

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kildare** Ref: **100**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **247**
Category: **E** Date(s): **24/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	44
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	35
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	39
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	21
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	10
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	42
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	26
TOTAL MARK	450	247

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2014 and we note that this is your 11th year to participate. Thank you for the well prepared submission which includes some photographs and a very good map of the area with project locations marked for our attention. This is very helpful but it would be easier if there was an accompanying legend beside the map. The town centre would best be represented on a separate map and we noted that a suitable town centre map is available on the following link <http://www.townmaps.ie/kildare%20map.pdf>. Your committee of eight very active volunteers are deployed into three sub-committees with specific tasks. This shows strong organisation and you also participate in the Pride of Place. You are well organised in regard to fund raising by producing the calendar and the Black Tie Ball and having a Junior Tidy Towns group. We noted with interest the support of the Courts Service as well as Kildare County Council. The range of communications systems used is extensive, including Facebook, community electronic notice board, local radio and posters. We encourage communities to prepare a 3 year plan by identifying suitable projects under the eight criteria of the competition and then deciding on phasing of their implementation.

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

Kildare is a very historical town, a fact which strikes visitors when they see the round tower. Kildare Tourist Office occupies an important position in the town and is a great use for an old heritage building. You are affected by the recession with a number of closed premises and we note the actions taken by you in decorating such premises and enhancing the streetscape by using windows of closed shops for display material on Kildare's heritage such as Fitzpatrick's, the Roma Grill and the premises on Claregate Street. Well done on this effort and on the 22 actions listed in your application. The Kildare Town Community School is a lovely building set in neat grounds and surrounded by a lovely wall. The nice planting had no weeds to be seen. Graves and the cemetery were well maintained; the wall needs painting and weeds at the wall base should be removed. The Railway Store was in good condition. The well-built playground was much in use and the blue terraced cottages across the road caught our eye.

Mahons and the Colosseus premises were good. The Silken Thomas and the Round Tower House looked well and had nice hanging baskets. Some lovely large houses nearby caught our eye; some painted and some covered with Virginian Creeper. The Bank of Ireland is a significant building and it looks well. The two pizza premises need painting and weeds in gutters should be removed. The information signs were of two different types. Congratulations on providing public toilets in the square. They are a rarity in Irish towns. Plant containers were a good standard. The old Horse Trough had weeds. Southwells and Hartes had well-kept premises and we admired the window boxes and the floral display over the door of Hartes. Lidl, Aldi and Tesco stores all looked well and we admired the oak trees outside the car park at Tesco. The white Tus Nua building is in good condition. Top service station and Daybreak shop complex had good planting. The cottage near St. Brigid's Church looked well. We

admired the redevelopment of the square in front of St. Brigid's Church. Paving and bollards looked well and no litter to be seen. St. Brigid's school also looked well; we liked the group of birch trees here and noted the flower boxes on the railings. Congratulations to teachers and pupils on the Green Flag achievement. Gaelscoil was fine. The Railway Station and its car park were litter free. The Church and Cemetery on Green Road looked well and were well landscaped. We wonder if some softening could be achieved for the dominant entrances. Round Tower GFC buildings, grounds and pitch were all in good condition. The Round Tower, the adjacent St. Brigid's Cathedral (Col) and the Verger's House are impressive parts of your heritage and we noted that they are accessible for visitors.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Trees are a feature in the centre of Kildare town; they help to define the square but unfortunately they do not protect the half statue of Lord Edward Fitzgerald from suffering the effect of birds' droppings. Trees also help to frame the cathedral and round tower. We also admired the mature trees at Fairgreen and specimens of lime and chestnut trees near the entrance of Round Tower GFC buildings. Elsewhere, we enjoyed seeing the impact of trees, especially in some residential estates. In planting new trees it is best to use a single species on a road or street for uniformity. Also, it is important to ensure that the base of new trees is maintained free of weeds and grass and also flower beds to ensure early establishment. When trees are established it is important to remove the stakes as the stems can get damaged from the ties or stake. This is also mentioned under residential estates where it is a problem. Guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible which in general is how you have used them in the square as well as window boxes and hanging baskets. The displays at Mahons and Hartes in particular caught our attention. Empty or poorly planted containers are less effective than no plant container and in that regard, it seems as the horse trough in the square may at one time have been planted with flowers, most of which are gone or died. Plant containers require much maintenance and if not done they can look unsightly. In that regard we suggest that the containers at Beech Grove do not enhance this area. We were very impressed with the Geraniums at Fitzpatrick's Garage. The use of permanent planting is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming. Climbing plants can be effectively used to enhance buildings such as we saw on a house in the town centre and they can be used to screen walls. Included in the 11 actions under this heading are roundabouts at the M7 interchange. Both of them were very different and very impressive. The sculptures of horses in wildflowers are very appropriate and very well done. The roundabout at Kildare Village is also appropriate for its setting and is planted to a very high standard.

