Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre:	**Clara - Clóirtheach**	Ref:	**1060**
County:	**Offaly**	Mark:	**286**
Category:	**D**	Date(s):	**13/06/2026**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	44	45
Streetscape & Public Places	80	36	38
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	35	37
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	34	35
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	17	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	44	45
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	32	34
TOTAL MARK	**600**	**275**	**286**

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 with photos, and your map. Thanks you also for your Action Plan, but we suggest that if it relates to this competition then you should have Eight Headings would relate to the Categories in the competition. You are about to embark on a new Action Plan so you should amend this for your next Plan. We recommend a five year plan rather than a three-year plan as very often actions/ projects take longer than three years to complete. In addition to the partners column, we suggest you also add a column with the name of the committee member who will lead/advance the action/project. In this way the workload is divided amongst your committee. You are a committee of 10 with a voluntary force of 8 which is small for a population of over 3,4000. We suggest that you put up notices in the local retail/public house/take away and ask for volunteers just for one specific project. This sometimes encourages people to join when they know it's not long-term. Your Facebook page has 1.1K followers and we see that it is updated regularly which we encourage, as having a strong active social media presence helps to attract new volunteers by 'advertising' what you do and in particular the social benefits. Instagram is another popular platform for younger people so in time perhaps open a page here too. You have the support of state and semi-state organisations, local businesses and voluntary groups. We are delighted to see that you work with three local schools and that now you have one of the teachers of the senior school on your committee. This is your eleventh year entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns competition and you list the many benefits that have accrued in that time. The increase of the sense of pride in your town amongst your community is probably the most heartwarming. We are delighted to read this.

See Concluding Remarks for advice for your 2027 application and map.

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

The layout of your streetscape is quite unique. With the railway, river and main roads almost running in parallel, your secondary roads cross back and forth giving you an interesting town centre. You have vernacular single, two and three-storey structures like many Irish towns but the historical impact of the railway and river transforms your streetscape. For a town of its size you have a large number of historical structures and amongst them are St. Brigid's RC church, St. Brigid's Cof I church, the Community Centre (former RC church), the six storey, former flour mill and its associated structures, the old jute factory (Clashawaun Works) and worker's houses, bridges, numerous fine houses set in their own grounds, post boxes, water pumps etc. etc. The Clara Library and Clara Bog Visitor Centre were closed – we admired the building and its landscaping, including the parking area; it's wonderful to see landscaping in a carpark – perhaps ad a couple of tree too? Compliments to the businesses who made an effort to

present their premises – some had been recently painted and presented very well along the streetscape. We noted some flat iron gates along your roads. These are quite special and we suggest that you ask the residents/farmers for permission to repair those in need and to paint them all the same colour. The painted yellow pump was noted – put two planters either side and remove the one in the front as this planting is partially hiding this historical feature. We admired the mosaic at the entrance to the Hobby Shed and Men's Shed. The gate was closed so we couldn't go in and see what other creations were in the process. We noted the two painted utility boxes. We admire this project which Tidy Towns' groups often undertake. We recommend that you look along your streetscape and paint others in themes related to Clara – historical, business, nature, celebrities etc. This could be undertaken over a period of a few years. Unoccupancy and dereliction were noted. Hopefully this is being investigated by your and by Offaly Co Co? We admired the hard landscaping etc. at the Bull Ring but we're not sure if this is the best location for the 'Proclamation of the Irish Republic'. It seems a little lost and that this location was randomly selected? Maybe put in in the park and here you could make a feature of it by surrounding it with seats and planting beds or trees.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Both of your main parks were visited. In the River Park we loved that the riparian bank to the river is quite large. This will serve as a critical ecological buffer to help filter pollutants etc. Riparian banks also control erosion of the bank and sustain biodiversity so they are critical to the health of the river. The grass was neatly mown in this park and seats were located along footpaths where we sat for a while and enjoyed the sound of the flowing water and singing birds. The litter bin beside you wildlife sign was overflowing and there was with a considerable amount of litter on the surrounding grass. The 'Leave No One Behind' sculpture is very beautiful but you need to remove the moss etc. from the base. This to be undertaken by hand using a hand fork and stiff brush so that damage isn't done to the delicate base. The sign, informing us of its creation, was dirty. There was a bike covered in crochet, partly hidden in bushes – is this one of your historical projects? Remove it. The All Together wall was noted. Is it time to update this and remove all these items and just plant ivy, pyracantha, honeysuckle, etc and make this a biodiversity corridor. The rose bed is still new … it will take a few year before this makes an impact so have patience. There were a number of planters at the entrance to the Community and Family Resource Centre. If you want these to make an impact they MUST all be the same containers. At the moment there's a mixture of plastic troughs in green and brown and pots of varying shapes in brown and grey… truthfully it all looks quite haphazard. One person should take charge of this. We admired your Raingarden which you tell us was project No 12 of your BAP. It is the only Raingarden we know of in Co Offaly (perhaps there are more?) so well done. It is a very beautiful space and your sign tells the passerby how it works and the benefit of it. We will need more of these with Global warming and the heavy rainfalls that we are now experiencing.

