

# Tidy Towns Competition 2009

## *Adjudication Report*

Centre: **Kilkenny** Ref: **398**  
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **302**  
Category: **G** Date(s): **04/07/2009**  
**29/07/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	49
The Built Environment	50	42
Landscaping	50	43
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	31
Litter Control	50	32
Waste Minimisation	20	11
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	38
General Impression	10	9
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>302</b>

### **Overall Development Approach:**

Your adjudicator would like to welcome Kilkenny to the 2009 Tidy Towns Competition. Keep Kilkenny Beautiful (KKB) is to be congratulated on the quality of their entry documentation this year. It was by far the best entry file handled by this adjudicator this year. The entry form detailed in succinct terms the various projects carried out for this year and the plans for the future. One word describes your entry and this is 'clarity'. The Committee of nineteen has in place a superb Tidy Towns strategy for Kilkenny. This has succeeded in harnessing the good will of a vast range of agencies and local organisations, and this is the key to Tidy Towns progress. Excellent support for KKB has been greatly assisted by a well thought out communications strategy. The idea of the annual Calendar is novel and of course plays a big PR role for your annual work programme, and the importance of the objectives of KKB. The many competitions targeted at the Schools in Kilkenny are strongly commended. It is so important that young children grow up with an appreciation of the importance of environmental quality. The 3 Year Plan summary was read and this document is very clear in its objectives. Thank you for the Awards Night presentation and the City Tourist Trail project details. The Approach Roads Survey yet again identifies issues clearly and proposes actions. The maps provided were really excellent and were exactly what the adjudicator needed, and were used in conjunction with Satellite Navigation.

### **The Built Environment:**

The well structured programme of Competitions targeted at environmental improvement is strongly welcomed. The adjudicator was especially interested in the Study on the value of the archaeology and heritage of Kilkenny. It is encouraging to see that some buildings have found a new use, such as the Bank of Ireland now occupied by Left Bank. The external visual integrity of this building is intact. Courthouse renovations were also observed and the holding of the Historic Graveyards Seminar in May of this year was noted. Kilkenny is most generous in respect of the sharing their acquired Tidy Towns knowledge with other communities. The KKB role in monitoring Planning Permissions could be followed by many other Tidy Towns groups in Ireland and

the putting forward of the Tidy Towns views on a new development can have a significant effect on the eventual Application outcome. The adjudicator was conscious of seeing relatively few advertising signs or hoardings on approach roads, and this is so refreshing. The Ring Road was especially clear of such unwanted signage. The Kilkenny Design Group of Limestone building visually compliments the wonderful Kilkenny Castle and grounds across the road. The new paving in progress along The Parade was examined in great detail and this will be a really superb area when completed. The adjudicator was disturbed to see that, where the cobble lock meets the paving, the gaps have been filled in with concrete to give an ugly unfinished saw-tooth effect. This is on the Kilkenny Design side of The Parade – Kilkenny deserves a greater attention to detail here. So many shop fronts in Kilkenny are worthy of close examination and one of these is Whites Family Butcher and the graphics, and detailing on this frontage are excellent. Simple graphics were admired at Allens. Every adjudicator is impressed by The Alms Houses and the nearby Tholsol, and these buildings are really part of the Kilkenny built environment brand. On Rose Inn Street, the John O'Connor Pharmacy is commended on the good colour scheme and simple clear graphics that work well together. The frontage of the Kilkenny Shopping Mall disappointed greatly and the poor presentation here is so much out of tune with this core area of the city.

