

# Tidy Towns Competition 2013

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilkenny** Ref: **398**  
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **313**  
Category: **G** Date(s): **16/06/2013**  
**22/07/2013**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2012</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2013</b>
Overall Development Approach	50	48	49
The Built Environment	50	44	44
Landscaping	50	44	45
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	33	33
Litter Control	50	33	34
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	13	13
Tidiness	30	17	17
Residential Areas	40	30	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	38	39
General Impression	10	9	9
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>313</b>

### Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator welcomes Kilkenny City to the 2013 National SuperValu Tidy Towns competition and thank you for this years submission. You have reacted well to the last adjudicators comments with regard to the suitability of material included with your previous competition entries. This year the submission was a joy to read, clearly laid out, with works done as part of this year's entry clearly marked. Your maps, at a city centre and wider environs scale, were so easy to use on adjudication day and the suggested walking route was followed with a few detours. This new format can be seen as a template for larger towns in the competition and we hope you share the success of this method with other large centres. Your structured approach to the competition has meant that you have addressed and are developing projects in all categories of the competition and your subcommittee structure is also working well with particular emphasis on biodiversity and tidiness. In particular you seem to be successful in liaising with the 70-80 active residents associations in the city. This is great to see and gives you and the competition a real link to the town's local residents both for support and to advertise your projects. With your planned projects to include a new quarter of the city we only look forward to seeing your city develop over the coming years under your considered management.

### The Built Environment:

This was the adjudicator's first visit to the city in a decade and the works that have been done to present your heritage and built environment in its best light were evident. The magnificent urban space that has been created at the Castle environs is of international design quality and was beautifully detailed and more importantly well maintained. Another interesting element of your city core is how important the alleys and slips are in providing pedestrian friendly access throughout the city, with the pedestrian being able to avoid the worst of city traffic. However the maze of alley's can be confusing to the visitor and we wondered if there are plans to roll out the new city street signage to cover these areas. Small discreet wall mounted signs at key decision points would be appreciated. The new flowers beds and intricate cobble paving design at St Canices were very well done and the pedestrian priority streets around the Black Abbey exhibited a lovely example of paving which seems to take its inspiration from the paving detail to the lane leading to the courtyard at Rothe House. The city walls were noted on the stroll around the city and the city wall route marker scheme could be extended to link with the actual standing wall sections still visible at St James Street and Plas Tilbury. It would create a threshold between the commercial and more residential sections of the city here. Good luck with progressing this lovely project. The Kilkenny Court Hotel has a prime spot opposite the Castle walls and while the Hotel is well maintained the fine

Georgian townhouse facing John Street needs attention. It is the focal point of views when walking along the river walk away at Johns Quay and its paintwork and gutters need attention before any further decline sets in. We wish you luck with the development of the riverbank city quarter, the renewal of street surface at High Street, the Green Bridge replacement and your new pedestrian and cycle bridge. All major pieces of infrastructure for the town, whose success will depend on quality detailing and design. It was interesting to note that a new urban garden is being planned along the river banks. Try to insist that the highest standard of urban sustainable drainage are implemented given the Nore rivers history of flooding.

### **Landscaping:**

A bulb planted for every citizen is a great achievement and shows how well you are harnessing local sponsorship in a practical manner. For next year include photographs of the spring displays. The new planter beds at St Canices exhibited a mix of annuals and shrubs for year round interest. There is still an emphasis on annuals for colour and in some spots this strategy could possibly be altered to allow perennials to make an impact. For example the riverside bed by St Johns Bridge, seen when visiting your new military memorial, was filled with rigid rows of red begonias. Could a more naturalistic display be installed here to reflect its riverside setting? We wondered did the fringe of purple and pink annuals draw attention to the stone clad substation here. The simple palette of hornbeam trees, well maintained grass verges and low hedges to separate the pedestrian from the adjacent road at the riverside walk by the Carnegie Library was admired. Ensure the breakthrough for the new bridge here respects this landscape setting. Due to the narrow medieval streets it occurred to us that opportunities for street tree planting in the city are limited. Could more trees be planted to the newly restored open space at James Green? Have you considered doing a Kilkenny City audit of street trees and this could be used to develop an urban forestry strategy for the city, taking in the city and suburban areas? So identifying possibilities for future tree planting sites. Could you aim for a tree for every citizen like your bulb scheme? Well done to the pupils of St Johns Junior School in adding to the cities stock of trees.

