is perhaps the focal building of the village. We were delighted to see that the entrance gates and adjoining piers were signage free so that their architectural merit is evident. Although not part of our 'agenda' we visited your RC church and admired the information panels. It would be good to also inform the visitor about

your very beautiful Harry Clarke stained glass windows. Or did we miss this?

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

There are some fine, well maintained, and well planted beds along approach roads and in the village itself, which we admired. One of the beds needs some repair carried out to the stonework. While you are surrounded by fields with a variety of trees, the village itself lacks trees along the streetscape. We noted buildouts have been provided and we suggest that these are ideal locations for trees. But there are others. With climate change we are going to need more trees in the built environment so perhaps you could start planting some? We suggest you take a critical look at this aspect of village landscaping and make a long term plan. Also include St Ciarán's & St. Manchan's N.S grounds as trees are needed in the large open hard landscaped area in front of building. The planting beds around the pilgrim statue, which celebrates the Pilgrim's Path, are a little sparse, and we recommend additional planting to be added to add to the beauty of this area. Chemical weed control methods had been used in some areas – e.g. around the sign beside St Manchán and his cow, in the church grounds, and there were others. This practice should cease. Most communities no longer use chemical weed control. The small garden in front of the old barracks was admired. Take care to remove the ivy? which is growing on the front of the building so that it will not enter into the roof space and cause damage to the timbers. It would be wonderful to see some planting along the street side of the GAA boundary wall. Truthfully where block /rendered walls exist in your village they are ideal location for plants such as ivy, pyracantha, honeysuckle, wisteria etc. Good to commemorate your centenarian and the oak tree he planted is growing well. We note that you are moving to perennial planting which is excellent but if you need a splash of colour/movement then a small amount of annual planting is acceptable. We loved the Bat Garden with the mosaics – compliments to all involved in its creation. The sign is VERY intrusive – move to one side. Work in the GAA ground was noted.

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

In addition to fields, trees, hedgerows and stone walls, you have habitats of value for nature and biodiversity in your rivers. It's wonderful that the river Brosna flows through the village and with the riparian banks additional habitats for birds, insects and mammals can be found. The new bird table in the school grounds was noted and it's wonderful to see that the children are recording bird spaces using the Merlin app. Perhaps they might make a hand drawn poster with the birds for next year. Birds they noted during the different seasons would be a wonderful project. This is something where they will need your assistance. Your Community Biodiversity Action Plan is in its final year. We assume that this will be updated. Truthfully when a plan is made it is very often out of date almost immediately, so don't be afraid to change some of the actions as nature and climate action changes around you. Section 4 showed the actions you should engage in … have you embraced these? Your wonderful events held to highlight the importune of bats was very successful and now as a result you have a new garden with mosaics in addition to the a selection of wildflower along the river and in gardens from the flower bombs that were launched by the children. Good to see that the local businesses supported you in these events, and congratulations on the National Heritage Week accolade. Did you have visitors to your swift boxes this year? We noted the ones at the old barracks but were too early in the day to see any visitors. Some willow weaving is needed in the school grounds – we love the circular structure and look forward to seeing it completed. Wonderful clean-up work by the OPW to the River Brosna – thanks for the before and after photos.