### **Landscaping:**

The adjudicator was highly impressed with the excellence of your well thought out landscaping programme for this year. In this regard your attention to detail is highly commended. Along the Ring Road – all of it was examined – appropriate landscaping is to be seen practically everywhere. What was most impressive, was the sensitive treatment of the many roundabouts. The presentation at each was of a high caliber and the landscaping design appears to be different at all roundabouts; some with trees and some without. The use of gravel as a design element at some roundabouts contrasts effectively with others where planting dominates. River zone planting was noted and your floral barge feature was an excellent innovative idea. The fruit trees project involving planting at 40 locations is really important, in both the visual context but also in terms of the needs of wildlife. So many trees have been planted in Kilkenny in the past few years and 1500 autumn saplings planned. This is a great investment in the future presentation of the city. On the main approaches, the visitor is welcomed nearly everywhere by colourful beds and this sets up great expectations of what the city proper will deliver on arrival. It does not disappoint. Along the main streets, the many hanging baskets, window boxes and free standing plant containers give a sense of colour that blends perfectly with the built environment. Along the Ring Road, the wildflower edge planting looked really well. Excellent hard and soft landscaping combined to a great effect at Canal Square by the bridge was noted. An untidy area here by the ESB units needed attention. Bateman's Quay is superbly presented and the colourful hanging baskets on the riverside railing carry the eye along the river. Good raised landscaping was noted at the James Street and Parnell Street road junction.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

The Newark March was visited and enjoyed. What a great area this is for wildlife, practically in the city centre. Your cooperation with Bird Watch Ireland is appreciated, as professional advice will always be of help. The thirty new bird boxes have been provided – is there any monitoring of occupancy? The Kilkenny Castle Park and Rothe House Garden are superbly presented and can match anything that this adjudicator has seen elsewhere in Ireland or in other countries. Such great city centre amenity areas provide so much enjoyment for everyone. In the wildlife context, you are undertaking initiatives that few consider, such as the Beetle Bank, a simple yet important idea. The adjudicator would like to have seen a copy of the multi lingual environmental awareness brochure. It may have been included in the bound document, but the adjudicator did not find it. The Riverbank Kingfisher Enticement Programme is most interesting one and the adjudicator who lives on a river has rarely seen one. The Tree Survey will guide your planting needs into the future.

### **Litter Control:**

The adjudicator was most impressed with your many inter-linking litter control initiatives and this is the correct way forward. The overall strategy is well thought out and is complimented by ongoing assessment. You have many interesting initiatives including the Schools Litter Trail. The weekly cleaning of the Bring Centres has been noted and these are discussed below. Does the Litter Line produce much public response? That you take enormous measures to control litter is undisputed. However, in marks terms this must be balanced by what is noted by the adjudicator. On the Ring Road and the main city centre routes litter control was really excellent. Problem areas were identified in the city centre. The Bring Banks were visited and littering and dumping was noted at the Fair Green, Parnell Street and Kingfisher Bank Bring Centres. Litter was noted between the units and at Parnell Street much litter was seen behind the units, raising the issue of when this area was last cleaned out. The Bring Centre at the Lidl Car Park was neat and tidy, but the official signage was missing. Unfortunately, litter issues were not confined to the Bring Centres. Much aged litter was noted along the river walk by Maudlin Street. In this general area much litter was present in the cul de sac that runs parallel to the access road to the County Council offices. Along Maudlin Street, quite a lot of litter was evident after Langton's Car park walking towards the tower. Litter was also evident at Canal Square by the bridge in the corner. Along High Street, litter was evident below the Tholsol on the left. Also along Rose Inn Street, at the end of The Parade, litter was noticed. Some of the estates had a scattering of litter and this included The

Fairways and its approach roads. The IBAL Report advised that Kilkenny was 51st out of 60 towns and cities surveyed.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

Like under many other adjudication categories, you have a comprehensive list of initiatives for this year, all of which are excellent. The adjudicator especially likes the use of solar power for the Schools warning lights. The Waste Survey is interesting; is this repeated each year for comparison purposes? The free household collection of hazardous waste is yet another excellent initiative. You are the only group doing this in the experience of this adjudicator. The adjudicator was impressed with the Eco Chat concept. This is so simple, yet presumably effective. The Kilkenny Schools have been very successful in the Green Flag Programme and the KKB support has played an important role in this progress.