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

What struck the adjudicator was how many of your initiatives in this category involve the younger residents of Kilkenny. We admired the innovative approach taken by the CBS transition year pupils in their exploring website and the wildlife detective's programme seems to have been a success for you. The rivers in the city are such an important habitat and we noted the lillies and iris flourishing by the banks of the river. As well as the Nore the visitor gets glimpses of the river network at Friars Bridge and perhaps in spots such as these, river habitat information could be discreetly posted. The works proposed to manage St Mauls graveyard as an example of best practice in graveyard maintenance will be followed with interest. Standards set here can be followed in the graveyard of St Marys, viewed from St Marys Lane, a real green and wildlife oasis in the built up city areas.

### **Litter Control:**

Well done on your black and amber bag scheme carried out in conjunction with Keep Kilkenny Beautiful which seems to have been a success for you. These kinds of high profile events together with your innovative paving stones are a great way to get the anti litter message across. The adjudication visit took place on a Sunday morning, and given Kilkenny's lively nightlife there was hardly a speck of litter to be found on the streets. The efforts involved to clear up the city are not underestimated and we are sure the standard here is due in no small amount to the work put in by your new subcommittee. Again your younger residents are taking part in the works here and the junior litter patrols at Newpark are to be applauded for all the hard work they have undertaken. Have you considered doing an audit of the number and position of bins in the city? For example at the base of the arch and steps to St Canices two bins are placed almost side by side. Is this necessary in this high profile spot? Can one be removed?

### **Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:**

You have included a number of practical projects in this category so keep up your endeavours here. The black smartly presented Keep Kilkenny Beautiful unit at John Street is very visible at the gateway to the city centre. Your schools participation in the Green Schools programme seems to have been a great success with two schools close to getting all 6 flags. Well done to all students and staff for the commitment shown. Have you had any thoughts about promoting the Green Homes programme also run by An Taisce. This could be promoted through your excellent network of residents committees and this would be a great way to progress the success of green ideals in the town. Maybe look into this for next year's submission?

### **Tidiness:**

For a town the size of Kilkenny you have been successful in presenting a very tidy impression to the visitor. In spite of your graffiti removal scheme some graffiti was still noted in the back lane areas. As you know best practice is to ensure that graffiti is removed as soon as practicable. When graffiti is allowed to remain, it invites yet more graffiti and may lead to an increase in vandalism and other criminal activity. With the introduction of your new signage scheme ensure there is not a duplication of signage. Again at the base of the steps to St Canices a new monolith has been placed side by side with your old tourist information sign. It causes unnecessary clutter and the old sign should be removed. In terms of signage the neatly painted black and white parking signs seems to be everywhere in the city. Can they be reduced somewhat as they tend to clutter up some of your lovely set piece areas. For example at your new scheme at Johns Green no fewer than 14 parking / taxi and loading signs were noted. Far more poles than street trees unfortunately. The removal of the hoarding at the old mart sign is a good step and the hoarding at McDonagh Junction should be similarly addressed as it is

beginning to fail with age.

### **Residential Areas:**

Well done to all the resident associations on the hard work they carry out over the year and we wish them every success in the annual tidy estates competition. This type of competition is a great way to keep the momentum going; healthy competition is always a good way to get residents motivated! We will look out for the KKB plaques at the entrance to estates for next year's visit. The composting initiative for apartment blocks is great to see and we hope this is successful, as it is an idea that can be rolled out in built up areas across the county. How about starting a pilot herb garden project in one of the apartments communal areas. Sage, Rosemary and Chives could be planted to provide free herbs for apartment dwellers with no access to ground level outside space.

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

The use of perennials at your roundabouts is a great idea and we hope it is successful and can be rolled out across the city and wider to county roundabouts. The vibrant perennials already create an impact at the small roundabout at the McDonagh Junction development. By comparison the single species annual planted approach as seen at the Callan Road Roundabout, although beautifully maintained, looks a little dated. The riverside footpath network is a great asset to the residents of the city and all parts walked during the visit were well maintained with life buoys all present and your new dog bag dispensers noted along the route. Verge works were being completed on the Callan Road and your new city signs create a consistent gateway to the town on all routes travelled by the adjudicator. The works to the High street were being commenced with poor surfacing evident and we look forward to seeing this progressed for next year's visit as part of your medieval mile project.

