

SuperValu Tidy Towns Newsletter

Issue 1 – 2026

The SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition, administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht and sponsored by SuperValu, supports the Sustainable Development Goals.

A Chairde,

Cuirimid fáilte chroíúil roimh leitheoirí uile chuig an gcéad eagrán de Nuachtlitir na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu do 2026.

Welcome to the first issue of the SuperValu Tidy Towns newsletter of 2026.

In this issue, we bring you details of the 2026 SuperValu Tidy Towns Launch, the 2025 Regional awards and various projects undertaken by Tidy Towns groups nationwide. We also bring you information on special awards, details of courses provided by the Grove Institute eCollege as well as our much-loved poetry Corner.

Please continue to send us in articles and news pieces for our newsletter – we love seeing and sharing the results of all your fantastic work!

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SuperValu TidyTowns Competition Launch 2026

The Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht Dara Calleary TD, in association with the Managing Director of SuperValu, Luke Hanlon, launched the 2026 SuperValu TidyTowns competition on Monday the 23rd of March 2026.

The official launch took place in Carrick-on-Shannon Co. Leitrim – the winners of the 2025 SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition.



The closing date for receipt of entries for this year's competition is the 11th of May 2026.

Regionals Award Ceremonies 2025

The Department are delighted to have held two of the SuperValu TidyTowns 2025 Regional Award ceremonies so far this year with the remaining two Regional awards being held in April.

2025 South-West and Midwest Regional Award Ceremony

Minister Michael Moynihan and Maighread Cremin, SuperValu presented 2025 prizes to award winning TidyTowns groups from the South West and Midwest region in the Rose Hotel, Tralee on Monday the 9th of March 2026. MC for the night was Martha Farrell, Tralee TidyTowns.



Irelands Tidiest Large Urban Centre Winners 2025 & South-West and Midwest Regional Winners 2025 - Tralee Tidy Towns, Co. Kerry



Irelands Tidiest Village Winners 2025 – Rosscarbery, Co. Cork

2025 North-West and West Regional Award Ceremony

Minister Dara Calleary and, SuperValu presented 2025 prizes to award winning TidyTowns groups from the North West and West region in the Landmark Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon on Monday 23rd March 2025. MC for the night was Carole Coleman



Northwest and West Regional Award winners 2025, Irelands Tidiest small Town winners 2025, and Irelands Tidiest Town winners 2025 – Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim

Remaining Two Regional Award Ceremony details below

- 2025 Midlands and East Regional Award Ceremony is being held in The Royal Marine Hotel, Dún Laoghaire on Monday the 13th April 2025.
- 2025 South-East Regional Award Ceremony is being held in the Great National Ballykisteon Golf Hotel, Co. Tipperary on Monday the 27th of April 2026.

New Special Awards 2026



Dark Skies – Special Award

Dark Sky Ireland is delighted to announce its sponsorship of a special Dark Sky Award in the 2026 Tidy Towns Programme. The award will reflect the practical role that communities can play in improving night time environments whilst delivering broader environmental, social and educational benefits.

Across Ireland, towns and villages are already taking steps that make a measurable difference to reducing light pollution such as; identifying areas of over-illumination, reducing glare and switching to warmer coloured lighting that are less harmful to biodiversity. Other groups are engaging positively with local authorities on lighting strategies and guidelines to help protect dark skies. These actions help protect wildlife, improve conditions for human wellbeing and reduce energy waste whilst also creating more ambient and attractive public spaces after dark.

The Dark Sky Ireland Special Award includes a total prize fund of €3,000. The prize fund will be split with one overall prize of €1,000, plus two prizes of €750 each (Village or Small town / Large Town or Large Urban Centre) and two commendations of €250 each. Prizes will be awarded on the basis of effective community-led approaches to reducing light pollution, raising awareness of its impact and collaborating on the need to protect dark skies.

Dark Sky Ireland's involvement in Tidy Towns builds on our info guide from 2024 and the work we have been undertaking at a national and international level. In 2025 Dark Sky Ireland officially became a Champion Organisation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), awarded by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment. This reflects the alignment between responsible outdoor lighting at night and a number of the SDGs such as Good Health and Wellbeing and Life on Land and Life Under Water. Reducing light pollution is a practical example of how local actions can contribute to these global objectives.

We wish all the groups taking part in the 2026 Tidy Towns competition good luck and we look forward to receiving applications for the Dark Sky Ireland special award from all over Ireland.

