

# Tidy Towns Competition 2014

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilrush** Ref: **77**  
County: **Clare** Mark: **316**  
Category: **D** Date(s): **19/06/2014**  
**22/07/2014**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2014</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	55
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	46
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	45
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	33
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	32
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>316</b>

### **Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:**

Ta Fáilte Romhat Kilrush - Welcome Kilrush to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. Firstly we would like to congratulate you on achieving a Gold Medal in the 2013 National Tidy Towns Competition! Despite all the hard work involved, your continuing success seems to have inspired you to further achievement.

It was this adjudicator's first visit to Kilrush, and the adjudicator was looking forward to the visit. We have to say that our visit to Kilrush will be remembered as one of the highlights in our experience of adjudication over the years. This is because Kilrush itself is a lovely town, and most importantly its people have obviously appreciated that, have striven to retain its character, and continue to improve and move forward in many ways We consider that you have all the enthusiasm to progress further, based on a solid achievement to date, and we look forward to following your progress in future years.

Thank you for your well presented downloaded and extended Entry Form. Project 1.2 in your summary of projects on page 18 sums up your attitude to completing the Entry Form and we quote

"What is critically important is that the documentation gives a crystal clear picture of your new work for that year"

It was obvious that the putting together of this document was not a last-minute effort, but one on which had spent considerable time and thought, so it was with interest that we read on your Facebook page that you had a specific meeting in April to deal with the completion of the Entry Form. This is a good policy, and also helps to relieve one individual of sole responsibility.

Your Entry Form is clearly distinct and separate from your tabulated 2014 – 2016 Plan, although contained within the same volume. This made for clarity for the adjudicator. Within the tabulated Plan each category heading was succinct and easily read. It was obvious that you spent a lot of time putting this document together. The only negative comments that we would have is

Firstly your town map did not extend to the outer boundaries of the town and did not show the approach roads – although you did submit a location map also.

Secondly your expanded Entry Form did contain reference to future projects. We would suggest that these be included in a separate Tidy Towns Plan document to accompany your tabulated Tidy Towns Plan and kept separate from this year's project descriptions.

Thirdly some of the attachments in relation to various projects to which you refer might be inserted in an Appendix

rather than inserted within the Entry Form. Examples would be the details of the schools' - e.g. - competition details / poem, and the extensive planting details such as those on pages 39 onwards. This makes for easier reading for the adjudicator and focuses on the projects rather than their detail.

Please remember to include a fully comprehensive map extending to the town boundaries and showing - and naming the approach roads in 2015. Nonetheless, the map clearly showed all the projects undertaken for the relevant adjudication period. This was extremely helpful. Your 'before' and 'after' photographs were also helpful, and these mean a lot to an adjudicator, because they obviously will not have seen the 'before' situation on-the-ground. Your photographs were relevant to your projects, and did not include irrelevant material. Again well done on this!

Your committee is obviously a hard-working group of 14 people. You individually list the members' names, thereby recognising their contribution publicly. The regularity of your meetings is noted, and your 'standing' meetings with the local Town Council and other groups are important to you. We hope that with the 'demise' of the town councils, you will still be in a position to continue your regular local authority meetings. You individually name/describe 21 agencies, bodies, and businesses that have supported your activities. This extends to local, regional and national agencies. We are happy to see that, inter alia, you work closely with disability groups, and this is obvious from your Sensory Garden project. We assure all the people who help you that they are named and described individually in your submission. You also fully acknowledge all your sponsors locally, and in particular the main sponsor Mr. P. J. Queally of Queally's Super Valu, together with Kilrush Credit Union, and all the other local business sponsors including local residents' contributions - through church gate collection, shop counter boxes and raffle. To list all the agencies and sponsors here individually would lengthen this adjudication report unnecessarily!

Your communications methods include local newspaper cooperation and local radio programming. Your hour-long programme on local radio is a tribute to the esteem in which you are held locally. We hope that your parish newsletter is circulated to non-majority churches also. Your Facebook page and your Twitter page are further advances in modern Tidy Towns communications. You also realise the importance of updating your websites (Project 1.9). The promotional video through your Facebook page was facilitated by the Town Council. It is very important to use IT communication systems in order to attract and engage young members. It is also a sustainable method of communication.

We are delighted that you have set up two Junior Tidy Towns groups over the last 12 months. One is for the primary schools and the other for the secondary/community school. And you have also engaged with the local crèche! This we think is a new and novel idea and bodes well for the future. The junior members have already got off to a good start with their planting programmes. Their youthful enthusiasm and creativity/imagination - and your enthusiasm and experience will make for excellence in the future. We are impressed that you have listened to their ideas at an early stage. Well done also to the consistent work that Youthreach have contributed to your programmes.

