

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilkenny** Ref: **398**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **325**
Category: **G** Date(s): **14/06/2016**
11/08/2016

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	53	54
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	46	46
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	47	47
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	35	36
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	16	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40	40
TOTAL MARK	450	321	325

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Many thanks for your application to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2016. We note you are a participant since the 1980s and have twice been the Overall Winner. Congratulations on that and many other achievements. Kilkenny city is always a delightful place and this visit was no different. We were based in Kilkenny city as we visited towns and villages in the County and while the date of the visit is given as the 14th June, we actually adjudicated different parts of the city over several days. The advantage for you is that on the 14th we saw workmen positioning brackets on the wall of the River Nore and some days later we saw the wonderful baskets of Petunias placed in them. Also, the large containers in front of the Carnegie Library were not there on the 14th June; they appeared a few days later. Your committee of twelve members have a good gender and skills balance which no doubt contributes to your success. From the information provided it appears you are well organised with committees, sub-committees and extra support on the ground. Therefore, you have strong links with residents, voluntary groups and schools and work in partnership with local businesses and Kilkenny County Council. Your means of communication are many and include a website, Facebook, newspaper and radio. The involvement with primary and secondary schools is commendable. Many thanks for attaching a map of the area with project locations marked for our attention and an illustrated book with details of 66 projects. Thanks also for attaching a separate page with a list of the projects as was suggested in last year's adjudication. The difficulty we experienced this time is due to the size of Kilkenny City. Even though you indicate an approximate location on the map that does not suffice to find a particular address, for example, Melville Heights. Without a street map of Kilkenny, we had to resort to the use of a Sat Nav which fortunately we had available. It is clear you have a strategy and that plus the huge effort has contributed to your success.

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

There are many wonderful building in Kilkenny including Kilkenny Castle on The Parade, The Tholsel on High Street, Rothe House on Parliament Street and St. Canice's Cathedral in Church Lane. Buildings in High Street (part of the Medieval Mile) looked very well and streets clean, furniture in good condition and we enjoyed the interesting colour scheme in the plant containers. Most commercial buildings in the city centre were well presented. The new paving in The Parade is a great improvement from the days when this area was used for car parking. The same comment applies to the triangular area beside the river at John's Bridge and we admired the sculpture 'Dedicated to all who hurl for Kilkenny'. The many well maintained shops on John Street Lower with hanging baskets and window boxes conveyed a feeling of excitement. We walked across 'The Lady Desart Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge' which was opened in January 2014 and enjoyed the views up and down the river. The new Green Bridge will help to ease traffic flow in the city. The viewing point at Windgap Hill is a delightful view of the river valley its surrounding trees and also of part of the city. The area was nice and clean, we even enjoyed the Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) coming through the shrubs but suggest that sycamore seedlings be taken away. Some small repairs are needed to

the wall. The Kilkenny education centre was visited and it looks very well. Opposite St. Patrick's graveyard there is scope for tree planting on the hard surface areas.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The Riverside walk was very pleasant with clean water and nice stone walls. We question the need for Salvia beds on the side of the linear embankment. They are difficult to maintain in terms of watering and protection from slugs and would be better placed in a more urban setting where they will provide a stronger impact. The perennial border at the Peace Park is more interesting but some weeds were establishing there. The grounds at County Hall beside the river are well landscaped and we admired the 7 Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) trees for 7 signatories planted done last March; they seem to have established well. The gardens at County Hall with privet hedges enclosing beds of roses looked very well and the rectangular bed of yellow *Violas* added more colour. Kilkenny has one of the most intensive displays of seasonal colour in many parts of the town, concentrated in the city centre as is appropriate but also at other important locations. Some such as the bed of yellow Marigolds at the library are very well done and provide a strong impact. Container planting such as the large displays at the library, the boxes on the side of the river wall or the containers on the streets and hanging baskets on poles and on The Tholsel are done to a high standard. St. Canice's Hospital grounds has many fine specimen trees and the grounds of the school of the Holy Spirit suggest some tree ties and supporting stakes should be removed before they damage the tree stems. The Lidl and Aldi shopping complex is landscaped to a high standard and is well maintained; we admired the open spaces here and the flowerbed at Nuncio Road roundabout. In St. Patrick's Graveyard, the grass which needed mowing is encroaching on the gravel pathway. It is suggested that the ivy be removed from the Irish Yew trees. Some tree stakes should be removed as they are no longer needed. Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) growing on the walls added great colour. We very much enjoyed the variety of landscape designs on the roundabouts on the ring road. They are very interesting and a delightful welcome for visitors to Kilkenny.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:

We visited the swans at Richview Nature Reserve and were surprised at the friendliness of the ducks which were outside the protection fence. They are obviously used to people feeding them. The fine Ossory Pedestrian Bridge was visited and we noted the new timber rail preventing car parking on the access road as well as the successful control of Himalyan Balsam (*Impatiens balsamifera*) which was mentioned in last year's adjudication, so well done on those improvements. At the Kilkenny Education Centre, it's a surprise to see the use of herbicides so evident around the base of trees and on the edge of kerbs. We enjoyed the adjacent field of buttercups. The grassland management policy along the Nore Linear Walk is well informed, environmentally friendly and interesting. You are no doubt well aware of the rich natural area within your community and have taken measure to promote an awareness of its many habitats by having talks and walks. As mentioned, the old graveyards such as St. Patrick's are locations where biodiversity can be achieved with careful management. The management approach to the ring road landscape supports wildlife habitats and is aesthetically pleasing.

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

Under this heading you have listed 15 projects which are aimed at Reduce, Reuse and Recycle principles. The sustainable street lighting project using energy efficient lights which represent a cost savings of 54% with an 11 year payback period is very interesting and we note it is planned to extend to Patrick Street later this year. The new systems also entail removing overhead wires which helps to reduce visual clutter. The use of prunings from urban woodlands in Kilkenny is saving an equivalent of 250 litres of fossil fuel per ton of pruning which are burned in highly efficient stoves. We also note the 'Up-Cycling' and 'Veg Shed' projects as well as the 'Doggy bag scheme', 'reduce junk mail' and other ventures. All of these demonstrate your awareness of this criterion and the need to conserve our natural resources for future generations. In response to an over use of chemicals for weed control, many useful products of the past are no longer available and therefore communities are encouraged to use other means such as hoeing to maintain weeds. With a view to reducing the use of weed killer being used in Kilkenny, perhaps you would consider suitable options for controlling weeds that are less dependent on the use of chemicals. In some cases, allowing wildflowers to develop is an acceptable alternative.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Major efforts are taken to improve Kilkenny as is evident by the nine projects listed under this heading. We note with regard to the Nore River you clean up the water body itself and the river banks. We were very pleased to see such clean water in the river looking over from the pedestrian and cycle bridge in the city centre. The use of murals to reduce graffiti is a very positive approach and those we saw looked very well and seemed to attract the attention of tourists. Litter management is working well as we saw very little litter during our visit. The biggest incident was in St. Patrick's Graveyard where the litter bin was overflowing and other small bits of litter were observed in the area. At the Recycling bank near Lidl and Aldi there were some empty boxes left no doubt by the people who placed bottles in the bins. St. Canice's Hospital has a vacant Gate Lodge and dirty sign which looks untidy.

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

Most dwelling houses in Kilkenny City are well painted and in good repair. Here and there we saw weeds in gutters and even growing at downpipes where there are possibly water leaks that assist their growth. Dean's Court is a small estate that looks well. The trees are good specimens and residents are taking an interest in their areas by planting flowers in containers in the small front gardens. In Halticane Tce opposite Dean's Court we admired the Petunia bed but had to walk right up to the sign to read the name; time for cleaning. Melville Heights, an award winning estate in your competition was a delight. It was nice to see flowerbeds without the usual surround of timber

that has become over used in some areas. Patrick Street dwellings of different types some better cared for than others.