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

Open parkland, mature gardens, hedgerows, wonderful mature trees, and stone structures and walls are habitats for birds, insects and small mammals. In Clara you have your share along with farmland all around you. Close by is the 460ha Clara Bog Nature Reserve. Have you ever visited this area as a committee? We suggest that you organise a site visit which is led by an expert. Invite the community to take part – you'll be surprised at the take up, as people enjoy learning about something on their doorstep. We encourage you to develop nature corridors in your town as these are used by a wide variety of wildlife, including insects, birds, mammals and amphibians to travel safely, feed and find mates. Have you done a Fit Count since installing the Rain Garden to see what insects now visit? This is a simple exercise and the results are uploaded onto the Biodiversity Ireland website. We noted the bird boxes at the entrance doors to one of the schools. Do birds use these or are they just ornaments? We suggest they be relocated and put higher up on trees. You mention a BAP but didn't send it to us. What other actions are included in addition to number 12 – the Rain Garden? There are numerous ideas for activities and projects for you to undertake in this category which are on the Biodiversity Ireland website and also on the TidyTowns website.

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

When this category was introduced some years ago communities were confused. To be honest some are still confuse. This category is just about being aware of how we use the resources of the planet so that we cut down on our waste. We particularly encourage Tidy Towns committees to lead by example. We visited a few of the schools and noted that in one at the main entrance, there were two very dilapidated planting boxes. We admire when Tidy Towns groups assist in schools in growing vegetables and flowers with the school children. We suggest that you approach the schools and that annually, you take just one class from each school and have raised planting beds with vegetables and flowers growing. It would be wonderful if every child before leaving national school and secondary school had the experience of planting seeds, seeing them grow, and then eating the fruits of their labour. You mention in your Plan that the TY students completed a Food Wate Survey. What was the outcome and what were the recommendations to help communities? Good to read that there are fundraising opportunities for local groups with the installation of the Return Bins for bottles and cans. It would be good to some contactless bottle water refilling stations installed – e.g. in the centre of the town, at your rain garden etc. Has the former BofI building had many exhibitions since it was converted? It would be good to hold you AGM in this building where the community would see the work of local artists. Good to see that two new bus shelters were installed in Clara.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We encourage TidyTowns groups to take part in the An Taisce Annual National Spring Clean – we assume that you register for this? We admire it when groups take part in Nation-Wide or LA's Clean-Up events as it focuses the mind of the general public on the high amount of litter/fly tipping/ dumping that occurs nationally. When you are seen in your Clara Tidy Towns high vis vests you make an impression on the public. While the centre of Clara was virtually litter free unfortunately we noticed quite a amount of litter in some of your communal green spaces and on

the approach roads. Picking litter is a task that really needs to be done a few times a week in order to keep the village litter free. We commend those who undertake this task in the centre of the village where you have definitely made a difference. Another job for your volunteers is the removal of weed growth – we noted quite a lot at walls and at roadside kerbs. Ask the volunteers to bring a spade, hoe and stiff brush with them. This is something that really needs to be done in late spring and then again in a few time in mid-summer. We love to read that you have launched 'Clean Outside Your Front Door'. Hopefully this campaign will encourage businesses and residents to help you. We suggest that you get them to sign up for this – sometimes people need to be shamed into doing things. Ther are a lot of cable ties on poles and on public gates … these should be removed. We noted Tansy ragworth is quite a few areas. This is a noxious weed and should be removed.