Your statement "Tidy Towns competition has greatly improved Kilrush in terms of environmental development over the last 20 years" is not an idle boast. Interestingly you refer to the fact that annual progress has served as a benchmark to evaluate progress. We like your philosophy of participation and cooperation between the community and all external agencies, businesses etc. Well done on keeping a close eye on all new planning applications.

Before we leave this topic we would like to add the following aside which we consider reflects community involvement on-the-ground.

As the adjudicator photographed the quayside sculpture at Cappa, a local man sitting in a car, enthusiastically called over to tell the adjudicator - whom he considered to be a visitor (because visitors take photographs!) that the subject of this sculpture is alive and well and is a familiar figure in the area. This was an interesting thing to hear. We would add to this the friendliness and interest of the petrol station owner on the Ennis Road, who came to put petrol in our car (an unusual occurrence in Ireland nowadays where we are used to self-service) and, again thinking we were visitors told us a lot about Kilrush. And finally we refer to our visit to your wonderful Catholic church which was facilitated at a late hour by the Sacristan (?) The adjudicator would like to thank the gentleman who - although he was locking the church because of the Cemetery Mass on the day of the adjudicator's visit - allowed the 'tourist' time to see the interior of the church. At the Quayside Coffee shop - even though it was shortly before closing time when we took a break - the cheerful staff supplied us with welcome tea at the attractive pavement tables!

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

Before this adjudicator goes on to discuss your projects under this category heading for the current adjudication year, we would like to say how absolutely impressed we were by the excellence of your existing built environment and streetscape. We also noticed that last year's adjudicator was most impressed with the built environment of Kilrush. It is extremely encouraging and exciting to find a town which has paid such attention to its architectural heritage and character, not alone in its significant buildings, but also in its vernacular traditional streetscapes. This is a resource which many would envy. This did not happen by chance; it is to your credit that this is so, and it will serve you well into the future in many ways - from local pride to historic and touristic interest. Thank you for submitting the booklet dealing with the historic buildings of Kilrush. It is a lovely publication with excellent line drawings. However, we also note that equally important is the quality of new and modern architecture in Kilrush in the present and into the future, and we trust that you will ensure, insofar as you can, that all new development represents good 21st-century design and so forth into the future. Your input in the planning process will help to achieve this end.

In your summary of actions under this heading we note your various endeavours.

Your main 5 projects under this heading for this adjudication year were to upgrade five vacant properties. You explained very clearly how Kilrush has a high percentage of unoccupancy in relation to national figures at 31.6%. This is almost double the national average percentage of unoccupied dwellings. You also went on to explain that this is not attributable to the existence of holiday homes as few exist in Kilrush. We note that you carried out action on five of these properties. Your photographs on page 30 and 31 of your report clearly show the situation prior to your project being carried out. The adjudicator witnessed the resultant improvement on the ground verifying the photographic evidence. Although you include the painting of the central garage at Burton Street under your 'Tidiness etc.' heading, we also credit you here with the result. Your program in association with the town council/local authority to deal with derelict properties will benefit Kilrush. You have made a good start in having five of these properties painted and tidied up since last year's adjudication. You are so correct in dealing at first with the town centre and progressing outwards in coming years. You begin with the carrot of encouragement to property owners to renew and repair derelict buildings. But you also have to consider derelict site legislation, and you are doing this by liaising with the local authority.

You have a long list of policy proposals under this heading. One is that you are promoting the adoption of a tourism signage policy.

In relation to your tourism signage policy, we would suggest that you proceed slowly in order to maximise the benefit of this initiative. We would suggest that you liaise with the Architects' Department of your local authority, as well as with the Architectural Conservation Officer, the Heritage Officer, the Planning Department, your Area Engineer and the Arts Officer of your local authority. Signage can be both artistic and informative. It is critical that Kilrush is given the means and funding to investigate signage design which will be innovative, appropriate and worthy of its built environment.

The circular historic plaques in relation to the Gorta Mór which you have erected looked very well. The use of Irish along the circumference of the circle with the central English and Irish script was well chosen.

We include here the repair and repainting of the grand gates to the Vandefleur estate on the Kildysart Road. This is an important project under this Built Environment category, although you include it as just one of many under your Tidiness category. You are credited here with an increase in marks for this project.

Lower Moore Street and Moore Street itself are very good streetscapes with little wirescape, but satellite dishes attached to building frontages, and the few remaining poles, detract somewhat from its presentation. We admired the bilingual street names which include the Kilrush town crest. The green space and pump at the junction of Moore St. and Chapel Street were admired, as were the simple good shrubs here. Griffins building has a nice name sign and hood moulding, but is in need of care and attention. St. Senan's national school must be fairly sad at the state of their mural on the frontage of Griffins. The varied roof/eaves heights and chimney heights along this streetscape are aesthetically pleasing.

