Tidy Towns Competition 2026

Adjudication Report

Centre:	**Ballybunion - Baile an Bhuinneánaigh**	Ref:	**323**
County:	**Kerry**	Mark:	**363**
Category:	**C**	Date(s):	**19/06/2026**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2025	Mark Awarded 2026
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	51	53
Streetscape & Public Places	80	51	52
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	46	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	80	37	38
Sustainability – Doing more with less	80	25	26
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	70	72
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	37	38
TOTAL MARK	**600**	**353**	**363**

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. Thank you, Ballybunion Tidy Towns, for a very strong and impressive 2026 submission. This is clearly a committed and well-established group, with 10 committee members supported by over 50 volunteers, which is especially commendable in a busy seaside town where the summer population increases so significantly. Your regular meetings, open AGM, weekly meitheals and wide communication through WhatsApp, email, social media, local newspapers, church notices and community noticeboards show a group that is organised, visible and accessible. It is lovely to see the breadth of your community connections, including the schools, Youth Café, Ballybunion Nature Group, local businesses, the Ukrainian community, RSS and CE schemes, Kerry County Council, local artists and neighbouring. Tidy Towns groups. You have responded well to previous feedback around youth involvement through TY biodiversity work, beach clean-ups, wooden book libraries and plans for Junior Tidy Towns. The Community Garden Awards are a very positive and inclusive initiative, recognising local pride without making the project feel overly competitive. As this grows, it would be useful to show the outcomes, such as increased estate involvement, reduced mowing, new planting or biodiversity improvements. Future applications would also benefit from clearly attaching any 3–5 year planting or biodiversity plan and ensuring that the map is easy to read as a separate full-page document.

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

Ballybunion has a very distinctive seaside character, and the level of activity on the streets, beaches and public spaces gives the town a strong visitor energy. The resurfacing and footpath widening from the Garda Barracks to the Bunker Bar is a very welcome Town Centre First-style improvement, making the town safer and more comfortable for pedestrians, particularly during the busy summer months. The proposed bus stop and new wheelchair-accessible picnic benches are also positive user-focused improvements and show consideration for accessibility, inclusion and everyday comfort. The Pride of Place campaign and painting works have brought brightness and care to several locations, including walls, planters, the defibrillator box, SuperValu car park and approach features. The back of SuperValu is certainly brighter because of the wall painting and graphics, and there may now be an opportunity to refine the wider car park area with a more cohesive finish and some additional planting where practical. Your continued engagement with Kerry County Council on vacant and derelict properties is important, particularly where these affect Main Street and other prominent visitor areas. The library car park and Tinteán Theatre car park remain locations where additional greenery, improved finishes and planting structure could soften hard surfaces. The heritage trail signage and cliff walk interpretation are real strengths, and future lighting near the castle, cliff paths and coastal areas should continue to follow dark-sky principles, protecting both the visitor

experience and coastal wildlife.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

There is much to admire in Ballybunion's green spaces and planted areas. The planted boats, new self-watering planters, colourful junction displays and well-maintained approach features create a cheerful and welcoming impression. The entrance boat planter gives a lovely sense of arrival and was very well maintained, with attractive pollinator-friendly planting. It was good to see that you have listened to previous advice by avoiding further daffodil and tulip planting and by moving more towards pollinator-friendly and lower-maintenance planting. The existing spring bulbs are clearly enjoyed locally, but the future direction should continue towards native and wildlife-friendly species that provide nectar, seed, shelter and seasonal interest. Cashen Biodiversity Garden is a standout space, with mown paths, seating logs, interpretation, bird boxes, bug hotels and a lovely sense of being close to nature. Butterflies were evident during the visit, ox-eye daisies provided colour, and the mown paths helped visitors move through the longer grass while still feeling connected to nature. Access from the car park could be improved for wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility, and a small sign at the car park entrance would help visitors know the garden is there. Plant labels or QR codes would make the garden more interactive. Around the town there are further opportunities for native trees, native hedging and native wildflower meadow trials, especially at Sandhill Park, the leisure centre frontage, approach-road verges and larger residential green spaces. Continued management of Montbretia and Himalayan Balsam will also be important so that invasive species do not undermine the excellent biodiversity work underway

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

This section shows very good progress and a more structured approach to biodiversity. The appointment of Biodiversity Officers gives added knowledge and direction to your local work, while the Actions for Biodiversity project and LAWPRO-supported Himalayan Balsam work show that Ballybunion is moving from awareness into practical, informed action. Continued monitoring and follow-up will be important, particularly where Montbretia and Himalayan Balsam are present, and future entries would benefit from showing what areas were treated and what aftercare is planned. Your partnership with Ballybunion Nature Group is a major strength. The walks, talks, film events, Heritage Walk and Dolphin Watch all help to build local awareness in an accessible way. The Ringed Plover project is especially important in a coastal town where beach use, erosion and visitor pressure can affect vulnerable nesting habitats. There did not appear to be obvious public information about the Ringed Plover at the beach, so a sensitive nature-trail panel or small seasonal signage could help residents and visitors understand how to protect this species without over-signposting the area. The TY BioBlitz and school biodiversity work are excellent citizen-science projects and should continue to grow. Native species should guide future planting, especially in coastal areas and biodiversity gardens. A simple biodiversity map showing meadow areas, invasive species work, Ringed Plover zones, school projects and Cashen Biodiversity Garden would help tell the full story and show how these projects link across the town.

