

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **KILDARE**
County : **KILDARE**
Category : **E**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 16-07-97

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1997	Mark Awarded 1996
Overall Developmental Approach	50	24	--
The Built Environment	40	24	--
Landscaping	40	20	--
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	12	--
Litter Control	40	15	--
Tidiness	20	8	--
Residential Areas	30	16	--
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	21	--
General Impression	10	3	--
TOTAL MARK	300	143	--

Kildare, Co. Kildare

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Welcome back to the competition. It was disappointing not to have received a more detailed entry form outlining areas that have been improved, or particular problem areas, together with a detailed map highlighting the location of these features together with names etc. The adjudicators look forward to the submission of a five year plan, which is now a requirement for all towns entering the competition. Please try to highlight positive and negative points for consideration for the adjudicators next year. The adjudicators recognise that Kildare is a Heritage Town and this offers a unique opportunity for the town to develop, both for visitors, as well as the residents and the commercial sector. Overall, because of the large number of residential areas, and the problems associated with several of these, it is necessary for one concerted effort to bring all the Residents Associations together and, form new ones where none exist. Also, the commercial sector will have to take on a greater responsibility for the square in terms of litter control. The Tidy Towns should complement this in conjunction with land owners and the County Council on the approach roads. So for next year why not try and improve in one or two areas; the adjudicators suggest that perhaps you might concentrate on improving the Square and the approach roads, and then through the Residents Associations in the future, improvements should be brought about in the residential areas.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

There are some extremely good examples in the presentation of buildings throughout Kildare town. The Cathedral and its grounds are a great asset and were very well presented at the time of adjudication. These are also backed up by a number of individual efforts such as Chapman's which was very well presented with nice flowers noted. The entrance to Kildare Chilling Company was well presented; it would be nice if the walled area outside could be planted with some climbing plant. The grounds of RACE were very well presented with tree planting noted; however, the area opposite this entrance is a bit of an eyesore. A nice presentation was noted at the entrance to the Irish National Stud and Fitzpatrick's Garage had an excellent presentation. Well done. The entrance to the army base was also litter free, neat and tidy. A number of premises were freshly painted; The Curragh Lodge is just one example. The convent was well presented, as were most of the schools and churches. Outside Des McWey, cobble locking and new trees were noted. This is nice to see; try to continue this around the CYMS. The Railway Station was well presented but please screen off the gate where the skip is as this took from the overall appearance on the entry into the Railway Station car park. The Carmelites and White Abbey were also looking well, as was St. Joseph's Academy. It was good to see that there was a new Kildare Woollen Mills which, in time, will hopefully lead to the regeneration of this area and improvements along this street as

tourists will obviously be attracted. Graffiti was noted in the car park opposite this woollen mills. Stream International was very well presented and there are a number of other premises which looked well on day of adjudication; these included The Candy Store, Daniel Boland, Silken Thomas, Bank of Ireland, Conlan Travel, Simply Gourmet, The Vatican Pub and The Jail House. In considering the main aspects of buildings, there are two factors to be kept in mind, one is the quality of the individual structure, i.e., its presentation and materials used and secondly is the building in its overall context. Insensitive changes to individual buildings can destroy the overall character of the street. Buildings on corners, or at the end of streets assume greater civic design importance because of their location. Where such buildings are modified insensitively, or allowed to fall into disrepair, it can have serious visual implications. e.g. Corner of Claregate Street.

LANDSCAPING

There is limited evidence of landscaping having taken place throughout Kildare this year. However, there was a well maintained area on the approach from the Curragh and outside Kildare Chilling. The appearance, maintenance and presentation of the public spaces (including amenity areas, open spaces, footpaths and streets etc.) are a vital aspect of civic design quality. Poor presentation of public areas can take away from high standards achieved by individual properties. Appropriate selection and siting of trees, shrubs and flowers for an all year round effect is an important consideration and one that should be considered with care. One way that this can be done is by introducing an "Adopt-a-Spot" scheme where residents and the commercial sector might take on responsibility for a particular area outside their immediate premises. There is scope to plant more trees; strive for good urban natural planting with a mix of trees of different ages. There were, unfortunately, very few other well landscaped grounds presented or noted by the adjudicators in open spaces this year; improvements could perhaps be brought about in this area. It is nice to see the trees in the Square; they are a nice feature and help to soothe the appearance of the built environment. The adjudicators recognise the fact that Kildare will be by-passed in time; there is a great opportunity for the town to promote itself prior to the by-pass being put in place by showing passers by that Kildare is a nice attractive town and a place to stop and visit even after the by-pass has been completed..