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

Good to read that the recycling initiatives from the local shop and pub have realised funding for the local school to advance their projects in biodiversity and sustainability. We congratulate the school pupils and teachers on their prize for the Gardening Competition. We admired the seating along the roads and particularly the picnic areas along the Brosna. Great to see that one has been roofed, as it rains very unexpected in Ireland and a shelter along the river walk will be a welcome for the walkers and picnickers. We note that Ballycumber Tidy Towns has an excellent relationship with St Ciarán's & St. Manchán's N.S and that you work closely with the Green Schools and Gardening Committees. We had a walk around the school grounds and saw the wonderful work that the children are undertaking. We are delighted always when children are involved in planting vegetables, fruit bushes and fruit trees. As there is space in the school grounds, it might be possible that each class could have its own raised planting bed area. Here pupils of different years could grow different vegetables and flowers and learn from one another. What a great achievement for the pupils and teachers to have won first prize in the Tullamore CU gardening competition. The work the Men's Shed has undertaken is noted. We love to hear that a Men's Shed exist in a community, as in these villages work relating to sustainability is always strong with the reuse of timbers, metal, stone, etc. We know you have an orchard. Is it your plan to expand this? Windfalls are a wonderful source of food as they provide late season sugar boost to insects, small birds, and mammals. Wonderful that you have a community polytunnel where members grow vegetables and fruit – we visited.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We see you take part in the All Ireland An Taisce Spring Clean Event. This is a wonderful way for the whole community to be alerted to litter and fly-tipping. When your volunteers are seen in their high viz vests, it focuses the attention of the whole community and indeed on visitors on the need to be vigilant on litter, fly-tipping and weed growth. While the village was litter free there were quite a number of areas which need your attention. Your signage is quite dirty. Some will just need washing with soapy water and a soft brush but others are in need replacing. Remember if you install signs you must maintain them. The blue and yellow picnic benches and seats were also in need of attention- perhaps select a single colour which will not show the dirt so easily? There is a small stone sign at the base of the wall beside the seating and although we tried very hard we couldn't read it. Remove it or carefully paint the lettering. You noted that you have community groups putting up signs which are untidy. We recommend

that you ask the area office to install 2.4m x 2.4m Community Notice Boards, painted black, on the main entrance roads to the village. All community posters are restricted to these boards and then all 'illegal' posters which are attached to posts, fences etc. around the village are removed as soon as they are noticed.

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

Like all Irish villages Ballycumber has a mixture of vernacular single and two storey houses located on the Main Roads. It was good to see that the majority were occupied as vacancy leads to dereliction in a very short space of time. Some gardens were well-designed and attractively planted with a variety of pollinator friendly, flowers and shrubs. We loved the old schoolhouse and were delighted to see that the stile had been retained and close by a wonderful rose bed established. Compliments to the owner. Sycamore Drive name stone is clearly displayed and the planting along the long entrance wall, along with the planting on the opposite side of the road, was admired. Here many residents had wonderful displays of flowers and shrubs which added greatly to the area. It would be nice to see a bilingual sign added to the estate name. We were delighted to see the benches in the communal open area as very often these are not provided although they are very necessary for social engagement. An unusual location for the bring banks, but we assume this has the acceptance of the residents. The wonderful mature trees in the communal open space in this estate were admired and were full of bird song when we visited. Twickenham estate was also well maintained and here too the planting beds at the entrance were admired.

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

You are located on the busy R436 close to Clara and when we visited we saw that traffic volume through the village is quite high (perhaps it was the time of the day). The approach roads are well maintained and we noted that the grass margin is trimmed so that the village name signs are clearly visible. The Offaly Heritage Trail area is in need of your attention – the sign is dirty, the grass is encroaching on the path and a sycamore tree needs to be removed before it becomes established. Find a different more suitable location for it, as it's growing very well and we'll need more and more trees due to climate change. The parking outside some of the businesses seems a little chaotic. Perhaps, a layby (roadside parking), along the road with cars parking in a line might be more appropriate – similar to the housing areas on your main road. This will reduce the footpath width but it will make it safer for the pedestrian. Then a row of trees could be planted along the pavement which would add to the streetscape. We looked for an information panel along the walkway beside the Brosna River which would tell us the distance to the next town/ village. This is something that the visitor to your village would like to know. If there are any features, e.g. lime kilns, archaeological features, social features, etc. along the route, these could be noted on the map too. We noted and admired new dipped paving with rumble strips. Is this the plan for your other road junctions? The Ballycumber Clonmacnoise cycle route sign was noted.

Concluding Remarks:

Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2026 competition … we have a recommendation for 2027

- Please BRIEFLY describe your Key Project as requested. We read the attached document and then read about it again, 'For the Love of Bats', in your application. Once is enough to submit the information and photos as the adjudicators' time is limited due to the number of applications received annually.

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. We would appreciate if this point could be taken into consideration when preparing your 2027 application. It was a pleasure to visit and adjudicate Bllycumber – we have passed through the village many times, so it was a pleasure to take the time and visit the surrounding roads and see the riches there.