

# Tidy Towns Competition 2025

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Milltown - Baile an Mhuilinn** Ref: **202**  
County: **Galway** Mark: **397**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **08/05/2025**  
**19/07/2025**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2024	Mark Awarded 2025
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	54	55
Streetscape & Public Places	80	49	51
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	56	58
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	52	54
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	29	31
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	70	72
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	40	41
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>397</b>

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Bhailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2025. Go raibh maith agaibh as bhur iarratas a chur isteach. Maith sibh don obair atá déanta agaibh in bhur cheantar go dtí seo - guímid gach rath oraibh i bhur dtionscadail amach anseo. Ádh mór. Thank you for participating in this year's competition and yet again managing a large volunteer work force to help make your village look so well maintained year-round. Milltown's commitment to the Tidy Towns ethos is clear and long-standing with over 60 years in the competition is no small feat! It was lovely to read in your 2025 application how your core committee of 12 continues to work hand in hand with CE/Tús workers, volunteers, local schools, and businesses. There's a lovely sense of meitheal in everything you do. On the ground, your clean-up days and seasonal initiatives show that there's strong local buy-in, and I particularly appreciated seeing new residents getting involved – such a welcoming touch. Looking ahead, there is also a great opportunity to broaden your engagement by building a relationship with agencies like Inland Fisheries Ireland or Waterways Ireland. These partnerships could support your work on the River Clare and open the door to community education and funding opportunities. As shared on your Facebook page, a lovely morning was spent in Milltown Heritage Park as part of the ongoing project between Milltown Heritage Society and the Natural History Museum of Ireland. Chris Benson carried out a bird ringing demonstration, giving children the chance to get up close and personal with native birds. They also visited the sandstone visiting seat from Pa Meehan's house beside the river walk, and took part in a celebration of culture through music and poetry. This wonderful initiative highlights the connection between native species – from rocks to trees – and our shared heritage. Referring to the Tidy Towns Handbook, a well-structured plan across the competition categories and a clear organisational map are key to success here. Consider applying to community capacity-building funds like those offered by Pobal or similar schemes to support training and development for volunteers. that there's strong local buy-in, and I particularly appreciated seeing new residents getting involved – such a welcoming touch. Your application form and the supporting map could be a little easier to navigate. A clear layout, use of N (New), M (Maintained), FP (Future Projects) codes, and a project legend would help paint a fuller picture. Last years adjudicator recommended the Development of a digital outreach strategy (e.g., Facebook page, youth engagement). Consider appointing a younger member as a digital communications lead. Continue engaging schools and link annual planning more clearly to project progress. Host a community appreciation day to showcase completed projects and welcome new volunteers.

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

It was a real pleasure to walk through your village – the repainted benches and vibrant planters really lift the whole streetscape. The care shown in maintaining areas around the community mural and pump is obvious. Your 2025 application highlights the use of planting around derelict sites, which is such a thoughtful and effective approach. Some signage does clutter the visual line and could benefit from a gentle tidy-up. These small improvements would

really showcase the strong character of your built environment. The Heritage Park and Museum is one of the community's standout assets unfortunately it was closed on our weekend visit, but it is evident that it is a hub for intergenerational storytelling, biodiversity projects, and cultural events. Features like the sandstone seat from Pa Meehan's house link local stories and landscape features, fostering a strong sense of place. The museum is integrated with the Clare River Walk and serves as an outdoor classroom and reflection space. Continue to invest in the ecology of the park and its environs Conduct a full signage audit and rationalise unnecessary signs and poles. Use coordinated paint schemes and shopfront enhancement grants where applicable. Extend visual improvements to lesser-used streets. Launch a 'Best Painted Building' award to encourage wider involvement from local businesses and property owners.