More information on how to apply for this award can be found here: https://www.tidytowns.ie/app/uploads/2026/03/2026_03_18-17-b-Dark-Sky-Ireland-Special-Award-Entry-Form-Irish-2026.docx

Resources and guides on how to reduce light pollution in your communities can be found on our website here www.darksky.ie

Dementia Inclusive Community Award – Special Award



Prize Fund €5,000

Sponsored by the Health Service Executive (HSE), National Dementia Services

The HSE's Dementia: Understand Together campaign aims to inspire everyone in our communities to include and support people affected by dementia.

This award aims to recognise Tidy Towns committees who are making positive changes within their community to promote and facilitate inclusivity for people living with dementia. This can include raising awareness for dementia, involving people living with dementia and their families and carers in community activities, creating physical spaces that are accessible for everyone, or developing outdoor spaces that stimulate the senses or lend themselves to reminiscing.

Prize

A winning prize of €2,000 and a runner up prize of €500 will be awarded to the Tidy Towns

Committees from a large town/urban centre.

A winning prize of €2,000 and a runner up prize of €500 will be awarded to the Tidy Towns

Committees from a village/small town.

Further information is available by emailing understandtogether@hse.ie

EPA Circular Economy Award – Special Award

The EPA has sponsored a Special Award for Circular Economy since 2021.

• What is the purpose of this award?

The purpose of this Special Award is to raise awareness of circular economy principles and to recognise communities across Ireland that have undertaken activities to support and foster a circular economy in their locality.

• What is the Circular Economy and how can groups foster Circular Economy principles?

In a circular economy materials, goods, products and resources are kept in use in our economy for longer, valuing the resources we have, and working to avoid these resources from becoming waste. This is done by taking actions to extend the life of a product (repair), by finding a new use for a product (reuse), or by finding a new home for a product, like sharing or swapping. Reusing, repairing, upcycling, swapping, sharing, exchanging and restoring are all important aspects of the circular economy, and all align with the principle to make less waste, and use less resources. These kinds of actions may be small, but their impact can be big. As one example, initiatives like Swap Days (for clothing, uniforms or sports gear) can avoid textile waste and save money. These actions can teach children about the importance of reuse and circular economy principles by showcasing a practical example in their own community.

• What Circular Economy Activities is the EPA looking for in competition entries?

The kinds of activities and initiatives that would be suitable in competition entries for this award include those that reduce the use or consumption of resources, promote or support sharing products, and engage in reuse or repair activities. These actions can be taken by community groups, working with householders, businesses, schools, local authority or other local organisations. Projects or initiatives that are standalone or one-off are welcome, though an ongoing programme or initiative implementing circular economy measures would be more favourable. Previous award winners have implemented a variety of circular economy measures and raised awareness of the circular economy in their community.

Example of past winners' activities

2025 Winner – Westport Tidy Towns

Westport Tidy Towns focused on reducing waste, reusing materials, and rethinking consumption through a variety of innovative, community-based projects. Some examples of these projects included:

- **One Westport:** A community network of environmental, business, sport, and other community-based organisations all working together to develop and promote local sustainability. One Westport represents a number of groups engaged in sustainability efforts, including Westport Tidy Towns.
- **Circular Economy One Day Event:** One Westport hosted the event 'Change one Thing' encouraging business, individuals and organisations to change one thing to accelerate the transition to a circular economy, the event included workshops and demonstrations including bicycle and clothing maintenance and repair, and a clothes swap.
- **Post Christmas Re-Gifting Campaign:** Unwanted gifts were collected and redistributed to those in need or local charity shops, the campaign's ethos was "Don't want them, don't need them, don't waste them Re-gift them".
- **Reduce the use of Single-Use Plastic Bottles:** Two public water stations have been installed in the town centre, and several local businesses offer free water refills to provide a convenient way to refill reusable bottles and reduce plastic waste.

2024 Winner – Rush Tidy Towns

- **Rush Free Stuff:** Rush community freecycle Facebook page with over 4,900 followers allows members to give away or request items and has facilitated rehoming an estimated 60,000 items since its launch.
- **Zero Waste Rush Community Group:** Activities taken by this group include clothes and bike repair cafés, building repair skills.
- **Loaning out items:** Rush Tidy Towns offers items like power tools and gardening equipment to residents' associations, increasing accessibility and reducing carbon footprint. The group also offers Reusable Party Packs, and organises family initiatives during Halloween, Easter and over the Summer, with reusable props and toys.
- **Water Harvesting:** Rainwater is harvested to use in flower planters.
- **Food waste prevention:** A team member of Rush Tidy Towns has become qualified and accredited as an Olio food distributor in order to reduce food waste. In just one month the group saved 38kg of food from being wasted.

