

# Tidy Towns Competition 2023

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballycroy** Ref: **505**  
County: **Mayo** Mark: **277**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **28/06/2023**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	40	42
Streetscape & Public Places	80	37	39
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	30	32
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	28	29
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	16	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	25	27
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	34	36
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>277</b>

### Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2023. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Adh Mór.

Welcome to the Super Valu Tidy Towns Competition for 2023. We thank you for your entry, and wish you all the best in all your future work. Good luck.

Ballycroy, Baile Chruaich, a mid-sized village with a population of less than 1000 people – was an active participant in the competition from 2005 to 2016 and then re-entered the competition last year and has a committee of 3 members with support of another 7 volunteers.

- It is noted that since August 2021, Ballycroy Tidy Towns has continued to hold regular meetings to ensure you can effectively progress improvements for the local community. It is good to read that detailed records of these meetings are kept and a 'to-do list' for Tidy Towns is maintained and shared with relevant groups incl. the Community Council, CE scheme, and Mayo County Council. This is very important and commendable, as it avoids any duplication of work and maintains the full transparency of your activities.

- Ballycroy Tidy Towns has received support from various local national and local organizations and entities including the Community Council, local schools, Mayo County Council, Ballycroy Women's Group, and the Wheel.

- You communicate with the public mainly via your Facebook page. A Ballycroy website is under development and you propose to have a dedicated page on Ballycroy Tidy Towns activities. You conduct frequent public meetings to discuss committee updates, work progress, fundraising initiatives, new projects, and other suggestions. The Community Council and the local Church distribute two community information leaflets and information is provided in local stores and the on the 'community wall' in the Community Center.

- It is noted that the two primary schools in the Ballycroy serve as the central hubs for youth engagement. The safe involvement of local children in your ongoing projects is appreciated and encouraged by your committee. It is pleasing to read that in recent months Ballycroy Tidy Towns group has donated fruit trees to the primary schools and playschool in the parish, which has allowed students to learn in a practical way about biodiversity and sustainability. Your priority project this year has been the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the Scoil Naomh Bhríde front garden space and flower bed area.

The coloured map with photographs (inserted on the map) provided with your Entry Form, showing the main landmarks in the village and the various projects completed in Ballycroy this year, was of very good quality and the adjudicator particularly liked the Ballycroy Tidy Towns logo.

The quality of the application form was good. The 3-year Tidy Towns plan (2021 to 2024) is very comprehensive with specified timelines ranging from short to long term. Perhaps consider subdividing the plan in accordance with the 8 competition category headings and assigning some responsibilities for individual tasks.

The adjudicator's assessment is based on a recent site visit and the contents of the application form, which is

suitably concise at 17 pages long - well done. The text inserted on the form is also quite easy to read. However, for next year try to avoid long paragraphs of text and consider the use of bullet points to replace these longer paragraphs. This will add greater clarity to the document and will make the entry form easier to read.

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

- You have undertaken a number of new projects under this category this year including the provision of a safe walkway to the Community Centre and Church, in conjunction with Ballycroy Community Council and the renovation of flowerbed at Cleary's pub.
- The adjudicator visited Ballycroy village for the first time this year. Approaching the village from the Mulranny direction, one is struck by the wonderful setting of the village located in a very scenic landscape and surrounded extensive areas of bogland, rolling hills and mountains with distant sea views.
- At our first stop, the flagship project for your committee this year was visited - the garden area located to the front of the school. The boundary of the school adjoining the main road consists of a very well-constructed natural stone wall, with a grass margin and planted areas adjacent to the road. The work undertaken by the Tidy Towns Committee to rejuvenate these plantings and the surrounding area has been excellent. The presentation and maintenance of the planted areas, containing a range of herbaceous perennials is superb. The grass margin is also maintained on a regular basis providing a neat and tidy aspect. The school building is a very attractive structure with timber cladding and fits very well into the surrounding scenic natural landscape. All in all, your committee can be very proud of your contribution to the enhancement of this area.
- The grounds of the nearby Holy Family Church were visited and the very extensive tree cover and attractive sylvan setting of the Church was noted positively. The birthday trees were an interesting feature here, planted to celebrate the special birthdays of local residents in Ballycroy. The Church grounds the boundary wall facing the road add significantly to the quality of the presentation of this part of the village.
- The Visitor Center associated with the Ballycroy National Park was visited at the adjudicator was very impressed with the excellent facilities provided at the gateway to this extensive National Park. Ballycroy village is certainly very fortunate to have such a wonderful facility so close. Perhaps there are advantages to be gained due to the large numbers of tourists now attracted to the area. The presentation of the entrance to the visitor center, access road and car parks was excellent and this was matched by the warm welcome received from the reception staff and the lunch provided in the Café. The areas of managed wildflower meadows in the car park were also worthy of special mention.
- The nearby bottle bank was presented and maintained in the pristine condition. Perhaps the erection of suitable fencing would further improve its appearance along the roadside. The blank sign located beside the bottle banks centre could be used to publicize local events or to highlight information on the history of the village, local wildlife etc. The caution children sign and nearby wall would benefit from cleaning and repainting. The wall of the cemetery facing the road was nicely painted a striking black and white colour.
- The Ballycroy Community Centre was freshly painted and looked well. The window boxes enhanced the presentation of the building. The grounds of the community center are maintained to a very high standard with closely mown grassed areas and attractive information sign on the history of Ballycroy. You might consider retaining a wildflower meadow strip along the roadside boundary here, as this will reduce the need for regular grass maintenance and will encourage greater biodiversity. The planting beds to the front and side of the community center looked well, but perhaps additional planting to fill in bare areas would be desirable here.
- The Garda station premises were freshly painted and nicely presented and the boundary wall facing the road enhanced this part of the village. Cleary's Bar and Grocery premises (now closed) also looked very well. This complex of buildings painted in striking white and red, added a splash of colour on entering the village. The Cleary's stone and flower bed was also especially admired in this area.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

