Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre:	**Ferbane - An Féar Bán**	Ref:	**621**
County:	**Offaly**	Mark:	**370**
Category:	**C**	Date(s):	**14/06/2024**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	57	58
Streetscape & Public Places	80	51	53
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	45	47
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	25	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	43	45
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	37	38
TOTAL MARK	**600**	**356**	**370**

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 which included photos, and for your map and Five Year Plan. See Concluding Remarks for suggestions for improvements regarding your Map and Application Form. You are a committee of 4, and are assisted by 10 which truthfully is small for a town of over 1,300 people … it would be good to get some additional volunteers to help you. Your Facebook page (you failed to mention it in 'Social Media Address') has 888 followers and we were happy to see that it is active. Keep posting – particularly with photos of your activities, nature, events taking place etc. etc. This is crucial if you want to attract new members /volunteers. You list state and semi state organisations, in addition to voluntary groups, and located businesses who assist you. It is important to keep up communication with all of these so that they give you the assistance needed for you to undertake your actions and projects. This is your 15th year entering the SuperValu TidyTowns competition and we assume that in the intervening years the community has witnessed an improvement in the town due to your involvement and work.

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

Located at the junction of the N62 and R436 the town, in addition to your vernacular single and two storey structures, you have a number of architectural structures of merit which give Ferbane its uniqueness - the RC church of the Immaculate Conception with it stunning bell tower, Saint Mary's parochial hall, The Coffee Barn (previously Ulster bank), St. Joseph's convent, and the triple-arch concrete bridge to name a few. It's wonderful that your Fair Green has been restored and we have no doubt that now this area is well used. We admire when shop windows have a display, and the one dressed by the Gallen CS students with the junk couture 'The Glam Clown' was a great idea. We admired the well preserved shopfronts which exist along your main streets – Fleming, James Hamill and Grennan. We think you've lost a few which is a pity as it is important that they are retained; they are part of your social history in addition to their architectural merit on your streetscape. We also admired the many businesses who had recently painted their premises and which gave a pleasant freshness to the streetscape. A few had made additional effort and had added colourful pollinator-friendly flowers in window boxes, planters or hanging baskets. These added beauty to your streetscape, in addition to being of benefit to your pollinators. Encourage other businesses to do likewise. Overhead service cables diminish the visual amenity of your streetscape especially where they feature several cables radiating from a single pole; the local engineer should be approached regarding a possible date for ducting starting with the most unsightly poles first. It would be wonderful if St Mary's Hall was given to you for your use. This could become a wonderful community building and possibly have an Allotment area too. Your Tidy Towns notice board was noted.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

We admired the Fair Green area. Neatly trimmed grass, trees and hedgerow behind the stone wall, and well planted flowerbeds also set behind a natural stone wall. Good to see picnic benches and now with a new opening in the wall people can access it with ease and park close by. In addition to the Fair Green there are the green spaces - Gallen United F.C., Ferbane GAA, Ferbane Pitch & Putt Club and West Offaly Lions RFC. We are delighted to read that you maintain the trees which you have planted around the town. Trees need to be watered for three years after they have been planted. It is also good that you have removed the grass around them so that the trees receive the benefit of all the nutrients in the soil. Check stakes and ties and adjust as necessary. The Chat and Chill area is one of your key areas where you undertake weeding, pruning and mulching. It will be wonderful when the climbing hydrangea covers the wall at Higgins' Corner. This flower bed, with lavender, sage and snowdrops, adds to the streetscape and will be wonderful for our early spring pollinators. We liked that a narrow strip of grass is trimmed on each side of the pathway in the Cowpark/ Ferbane Business Park leaving the area beyond to grow wild. It's important that you cut the long grass in September and remove it so that the ground is starved of nutrients which will help the wildflowers to grow. Wildflowers need low-nutrient soil to keep vigorous grasses from taking over. Good to see that you are planting additional trees (Hare's Corner donations) to create your Forest of Ferbane. While you have a considerable number of trees we feel that there is a dearth along the streetscape, similar to many Irish towns. Do a survey of the town and identify where trees could be planted and bring this to Offaly Co Co for implementation as build-outs will be required. As we know, trees are known to have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. In addition trees help reduce pollution, improve the appearance of a community and increase the value of property. Only plant trees suitable for an urban setting on the streetscape.