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

It was fantastic to see the new gazebo has centre stage in the park and your living hedge project is another lovely touch, and I was glad to read about your reduced mowing and pollinator-friendly planting in this year's entry. There's a lovely balance now between tidy presentation and biodiversity value. Going forward, having a clearer five-year vision for planting would be helpful – and don't forget to involve younger volunteers in seasonal planting to build skills and ownership. Together, the tower and the museum reflect Milltown's commitment to honouring its built and cultural heritage while linking it meaningfully to modern community and environmental initiatives. Milltown demonstrates a mature and thoughtful approach to landscaping, balancing aesthetic appeal with ecological integrity. As adjudicators, we see a town that values seasonality, native planting, biodiversity support, and local pride—all grounded in a strong volunteer base and practical horticultural planning. The community has a coordinated and self-sustaining planting system using their own greenhouse. Actions are not just decorative but ecologically aligned, especially with pollinator goals and tree planting. There's a strong link between green spaces and local identity, with places like the Heritage Park serving dual purposes of education and amenity. Your Projects have involved local schools and CE schemes, strengthening community ownership. Create a five-year planting strategy with emphasis on native trees. Use pollinator-friendly planting schemes for new beds and enhance approach verges with perennial borders that enhance biodiversity in nature. Host a community planting day to introduce new wildflower zones and engage residents in planting maintenance.

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

Milltown continues to show real care for the natural world and its links to heritage. The biodiversity garden was alive with pollinators on the day of adjudication, and the new bat boxes and reduced mowing were clearly working well. The river walk, flanked by wildflowers and maturing hedgerows, is becoming a natural corridor that offers both habitat and a peaceful place for people. Because the River Clare is such an integral part of Milltown's biodiversity and public amenity, you might consider establishing a relationship with Inland Fisheries Ireland or Waterways Ireland. These agencies can offer guidance, monitoring tools, and even potential funding to support water quality testing, riparian zone protection, and community engagement initiatives—particularly with local farmers to help raise awareness to reduce runoff and pollution. Your 2025 application and supporting materials show that biodiversity is now embedded across multiple projects—from school gardens and the outdoor classroom to the wildflower zones and signage about pollinators. The Heritage Park event with the Natural History Museum and bird ringing was a beautiful example of bringing nature, learning, and culture together. It was a joy to witness the children's excitement and participation on your facebook page. The 40 fruit trees at the GAA pitch were inspected and might benefit from the vegetation at the base being removed to reduce competition and encourage growth. The Tidy Towns Handbook encourages communities to document and map their habitats—this is something you could now develop further. In fact, your group could become a valuable contributor to citizen science by gathering local species data and submitting it to platforms like the National Biodiversity Data Centre ([www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie)) or BirdWatch Ireland. These platforms allow communities to make real scientific contributions while tracking changes in local biodiversity over time. A biodiversity map or seasonal species log (perhaps in collaboration with the school) would add scientific value and community pride. Going forward establish a seasonal biodiversity mapping group involving the school. Publish a biodiversity trail map linking green spaces and install signage. Develop a light-touch habitat survey process for all ages to get involved. Organise a guided nature walk and create a "Junior Pollinator Passport" activity booklet for local schoolchildren.

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

Milltown is steadily building a strong foundation in local sustainability. The refill station continues to be a practical and well-used feature in the village, and the composting area in Heritage Park is a great step forward. It was also encouraging to read about your Spring Fair sustainability workshops and to see how CE scheme participants play a role in reusing and repairing materials locally. Your 2025 application outlined increased awareness of waste reduction, and your inclusion of repair initiatives shows growing ambition in this area. The use of perennial planting and reduced watering needs demonstrates good planning and long-term thinking. In the same spirit of cross-sector collaboration, engaging with Inland Fisheries Ireland or Waterways Ireland could support sustainability efforts along the River Clare—particularly through projects aimed at water conservation, pollution prevention, and nature-based farming practices. The Northern Lights over Milltown were featured as a significant local moment, with the display used to emphasise the importance of climate action, dark sky preservation, and biodiversity awareness—tying natural wonder to sustainability and community pride. Going forward, this year also presents a new opportunity for Milltown to explore light pollution awareness. Consider introducing a 'Milltown by Moonlight' campaign to promote Dark Sky-friendly practices, such as reducing unnecessary artificial lighting, switching to downlighting, and hosting a community stargazing evening. This would complement your sustainability values while strengthening links to biodiversity and heritage. The Tidy Towns Handbook suggests highlighting measurable outcomes to build support and inspire others—this could be your next step. You might also consider tracking simple metrics like litres of water