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

Several actions are listed under this heading including a detailed biodiversity plan which is ongoing at present as is the proposed new walking route through the Curragh Plains. Mapping of invasive species will be an important action and the creation of the heritage monastic garden at Chapel Hill is very interesting. We wish you well with these and other initiatives you have planned. There is a rich natural area surrounding your community and it is important to promote an awareness of its many traits and to map these habitats. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands.

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

This category is becoming more and more important and the available marks are now increased to 50 to highlight the need for communities to address the issues involved in tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. The efforts to lower the carbon footprint by using email and walking to meetings etc. is appropriate. We note the production of a guideline document for greening local business and would be interested in what feedback you received from that initiative. We wish you luck with the proposed composting facility and the planned greening initiative for households. In addition to such actions, there are a number of other measures that your town can take in regard to sustainability. Contact your waste contractors and try to find out what is being thrown away and armed with this information you can start to think about how waste can be reduced. Examine the waste pyramid and note the recycling is only the fourth most preferred option after avoidance, reducing and re-using. One third of our waste is organic in nature, such as grass clippings. You can avoid collecting mown grass by more frequent cutting and using mulching mowers which shred the clippings and facilitate faster decomposition. In regard to water usage, self-watering hanging baskets are a help in reducing the amount of water used and also the task of watering. Other waste minimisation projects might include working with retailers to cut down on packaging, reminding people to re-use shopping bags, discouraging junk mail, encouraging the re-use of water bottles and coffee mugs at school and at work. 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. In some cases, allowing wildflowers to develop is an acceptable alternative. These activities will highlight the fact that you are focussing on this category and when you develop more projects in the future your marks will increase.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The clean-up days are very worthwhile not only in the collection of litter but also in raising awareness. In regard to tidiness, the vacant premises are a big challenge for you and we note your efforts in reducing the impact and turning the negatives into positives. It was sad to see some premises such as Derby House Hotel and Graces that are closed, as well as the empty army complex where railings need painting. Litter was noted across the road from the cemetery in the fence of the car park. On Dunmurray Road, some litter on the road seen at the old pump. There is a redundant pole at army complex. Meadow Road had weeds and litter. The old school was derelict. The town centre had litter and some weeds. Weeds should be removed from gutters on the funeral home. In Shraud Street it

was sad to see what appeared to be brick terraced railway cottages in derelict condition. There was graffiti on the adjacent building. Some graffiti was seen on a sign as we made our exit from the Railway Station. A vacant building was noted beside the Gaelscoil, and on the opposite side, we observed an empty terrace of buildings and an unsightly lane.

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

Houses by roadsides in Kildare were mostly well-kept. Meadow Court estate had a great line of lime trees and we admired the hanging baskets on some houses. Dunmurray estate had some trees which are not thriving. Bishopsland had nice planting at the name stone sign and good specimen trees and nice houses. The litter bin at the entrance would best be positioned to a less conspicuous position. North Glebe estate both had nice houses and good quality trees. The trees in margins were unusually small. Dara Park was fine. Beech Grove estate had a nice entrance sign; some rubbish was lying near it behind a wall. The plant containers were not well maintained and a dead Cordyline tree stem should be removed. Ruanbeg was a high quality estate. We admired the good quality trees and grass maintenance, garden hedges and houses. Deanery modern apartment complex were fine and Whiteabbey Court estate was fine. Loughminane Green estate is entered in the Best maintained Housing estate competition. Some dead and dying trees here need replacement and good luck in the competition. We admired the birch trees on the boundary of the estate with Green Road. White Abbey Lawns had good painted walls in front of nice houses. Ties and stakes need to be checked in North Glebe, Beech Grove and Ruanbeg estates to prevent the tree stems from being damaged.

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

On the Kildare Road link to Curragh, there were dirty signs for the stud farm and Japanese Gardens and the entrance gate and surrounding (seems not used) needs cleaning. The St. Brigid's Cross in hedge format at the junction with the Monastervin Road was appropriate for Kildare and we liked the other planting here. Weeds on the railway bridge at Green road.