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

With the tree lined River Brosna, your green spaces, the hedgerows, stone walls, farmland and the SAC of Ferbane bog, you have a great variety of habitats for insects, birds, mammals and amphibians. Interesting to read about the swale at the GAA grounds. With the tarmacadam surface this is needed to filter the run-off. It would be great to see this in all carparks – an easy solution that works perfectly. We saw many of your 'managed for wildlife areas' as we walked around. We visited the Ballylin Board Walk and were delighted to meet some of the community there enjoying this beautiful environment. Will the walk this be extended? The bog is quite big so it would be good to make the experience last longer. Great to read of the Environmental and Social Studies class on the designs for a Biodiversity Garden – hopefully will one these be implemented? There is no need to put up signs where you have trimmed the narrow strip of grass along the edge of the pavement and allowed the remainder to grow as a wildflower/ wild grass, meadow. At this stage, people know why the meadow is there, and remember signage is clutter in the streetscape. Do you know it there are Daubenton bats along the river? They nest in colonies under bridges so perhaps you have some? Contact Bat Conservation Ireland and they will assist you to undertake a survey. Are there any bats in your historic buildings? Again Bat Conservation Ireland will advise. What about swifts? Swift nesting sites are in decline so if you haven't noticed swifts in your area, we recommend putting up swift boxes on the community buildings. These are easy to install and very important in our towns which, as we've said, now have few locations for the swifts to nest. Contact www.birdwatchireland.ie or www.swiftconservation.org for advice on their installation and maintenance. We noted a planning notice near the site of your 'Local Wildlife Hotspot' in the CowPark – will the development impact on it?

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

There are a variety of projects and actions that you can undertake in this category and we read that your community are embarking on some. We read of the opening of An Síolán Community Greenhouse May 2025 and that they have provided workshops regarding composting and growing vegetables and flowers. Hopefully this will be an ongoing series of workshops and that little by little word will spread of the benefits of the workshops – less waste associated with shop bought plants and compost, tasty food to eat, beautiful flowers to look at in your gardens, and less waste going into landfill. You have added a new compost bin to your composting area. A series of compost bins are required to deal with grass/leaves/twigs as it takes a few years to make good compost. We see that students of the Community School are availing of the knowledge of a local horticulturalist which is wonderful, and have had various workshops. We suggest that you arrange a foraging walk for your community. Depending on the season, our hedgerows have a great variety of free food – elderflower, elderberries, wild garlic, nettles, blackberries, mushrooms, sloes, crab apples, etc. etc. Good to see that, like many public/community buildings around Ireland, your schools and Heritage Centre have now installed solar panels. The E.V. charging facility was noted at the Fair Green. We encourage TidyTowns committees to become involved with the local schools and we suggest growing vegetable in raised beds with say, fifth class, in the National School(s). This to be undertaken annually which will ensure that every child leaving National School has had the experience of planting seeds and seeing the results – tasty fruit and vegetables. Perhaps in their adult lives they may become involved in an Allotment thanks to your kindness. The seats made from old pallets in Knockaulin Drive Green Area were admired. We visited the Community Garden/Allotments at Ballyvora Grove – great work to be seen too. We couldn't access it but we looked through the railings.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We are delighted to see that you took part in the An Taisce National Spring Clean (19th May 2025) as this focuses the whole community on the need for vigilance with regards to litter, fly-tipping and weed control. You have sections of the community who signed up to 'Adopt a Patch' – it's always good to have initiatives such as this as it focuses the mind of those taking part of litter and weeds in areas in addition to the 'Patch' they adopted. We see that you also launched 'One Group + Hour = Community Power' where 'groups' signed up – Ferbane Scouts and Beavers,

Gallen Community School, St. Cynoc's Primary School, and Ferbane Athletics Club. We see that some of the community groups are youths and hopefully having completed this litter pick-up task, it will make them mindful of the correct disposal of their own waste. You have the Ferbane Belmont C.E. scheme workers doing painting, litter picking, and other jobs for you which lessens the weekly work for your small cohort of volunteers - it is great that you have them. We read that your CE workers and volunteers do not use chemical weed control. Hopefully the school will follow the recommendations of their Biodiversity Management Plan and also stop using it. When we visited Ferbane was practically litter free but weed growth was noticed in a few areas giving a slightly unkempt feel to these. We suggest you put up a sign in estates stating that you'll be removing weeds and litter picking in that area. This might encourage volunteers who wouldn't join you on a general clean-up but are happy to help in their locality. Put it up a few days in advance to give the residents some notice. It might be time to investigate the purchase of a hand operated machine to remove weed growth. Perhaps share the cost of one with other Tidy Towns groups close to you. Ask other TidyTowns groups for a recommendation. There are some poles that are devoid of signs; ask the LA to remove them.

