Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre:	**Banagher - Beannchar na Sionna**	Ref:	**591**
County:	**Offaly**	Mark:	**341**
Category:	**C**	Date(s):	**17/06/2026**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	53
Streetscape & Public Places	80	48
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	41
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	40
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	38
TOTAL MARK	**600**	**341**

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 photos (some are very small). We are delighted that you have reformed the Banagher Tidy Towns committee and that you are joining us this year after a break of three years. Your committee is large – see Concluding Remarks for advice on allocation of committee work; and we are delighted that you have a voluntary base of 47 including volunteers who now call Banagher 'home'. Your Tidy Towns Facebook page has almost 900 followers and you follow 13 groups – expand this number as you will learn from others. We were happy to see that it is update regularly which is crucial for community involvement. You engage with Offaly Co Co for advice from their in-house experts and also with your Elected Representatives in addition to local businesses and community groups including the Men's Shed, Banagher Development Group, etc. Great to see you have Picker Pals and also TY students participating in planting. Prior to the break of 3 years you participated in the SuperValu Tidy Towns competition for more that 20 years. You're now back …. and we're delighted to welcome you. You have seen an increase amongst the town's people in a sense of pride of their surroundings and in what the town has to offer, which has encouraged them to engage with others. A pride in one's place and a wish to volunteer - truthfully this is the spirit of SuperValu TidyTowns.

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

Your town straddles the River Shannon with the majority being in Co. Offaly and here your streetscape has some fine structures including St. Rynagh's RC church with its beautiful stations of the cross by Bernard McDonagh and wood carving by Imogen Stuart. Crossing the Shannon is the wonderful six arch masonry bridge. The Martello Tower and Napoleonic fort on the western bank beside which is the recently opened public baths which were extremely busy when we visited. We read with interest of your Conservation Plan for Banagher and were delighted to see that this informs your work. Your work is also informed by the Banagher Town Masterplan developed by Offaly Co Co. In order to encourage shop owners and business premises owners to maintain the properties you have developed initiatives such as the Best Street and best Commercial Premises Competitions – there is nothing like a little friendly competition! Perhaps also have a 'Best Shop Window' competition which will encourage owners to decorate their shop windows which are becoming less and less visible in our streetscape. As you have so many historic structures you could develop an Historical Trail where all structures of importance, including the bridge, historical post-boxes, water fountains, historical soil vent pipes, historical flat iron gates and piers, in addition to buldings, could be included. An Historical Trail is not just about buildings. Interesting to read the land transfer map

at the Barracks site. We look forward to Offaly Co Co's plan for this wonderful area with its historic buildings. We encourage you to actively engage with the LA in the planning of this important area. The coloured bollards at the Marina are quite intrusive, perhaps use a single dark colour which will not detract from this beautiful area. Remember features such as these are background to the area/streetscape and should not be the first item we see.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

We see you value your trees and are aware, unlike other communities, that trees are wonderful for shelter not only from the rain but also from the sun. But unfortunately your main street is lacking in trees. It's time for a rethink of this important axis and to undertake a landscape plan. Trees can very easily be planted in buildouts. Many Local Authorities are undertaking this approach as they are now aware of the importance of trees in global warming in summer and water management in winter. There are some wonderful planting beds around the town which have stones surrounds that were greatly admired. The variety of flowers and shrubs which have been planted were liked. The marina area with its great mature trees, playground, and picnic benches was very busy when we visited. We admired that the grass adjacent to kerb stones had been neatly trimmed to expose the full extent of the kerbstone. Very often we see this section of grass sprayed with chemical weed control which burns the grass and leaves the area extremely unsightly. We recommend a 750mm radius from your trees in communal open spaces be left uncut. This will not only alleviate the problem of cutting close to the tree, but also will become a wild flower/grass area around each tree. Additional areas of meadow growth should be considered for your communal green spaces. Please congratulate the resident who maintains the planting bed on Harbour Road. We were delighted to see the planting along the long block wall of Liffey Mills. Some of the panels will need additional planting, but this wall in time will be a wonderful green lung in the town. We encouraged this treatment to any other block or rendered wall in your town, but NOT on natural stone walls.