Francis Street is a wonderfully wide thoroughfare of excellent scale and proportion. The conservation of its original buildings - which were part of a planned town - is excellent, and we commend you on the perception you have had as a community in seeing to this. The different heights of buildings, emphasised by their different colourful presentations looked extremely well. You have dealt very well with any neglected properties - for example the now ochre coloured cinema. We very much remarked on the lack of clutter, and your perceptiveness with regard to this. The simple building lines, not complicated by clutter, are remarkable. Good too are the lack of overhead power lines, the lack of gaudy advertising and sandwich board footpath signs, the general lack of overpowering projecting lighting, and the cleanliness of signage. It truly is a visual delight! We would like you to convey these adjudication comments to the property owners and occupiers in Francis Street and generally throughout the town. The simple semi mature tree plantings also look well in this setting. The Post Office is a simple building with a good ramp. The Quayside Coffee shop is very well presented. Your local engineer has obviously contributed to the overall excellence of this area by supplying clean road lining and parking space markings. We would not wish to single out any particular building or series of buildings, as each and every one excelled. We would however like to see the large 'to let' sign on the old mill building and the smaller 'for sale' sign on the blue section of wall nearby removed if at all possible, as they both detract somewhat from the overall effect - especially at the lower end of Francis Street near the entrance to the Marina/Sensory Garden. You mention that proposals for the enhancement of Francis Street are proceeding apace, but we would simply ask that you maintain it as it is - we do not see much need for further works here. Any 'enhancement' needs to be carefully designed and considered.

Toler Street is pristine - also with excellent road markings. The infill development on Toler Street near Banklawn House is very good. These are five houses which echo the existing houses opposite. This is a leafy street with the well presented Catholic Church. There is a lovely doorway to the church, and the grotto opposite is spotless. The pump nearby is shining. Your excellent Catholic Church, with its wonderful Harry Clark stained glass windows is obviously much valued by the town. A return visit to spend time inside this beautiful church is on this adjudicator's agenda. The Church of Ireland is well presented, and makes for a nice landmark building on the Kildysart approach road. We admired the relevant Heritage information board and the good fingerpost signing - informing and directing - both of which were set against a lovely stone boundary wall. Well done on the conservation of the building as a Teach Cheoil/Ceoltas venue.

The West Clare Family Resource Centre/Library complex would benefit from varnishing of the wood on its fascia. This complex is attractive, but needs a little attention. The Racquets and Handball premises nearby needs paint and removal of the dirty bunting. The Bank of Ireland is well presented, and appears to have learned from your example

with regard to restraint in relation to signage and external attachments.

The Mercy Convent is unfortunately an eyesore in your built environment. You have tried to ameliorate its problematic presentation by working on the garden. Nonetheless the general impression is one of neglect - with its broken windows, overgrown site, very poor entrance etc. There was no obvious name on the school beside the Mercy Convent. The school is well presented. We did not see any sign of a Green Flag at the school. A corner building nearby – a white old fuel shop needs repainting of its gable and chimney, although you have dealt with its front elevation The Gaelscoil is also well presented - but for the yellow wall at the corner which requires painting. Once again no Green Flag was observed.

One other eyesore puzzled us rather greatly - and you did not mention it yourselves. That is both the extensive roofless structure – possibly an old boat building shed - and associated deteriorating large boats – all of which detract from the views back towards the town and surrounds from the Marina area. Perhaps you would let us have some information about this situation for next year's adjudicator. Conversely - and perhaps luckily -the eye is drawn away from this eyesore towards the large modern clean white and terracotta colour building by the water's edge when one views the sweep of the bay from the Marina area.

The Marina building itself is modern with clean lines, and is very well cared for. We expect that future development of this facility – noted on a planning notice - will be up to the same standards. The Scatterry Island Monastic Settlement sign (modern, grey) with details of boat times etc. is restrained and artistic.

The nursing home on the Kilkee Road looked very well with a good painting colour scheme.

Kilrush is full of 'loved' properties, and we would like to individually commend many people. However, in the interests of some brevity we have to be selective! Buildings and shop fronts which we particularly admired included Patrick Bourke's at The Square, with its excellent name signs, lovely sash windows, and hood moulding picked out in contrasting cream on maroon walls. At sometime in the future perhaps the external lighting might be replaced by discreet recessed down-lighting with the advice of a conservation architect. Monument House shop front and its neighbour in blue are in themselves good shop fronts. However, here an inordinate number of external lights detract from their character. It is also noted that the sash windows have been replaced at upper floor level. The old 'John Lillis' sign looks well.

