

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilkenny** Ref: **398**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **330**
Category: **H** Date(s): **24/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	54	55
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	46	46
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	47	47
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	36	37
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	17	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40	41
TOTAL MARK	450	325	330

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

We would like to welcome 'Keep Kilkenny Beautiful' (KKB) back to the Supervalu Tidy Towns competition 2017. It is always a pleasure to visit your beautiful city, where you continue to make welcome improvements. Kilkenny is at the top level in this competition – congratulations on your achievements to date. The city centre was buzzing with happy tourists – we note that this is a crucial industry for you. Yours is a large spread-out centre to adjudicate so many thanks for your helpful maps with new work clearly highlighted. The colour-coded entry was well laid out with clear timeframes, making the job at hand easier. You clearly explain how community involvement works in your city environment through you links with various community groups, clubs schools and residential areas. You see the importance of getting young people involved from the beginning, whether it is through their club or their own housing estate. It is not surprise that the local business community are so supportive of your efforts – a clean and welcoming city will bring more visitors into Kilkenny. KKB efforts are strongly supported by Kilkenny County Council and your local Tus/CES scheme. Your KKB annual awards are a fitting way to motivate all sectors of the community and acknowledge their efforts at the end of the year. We note also that the new LECP (Local, Economic & Community Plan 2016 – 2021) has recently been launched. The importance of Tidy Towns as co-ordinating group is clearly recognised in this. Don't forget to submit a copy of your own Tidy Towns 3 Year Plan. You use a wide range of channels to keep the community 'on message'. These include regular appearance on local radio and in local press, emails, text, website and social media. Keep up the excellent work!

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

Kilkenny has a unique built heritage that you are doing your best to preserve. Some carefully considered painting jobs have been carried out along Kilkenny's main Streets. Many of the shopfronts along the main streets are sympathetic to the traditional character of your attractive streetscape. Your Annual KKB Awards encourage proprietors to put their best foot forward. A simple paint job can make such a difference in making the street inviting and attractive. You are exerting influence regarding appropriate signage, in conjunction with Kilkenny Co Co and your recently conducted conservation survey. We observed the repaired and repainted dome at the lovely Carnegie Library. We were delighted to see the Tailor's House being refurbished. The Parade Bar is eye-catching for its simplicity. Impressive Bank premises enhance the overall streetscape as does the elegant Hibernian Hotel. We admired the quaint tourist office. The Citizens Information is another impressive building; however the areas around the windows would benefit from cleaning. The sign at the former Kilkenny Reporter office should be cleaned due to the fact that it is an area of high tourist footfall. We note that Dore's was getting a makeover in advance of a new tenant – hopefully the upper storey here will be painted for next year. Some but not all of the buildings that caught the eye this year included Willoughby's, Finishing Touches, Daniel Bollard's, Lenehan's pub, Kilkenny Book Centre and B MacEaney Pharmacy where the original sash windows were admired. It is important to pay attention to upper storeys as well as the shopfront itself. For example

the Vodafone shop is nicely presented but the weeds on upper window ledges detracts from the overall appearance. Another example of this is Paris Texas, where the upper storey is of a poor standard.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Kilkenny is setting a high standard in this category and this is reflected in your marks. We especially admired the pollinator-friendly planting on approach roads Your landscaping is used to define boundaries, welcome visitors to the city and 'bring back' otherwise forgotten areas. Yet it is restrained and doesn't detract from your historic architecture and natural amenities. You now plant mostly perennials, which is an advantage in terms of attractive wildlife, less maintenance and less use of water resources. Formal planting is appropriately used to highlight features around the city centre. You continue to plant spring bulbs and native trees – a wonderful investment for the next Kilkenny generation! Much of this is done in conjunction with your enthusiastic residents groups. Your 'Winter Colour' competition is commended. At Ballsbridge road, we saw the new timber perimeter to deter damage by cars as well as fruit bushes and hedging. We were most impressed by the planting scheme at and adjacent to Aldi. This is the best supermarket planting scheme we personally have seen. Even McDonalds has cheerful yellow planting to soften the visual appearance. We couldn't visit Kilkenny without a stroll through the beautifully maintained Castle Park. Here we admired both 'fields' of ox-eye daisies. Compliments to those who tend to the flowers, greens and shrubs at Bateman's Quay – a lovely linear stretch where one can get away from the hustle and bustle of city streets. We were particularly impressed with the flower bed inside the river wall. Beds and planters at the library area blend in well with this special building. Landscaping under and around the new bridge is welcoming and keeping ongoing maintenance in mind. The newly established Peace Park is still coming into its own and is less manicured than previous areas. New tree planting blends in here. The bed at the entrance near the bridge is superb. Picnic area and lighting in excellent order. On Dean St, we noted the attractive landscaping either side of Applegreen, at base of St Canice's steps as well as the linear bed in front of Paddy Powers. We were pleasantly surprised at the standard of landscaping at some city car parks including the lovely rose bed at St. Canice's car park and stone flower beds at Cathedral Square car park. There is a lovely blend of trees, shrubs and formal planting at Black Abbey Square. The lovely rose bed at the entrance to the Tennis club was admired. Hanging baskets throughout city centre streets are in good proportion and beautifully maintained. The floral display at McDonagh Junction is impressive. We like the contrast of the steel planters against the stone seats at the Nore walkway.