2023 Winner – Swords Tidy Towns

- **Reuse of Banners:** For the 2023 St Patrick's day parade the group reused banners and placards from previous parades.
- **Repair:** The group works to repair equipment where possible, instead of buying new, and repair and

upcycled an old bicycle to use as a display for flowers.

Making Compost: Swords Tidy Towns makes their own compost using discarded plants.

For further information see Local Authority Prevention Network

Shercock Tidy Towns

Re-established in 2021, Shercock Tidy Towns has gone from strength to strength in a short period of time. The town has embraced a range of recent improvements that have helped restore pride in our small yet diverse community. Much of this progress has been driven by a dedicated committee of four people who, with the encouragement of key stakeholders and the support of various grant schemes, have made these projects possible.

To date, notable works include the repainting of 22 buildings in the town centre, which created an immediate visual impact. The installation of four striking murals encouraged reflection on our cultural, natural and archaeological heritage. Long-awaited street name signage and new welcome signs on approach roads were also delivered, meeting a long-standing community need. These projects were successfully supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development in 2023 under the Town and Village Renewal Grant. With over 200 volunteer hours invested in this project alone, we believe the social return has been invaluable.

This work has also been formally recognised, with Shercock Tidy Towns receiving the Endeavour Award in both 2023 and 2025. You can find out more information about our recent project on our website here: www.shercock.ie



Image of 'A Fairday in Shercock' This mural by international

artist, Omin, on bottom left echo's back to a local black and white image of a typical fair day in Shercock, whilst two men 'do a deal' for an animal, above. To the right of the image, the infamous Margaret Barry, a regular at street fairs and fondly remembered for her singing in Shercock, is presented here with her banjo.



The Ralaghan Idol is hidden in plain sight on a slender gable of a Main Street building. This archaeological object was found in a bog outside Shercock and is one of two (the other being the Corleck Head) from this area, on permanent display in the National Museum of archaeology on Kildare Street, Dublin.



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The mural is dual purpose by reinforcing the point that ‘Nil beatha gan uisce’ or ‘There’s no life without water’, inár gcéad teanga.

Heritage in Bloom: Public Art and Biodiversity in Geashill

In Geashill, we’ve long found that biodiversity and heritage go hand in hand. Whether through wildflower planting, pollinator friendly areas or storytelling in sculpture, everything we do aims to make our village richer and more vibrant. Both strands are deeply rooted in the landscape and social history of Geashill. We plant native trees like Oak and Scots Pine, along with non native Lime and Beech to reflect the designed landscape of places like the Green and the Glebe Walk. Our sculptural pieces also draw on the village’s rich history and mythology.

While our biodiversity work has been widely acknowledged at national level, our steps into public art haven’t received the same spotlight. This is a chance to share how sculpture has grown in Geashill and how it enhances the village for residents and visitors alike.

Take Cruinniú or Gathering, a six part sculpture marking the Battle of Geashill. It reflects the mythical clash between the warrior brothers Heremon and Heber, fought at Ballintogher just outside the village. The seed of the idea was planted in 2014–15 when Offaly County Council sought the “Hidden Stories of Offaly”. Though our submission didn’t make the top three, it sparked interest locally. Then in 2017, historian Clemens von Ow discovered accounts of the battle in ten early Irish manuscripts, including The Book of Leinster and the Annals of Clonmacnoise.

By year’s end, Clemens had written and illustrated Heremon & Heber and the Battle of Geashill, a book that captured public imagination. With community support and a timely funding opportunity, the idea of a sculpture near the Esker Riada—close to the battle’s traditional site—began to take shape.

A key design feature that Bord na Móna provided during the early days of their seven villages was a playground for the children of the Bord na Móna workers. We have been kindly provided with these amazing photographs of Cloontuskert’s ‘Old Playground’ dating to circa. the 1970s by Cloontuskert native, Ruth Trimble (Malone). Perhaps these images will bring back some nice childhood memories for your readers around the country, particularly those who may have grown up in a Bord na Móna village themselves”.



Artist Holgar Lönze brought the vision to life: five bronze coated sciath (shields) mounted on standing stones, representing Heremon, Heber, their brother Amergin, Heremon’s wife Tea/Tara, and finally Geashill itself. The Geashill shield echoes the Nebra Sky Disc, whose celestial alignment some astronomers date to 1699 BC—the year associated with the battle. Holgar also ran a community workshop, creating a hoard of wax moulded bronzes that form the sixth piece of the sculpture.