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

Along the approach roads and in your town's green spaces you have great mature trees, hedgerows and stone structures which give a great variety of habitats for birds, insects and small mammals. And then there's the wonderful expanse of the River Shannon with its great riparian banks to add to this biodiversity. We admired the growth along the riparian banks which not only are excellent for biodiversity but also assist erosion control and water cooling. In addition you have the Callows – another SAC and SPA – where resident and migrating birds breed. You mention that one of your community has undertaken the Daubenton Bat Survey for 10 years. Monitoring of bats is crucial as they are critical to global ecosystems. It's good to read that you will develop a Biodiversity Plan for your area. You will need professional help to develop a good workable plan for your area, but in the meantime, we are delighted to see that you are learning about biodiversity and sharing your information with the community. It's important to know what's in the area so as to conserve and to promote its development. You mention that hedgehogs have been spotted nesting in hedges. Hedgehogs happily use man-made boxes so perhaps you might provide these. Your Men's Shed could make them. Check the Internet for the correct design. Let us know next year, the results of the urban birdwatching day which you undertook with the Biodiversity Officer from the local authority. Hopefully it was well attended by young and old. We hadn't heard of All Saints Bog so looked up the NPWS website to see its location. Hopefully this event was also well attended. You mentioned 'Saving Banagher's Swifts', next year indicate the location of their nesting locations on your application form map (a small dot is sufficient). It's wonderful to see that you have bee keepers in the town and your planting schemes have been beneficial to them. Ducks, water hens, swans – we saw them all on the River Shannon.

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

When this category was introduced many communities struggled until they realised that it's just about being aware of our use of the planet's resources and how we can, in our daily lives with our actions, cut down on waste. We are delighted to read that 'Sustainability principles underpin all Banagher Tidy Towns' activities'. We congratulate the schools on their Green Flag awards and we encourage you to engage with the teachers to undertake additional activities which will add to the children's scholastic experience. With the Men's Shed, raised planting beds could be made from recycled timber, and then each could be planted by the children/pupils with vegetables, fruits and flowers. Perhaps each class in the two schools could plant a raised bed and then the children/pupils will learn even more. They also could make their own compost and with the fallen leaves from the trees on the schools' sites, make leaf mould to add to the compost. Community gardens are wonderful assets to a town so we encourage you in this activity and look forward to visiting it on our next adjudication of your community. Having eight community EV charging stations is great and due to your location on the Shannon we have no doubt that they are well used by visitors. A nice reuse of the flagstones which were moved from the entrance to the marina - they look good in the fairy garden. Many communities have applied for funding to carry out sustainability projects – native tree planting, orchard planting, seminars by experts etc. We encourage you to look and see what funding is available for your group for sustainability projects. Another simple project for you to undertake is - 'Take a Plant, Leave a Plant' similar to the 'Take a Book, Leave a Book' which has become very popular. We suggest that you ask gardeners when they are removing or separating plants which they no longer want, to put them into pots/containers and then make them available for the community. We also recommend that you collect wildflower seeds growing along your roads, and plant these in your meadows, as these are the ones that will grow well for you. In addition, they are free and so by doing this you cut down on waste associated with bought products.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We assume that you take part in the annual An Taisce National Spring Clean event. When the residents and business owners see a large number of volunteers in their high viz vests picking litter and removing weeds it reminds them to be vigilant in their own waste disposal methods.

Your ‘Street and Walkway Cleanup’ which involves most of your volunteers in biweekly work – ‘raking, scraping, shovelling, edging, and trimming’ - has certainly reaped it’s just rewards. We read that all organic materials from these cleanup sessions are incorporated into your compost; this is excellent. We are delight to report that the town was virtually litter free when we visited and weed growth, while noted, was not too intrusive. Unfortunately signage was very dirty which is a pity. If signs are introduced they must be maintained and cleaned regularly. Truthfully, we advise communities to put up a minimum amount of signs, as signage can clutter a landscape and streetscape and detract from their natural beauty. We also noted quite a number of community and commercial ‘illegal’ signage – i.e. temporary signage – attached to poles, fences, buildings, leaning along the sides of the road, etc. We advise you to ask the area office to provide community notice boards at the entrance roads to the town where signs can be erected and removed when the event is over. Then all ‘illegal’ signs can be removed. The clothes bring banks were full, and bags of clothing had been left on the street beside them. Truthfully, we have seen this in many towns.. a different solution has to be found.