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

You are leading the way in this category, which is not surprising as you are so proactive in your approach. We note that you have a biodiversity sub-committee to focus on this category. Kilkenny has a rich natural environment due to its positioning on the River Nore. The variety of habitats within and around the city means that the area is rich in wildlife. You are ensuring that all relevant bodies are up to speed on the National Pollinator Plan and implementing its actions. Ongoing work in this regard at Rothe House is commended. At other parts of the city pollinator-friendly planting has been added and mowing regimes altered in order to encourage our bees. We are delighted to note that a study is being carried out at the River Breagagh in terms of habitats and species. Well done to all involved in the recent removal of Himalayan Balsam from the river area, particularly to the local fishing club. Your ongoing vigilance and communication regarding Japanese Knotweed Giant Hog Weed is crucial to its eradication. You continue to conduct surveys and raise awareness of local birdlife, in conjunction with groups such as Bird watch Ireland. Recently held talks are a good example of this as are your ongoing swift surveys. Kilkenny is blessed with the number of natural amenity areas for walks and recreation – these include the Castle Park, Dukes Meadows, Newpark Fen among others. We are impressed with your ongoing wildlife monitoring and awareness of changing trends. Well done to the sub-aqua and canoe clubs for their valuable assistance with annual river cleaning. We enjoyed a walk through the beautiful Rothe House gardens to admire the orchard, vegetables and wild flowers. Keep up the good work.

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

You have an impressive number of new initiatives under this heading along with ongoing review of existing ones. The concept of Community Gardening is alive and well in Kilkenny – it ticks so many boxes in terms of efficient use of resources. For some of your projects it is an important social outlet. It is encouraging to hear that some of the produce is used by local restaurants, thereby completing the circle! Strong focus on creative use is evident through initiatives such as the (zero waste) Consuming Project, Remaking of clothing workshops (July & Nov'16) and The Men's Shed members have valuable skills when it comes to Reuse, Repair and Upcycling. Their bike repair workshop in conjunction with Kilkenny VEC is a great example of community groups linking up for mutual benefit. It is great to hear that charity also benefited from some repaired bicycles. The ongoing planting of orchards and annual pressing day is another worthwhile initiative. The Smarter Travel 'park & stride' initiative in schools also gains you kudos under this category. Well done to the Transition Year girls for spearheading the 'Reusable Coffee Cups' project. We have become a very disposable and wasteful society when it comes to coffee drinking so we really hope this project is successful enough to be replicated elsewhere. Do please tell us about the 'Greening' of any of your festivals. Participating in national campaigns such as National Reuse Month (Oct '16) is another useful platform for initiatives such as the launch of Kilkenny's new Repair Directory and distribution of reusable cotton shopping bags. Ongoing upgrade of street and building lighting to more energy efficient LED's is noted as is KKB'S representation at the recently held Master Composter Training Programme. This is an excellent submission – well done to all involved.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We were pleasantly surprised by the stand-out cleanliness of this busy city. This is no easy feat and great credit to