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

There is a noticeable improvement in this section, and Ballybunion Tidy Towns has clearly taken previous feedback on board. The Local Link service from Tarbert through Ballybunion to Tralee is a useful sustainable transport option and could be promoted more strongly, particularly during the summer season when traffic pressure increases. The planned shed or mobile unit should also bring a practical sustainability benefit once delivered, by reducing the need for volunteers to transport tools and materials by car and by helping the group manage equipment more efficiently. The proposed MyGug project with St Joseph's Secondary School is an excellent example of sustainability in action, linking food waste, renewable energy, education and natural fertiliser. The Blocks4Change workshop was a creative way to bring schools, businesses, residents, artists and community groups together around the shared ambition of making Ballybunion greener. The Bean Festival is imaginative and memorable, connecting local food, seed-saving, soil health and community resilience. The beach toy libraries are another simple but effective circular-economy idea, particularly appropriate for a seaside town where families can easily understand and use the project. The next step is to begin measuring the impact of these good initiatives. Future applications would be strengthened by including simple figures such as MyGug outputs, workshop attendance, toy-library use, volume of reused items, or participation in growing and seed-saving projects. This would show not only that the projects took place, but also the practical difference they made.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Ballybunion continues to perform strongly under this heading, and this is especially commendable given the seasonal pressures of a busy coastal tourist town. Your litter patrols, liaison with Kerry County Council, support for the beach crew, Adopt a Bottle Bank and Adopt a Road schemes all show a very practical and responsive system. The successful lobbying for extra bins and proposed pizza bins is a good response to visitor-related litter, while the dedicated volunteer for dog waste bag dispensers is a simple but effective action.During the site visit, many areas were clean and well presented, including Cashen car park and the beach-front spaces, and it was good to see dog bins replenished. Some localised issues were noted, including bags near the clothing bank at Mick's Garage, stickers and cleaning needed on some bins, sand build-up on beach access routes, and weeds or overgrowth near the entrance down to the cliff/beach area beside Hawnies. These are manageable issues, but in a high-profile visitor town they are very visible. It is positive that the Ahafona signage review has been requested. A broader signage inventory would now be useful, as some signs are visually competing with each other, duplicated, in need of cleaning or partly obscured by foliage. This would improve both tidiness and visitor orientation.

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

There is a strong sense of pride in many residential areas, and the Community Garden Awards are a very good way of recognising and encouraging this effort. Fuchsia Estate was impressive, with new planting and a cared-for entrance, and it is easy to see why it was recognised. Sandhill Park has a large open green space and good overall presentation, but there was evidence of herbicide use and the space would benefit from a softer, more layered approach with native trees, shrubs, small meadow areas and reduced mowing in selected corners. Several residential and holiday-home areas have large grassed spaces that are very tightly mown. These open areas offer good opportunities for differential mowing, native wildflower meadow trials, tree planting and pollinator-friendly edges, while still retaining a neat and cared-for appearance. This would reduce maintenance over time and add ecological value without making areas look neglected. Herbicide use was also evident in places, including newer housing areas, and continued encouragement around alternatives would be worthwhile. The young trees at Marconi require attention, as some stakes and ties appeared broken or ineffective. This could become a useful school-linked or Adopt a Patch project, particularly where local children and residents could help with tree care, watering and simple biodiversity signage.

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

The approach roads give a positive sense of arrival to Ballybunion, with the planted boats, new welcome signage, maintained hedging and colourful junction features making an immediate impression. The entrance displays were attractive and well cared for, though over time you might consider simplifying some features so that the boat, anchor and planter elements read as one stronger display. A native hedge or low native planting backdrop could also help these entrance features sit more comfortably in the landscape and reduce the impact of surrounding signage clutter. Ahafona Cross remains a very important arrival point but also a visually and functionally busy junction. The signage, road layout and pedestrian crossing arrangements would benefit from review with Kerry County Council, not only for appearance but also for pedestrian safety. If this junction is redesigned in the future, it could provide an excellent opportunity to combine traffic safety, public realm improvement, biodiversity planting and clearer gateway presentation. The small stream near the junction could also be gently identified as part of the local natural landscape. Cliff Road and the coastal approach are very attractive, with excellent views, planters, sculpture, a water pump and strong interpretation. Wider verges here and elsewhere offer further opportunities for native tree planting, pollinator strips and reduced mowing, while still protecting views and maintaining the open coastal character.

Concluding Remarks:

Ballybunion is a very busy and much-loved coastal town, and the work required to keep it clean, welcoming and attractive during the peak visitor season should not be underestimated. Your 2026 submission and the site visit both show a group that is active, proud and increasingly focused on biodiversity, sustainability, accessibility and community involvement. The progress on youth engagement, native meadow areas, invasive species planning, circular economy projects, Town Centre First improvements and coastal biodiversity is especially encouraging. Well done to everyone involved in continuing to care for Ballybunion with such energy, generosity and local pride.