### **Tidiness:**

The anti-graffiti campaign appears to have been very successful, as no graffiti was noted in Kilkenny. Upgraded street furniture was noted and black metal bollards have been used successfully in various areas to define pavement sides. The quality of street furniture was very good. Has any progress been made in regard to the derelict sites that you mentioned in your entry? Presumably, the Local Authority is using their powers under The Derelict Sites Act, where necessary. Fly posting appears to be under good control and little, if any, was seen during the visit. On the Lidl roundabout, near the Loughboy Centre, large scale advertising signage was seen. Does this have Planning Permission or Local Authority License? The road up to Newark Golf Range, as far as the Ring road, was a little untidy. Some poor road surfaces were noted along here. This is a more rural road than others and a less clinical approach to roadside bank presentation is acceptable. Can the railings of Green's Bridge be painted and made a feature? At the bottom of High Street, the red and white steel barrier needed to be repainted. If not still in use, can this be removed? At John's Green, the railway bridge here looked quite untidy and painting here would make a big difference to this area.

### **Residential Areas:**

Quite a number of the estates within the Ring Road area were visited. Overall, this was an impressive experience. The few poorly presented estates visited were vastly outnumbered by the very good overall presentations in the majority of the estates. The various estate competitions have obviously played a major role here. In the city, it was good to see that it still has some residential areas and this gives life to the city at night. KKB has been very strong in the support of Residents Groups and Associations. Excellently maintained grass areas at Maiden Hill impressed and tiered planting at Springfields was admired. The grass here was properly cut back from kerb tops and this is correct, but unusual. Some kerb weed was present at Archer's Crescent. Of all the estates visited in Kilkenny, it was Melville Heights that stands out for this adjudicator. The entrance grass and landscaped areas especially, at the entrance are stunning and provide the excellence benchmark for all other estates in the city. Dukes Meadow demonstrated great care and maintenance attention. Attractive advance estate signage in blue was admired in many areas. The fine trees at Auburn Drive were admired providing good colour and textural contrasts. In housing estates ESB Sub-Stations are frequently an eyesore, but this has been overcome at Talbot's Gate in a most satisfactory way.

### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

As mentioned earlier in this Report, the Ring Road is excellently presented throughout its total length. Signage is unusually good and consistent. Most of the main feeder routes, off the Ring Road, were examined and the presentation impressed. In the centre of Kilkenny, wirescape still causes problems in some areas, but you are working on that issue. One of the interesting characteristics of the city is the many small narrow laneways that create such a feeling of expectation as you enter – what is at the other end? A case in point is Butterslip Lane. Kilkenny is a city to walk around and not drive around. The new City Tourist Trail and Signposting Project will add greatly to the enjoyment of what is already a wonderful city.

### **General Impression:**

Your whole approach to Tidy Towns is strategically sound and is working exceptionally well. It was a real pleasure to spend a lot of time in Kilkenny and to examine this wonderful city in detail. Good luck with all your work planned for 2010, when we look forward to returning.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

Kilkenny was gearing up for its Arts festival on the day of 2nd adjudication and the city looked great. The castle and grounds were impressively presented and, although major road works were underway along the Parade, by next year this will no doubt result in a greatly enhanced streetscape.

The entrance to High Street is very attractive, but the red and white traffic barriers look shabby and ill-fit the surroundings. The street looks great, however and is very tidy with its heritage signage and cobblelock footpaths. The side streets are very enticing with their gourmet cafés and galleries. Planting of trees as well as

flowers was noticed and is proportionate.

This adjudicator did not notice the degree of litter as described during the first round of judging and most of the main thoroughfares were clean and virtually litter free. The one exception that was found was the terrible state of the path outside Dunnes Stores, which let down the otherwise fine appearance and atmosphere along St. Kieran's Street. The fine space at Canal Square, as mentioned, is diminished somewhat by poor finishing at the ESB substation.

Overall, this adjudicator very much enjoyed his first afternoon in Kilkenny in some time and was very impressed with how the city has developed in the intervening years.