### **General Impression:**

After a busy weekend the city was beautifully presented for this adjudicators visit. A number of ambitious projects are being planned for the city which will only improve its setting for residents and visitors alike. This commitment to constantly improving your city is commended and we look forward to these developments being completed over the coming years. We thank all of the numerous stakeholders involved in the works which make up this year's submission and continued good luck for all your planned work in 2014.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

Kilkenny is not unique in Ireland as an inland city with a distinguished history going back to earliest Christian times, but it is unique as the one which takes a palpable pride in these traditions, respecting the past but at the same time advancing as a vibrant modern city in the European context. It is a pleasure to witness progress and enhancement year on year. It is not the second adjudicator's rôle to give a repetition of the first's comments in a different form but rather to underline and emphasise details that immediately catch the eye during the day's visit and to provide, if possible, a summation of such details. Most of these impressed; a very few caused concern. The concerns first – planning blight is one: the 'ring road' (it is still not a ring but a crescent) and its feeder roads are expected to pass by way of Kilcrene where there are tracts of undeveloped land with broken walls, ill-cambered roads, abandoned petrol pumps, meadows sustaining more thistle than grass and a general sense of neglect. Litter control, so brilliantly organised in almost all areas did not seem to extend to some of the interconnecting estates to the north-east of Hebron road where litter was all too visible on the splendid open lawns and even in front of houses. The motto 'look after your own front door' would be applicable here; litter is a variable day by day and credit is duly given for the much greater areas of the city where control was first class. A single bin is all that is needed at the imaginative revetement weir project on the east bank of the Nore. The Junior Litter Wardens scheme is much admired. Mention was made by the first adjudicator of a prominent building needing attention: another is a three-gable cement structure on the sensitive corner of Coach Road and Dean Street. Many developments, great and small, impressed enormously. Among them the floral decorations, judiciously selected by variety and colour whether in beds, on roundabouts, in parks, in tubs and troughs, each planting appropriate to its particular location. The parks themselves, ranging from the formal rose garden and Castle Park to small spaces of urban planting and lengthy riverside walks, are superbly designed and maintained. The New Park nature reserve was much admired both for the concept and the sensitive way it is managed. The St Mary's peregrine falcon project, which we would not know about but for your excellently descriptive submission, is applauded, as is the solitary bee project. (The St Maul's Graveyard biodiversity project was not seen because it was closed on the date of the visit.) Heartiest congratulations to no less than 13 schools and colleges for their green flag status, some having achieved up to five flags. The Kilkenny College robot, recycled from electronic equipment, was well worth the search: this project is an imaginative (indeed artistic!) triumph in itself but also valuable for the visual publicity it can gain in the cause of sustainable resource and waste management. A precinct of real charm is the enclosure surrounding St Kenny's Well, an ageless space for quiet contemplation. This adjudicator was greatly taken by a number of small to medium-sized successes in the urban renewal category, among them the markers of the old city wall, the restoration of the traditional swimming place on the Nore, the repaving and improvements to Bateman's Quay and the paving, lighting and provision of handsome street furniture in lanes and side streets. Especially admired were the reinstatement of John's Green and, best of all, the refurbishment of St James' Green in this important residential and religious neighbourhood. Kilkenny is rich in streets and lanes of modest houses and cottages: these provide for its sense of personal character in the way that the great churches, abbeys, Castle and Tholsel provide for its public character and fame. Perhaps when you are planning for the new urban centre at St Francis' Abbey you might consider a mural in, say, ceramic or mosaic giving the chronology of the city's development – for example St Canice's foundation, the Norman Supremacy, the Statutes of Kilkenny, the Confederation, the Kyteler incident, the arrival of the Railway, the GAA, etc, etc. It is good to find so much traditional housing in the

city centre and also that city-centre apartments have now become a significant part of the residential scene rather than concentrating all new building in remote suburbs. The suburbs are well looked after, both by residents as a matter of domestic pride and by the authorities in terms of roads and facilities, ranging from the chic Talbot's Inch to the spacious developments of The Wier, Ardilea and Duke's Meadow. It was very good to see mid 20th century housing developments in the neighbourhood of Stephen Street in the west and also Assumption Place in the east have been kept up so well – not often the case in many cities. Every good wish for your continuing success in all categories.