O'Sheas is a lovely building, but is sadly in need of funding for its ongoing conservation. In the meantime its character has been protected. Well done on your work at this building and to the cooperation of the owner in allowing this to happen. A nameless shop front between Clancy's and Barrett Brothers (also on Moore Street) is another lovely example of a traditional shop front. Saunders is exemplary in its presentation. We particularly liked its marble lettering and its colourful contrasting paintwork, its sash windows, its doorway grille and its general restraint. Well done to the owners! Another wonderful traditional and tastefully maintained shop front exists nearby – O' Sullivan's with its double frontage and its Irish name inscription over the second frontage. Giasain /Gleeson's with its beautiful blue and contrasting maroon paint is yet another example of this excellence. Brew's with its - now rare - faience type shop front tiling is another iconic part of your streetscape. Beside a small shop called Clancy's on Henry Street there is a rather desolate looking shop front, which detracts from the street – as does its adjacent laneway - which is equally derelict and neglected. The said Clancy's shop has lovely marble lettering, but is in a rather neglected state of repair generally. An example of a shop front which is well-kept but rather 'overcome' by external attachments is Kelly's of the same street. This adjudicator wished that they could award prizes to many property owners in Kilrush! There are many excellent premises – not all have particular architectural character – but nonetheless are extremely well presented and all contribute to the valuable streetscapes.

Some empty hanging basket holders along Moore Street, should, we consider be removed, and perhaps donated to a needy area within the town. These aspects of floral ornamentation are not necessary in your beautiful streets, which are able to 'stand on their own.' We consider that such additional items being added to such good vernacular streetscapes distract from the resource which you have in your built environment.

A lovely sign for 'Mary's View July 27th 1878 at first-floor level /The Square was totally 'overpowered' by cabling, a 'heritage' light and an advertisement for a bed-and-breakfast. This is a pity, as this is a small but significant feature of your built environment.

The lifeboat house at Cappa looked very well.

We commend you on your use of Irish – particularly in shop fronts in the town, and we encourage you to continue this tradition into the future. At the Museum of Rural Life we admired the clean mural and the good red gates. A few weeds and raw security railings adjacent detract a little from the Museum and its mural.

(We also noticed the bilingual aspect of your painting competition results contained in your entry form.)

### **Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:**

You acknowledge the support of the T.C. gardener and a committee member of the Tidy Towns in relation to your projects under this category heading for this year. Your projects were dedicated to the improvement of the town's landscaped areas 'paying careful attention to the environment, biodiversity, and sustainable development.'

Your 'Spreading the Goodness' project involved a decision to use only organic fertiliser in all the landscaped areas

of the town. Your Moore Street tree project - and other tree projects were noted. Your third project under this heading involved the adoption of sustainable planting schemes. We are very pleased that you are taking this approach of only planting trees/shrubs/perennials that are native or naturalised in Ireland. You correctly state that once established this type of planting requires less maintenance in the form of watering, feeding, and weeding. It also, you say, results in less cost in the production of summer bedding plants. Wildlife prefers such habitats and the overall effect is good and long-term. We are totally 'with you' on this, but we would add another reason. Visually annual bedding planting and floral displays can look quite well in a formal urban setting - for example in a major urban park. But in a country town such as Kilrush such formality is 'foreign' (unless a planned and formally landscaped Park is in question.) You will have experience of the latter in Vandefleur gardens, and in some formal town beds, and you correctly confine formal planting to such specific areas. We are unsure as to how you intend to develop the waste field into a mini park in the future? Is this to be a formal space or a wildflower space? Your foresight in ordering your bedding plants in January saved you money. Good planning is part of your landscaping endeavour. Given your new sustainability drive we expect that the number of bedding plants will decrease, as will your hanging baskets and window box stock. There are areas that benefit hugely from such floral displays – such as dull lane ways and neglected areas. However this adjudicator considers that within the town centre more emphasis should continue to be placed on presenting your built environment without distraction. In particular structures which are protected structures should not have hanging baskets attached. This includes bridges as well as buildings, because the attachments damage the fabric of the buildings. Likewise attaching window boxes to protected or other architecturally good structures can attract dampness to original sash window frames through repetitive watering.

Projects number four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine involved various landscaping projects including the removal of storm damaged trees, tree planting, the creation of a large new flower bed (see comments under 'Residential' below), and the creation - including tree planting - of a new estate entrance. However, the development of the sensory garden with its wheelchair access takes pride of place because of its accessibility, visual attractiveness in a central location, and in its sustainability. Appropriately the wheelchair parking space is directly beside access to the garden. This general landscaped area beside the pedestrian bridge was very inviting on a lovely summer's evening. Once again your attention to native tree and shrub planting as against formal flower beds suits this seaside area. We admired the Kilrush and Scattery bronze plaque, and we particularly loved the dolphin sculpture, although we thought that the water pipe was a little strident. The fountain was not playing on adjudication day. We read the Glynn's Mill and the Monastery information board with interest.

Cappa pier - now also part of the Wild Atlantic Way – was a lovely place to spend an evening with wonderful late sunshine. We noted the shining new Wild Atlantic Way sign at the harbour. The harbour was being much enjoyed by many young people swimming. We read with interest the information boards. The Ceapach sculpture is a lovely feature. We would be disinclined in general to locate flower boxes along the harbour promenade as this is a good traditional harbour area, which can, like your streets, 'stand-alone.'