saved, compost volumes produced, or the number of reuse projects completed. Create a local composting pilot and share results publicly. Introduce refill stations, rainwater harvesting in community buildings, and a monthly sustainability newsletter. Run a 'Green Gains' week highlighting small sustainable actions by residents and businesses. Consider introducing a 'Milltown by Moonlight' awareness campaign to reduce unnecessary artificial lighting. This could include a community stargazing evening, promoting downlighting, and exploring your potential as a Dark Sky-friendly village—aligned with best practice examples from the Tidy Towns Handbook and Mayo Dark Skies guidance.

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

Milltown was spotless on the day of my visit – from approach roads to the heart of the village, everything looked well cared for. Your regular patrols and consistent upkeep really shine through, and the community's use of posters to promote seasonal clean-ups is a simple but smart way to keep momentum going. It was particularly good to see that unused or redundant items, like old furniture near the playground, have been removed—this shows your group is responsive and actively maintaining public areas. Local school engagement and environmental education were spotlighted, particularly through the Picker Pals programme, Active Walkway initiatives, and solar energy installations, demonstrating Milltown's efforts to instil stewardship values among young residents. There are still a few areas where refinements could make a big difference. The Heritage Park, though full of character and community pride, feels a little busy in places. Grouping interpretive signage and consolidating machinery displays could help reduce visual clutter while still celebrating the space's heritage. Weed control—especially along verges and base of signs—could benefit from a shift away from chemical use. Some herbicide application was visible in the Heritage Park during the visit, and this may be at odds with your strong commitment to biodiversity. Consider phasing in more environmentally friendly alternatives such as manual removal, mulching, or vinegar-based treatments. These methods are also an opportunity to educate and involve your younger volunteers. Introduce low-profile signage and tidy machinery displays. Pilot weed management methods that align with biodiversity and volunteer safety. Engage schools in seasonal clean-up campaigns. Introduce a 'Golden Picker' award for standout litter volunteers and trial a 'litter-free zone' campaign around key village landmarks.

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

Milltown's housing areas are a real credit to the community—neat, welcoming, and clearly well cared for. From Millbrook to the newer estates, the overall presentation is tidy and inviting, with nicely maintained communal spaces. A well-placed bench near the Millbrook entrance added a lovely, neighbourly touch. Residents might consider introducing bat boxes or bee hotels in appropriate spots and enhancing their awareness with simple signage to explain the biodiversity value of native hedgerows. Entry signage at some estates could also be updated or standardised to ensure a cohesive identity across neighbourhoods. Promote estate competitions and liaise with Residents Associations and Enhance communal green areas with native planting and interpretive signage this could be done by introducing biodiversity projects in housing open spaces. You might consider launching a community-led biodiversity plan for housing areas, with each estate contributing one small action per year you could then launch an estate biodiversity award in a few years. Encourage residents to plant pollinator patches. Reintroduce traditional signage on updated buildings where possible. For Next Year Host an estate-wide 'Greenest Garden' challenge and offer workshops on pollinator-friendly planting.