His work has transformed an unremarkable lay by into a place to pause, reflect and connect with the landscape. The project features in the recent publication Faithful Images: Public Art in Offaly, and for pupils of Geashill National School, it proudly appears in their book Wild About Geashill.



Another favourite is Lady Muc, the pig sculpture grazing at the edge of the village green. Her story is firmly grounded in social history. In 2015, while excavating a path, CES workers uncovered shaped limestone blocks arranged beneath the soil—the long forgotten base of the weighing scales used during Geashill’s Pig Fair, once the largest in Ireland. After resetting the stones, it felt like there was more to be done to honour that heritage—and what better way than a pig?

With Creative Ireland funding secured in 2020, we approached weld artist Luke Carson, known for his sculptures made from scrap metal. A call out for old tools and farm implements brought an overwhelming community response—car boots and trailers full of rusty treasures. People who might never normally engage with public art became part of the process, helped along by our two ‘muses’, Tamworth pigs Bigly Pigly and Reversy Percy.

Lady Muc now feels as though she has always belonged in Geashill. Visitors regularly stop to admire Luke’s clever use of wrenches, spanners and other donated pieces, each carrying its own quiet story. A sculpture made from discarded rural tools has become a symbol of shared memory and pride.

Lady Muc and Cruinniú are just two examples of how stories can grow into something tangible and lasting. These tales also feature in the Geashill Audio Guide—including the Battle of Geashill and the Pig Fair—which is available on our website: www.geashilltidytowns.com.

Caren Carruthers & Pat Foley, Geashill Tidy Towns

The “Green Thing” – Author Unknown (submitted by one of our TidyTown adjudicators)

In the line at the shop, the cashier told an older woman that she should bring her own shopping bags because plastic bags weren’t good for the environment.

The woman apologized to her and explained, ‘We didn’t have the green thing back in my day.’

The clerk responded, ‘That’s our problem today. Your generation did not care enough to save our environment.’

‘That’s interesting’ she said. ‘Back then, we returned milk bottles, soda bottles, and beer bottles to the shop. The shop sent them back to the plant to be washed and sterilized and refilled, so it could use the same bottles over and over. So they really were recycled.’

‘We walked upstairs because we didn’t have a lift in every shop and office building. We walked to the grocers. Furthermore, we didn’t climb into a 300-horsepower machine every time we had to go two miles.’

‘Back then, we had one TV, or radio, in the house — not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief (remember them?), not a screen the size of the county of Louth’. ‘In the kitchen, we blended and stirred by hand because we didn’t have electric machines to do everything for us.’

‘When we packaged a fragile item to send in the post, we used a wadded up old newspaper to cushion it, not Styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap.’

‘Back then, we didn’t fire up an engine and burn petrol just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power. We exercised by working; so we didn’t need to go to a gym to run on treadmills that operated on electricity’

‘We drank from a tap when we were thirsty instead of using a cup or a plastic bottle every time we had a drink of water.’

‘We refilled writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, and we replaced the razor blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull.’

‘Back then, people took the bus and kids rode their bikes to school or walked instead of turning their Mams into a 24-hour taxi service.’

'We had one electrical socket in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And we didn't need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 2,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest pizza joint.'

'... isn't it sad the current generation laments how wasteful we old folks were just because we didn't have the green thing back then?'

Enniscorthy TidyTowns



30 years of dedicated service as treasurer and secretary acknowledged as Seán Óg Doyle enjoys a well earned break! Seán Óg was delighted to receive an official letter from Minister Callery on his retirement.

Arklow TidyTowns – Ireland Best Kept entrant 2026



Arklow TidyTowns are embracing their Ireland's Best Kept Town nomination. So far they have done a radio interview, a newspaper article in hard copy and on social media. A window display will be used to prompt community participation. Here are some photographs of their 'Day parade'. Members walked up the street dusting and cleaning as they went along to get the point across. It was great fun. The float was made up of paint brush bunting, coloured sweeping brushes and recycle bags as planters. They seize every opportunity to keep our towns up to a high standard.

Poetry Corner

The Peoples Park

1960 I was just a lad of sixteen, my love for nature was as great then as it is today. The peoples park an oasis of beauty that I was able to visit often. My first stop was the little shop inside the gate where I would get Ice-cream and boiler sweets, they lasted the longest.