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

Conserving nature is a new venture for many towns and can appear daunting at first. The adjudicators recognise that environmental programmes can take time to get up and running and even longer to assess their success. This section of the report requires an involvement of all groups, including schools in the town. The emphasis is on the conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats and the environment. Woodlands, rivers, ponds, hedgerows, open spaces, graveyards and walls are important habitats. The committee needs to identify the habitats in their area and then determine the appropriate actions to conserve and enhance these habitats. Guidelines in the Tidy Towns book

offer other suggestions as to the type of initiatives you might undertake. Is there a local wildlife expert, or a member of the community with experience in this area, that your committee can draw on? In preparing an environmental programme for the village, there should be a year-round emphasis on environmental protection and promotion involving all members of the community. The next step is to identify what habitats are in your area - are there woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, or other habitats such as urban spaces, cemeteries, walls etc. Prepare a survey and map, showing the areas of wildlife importance and areas of future importance, e.g. school grounds and gardens, derelict sites etc. Other steps involved in the preparation of the environmental programme for Kildare would include identification of the flora and fauna in the area, preparation of a wildlife management plan as part of the area development plan and the identification of tasks to be carried out including conservation projects, wildlife gardens, areas of conservation, access, tree planting, information areas etc. This must be carried out in sympathy with the local landscape and must not be overwhelming visually, or environmentally.

LITTER CONTROL

Litter is a major problem in Kildare. The adjudicators were extremely disappointed to see the amount of litter throughout the town and in outlying areas. It is evident on almost all approach roads, and all around roads leading to residential areas. This must be tackled. Look to the example of other towns that have overcome this through the Tidy Towns competition. Kildare town, can, and must do this. In this regard, approach the local authority and ask them what their plans are in relation to the "Action Against Litter" campaign. There must also be "bottom up" involvement; that means educating school children the whole way up to adults and encouraging commercial premises to maintain outside their premises. If Kildare could even concentrate on this one aspect, it would bring about major improvements in many other areas, such as tidiness; roads, streets and back areas; residential etc. It is very important to include school children in these plans; other towns, e.g. Kilcullen have introduced Litter Wardens and Litter Patrols and you might try to encourage a similar approach.

TIDINESS

There is room for improvement under this category. Firstly in terms of landscaping with greater attention to detail. Secondly, in terms of cleaning up signage. Thirdly, removal of wirescape, where possible. Fourthly, road signs could be improved, e.g. replace the Narrow Bridge sign near the railway. Also weeds and gravel along by kerbs, especially, along by the main roads detract from the overall tidy appearance. Having said this, there is evidence of a tidy appearance in some areas, so this should be expanded. The areas outside the National Stud, the Army Barracks and some service stations are good examples.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

At the park opposite Meanscoil, some litter was evident; Dara Park was well presented, as was Assumpta Villas. Well done. Melitta Park was a very good presentation but there is no need to have

the flower containers raised. Sprinklings of litter were noted on the grounds in this park, which otherwise was an excellent presentation. Try to replace the Melitta Road sign. As mentioned above, the Tidy Towns Committee, in conjunction with the local traders and County Council, should try to work through Residents Associations. This is the best way of trying to achieve success. Examples already exist where a positive impact can be created as mentioned above. This should be followed through with other parks, give it time and Residents Associations will respond. Running a Residents Tidy Estate Competition would also be a way of encouraging this.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

On the approach road from Newbridge, there was a good appearance on the left hand side and by the Kildare sign. Try to remove the illegal sign post, i.e. Rustic Charm, at the nameplate. Also, try to remove gravel by kerbing. At the junction further in, before the National Stud entrance, a better presentation could be made on the left hand side. Approaching from Monasterevin, the right hand side was very bad with litter in evidence; walls needed to be painted and resurfacing was also needed. A very negative impact here. There was limited maintenance on the left hand side, helped by the residents perimeters. Otherwise, there was very little evidence of a good approach here. Approaching from Grey Abbey was not too bad. The Tully Road was okay, but try to replace the 30 MPH signs. Litter was noted where grass had been cut back on the left hand side. Further in near the traffic lights try to replace the major road signs.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

First of all the adjudicators recognise that there is obviously a need for greater community co-ordination in the town of Kildare. The adjudicators were disappointed with the presentation, and feel that Kildare has a major litter problem. What the adjudicators saw is being seen by everybody passing through the town also. The people of Kildare will have to take a greater role in improving the appearance of their own town. Try to work on the preparation of simple 3/ 5 year development plan for the town. This should be simple and realistic, and should set out key objectives to be achieved. The adjudicators are sure that if one or two key projects are followed through, all sectors in Kildare town will follow through by supporting and creating what could be a magnificent town. Good luck in the development of your heritage town status and please try harder. Don't give up, it will take time. As can be seen in other towns throughout the country, your efforts will be rewarded, not just through the Tidy Towns competition but through improved economic benefits for the town of Kildare. Good luck for 1998.