- A number of maintenance type projects which are ongoing commitments of Ballycroy Tidy Towns are worthy of mention here, including the provision of flower boxes along N59 in front of Ballycroy Community Centre, a revamp of flowerbeds outside Scoil Naomh Bride and a major clean up and rejuvenation of picnic area at Ballyveaney.
- Ballycroy is fortunate to have important stands of trees at the entrance to your village which are establishing very well despite the harsh wind conditions. These trees are an important feature of the area and their continued care and attention will be an important task for your committee in the future. The planting boxes installed between the trees look well but to probably impede grass cutting and maintenance operations. The removal of the planters on a phased basis and their relocation to more suitable locations within the village core is suggested.

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

- It is noted that instead of mowing all of the Ballyveaney picnic area every week, you arrange for the cutting of the verges and around the picnic bench every week and mow the rest every 6 weeks to encourage wildflowers. To provide a more stable habitat for ground nesting birds and small mammals, perhaps consider mowing the verges every week and the remainder of the site once/twice per year. Removal of the grass clippings will reduce soil nutrients over time, thereby encouraging greater plant species diversity in the grass sward.
- Other projects to consider under this category for next year could include the installation of swift boxes at the Community Centre, erection of Bat Boxes on the trees in the Church grounds and local pollinator surveys perhaps in conjunction with the NPWS. Further information on these and other topics under this category, is available in the Tidy Towns handbook.

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

- Your committee has been successful in maximising the use of local resources by re-using plants either salvaged from the previous year, donated by the community, or propagated from cuttings. In addition, plant pots and seed trays have been salvaged from your community garden for use in future projects.
- It is good to note that the removal of weeds from kerbs and footpaths in Ballycroy is now done manually without the use of herbicides. The use of a mechanical Weedex type machine for the future, could be considered which will help reduce the amount of manual inputs required in your weed control operations.
- When considering any new projects under this category it is worthwhile first of all considering how the proposed project will align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The information provided in the Tidy Towns newsletters and Handbook is very informative in this regard.
- You might in the future consider installing a community composter in the village. These are useful and provide a quantity of mulch to use on your planted areas, which will ensure rapid establishment of the plantings.
- Other areas worthy of consideration by Ballycroy Tidy Towns for the future under this category, which is in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals, include the development of small electric microgeneration schemes for Wind, Solar and Hydro in partnership with the Local Authority - these may also attract suitable SEAI or Leader funding.
- You might look at the provision of public e-car charge points and additional bicycle parking facilities in the village, and where there are deficiencies, suggest suitable locations where these could be provided in the short term.
- The Committee might also consider in the future initiating membership of the Sustainable Energy Communities programme run by the SEAI which includes engaging in learning networks, preparation of energy masterplans and local energy action plans etc. The following are useful links in this regard.  
<https://www.seai.ie/community-energy/sustainable-energy-communities/>  
<https://www.codema.ie/sec>

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

- You carry out a Community Spring Clean approx. every 3 months and it is noted that as part of this year's National Spring Clean you arranged for litter picking operations along village approach roads, in conjunction with Mayo County Council and the Ballycroy National Park organisation.
- On the day of adjudication, the village area was found to be very tidy and largely litter free - well done.

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

- The maintenance of estate flowerbeds, children's playground and public seating are priority maintenance projects undertaken by your committee this year under this category
- The area in the vicinity of the Community Playground was visited and found to be well looked after. The nicely painted colourful single storey dwellings overlooking this area enhance the village streetscape. An attractive planting of herbaceous perennials with a stone wall backdrop – the estate planting scheme, looked very well and significantly enhanced the road environs here. A steel structure in the shape of a boat would benefit from a refresh with paint. The restoration of the timber seating and decking at the base of the boat would stop any further deterioration of this feature. The circular concrete planters along the roadside margin here impede maintenance and do not enhance this area and it is suggested that they be removed.

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

- It is noted that the committee has arranged for the clearance of footpaths in the village and in particular along the N59, to improve the safety of this path for pedestrians. A new section of footpath which links Scoil Naomh Bhríde to the community centre and visitors centre has also been upgraded.
- The approach from the Mulranny direction is enhanced by wonderful natural vegetation located on both sides of the road. It was good to see that roadsides strips are reserved for wildflowers with narrow margins along the road maintained on a regular basis. An attractive line of trees planted in the roadside margin with black wooden planters in between, enhance this approach. As stated previously perhaps consider reducing the number of planters here as it is probably very difficult to maintain these and cut the grass, particularly during the dry summer months. Cafferkey's Bar and B&B premises and car parking area looked well. The road surfaces and markings along this section of the N59 are to a very high standard.
- The approach from Belmullet includes a new footpath and a line of trees and planters and timber fence along the roadside boundary. The new path provides safe access for children walking to the national school. Consider planting a native hedge behind the fence as the timber fence is visually prominent and will deteriorate over time.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

The work undertaken by your committee this year has been very impressive for such a small number of people involved. The visit to Ballycroy was an enjoyable and memorable experience for the adjudicator, who was struck by the quality of your projects and the obvious vibrancy and community spirit present in your village. Do consider the suggestions made as these can assist your work and have a lasting impact. We wish you well for the future and for the further sustainable development of your village community - keep up the good work.