You are liaising well with the local community in relation to planting schemes generally.

### **Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fíadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádurtha:**

Under this category heading we note that you have an ongoing project in relation to local wildlife habitats. Earlier this year members carried out surveys into four areas of the town. You have given us some examples of the wildlife observations which you have made in this endeavour.

The wildlife garden at St. Senan's primary school is also one of the projects which occupied your attention under this category heading. You also presented the school committee with a wildlife garden plan which has many aspects to it. We are sure that the bug hotel is a great attraction with the children.

Kilrush Tidy Towns has produced a biodiversity audit also this year. (We would again suggest that you include such actual detail as the actual audit in an Appendix to your actual Entry Form). This forms the first stage in the development of a local biodiversity action plan. We are delighted to see that you are working closely with the local authority Biodiversity Officer in relation to this work, and we look forward to further developments - including the erection of the noticeboard when you have enough research carried out to inform your sharing of the findings.

You have created a wildlife habitat for ducks at Kilrush Creek Marina. We wondered about the genesis of the 'crannóg' on the front page of your Tidy Town's submission. Now we know the background to the 'archaeological' feature! This is certainly a novel idea and catches the eye and imagination. Your bat box survey belongs to last year's adjudication. However we wish you success in your ongoing development of this topic.

We are pleased that you are aware of all the legislation and designations applicable to wildlife habitats and natural amenities in your area. You have named a number of people and organisations who will advise and help you. This is a professional approach to the subject.

We noticed your bird box on the stone river bank area near the sensory garden/bridge.

We saw evidence of chemical weed killing and this is not recommended as it is injurious to the environment. We would recommend that you use nonchemical treatments for weed treatment which you might discuss with your County Heritage Officer and County Biodiversity Officer.

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

We note that you carried out waste surveys in schools and businesses in Kilrush between March and May of this year. The survey document which you have submitted is the Green Homes Water Action Plan. We do not appear to have received a survey document relating to the schools and businesses survey.

You compost grass cuttings, and you have held workshops to promote the practice of composting during the month of April this year.

An information leaflet on water conservation has been distributed to schools and businesses. Your extract from the town plan in relation to water conservation shows that you are conscious of the importance of the conservation of natural resources and are spreading the word through your awareness leaflet promotion.

You organised community recycling initiatives in relation to scrap metal, electrical goods etc. between March and May of this year, and you also promoted the recycling of Christmas trees. You are promoting the ethos of FreeTrade Ireland. The local Golf Club assisted you in relation to one of these projects. You encourage students to use the second-hand bookshop, and to consider recycling school uniforms amongst the next generation of students. The Chamber of Commerce are working with you on trying to encourage local shopping through a voucher system, which will result in the curtailment of unnecessary journeys to larger towns. You also hope to publicise the 'grow your own' community allotment project.

Although you discuss the recycling centre and the car park bottle bank in the Tidiness and Litter Control category we are also referring to them here. Free access to a recycling centre was provided for bulky household rubbish as part of clean up week.

The recycling centre at Lisdeen is available to the public.

Well done on your Ecar parking space beside the sensory garden.

Under project 1.8 in relation to Community Involvement and Planning you clearly state your best practice with regard to sustainable waste and resource management in your own 'patch' as a Tidy Towns group.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

The number of projects under this category heading which you list is impressive -and you refer to them as 'the main highlights' – so obviously there were others. It is very important to retain and repair existing stone walls which are important to the area. You have been doing this on the Kildysart Road. On adjudication day we noted that parts of the wall along the Kildysart/Vandefleur estate boundary were still awaiting repair and fenced. You also show a photograph of the repair to the wall opposite the Gaelscoil.

The FÁS workers work in conjunction with yourselves and the local authority on improvement works and maintenance works. The new ride-on lawn mower and strimmers will facilitate this work. The area around the bring banks has been painted during the months of April and May this year. Broken timber barrels have been replaced with new ones at the Maid of Eireann monument. Other barrels have been replaced at the seafront at Cappa. A replacement vent pipe has been organised for the Ennis Road at Whelan's garage. We are delighted to see that you have the Town Engineer on your side in relation to such issues. Such a project is an attention to detail which we note. Despite the fact that you have contributed to the sprayer to tackle the weed/grass problem - as already stated - we would encourage you to consider nonchemical methods of weed control. You have tried your best with the old convent issue in cleaning and tidying the garden. There is a very rundown entrance to the Mercy Convent. This building and its curtilage is a problem for you with its broken windows, and, despite your best efforts it still has overgrown curtilage. At a minimum the gate should be painted and the signage rationalised at the entrance. Can you fill us in on the existing situation here and let us know how you are approaching the owners in relation to a remedial programme. You can only try, but we would like to hear how you are trying. It is an issue under various category headings.