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

Milltown creates a great first impression. The approach roads are clean, well-presented, and flanked by a mix of hedging, maturing trees, and well-managed verges. Your existing hawthorn hedging, is a great asset both visually and ecologically. You've done some lovely work here – we particularly liked the tree planting along the Dunmore Road and how well-kept the verges were. The hanging baskets on poles are cheerful touches, and the new Ballindine signage was well placed. During our visit, we noted that some of that some of the other farm-style gates had been refreshed with a coat of paint in lovely cohesive tones. These heritage features contribute greatly to the character of the village and would really stand out with with planned painting and a little attention. Several poles and signs may now be redundant or partially obscured by vegetation—consider a signage audit to tidy up the visual experience. A unified colour scheme for walls, railings and poles would also reduce street-level clutter and sharpen the village's overall aesthetic. The idea of using locally sourced wildflower seed mixes to enhance some of your grass verges is a strong one. A Wildflower Verge Zone on one approach road would act as a flagship for your pollinator-friendly work and could be paired with interpretive signage to explain the project. Bike parking also deserves a mention—are there locations where new or refreshed facilities might encourage greater use of bicycles for school or errands? There are opportunities for Native Tree planting and signage improvement. Look at coloured surface for narrow approach sections and liaise with Galway County Council to address visual obstructions and traffic calming. Paint (outstanding) gates and walls in uniform tones; complete a signage and pole audit; introduce a pilot Wildflower Verge Zone with interpretation signage. A suggestion for Next Year is to Collaborate with a local landowner or school to co-design a 'Welcome to Milltown' biodiversity verge or orchard edge as part of the entrance experience. Signage visibility is another area to review, particularly where vegetation is obscuring views. Conducting a signage audit would help streamline the entrance experience. Grass verges continue to be well managed, but there's potential to trial a Wildflower Verge Zone using native wildflower seed mixes sourced locally or through verified Irish suppliers. This would add colour, attract pollinators, and signal your ongoing commitment to sustainable landscaping. Finally, consider refreshing or installing bicycle parking where appropriate to encourage active travel.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Your work in all areas of the Tidy Towns competition but particularly in terms of Biodiversity and green spaces is to

be commended. You have an opportunity to encourage the whole village to come on board by Hosting a 'Biodiversity Open Day' at the Heritage Park and/or Develop a Community Biodiversity Map for distribution in local shops and schools. Many thanks for all your great work.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

The approach roads to Milltown are well presented and maintained. Of particular note are the vibrant flower beds along the N17 (south), which create a welcoming entrance to the village. The freshly painted blue gate adds to this positive visual impact. The Church and its grounds are presented to a high standard. Our visit inside the Church was a peaceful experience enhanced by tranquil background music and singing. Perhaps you might consider a small wildflower area in the Church grounds. The streetscape has eye appeal with freshly painted shopfronts as well as vibrant planters and hanging baskets. Shopfronts included Ryan and Sheridans. We liked the presentation and retro image of the 'CYM' building next to the Church. We enjoyed our visit to the Heritage Park and witnessed families and young children enjoying the play area. The gazebo is impressive and the native trees are welcoming. We liked the historical features also throughout the park such as the Washing Stone and Cloch na Fuinneoige. The 'Meeting of the Waters' seating area is thoughtfully placed and offers a tranquil space for reflection. We also noted and admired the vintage farm machinery displayed in front of the striking stone cottage. The thatched cottage with its red-painted door and windows, complemented by colourful flower boxes, adds great charm and serves as a welcoming focal point within the park. We also noted vintage farm machinery displayed on the bank of the river as we enjoyed the view from the bridge on the main street. The village was clean and litter free on the day of our visit. The toilet facilities however, at one of the public premises need improved presentation. Millbrook estate is very well presented with a vibrant display of flowers at the entrance. The village pump is a charming feature. This is enhanced by the eye-catching floral arrangements, whitewashed steps, and a blue-and-white colour scheme which is in keeping with the colour scheme seen in the park. Well done. We noted the water refilling station on the entrance to the park and the display of flags which is welcoming. Your efforts in promoting responsible behaviour through signage discouraging dog fouling and smoking near the playground are also appreciated. Some weeding is needed at the ball alley, but overall, the level of upkeep in the village and park is highly commendable. The recycling area is clean and tidy and we were also pleased to see the provision of bike racks. Overall, it is evident that great care and attention to detail have gone into maintaining and presenting Milltown. The village and park are a credit to your community, and we thoroughly enjoyed our visit. We wish you well with your future projects and we look forward to returning in the future.