

# Tidy Towns Competition 2014

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bennettsbridge** Ref: **997**  
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **255**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **11/06/2014**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2014</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	41
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	36
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	21
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	8
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	26
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>255</b>

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

Time was when Bennettsbridge was invariably placed among the top three centres in the county; the entry apparently stalled for a number of years and returned three years ago to a fairly lowly position which has been rapidly improving to include the Endeavour Award last year. The impetus is palpable when reading your submission: clearly there is now a strong work ethic as well as enthusiasm; proposals are transformed into action and the expertise of knowledgeable residents is made good use of. Those of the committee who were involved in the past will be aware that the competition is now much more community-based than heretofore. Do not expect your increase in marking to be as spectacular as it was last year, which was quite unusual. You have been awarded a considerable increase in marking; committees should not be taken aback by the relationship of totals to last year's in the new system. Your initial 3-Year Development Plan is nearing completion; it is superior to many others in that annual deadlines are set and each project is systematically reviewed – this is no simple wish-list. The creation of sub-committees for fundraising and bio-diversity (and probably further disciplines) will undoubtedly prove to be productive. Your association with other organisations is exemplary and your engagement with the local national school will certainly place you at the centre of things locally. Your fundraising has been particularly successful. The narrative style of your submission makes it perhaps a bit lengthy, though it certainly does make fascinating reading; groups that do particularly well in the competition manage more succinctly. Your maps have been most useful. The answers to the awareness questionnaire are illuminating.

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

The work on the Community Hall has been most impressive. Conservation work on the former Garda Station was, from your description, much needed; in your next submission you might state if there can be a new use for this eccentric and unique building. The Health Centre was looking bright and clean, as indeed it ought. It has been noted that you were also instrumental in the decision to repaint the Eircom facility. The shops and business premises, old and new, are smart and colourful – just what one would wish in a traditional village street. The church and the school were looking well cared for. It is interesting to read that you were responsible for painting the stepping-stones on the bridge and also for general maintenance; this is one of the two most splendid structures inherited from the past in Bennettsbridge, the other being the former flour mill, now the headquarters of the renowned Mosse Pottery.

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

The stone-bordered flower bed on the Kilkenny approach creates a colourful sense of welcome. Attractive small areas of planting were noted such as the Ladies' Club lawn and the entrance to Woodlawn. It is good to find imaginative attention given to choice of colours throughout the village. Your tree-planting programme is particularly praiseworthy, with native species placed at salient points, as shown on the maps. Congratulations too for winning 30

young trees in the Ikea competition. Many trees planted several years ago have come into their own. On the Kilkenny road young horse-chestnuts need more space as growth is inhibited by the dense background hedge, which should be cut back; some of the older horse-chestnuts between the bridge and the mill need attention, and replacement where trees have fallen or have been removed in the past. The grotto is well cared for. The children's playground is bright and clean. It is worth mentioning that ideally planters and floral pots are preferred on gravel or hard base rather than on grass where they tend to damage the sward.

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

The Flynn-Furney Environmental Heritage and Tourist Training report is most absorbing. It is interesting to read that after the river valley the roadsides are the best wildlife area. You may be taking advice in devising a walking route, apart from the now well established riverside route to Kilkenny. Suggestions such as organising a wild-life themed event each year might be taken up. Thank you for enclosing the local agenda for "Developing A Template for Community Biodiversity Survey" and for the précis of what you are doing under this head. The scoping of the Biodiversity Action Plan is similarly impressive. The very fact of your undertaking these studies ensures additional marks in this competition and the result of your consultations with the various expert groups will be looked forward to. In conjunction with your specific studies why not involve one or more school classes in creating inventories of, e.g., the birds they see on their daily round, to involve them in topics which may well be valuable in later life. To return to the less speculative: clover, coltsfoot, celandine, marguerites and all manner of grasses were seen in the wild flower area; the scent on the warm summer day of the visit was tremendous! Good luck for your 'Beat the Balsam' walk.

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

In most towns and villages developments under this heading are centred on the schools, a huge proportion of which now have green flag status. Because most of the appropriate activities are 'invisible' to the adjudicator we depend on your descriptions – thank you for these. It is encouraging to read that you are registered with Green Homes. Your taking on what is now known as 'rainwater harvesting' will prove even more sensible when water charges are introduced. It is very interesting to learn that Mosse's mill is still powered by its own water system and now feeds into the national grid. Composting of grass cuttings is another useful procedure. It is good to read that you held a WEEE recycling collection. Your involvement in clothes recycling is noted and this creates income for the Tidy Towns committee. Because adjudication is anonymous the school grounds were not entered to observe the vegetable garden – it is handy to know that it is organised by the Parents' Association and yourselves. Well done to the children, their teachers and parents, for taking part in the Cycle to School Week; it would be interesting to learn what proportion continued to cycle. A bring centre was noted at the GAA.

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

Last year's adjudicator mentioned artificial flowers and none were seen this year; poles and outdated signs were also gone. Kerbside weed was not in evidence. It was very good to read that the owner of the commercial premises on the west side of the bridge generously erected gates to screen the yard. The west side is still less well favoured than the east, for the prominent riverside field next to the mill is extraordinarily weedy and its post-and-wire fencing leaves much to be desired. Some of the shrubs doing their duty concealing the block wall at the GAA need replacement. (Generally, do avoid unplastered cement block walls, simply because they look ugly, and post-and-wire fencing because it is short-lived and attracts litter; stone walls, timber fencing, or hedging in native species, should be preferred, depending on the budget available.) Remains of the trees uprooted in the winter storms that you describe were not seen but were used for firewood, as you report. It is noted that the Committee was responsible for painting the prominent derelict house - well done again! As to litter control, it is noted that you are fortunate in having a Tus worker to undertake daily litter picks. You mention that voluntary helpers, including Scouts and Beavers, also undertake twice-weekly litter picks and this is worthy of the highest commendation for it is an unenviable task when there are so many creative activities that would be preferable. Is it possible to discover the sources of littering and, ultimately, to stop it at source? In some urban areas well publicized prosecutions have helped.

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

There are few residential homes on the main street now mainly because people prefer to be away from traffic and in safe areas where families can thrive – it was noted, however, that older homes that are occupied are kept with pride; a very fine creeper-covered house was observed on the west side of the bridge. Many individual suburban homes on the outskirts, particularly on the Station Road and the Thomastown Road, have attractive front gardens. Houses in the Bull Ring, with their genuine art-deco motifs, are surprising survivors from the mid 20c. Some boundary walls here, and also in other estates, do not match the well maintained exteriors of their respective houses. Tree planting in so many suburban developments was viewed with pleasure. At Hillview the section where there is conspicuous tree planting seems is more visually appealing than where there is less. Good luck to the entries in the Best Village Garden competition.

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

The most impressive approach is from Thomastown because of the wide trim verges and well kept hedging but the Kilkenny approach is also attractively maintained and because of the appearance of the bridge is visually exciting. The black and white kerbs on the Station and Thomastown roads make for neatness as well as safety. The village pump is looking smarter than it probably ever was in the past. Seating throughout the village is of good quality. The surface of the main street is surprisingly poor. Parking should not be allowed here because of the constant through

traffic. The car parks at the church and the school could hardly be better; the car park at the pottery leaves much to be desired. A recently gravelled lane was favourably noticed near the school and it was pleasant to find connecting paths between the housing developments above the village. Traffic calming measures, particularly near the playground, were noted.