Wooden seating at Francis Street / Supervalu has been replaced in a style similar to the damaged seating.

Around the approach to the marina a few items need attention. These include improvement of the rough road surface, the painting of some bollards, and the removal of a rusty cylindrical item near the marina building. A galvanised roof to a shed on the right-hand side as one enters the marina would benefit from painting. This is not however on the marina site. Some rusty posts at the marina gate would benefit from upgrading. However, we noted a major planning application for the Marina on the entrance gate. We trust that this overall development, if permitted and it develops, will include a total revamping of this area.

On the road connecting the Marina to the Shanakyle Road, a rather derelict area with weedy gravel and a water pump was noted – although the adjacent grass was neatly cut. The weedy gravelled area extended along the road opposite the modern apartments and a seemingly disused piece of machinery/trailer was parked off-road on the gravelled surface. A littered lane in this general vicinity looked poorly (off Shanakyle Road). Concrete post and wire fencing on the seaside of this road needs repair, and trimming of nettles along the roadside boundary is necessary, although outside the boundary the road edge was presentable.

In a car park behind the Supervalu premises we observed two containers. One container was rusty. There were also some loose concrete blocks in a pile in the corner of this space. However the car park was nicely landscaped.

A few remaining poster (election?) ties on a pole outside the Catholic Church were noted.

The West Clare Railway information board and the Quays/Marina information board near the Marina entrance could do with cleaning/upgrading. Three flagpoles at the entrance to the Marina had no flags attached on adjudication day. At the Market Square, in front of the Market house there were also some flag-less flagpoles. This is a pity.

You have promoted spring clean ups and beach cleanups during the Spring Clean event. With regard to litter control you have carried out several litter events this year. But unfortunately we have to say that despite your best intentions and hard work the results have been less than satisfactory. This is an area where you are going to have to garner every possible scrap of cooperation that you can from the residents of Kilrush, because it would appear that the issue of litter is holding you back in your quest for perfection. It is also holding you back in your progress in this competition. You need the cooperation of every inhabitant. We are delighted to see that you have gone to the trouble of carrying out a case study in March which highlights those areas needing most attention. Well done to the committee members who carried out this survey.

On the Kildysart approach – which was the adjudicator's point-of-entry to the town in the vicinity of the 50 K pH and at the Wilson Road estate junction we noted a few pieces of litter. Beyond this point there is a nice sweep of road into the town, but we were very disappointed with the amount of litter we saw on this approach. There was an absolute 'necklace' of litter along St. Senan's Terrace frontage. As one enters the town along Grace Street and Crawford Street further litter was noted.

There was also a small scattering of litter at the northern end of The Square on adjudication day.

You list cleanups which you undertook on various dates in April and March including coastal cleanups. Your photographs of the cleanup at the beach and town area areas showed just what an amount of rubbish you dealt with.

A littered lane off Shanakyle Road looked poorly.

In the John Paul estate an amount of litter was noted.

In the estate on Pella Road there were a few pieces of litter.

We appreciate the fact that you probably did clean up the lane at the rear (North side) of O' Gorman Street, but its effect had certainly ceased by adjudication day. It was very littered at its Pound Street end.

You are aware that you have current black spots. The 'Sparkle in Kilrush' clean-up every Wednesday which started in April 2014 would appear to be inadequate in relation to the problems which you have. The litter warden cannot alone cover all areas every day. In many successful centres in this competition there is a daily litter pick during the summer months. We think you are going to have to think along these lines – at least until such time as people begin to respect the environment and stop littering. That is not to say that all the litter is created by way of the local inhabitants, as there is a fair chance that visitors contribute. The major cleanup of all residential areas during the last week in May did not last until the adjudicator's visit in June in relation to litter. In some areas, no doubt, all aspects of the cleanup were successful. We acknowledge the major cleanup by staff and management of Supervalu. Well done to them both for taking a lead. Hopefully the good example of the schoolchildren will have effect.

We look forward to hearing more about the cigarette litter minimisation project. The idea of the 'stubby bags' is a novel one. We hope that they are fireproof!

You say that since the redesign of the car park bottle bank the serious in evidence of fly tipping has markedly decreased. Certainly the area was not littered on adjudication day. We liked your upgrading paintwork and the 'porthole' idea of recycle bins.

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

We congratulate you on the amount of work which has been carried out at the John Paul estate. This work extended to house renewal, house repair, painting, new internal roads, new green area, and new entrances. The cost of this enhancement plan ran to several million euros. We hope that the residents appreciate the work and finance that has gone into bettering their environment. The residents of the John Paul estate have set up a special task force to maintain their area and a pilot paint scheme has been launched in the same estate. We noted some particularly well presented houses in the estate. The green area was well maintained. However an amount of litter was noted within the estate and the community centre itself looked somewhat poorly. Evidence of weed killer was noted especially on the approach to the community centre. Please refer to our comments under the Wildlife section. However we admired the shrub planting near the community centre itself. There were a few unattended gardens in the inner section of the estate. A boarded-up house detracted from some lovely gardens. A garden named O' Gorman's and an adjacent garden was admired. A weedy lane opposite these gardens detracted from their perfection. It would appear that the flowers had not yet been planted or had not sprouted or had failed in the flower bed? The grotto area nearby has been cleaned and painted. We think that the grotto location may be slightly incorrect on your map. However we had no problem finding it.

