

# Tidy Towns Competition 2024

## Adjudication Report

Centre: <b>Ballyhaunis - Béal Átha hAmhnais</b>	Ref: <b>506</b>
County: <b>Mayo</b>	Mark: <b>335</b>
Category: <b>D</b>	Date(s): <b>01/07/2024</b>

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2023	Mark Awarded 2024
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	44	46
Streetscape & Public Places	80	47	49
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	47	49
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	40	42
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	21	23
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	36	36
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>335</b>

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

Fáilte Chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu 2024. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Lean leis an dea-obair! Thank you for participating in Ireland's longest-running environmental project and helping to make Ireland a better place. We really appreciate all the great work that you do and the effort you put in, year on year. Speaking of great work, many thanks for all the work that so obviously went into your entry this year. It was very detailed, very neat and easy to follow and interesting as well! It included many photographs in nice montages that serve as a useful summary of the many projects you describe. You also include your 3-year plan in which you are in Year 3 of same. Will you be devising a new plan soon? Thanks also for the map which is bespoke for your entry, well done. However, please have a look at the format as not all the features (e.g. the roads and river) were visible. It wasn't a great problem on the day and we were able to get around and find what we needed. There is no doubt that you are an active group with strong connections within your community. We were impressed by the list of supporting organisations and also your work with the refugee community. You communicate well and indeed have a new website – very good! Your use of social media was noted. So too was your work with schools and young people. The specific project that you have identified for particular effort this year is your brand-new Community Biodiversity Action Plan. This is a great achievement and a most useful document for any Tidy Towns or community group to have.

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

You have a great array of new projects in this category. These included the redevelopment of the former Convent National School into a community hub and library – a really significant development for your town. We also are pleased to see that Ballyhaunis is converting former commercial premises in much-needed housing space. No fewer than 20 properties have availed of the Street Enhancement Scheme and this has made a huge difference to your streetscape.

The new-looking Aldi store has superbly landscaped grounds. This is probably the best landscape treatment of a supermarket premises that this adjudicator has ever seen. There were many perennial plants and a large proportion of these were pollinator-friendly. The church grounds nearby are really well-kept and pleasant to visit. The Calvary scene here is impressive. The Foroige premises looked good with a nice little bit of planting here. We also admired the lovely Tidy Towns map in the square. The M. Curley crest mural is splendid. Could you possibly paint the planter surrounds in the square?

There were many examples of good shopfronts in Ballyhaunis. Catching the eye were Philips' Menswear and the pub bearing the same name, Herr's, Duffy and Colleran's pharmacies, Mac's Bar, EJ Philips Butcher, Renew

Barbers and Delaney's Hardware and Garden Centre. Paddy's Bar looks very well. We were impressed with the use of hanging baskets in the main street areas. We would strongly encourage more use to be made of the Supervalu grounds. There is ample space for some really positive changes here. Perhaps this could overlap with some of the actions in your Biodiversity Action Plan? It was great to see that the old Ulster Bank is now the Old Bank Medical Centre. It's a really lovely building and looks great in its new use. Is this the old Courthouse on Main Street with the Christmas tree in front of it? The railings here will be in need of attention soon. A sign here would be nice too. Ballyhaunis Community School looks really sharp. There was very neat tree-planting at the front of the grounds. We'd advise not planting at the base of trees as this doesn't help the trees and rarely is necessary.

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

Among your new projects in this category are the establishment of new 'pocket woodlands' at 2 sites in the Friary grounds. This is a great action that will surely have been flagged in your Biodiversity Action Plan. Another action from same was tree-planting and it is great to see that local businesses have been involved in this activity. A new project for you was the creation of a Biodiversity Mural – a super initiative. The pupils of Scoil Íosa have also been busy with the planting of native wildflowers in St. Patrick's Church grounds.

Your Community Park is such a great asset, a real jewel for you all. It's such a big space and we were delighted to see that so much of it has been devoted to pollinator-friendly management. This is a big contribution to biodiversity and conservation and we were impressed. We noted that there is good connectivity between habitat types here too. Make sure that this is maintained! There weren't that many people there on the day – not great weather – but there were some die-hard runners for whom this is an excellent resource.