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

Ther are single, two and three storey vernacular residences along your main street which are interspersed with your businesses and commercial premises. These are important in a town as they give activity to the area when the business and commercial premises are closed. Many of these had colourful floral displays in window boxes, or hanging baskets which added beauty and movement to the streetscape. We noted that some commercial premises are for sale. We strongly recommend that if/when these premises are converted to residential use, the shop name and shopfront design be retained (a condition should be attached to the planning permission). This is crucial to the retention of the social, artistic and architectural heritage of your town. We have seen these have been removed in many other towns which is unfortunate and a great loss to the community. There are also single and two-storey houses in their own sites on the towns’ approach roads, and here many had been recently painted and were very presentable. Their large gardens were full of colourful flowers and many had mature trees. We visited some of your residential estates and here too it was evident that residents took pride in their properties with many of the gardens full of herbaceous borders, colourful shrubs and in some, specimen trees which added to the beauty of the area. The sign name for Garrai Ard had been recently painted and was very easy to read by the passing motorist. Take care that the shrub in front does not hide the name. Perhaps remove it and instead plant it to the rear of the name stone. We also recommend that climbing plants, e.g. ivy, pyracantha, wisteria etc. are planted along this entrance wall, which will create a green corridor in time. We noted new trees have been planted along some of the entrance roads to estates. Remember to check ties and stays and to remove them when they are no longer needed. Communal green areas in many of the estates lack trees. Survey your housing areas and along the roads and in the communal open spaces areas which aren’t required for play these areas should be considered for tree planting schemes. In addition seating can be provided where members of the community can sit and chat. Many of the estate names need painting and/or removal of planting so that the sign is visible – again a quick survey will be needed. Don’t forget to encourage the residents to grow pollinator friendly perennial flowers from now on. Have a look at the website https://pollinators.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Garden-Pollinator-Guidelines-2022-WEB.pdf for ideas for the garden.

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

Located on the busy R439, which has one of the crossings of the River Shannon, there was a large volume of vehicular traffic in the town. We are delighted to report however that the majority of the motorists had reduced speed, making it safe for pedestrians. The Fáilte box hedging at the road junction looked good – the timber surrounds needs attention. It’s good to see that footpaths extend out beyond the edge of the town, where we saw quite a number of people walking in safety beside the busy roads. The various planting beds along the entrances were noted including the Trinity Knot bed. It might be better to remove the boat planters and just plant directly into the ground in these areas. This also has the advantage that there will be no maintenance or repainting of boats required. A continuity of planting bed design is recommended – a simple stone surround (which you already use in places). Your town’s paths are pedestrian friendly, mobility scooter friendly and buggy friendly. We also admired that you have routes through areas including the marina and Shannon Bank Park which are also accessible to all. Good to see the Age Friendly and wheelchair accessible parking spaces in the church grounds. We didn’t notice any around the town .. but maybe we missed them. Road surfaces were quite poor in a number of areas – edge breakup, previously repaired areas unravelling etc. Bring these to the attention of the area office. Equally road markings were worn and need repainting in quite a few areas.

Concluding Remarks:

Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2026 competition… but we have a few suggestions for your 2027 application.

- For your map we recommend that you have one legend showing key buildings and areas of interest (A – Z) and a separate one showing your project locations (Numbering system as indicated below). This will assist the adjudicators to quickly see your projects …. which is the reason for the visit.
- You will have seen that we request applicants to number their projects as, new projects (N), or improved/maintained projects (M) and all ‘future’ projects should only be included in a Five-Year Plan and NOT in the Application Form. You are to give each action/project a number as New (N1, N2, N3 etc.) or Maintained (M1, M2, M3 etc). You don’t need a large number of projects – remember a few projects carried out well is a LOT better than many project carried out badly.
- This same numbering system to be used to indicate the locations of these projects on a map – N1, N2, N3 etc and M1, M2, M3 etc. This is to help the adjudicators to negotiate their way around your town and see the various projects or locations of projects.

- As you have a large number on the committee you should now make a Five-Year Plan. Add collaborators - you can't do all projects without the assistance of the Local Authority, Waterways Ireland etc. After each project, put the name of the committee member who will take the responsibility to advance it. This will ensure that all projects will progress.
- Take care with the insertion of the photos into the Application Form as they are a little small. Perhaps ask a youth if you don't know how to do this. PRO for Banagher Tidy Towns will look good on their C.V.

We wish to state that the above remarks are 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. It was a pleasure to visit and adjudicate Banagher, a town we know quite well having visited many times as a tourist. We are delighted to see that you have joined the Tidy Towns again after a brief interlude.