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

The centre of Ferbane has single and two-storey vernacular houses sitting side by side commercial properties. It's always good to see residences in towns as it ensures the centre is active when the businesses close. The standard of presentation of individual houses along the streets, and on the approach roads was generally very good. Home owners and occupiers clearly take pride in their place and keep their front facades, road frontage, gardens and boundary walls well-presented. Some colourful window boxes and planters were noted along the streets – but it would have been good to see some more. Equally you housing estates were generally well presented. We visited Saint Cynoc's Terrace, Gallen Prior View, Delvin Park, Knockaulin Drive, Ballyvora Grove and Ard Glas. We loved the single tree on the 'island' in Delvin Park terminating the view in addition to helping traffic flow. We regularly recommend that a maze effect is undertaken in communal green areas and so we were delighted to see that Knockaulin Drive now has a maze effect in their wildlife patch in their newly finished park. The paths allowing people to walk close to the long grasses and flowers where they will have a chance to see the visiting insects and particularly butterflies. We see that residents maintain planters in all your estates. We strongly recommend that some of these are removed and instead permanent planting beds are made. These can then provide year-round colour and movement on the streetscape. In addition, snowdrops, crocuses etc. can be added for our early spring pollinators. The beds would also provide year-round cover for small mammals. The name stone of St. Cynoc's Terrace was dirty. A stiff brush and soapy water is all that's needed. It would also be good to paint the lettering afresh. Some boundary walls in some of the estates need attention where walls have become weather stained. Don't forget to encourage the residents to grow pollinator friendly flower. Have a look at the National Biodiversity data Centre website https://biodiversityireland.ie/website and https://biodiversityireland.ie/publications/ for ideas for individual gardens and for communal spaces.

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

We entered from the west and were greeted by neatly trimmed grass margins and hedgerows. The first town name sign was clearly displayed warning motorists that they are entering a settlement and so need to reduce speed. We noted that a resident had planted a very pleasant display of colourful perennial flowers at the edge of the grass margin beside the trees. The small timber surround planter under the sign was barely visible – remove it. We then spotted a second town name sign … why have you two town name signs on this road? We noted that there are residents quite a distance from the centre of Ferbane along all of your approach roads – ribbon development. Hopefully in time footpaths will extend out beyond where they now terminate which will gives these residents a safe passage into town in addition to a safe passage when they just want to go for a walk. Road markings were worn in quite a number of places and in some areas were non-existent, including at road junctions. This is something that should be addressed urgently. You need to paint the stone name sign of Glenvar Row so that it is legible. We admired the recently painted/stained fence on the Fairgreen Road. A dark colour is always a good colour choice in situation such as this, as it does not block our view and therefore allows us to see beyond the fence and into the countryside/field. We read that you 'lobby' the council, but in addition to 'lobbying' the council we suggest that you find our where you are on the works programme. The local area office will have a programme of work and you should see where you are for the various items for which you 'lobby'.

Concluding Remarks:

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

- Your application of 53 pages is WAY too big. We asked for a limit of 500 words per category. PLEASE adhere to this request in your 2027 application. There were 21 pages of your Application Form for the category 'Community – Your Planning and Involvement' – this is unacceptable. Use Bullet Points and avoid Essays. Keep the longer version for the community – we don't need/want this.
- Projects were repeated in different categories and so we ask that you select the best category to tell us about a project and only put it in this one category.
- There's no need to add lot of web links as we don't have the time to open these.
- When we ask the you 'briefly describe ONE specific project where particular effort was made' – we mean that. We ask that the description is BRIEF – yours was three and a half pages long.
- Quite a number of your projects which you described as (N) are in fact, Future Projects. These projects are the ones that you put in your Five-Year Plan. The only activities/ projects which should be included in the application form are those which have been completed and so are New (N), or those that are being Maintained (M). Don't worry if you don't have a long list. You are a small group so we don't expect you to have lots and lots of projects.
- Your numbering system is over elaborate. Select a colour for each category and then use that colour and

N1, N2, N3 etc for new projects and M1, M2, M3 for maintained projects. These coloured numbers can then be transferred to your map so that the long indications lines will not be necessary. Use two maps if you need to show the centre to a larger scale.
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 clear accompanying map to inform us of your projects and make our visit rewarding. It was a pleasure to visit and adjudicate Ferbane, a town we have passed through many times. Keep up the good work and we look forward to our return visit.