We also visited your Community Garden and were really pleased to see that the Green Flag flying here – well done. The new murals look great. The Men's Shed, Community Preschool and gorgeous old Friary buildings were all admired. The front of Friarsground Park is well-kept. The multi-use games area, playground, path, adult exercise machines all seemed to be in good order. The ornate Friarsground sign looks a little weathered at this stage – a beautiful frame though. The new mural is just lovely!

We admired the rather unusual planters in the square which look really well and in good condition. The hanging baskets on the bridge really add to the structure.

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

Your 'big-ticket item' for this year is of course your Biodiversity Action Plan. Our congratulations on this achievement. You have sought expert guidance for this and we are sure that this is an excellent plan. Your task now is to implement the actions that are recommended for Ballyhaunis. An ongoing project for you is the Dalgan River Citizen Science monitoring initiative. This is another really worthwhile project that does more than just gather data. The sampling programme will be instructional for many participants and we do hope that the results are interpreted and shared with the rest of your community. Well done for including the schools in the process. We really enjoyed your little riverside walk. While there we saw a Wren nesting in the bridge and were interested to see Yellow Corydalis on the stonework here.

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

You've lots to report on in this category! We will start by offering our congratulations on your receiving a grant to implement a circular economy plan. We wish you well on the actions of this other new plan for your town. You have also a new Sustainable Energy Community since your last entry and have already held an event on home energy. Great stuff. Other projects that you describe here are reuse and repair initiatives such as the bicycle repair clinic – a super idea. Seed-saving, composting and reducing garden waste are all subjects of events at your lovely Community Garden. It's great to see that second hand shops are doing well in Ballyhaunis. They are a terrific way of saving waste and providing much-needed funds. They are also great for bargains and unexpected treasures. In a similar vein is the take a book and leave a book mini-library which is now housed in your community hall. Well done for supporting the Junk Kouture project at the Community School. Fast fashion is an incredibly wasteful business and it's great that this issue is being highlighted.

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

Thank you for all the information on your anti-litter and anti-clutter actions throughout the year. We are delighted that your annual Spring Clean 2024 was well-attended. You use social media to help spread the word on not spreading the litter. We note that you are very proactive in terms of seeking fines for offenders and this is to be applauded. You keep local politicians informed on how you expect them to make the best use of signage and to remove it when all the votes are in and counted. Very good. Unfortunately, Ballyhaunis wasn't litter-free on adjudication day. We were disappointed to see waste dumped at the Big Bin at Supervalu. Some litter was also noted along your shopping streets. In your back areas graffiti was occasionally noted. We'd point you towards some tidiness issues in your main areas such as sign frames and roadside bollards in need of cleaning. Litterbins and pumps need a little TLC too... The sundial was a nice surprise to find. Could you possibly see if the lettering could be touched up?

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

It's good to read that a number of your formerly derelict or vacant buildings have been purchased and upgraded. We agree that the majority of the active shopfronts are indeed well presented. You have offered assistance to The

Maples housing estate and indeed encouraged others to reach out to you. This is exactly the approach we believe that Tidy Towns groups should take. There are currently 9 local housing estates that have residents' associations and we assume that you have made contact with all of them. Is there an estates competition? Other Tidy Towns groups have found these to be an excellent way to encourage positive action as well as healthy rivalry! Outstanding planting was noted on the way into St. Gerald's estate.

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

It's great news that Ballyhaunis has been selected as the next Town Centre First participant. This is a really exciting and important initiative that could be transformative for so many Irish rural towns. We wish you every success with this long-term project. On a somewhat smaller scale, you've reported to us funding for a new footpath and improvements to the parking at Scoil Íosa and the cemetery. You are also lobbying for further pavement to be added in two locations. Very important work – keep it up! Ongoing work includes the maintenance of grass verges by the RSS staff. Here, biodiversity is considered by leaving a proportion unmown - very good. We did note that the verges on the approach on the N60 looked very neat. Watch out for the old twinning sign getting faded and maybe in need of replacement. We believe that a road sign is missing on the Knock/Kiltimagh Road approach.

#### **Concluding Remarks:**

We were very impressed with many aspects of Ballyhaunis on our visit. You are blessed with lots of natural attributes and some lovely buildings too. We send our congratulations to the many businesses that keep their premises looking so well and to the staff and volunteers that contribute to the maintenance of your schools and churches. This was a very good entry with lots of positive actions for the future for Ballyhaunis. Well done.