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

The roundabouts and the ring road are most pleasant as well as being a great way of getting around Kilkenny city. We admired the various landscape designs implemented on the roundabouts. They are probably unique to Ireland as in some counties there is reluctance to provide any landscape treatment for public safety reasons. The combination of trees in some locations, natural hedgerows in other places, wildflowers and also maintained margins at particular places along the ring road adds great interest for the traveller. The roundabouts are planted in a way that helps commuters to identify their position on the ring road and where to turn. Well done on this landscape initiative. All welcome and directional signs and poles were clean. Within the town centre, the large car park at the river serves an important function and it is interesting to see some trees here which help to reduce the impact of cars.

Concluding Remarks:

We enjoyed our visit to Kilkenny. Well done on the many projects achieved and planned for the future. We hope our report provides some guidance for future projects.

Second Round Adjudication:

Well it was simply a delight to explore Kilkenny and one of the gems was the gardens at Rothe House. Your work to entice and encourage pollinators here and elsewhere throughout the city is to be highly commended. You are one of the best examples for this in the country – well done.

Kilkenny is a busy tourist and residential town and you manage to embrace this well. But of course there will be areas which can be improved. You run an anti-chewing gum initiative. But there was a lot of chewing gum on the bricks of James Street at the rear entrance to the supermarket. Overhead wires could be part of your long-term plan, especially in front of St Mary's Cathedral.

James Green was a lovely oasis but do check the straps on the trees here as some of these were rubbing the bark. It is hoped that as part of the restoration at St Mary's Cathedral, the railings will also be addressed as they could look fantastic. Back lanes were well looked after and Chapel Lane had graffiti quickly removed – well done. Evening lighting at the 'Left Bank' and the new hurler's statue was just great. The low-level ambient lighting for the bridge was not installed on second adjudication but such low intensity should not disturb wildlife also. The older wires hanging on the outside of this bridge could be removed also once the new lighting is installed. Langton's and other premises on John Street Lower all looked great in the evening as well as daytime.

Small inconsequential heritage features were spied in many places such as the 100+ year old 'ER' post-boxes and Borough boundary signs on Green's Hill. Well done for caring for these so well.

Homes were presented to a high standard along the roads and in the many estates visited. The ramps to slow traffic and the seat for Jake at Lintown were nice but it was sad to see the trees here damaged – could they be replaced? A nice touch was the public notice board as you leave the estate helping to keep residents up to date on your activities.

Newpark Marsh walks were enjoyed – what another lovely wildlife spot. Dog owners were aplenty here and all seen to use the dog waste bags and bins. The murals at the resource centre were admired. The delight here was the NewPark community garden that was ripe with fruit and vegetables – this was a lovely area so well done to the residents here.

As in most cities you have dumping and littering problems and you have had 8 court cases issuing fines. Have you ever carried surveillance at known litter spots by your litter wardens? Is the situation improving? Have you carried out a litter survey and devised a litter plan for the different areas in Kilkenny city? What other different inventive ideas have you for this as when pay-by-weight is introduced there could be more dumping?

It is suggested that at the front of the shopping park where Halfords was located, a native hedging planted behind the fence here as it looked quite bare and open.

Bank management on the ring road on the Castleconnor road roundabout was admired as was the tiered mowing regime on the ring road where Rose Bay Willow herb was flowering. There were quite a number of signs for charity events at the Castlecomer Ringroad roundabout. Maybe keep a watchful eye on this?.

Quite high up on some of the lampposts on the ring road cable ties were left behind. On the walking path of the ring road to the north of the city (by the golf club) there was a lot of litter accumulating along this stretch. Whilst on a ring road this can be seen often, it was obvious along this stretch of ring road so it is suggested that more litter picking is targeted here. It was good to see the signs telling walkers and cyclists how far they are from the city centre on the ringroad area.

So many various and inventive projects were detailed in your excellent entry form. Perhaps swifts may be encouraged to try out the purpose built swift box nests at the castle by playing some swift calls to lure them into the area? The linear park is a wonderful amenity and how lucky to have lifeguards here! The city centre development and the new bridge will make a great difference to congested roads in this area and once completed, some of the buildings that need attention here could be enhanced also and Christmas lights removed out of season. These were even noticed in the tower on the medieval Mile. Even though they were not switched

on – can they not be stored out of site outside of the festive season?

Thank you for your entry and Kilkenny doesn't rest on its laurels – well done on your hard work.