Island view state/Radharc An Oileáin boulder name sign looked well and the rock plants and shrubs are very effective here. The road to this estate rises up from the Shanakyle Road. Again we found some litter inside the hedging at the open space. An Sean Chill sign was admired.

On the railway cottage road cul-de-sac a large shed for letting has very poor surrounds and also requires repainting of its paintwork and roof. Its fencing also needs attention. Railway Cottage looked well. The Irish Whale Watch and Dolphin group premises could do with repainting, and a nearby derelict house would also benefit from repainting.

Estuary View Point estate has some dead trees and weeds in its open space. The road in this estate is very unfinished and we noted big containers behind security fencing at the top of the estate. These might be removed or screened. A large 'danger deep excavation' sign exists at the top of the estate. It is obvious that this is an unfinished estate. In the existing estate we noted parking on-footpaths which is both untidy, obstructive to footpath users, and damaging to the footpaths themselves. The approach to this estate badly needs trimming and road surfacing. . Painting took place on Island View housing estate and on O' Dea's Road. As a result of the completion of these works you can now, you say, concentrate on derelict houses in St Mellon's Terrace and elsewhere.

The estate on Pella Road fronts onto a wide road and is well presented generally, although one or two boundary walls need attention, and one house appear to be derelict. Painting is required on a few houses and there were a few pieces of litter. We noted two abandoned houses/gardens on the corner of Pella Road and Pound Street. A few boundary walls in this general area need attention. We noted some litter along the front of the Wilson estate road as we approached Kilrush also.

As already mentioned - we appreciate the fact that you probably did clean up the lane at the rear (North side) of O' Gorman Street, but its effect had certainly ceased by adjudication day it was very littered at its Pound Street end. And there was much evidence of weed killing along the hedge edges. Its surfaces are also poor. 45/52 houses agreeing with your request for urgent redecoration is an excellent success rate. We recognise your slight frustration in your description of the promotion of the improvement of boundary walls. You say the response is 'not hectic'. Well done to the local painter who was willing to give his time to this work. We are sure that the Kilrush Tidy Towns prize-giving ceremony on a different environmental theme each year is a great incentive and also a good PR event.

Wilson Road estate appears only to have its name listed on a particular house. The estate name needs to be signed on the Kildysart Road, so that it is visible for people looking for the estate travelling along that road. The outer part of the Wilson road estate faces a lovely stone wall of the Vandefleur estate.

Dooneen Park has a nice bilingual stone name sign. The estate is well presented. The entrance is a sweeping entrance with stone beds and nice flowers.

Shannon Heights is a well manicured estate. Cappa Cove estate was well presented

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

On the Miltown Malbay approach road in the vicinity of the 50 K pH speed limit sign there is an ESB site with 'raw' security fencing, and we also noted rough concrete post and wire fencing in this area. This looked poorly as one approaches the town. An overgrown gate and broken wall immediately adjoins the 50 K pH speed limit sign on the left-hand side. Some verge trimming would be effective along this approach. At a site which appears to be a waterworks site - security fencing again looked crude. Disturbed earth at this point needs replanting. Security fencing always benefits from screening/planting to soften its effect. It is also preferable that such fencing be painted, rather than left as raw metal. A nice roadside gravelled bed was admired. On this approach we also noted a large West Clare Horse Show advertising sign and a 'Tullabrack' Credit Union sign - facing traffic leaving Kilrush. There was evidence of chemical weed killing along this approach to the town. Please see our comments in this regard under Wildlife Habitats and Natural Amenities category. The Teagasc site was very well presented. The Kerry Agribusiness splayed entrance was clean with a good dry traditional stone wall. An elongated green area on the left-hand side was well trimmed, but we noticed two redundant road sign poles at the Miltown Malbay side of Kilrush Bus Park. The Kilrush town black and white sign is simple and cleanly presented. Could it be amalgamated with the blue and white parking disc sign in order to reduce signage occurrence? We noticed some fly posting outside a bollard at the town end of the elongated green. Opposite this we noted a very weedy entrance to green security gates. There were several sandwich boards/small billboard signs outside a furniture store property boundary. A blue wall at the furniture store (inside the access splay) needs repainting. The site has in fact a good road side stone wall which was compromised visually by these other issues. Kilrush Business Park was well presented except for a rusty yellow/black security barrier and the need for a repainting of the road markings/signs on the access splay surface.