Then my journey would begin as I leisurely strolled around the grounds. Firstly, the winding beds of red salvia edged with white alyssum and blue lobelia. Then the beautiful herbaceous borders filled with golden rod, lupins, peony roses, crimson phlox and many more beautiful plants. While the brick wall hung with yellow and red climbing roses which hung their flower heads with the heat of mid summers day.

The tranquil sound of birds singing was everywhere to be heard. All around the park beds of tea roses as big as small plates under planted with blue pansies graced this lovely place.

The manicured lawns at different levels were a sight to behold. Beds of scented shrubs carefully planted in all the right places and of course the lovely trees dotted around with rustling leaves are a memory to behold.

Today in my late 70's I often lay in bed at the dead of night and can't sleep, I let my mind wonder back to this lovely park and relive this wonderful place. Oh, how I wish I could go back in time for real but it's not possible I am afraid.

Denis Heffernan,
February 2026

Keep in Touch


As always, please continue to send us in your photos, articles and updates for inclusion.

Niamh, Claire, Siobhán and Murtaza

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20FIFTY Partners and Grove Institute are the authorised delivery partner for eCollege (funded by SOLAS) sustainability training courses.

Free online and tutor-led courses open to all, no prior experience required. What is e-College:

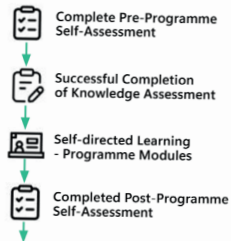
- A digital gateway to further education and training (FET),
- A set of part-time online programmes where you can study and progress at a time that suits you,
- A range of courses from multiple providers, including 20FIFTY Partners - specialists in Sustainability,
- Self-directed learning programmes which you can join straight away,
- Enjoyable and engaging online learning tailored to enhance your skills,
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These short courses include about four hours of content that can be completed over four weeks, combining online self-study with an instructor-led live workshop.

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Introduction to Sustainability

Understand the impacts of sustainability on day-to-day business. Demonstrate a deeper awareness of key sustainability topics impacting climate change. Understand the broader requirements for businesses and their actions related to sustainability.

Introduction to Biodiversity

Understand the importance of biodiversity. Demonstrate a deeper awareness of key biodiversity topics. Understand the broader requirements for businesses and their actions related to biodiversity.

Introduction to Energy Management

Understand energy management in the global context of sustainability. Demonstrate an understanding of the key principles of energy management. Understand a range of approaches and considerations in relation to energy use and efficiency.

Introduction to Water Conservation

Understand water conservation in the global context of sustainability. Demonstrate an awareness of global water issues and challenges. Understand a range of conservation approaches in preserving water as a critical resource.

Future Proof your Career with Green Skills

Supercharge your future with the green skills employers are racing to find! Learn the in demand transferable skills that will future-proof your career against AI disruption, build your own standout Green Skills Passport, and unlock powerful opportunities to land the job you want in a rapidly changing world.

AI for Sustainability: Foundations and Opportunities

Discover how AI works and where you already use it every day. Learn what sustainability really means for the planet, society, and the economy. Explore how AI can make energy use smarter, cut waste, and support climate solutions. Understand the 'twin transition' to greener and more digital industries and see how AI can optimise resources at home and at work.

AI in Action: Practical Pathways to Sustainability

Unlock how AI is transforming sustainability in real, measurable ways. You'll see how AI reduces waste, emissions, and costs while improving environmental performance. By the end of this course, you will understand what AI can meaningfully deliver for sustainability no matter what industry you are in!

Understanding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Describe the purpose and importance of the SDGs. Identify and explain each of the 17 SDGs and their interconnections. Recognize the relevance of the SDGs in addressing global challenges. Identify practical ways to engage with and promote the SDGs in communities.

Digital Sustainability

Step into the world of the twin transitions where digital innovation meets sustainability! Discover how smart, responsible tech use can reduce your environmental impact while unlocking the full power of digital tools. Learn the real carbon cost of emails, cloud storage, and video calls and pick up practical green IT habits and waste cutting tips that make your digital life cleaner, smarter, and more sustainable.

Waste and Circular economy

This introductory journey into the circular economy reveals how innovative thinking, smarter design, and regenerative systems are transforming industries and communities around the world. Through real examples and practical insights, you'll discover how circularity sparks creativity, reduces environmental impact, and builds resilient, thriving societies.

Sustainability in Retail

Through real examples from global and local leaders, you'll discover how sustainability strengthens operations, engages customers and colleagues, and drives long-term value. By the end, you'll understand the core principles of retail sustainability and know how to apply them directly in your role to make a real, measurable impact.

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