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

In the centre of the town there are several single and two storey houses on the main streets. A few of these had been freshly painted and looked very well. We visited several of your housing estates where residents had, in general, well-maintained properties – The Green, Kilbride, Cluain Fia, Armstrong Grove, Marian Square etc. There is a distinct dearth of trees in some of the estates both along the roads and in the communal open space. Marian Square had none in the large communal open space in the centre. Trees should be planted all around the perimeter of this square which will total transform the area. This will still leave the central area for ball play etc. We also suggest that a few picnic tables are installed at the corners so that people can sit and watch their children play, youths can gather and talk, and your elderly population can have a rest while out for their walk. We regularly tell TidyTowsn groups of the benefit of trees - they are good for mental health and wellbeing, they help reduce pollution, they improve appearance of your surroundings, and they increase the value of your property. Trees provide food for insects and food, roosting and nesting sites for birds. And now we have the additional benefit in terms of shelter from the sun which will be needed more and more due to global warming. We commend the owner of one of the houses in Marian Square for its presentation – beautiful, colourful, pollinator-friendly pots, and baskets adorned the house and garden. The building itself, garden wall and gate were recently painted and a seat inviting others to join the resident(s) was located in the front garden. We noticed some hanging baskets/ window boxes etc fixed to a pebble dashed wall along a communal open area. We recommend that here, and in other estates/areas in the town where you have block/ pebble dash walls, you make a nature corridor by planting ivy, pyracantha, honeysuckle, wisteria etc which will be wonderful for your biodiversity and also very pleasant to look at. These will take a few years to mature, but the wait will be worth it. Quite a few garden boundary walls along the roads were dirty and need to be painted. If some of these houses are occupied by elderly people perhaps you could offer to paint the garden walls for them? Some gardens had great displays of colourful flowers but it would be good if more had pollinator-friendly flowers. We recommend that you make a list of perennial pollinator-friendly flowers and shrubs and put this on your Facebook so that the residents can select these which will help your biodiversity efforts.

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

Tree lined roads with neatly trimmed grass margins greet the motorist when entering Clara. We were delighted to see that footpaths extend beyond the 60K limit on your roads which gives a safe walking route to those who live along these roads. We admired the 'Welcome to Clara' signs on your approach roads. Trim back the elder tree (Sambucus nigra) that's encroaching on your sign on the Ballycumber Road. We recommend that a large permanent planting bed is installed at the base of the Clara name sign adjacent to Bretland Park (Ballycumber Road). The small planter you have at present is completely lost in this large space. Plant Hostas, Rudbeckia, Alstroemeria, Verbena Bonariensis, Echinacea and Agastache, Salvia 'Hot Lips' all of which will give great colour and are also great for pollinators. In addition plant some ornamental grasses (height and movement) and also trailing pants for added interest and greater impact; but we caution you that none of these should block the name. In other areas where you have planters, if they are in a location where a permanent planting bed can be made we advise you to undertake this, as a permanent planting bed is preferable to one which is removable. We see this was undertaken in one area. New footpaths were noted including dipped kerbs. Along many of your roads markings are extremely badly worn and in some instances almost invisible. These are in need of urgent repainting.

Concluding Remarks:

We thoroughly enjoyed visiting Clara … in addition to the above we have a few other suggestions for 2027.

- Your map was extremely small. Next year fill an A4 page with your map so that your projects can be easily located. If necessary the legend can be put on a separate page (although we prefer if it is on the same page.)
- We request that next year you label your projects as New (those that have been completed from May 2026-2027) and Maintained. Just numbered them New – N1, N2, N3 etc and Maintained M1, M2, M3 etc These number are also put on your map along with a legend. All other projects are Future Projects and should NOT in in your application of on your map.,

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. Thank you for entering the SuperValu Tidy Towns 2026 competition. It was a pleasure to visit and adjudicate your town.