A lot of signing around Shannon Doc obscured a new Wild Atlantic Way sign.

The Shannon Doc Complex was well landscaped, but the entrance to the site was poor. The school on the left-hand side appeared to have no name attached and was not flying a Green Flag. The wall at the Fever Hospital and its capping need repainting. At the West Clare Adult Education we admired the nice Irish sign over the door.

On the Kildysart approach there are good stone walls, many trees and well trimmed verges. Again a simple Kilrush town sign was admired at the 50 K pH speed limit sign. In the vicinity of the 50 K pH and - at the Wilson Road estate junction - we noted a few pieces of litter. A sign for road R 473 was obscured by tree growth and a sign for Killimer/Kildysart and Town Centre was faded - the letters K I L L I being missing from Killimer and the C being missing from Town Centre. As already commented we noted that part of the stone walls bounding the Vandefleur estate are still awaiting repair. We understand however that this is a work in progress. Beyond this point there is a nice sweep of road into the town, but we were very disappointed with the amount of litter we saw on this approach. The Boxing Club site is very rundown, as is the parking area beside. There was an absolute 'necklace' of litter along St Senan's Terrace frontage. A boarded-up house and overgrown gardens together with some boundary walls needing paint at



this point, and provide a poor final entrance to Kilrush. As one enters the town along Grace Street and Crawford Street further litter was noted.

On The Ennis Road approach we noted a derelict property opposite Topaz. Shutters on an old post office(?) looked poorly (opposite Aldi) and 'defensive'. This approach has leafy and clean paths. Could the various signs be amalgamated - for instance the Farmers' Market sign, the parking name sign (green and white) and the Tidy Towns gold-medal sign? We noticed one road side pole which requires paint. The Horse Show advertising hoarding - and another hoarding for the furniture store on the Miltown Malbay approach - 'appeared' again on this approach. Tesco and Aldi landscaping are both very good. A poor barrier close to the Garda Station might be painted/renewed. The Garda station was well presented. The clothes bank nearby has peeling paint and signage.

On Limekiln Road O' Dwyer's was very clean. A cream wall opposite and a rusty gate nearby were not so.

We have already discussed the proposed tourism signage policy and made recommendations on this topic. We note that you have replaced many of the older directional finger post signage. The local authority is also enforcing issues in relation to unauthorised signage. You are upgrading street signs incrementally. We commend you on the condition of your finger posts signing especially in the Marina/Sensory Garden/bridge area. Well done to your local engineer! Well done on the resurfacing of various roads also! The Back Road and Pound Street were resurfaced during this adjudication year, as was the work outside the hospital. Some of the other upgrading and resurfacing which you have mentioned and submitted photographs of appears to have happened during recent but earlier adjudication years.

Although you mention the new footpath and new road completed at Chapel Street we are accrediting it here under the Approach Roads Streets and Lanes category.

The absolutely weed free condition of the roadway leading out of the town across the bridge on Cappa Road is praiseworthy.

The somewhat potholed condition of the private Marina road will, we hope, be addressed in the new development for which we noted a very recent planning application at the entrance to the Marina. Likewise the vast expanse of unsurfaced area behind the Marina building will hopefully be dealt with.

There were too many signs at the Kilkee Road junction. A hoarding advertising ice cream opposite the Nursing Home on the Kilkee road might be removed. Some domestic set back areas are in need of surfacing on this approach.

At Cappa Harbour area one of the upright poles on the older information board (with information about water quality etc.) needs repainting.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

The second adjudicator would concur with earlier comments regarding the application form. Future plans should be contained in a stand alone document while actions (rather than aspirations or exhortations) should be clearly identified under each of the contest headings. There were also a number of projects which referred to the last judging period and unfortunately these cannot be awarded additional points. The extent of wildlife-based activities including awareness raising measures is impressive. However the release of ducks into sensitive ecological areas is not recommended as they may inadvertently introduce disease and/or crossbreed with native birds. Any intervention of this nature should first be approved by National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel. Aside from that however your biodiversity audit and action plan is excellent.

Market Square was looking superb on the day of second adjudication and there is no need to repeat the positive comments made earlier, suffice to say the presentation was excellent. A new looking looped walk frame had yet to be filled with any signage. A dead tree across the road from the post office needs to be replaced but otherwise landscaping works very well here. Heritage signage for the West Clare railway across from the business centre was overgrown and faded. It's an interesting episode in your history so these are worthy of renovation. Considine's Bakery particularly stood out as an exemplar shop in presentation terms. The grounds of the old convent provide a fascinating natural experiment into how nature recolonises is areas abandoned by people, a process known as 'succession' in ecology.

This adjudicator did not experience the litter issues that had occurred previously and the town centre was spotless during second adjudication. This does not negate previous comments but does highlight perhaps that there are problem times that require additional attention. Overall Kilrush is a beautiful town with much to offer the visitor, you are wished every success in your future endeavours.