all who work in co-operation to achieve this excellent standard, particularly in a large urban environment. Apart from a couple of pieces of litter on the Nore Riverwalk and at the Peace Park, the streets were litter free! You are engaging a wide variety of local groups in your ongoing litter picks – this is a wonderful example of community participation, strongly supported by Kilkenny County Council. Well done to the students from Colaiste Pobail Osrai for their impressive work during 'Neat Streets'. You are proactive in seeking new people to get involved a play a part in line with your 'Working Together Winning Together' motto. The wide range of awareness-raising initiatives appears to be working - particularly the anti-litter posters with Kenny the mascot and initiatives organised to compliment the Green Schools Programme. Your KKB calling card gives a sense of the human touch. We are delighted to hear that all stakeholders are working together in an organised fashion to implement the Litter Management Plan. Your ongoing liaison with your 25 take away businesses is very worthwhile as this is the type of litter often seen along the approach roads. Bottle banks sites at Lidl, Loughboy Shopping Centre, Newpark Shopping Centre and near Aldi were all in excellent order. There was minor littering at Cathedral Square and (near) St. Canice's car park receptacles. Litter bins were well maintained and in a good state of repair. We noted your comments elsewhere in relation to current review of dog litter bins and provision of biodegradable poo bags. Good anti dog fouling signage and bag dispensers were observed along the Nore river walk. Cigarette butts are an issue outside Lanigan's Hostel so perhaps a discussion with the owners with regard to providing a cigarette disposal unit here? Could the nearby wall at the nearby steps be painted and weeds removed as it looks rather untidy? Attention to weeds in gutters at Colliers Lane is also required (High St entrance).

Kilkenny is performing well in terms of Tidiness also. The costly ongoing undergrounding of cables Patricks St and Ormonde St/Rd is a major boost for the city and will serve to further highlight the attractive streetscape and give an overall tidier appearance – well done to all in persisting with this challenging goal. Tidy up and planting work at the old railway shed is acknowledged. The creation of murals by younger residents is an innovative way of tidying up bland walls while often raising awareness at the same time. The sign at St. Canice's hospital is quite grubby. Perhaps in the longer term plan, a suitable hedge might be considered along this front boundary. The 'velvet lane' sign is becoming obscured by growth so we suggest you either trim back or move the sign slightly.

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

Kilkenny has an attractive mix of period homes, townhouses and modern housing developments. Residences along the main streets and approach roads were, on the whole, well maintained. We admired the gorgeous terraced homes at St. John's Quay. Opposite the new bridge was an attractive row of cottages along wide pavement. We positively note that you include environmentally friendly and wildlife friendly criteria in the judging of your annual estates competition. Such competitions keep the residents motivated and instill a bit of friendly rivalry. Kilkenny Co Co' Tidy Estates look at similar criteria in Local Authority estates. Some estates seem to be lacking names at the entrance.

Involving residents in the management and sustainable use of urban woodland with a view to cutting down on fossil fuels and weedkillers shows a very proactive approach. We look forward to hearing how this project progresses in conjunction with Gallows Hill and Dukes Meadows residents.

The distribution of a quarter ton of daffodil bulbs to residents groups is a lovely gesture that leads to blasts of colour in springtime. Well done for recycling and transplanting bulbs from other areas. Your continued support to residents in setting up or reactivating their residents associations is very worthwhile in the longer run as they will take responsibility for the upkeep of their own areas. We drove in and around numerous residential areas and all were well-maintained, many enhanced with planting at focal areas especially at entrances. Millennium Court has an attractive bed at its entrance; however the entrance road in this and surrounding estates is quite weedy. The Kells Rd contains some good cycle lanes and lovely residential areas such as Deans Court and Rose Hill.

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

We love the Kilkenny Ring Road and the way it is well- maintained but sustainably managed in order to encourage wildflowers and encourage biodiversity. Normally ring roads are so bland but yours is clean, welcoming and beautiful. There was no litter observed there – another pleasant surprise. The roundabouts are beautifully landscaped with clear name signs that assist drivers in finding their bearings. Directional signage from all roundabouts is excellent. The other highlight of our visit must be the new Central Access Bridge (We are relieved to read that it will have a more attractive sounding name soon!) This is a fantastic addition to the city's infrastructure. We must commend the sharp design and wonderful landscaping around it. The segregated pedestrian/cycle route makes passage safe for those on foot or bike. We are quite impressed with the fact that Kilkenny Co Co has a programme for winter, spring and summer colour along various city roads. Well done to those involved in the creation of the mini orchard at Springhill, which once was an area of waste ground. A new cycle way has just been added here. There were a lot of cycle ways and off-road walkways observed on our tour of the city – encouraging people to leave the car and cut down on traffic congestion. Ample bike parking was in evidence. We are glad to see that you are coming up with innovative incentives for businesses to remove off-putting metal shutters – for example your 'Best Evening Shop Display'. The pedestrian bridge is well used and further increases the city's connectivity. All finger posts, street names signs and visitor information panels were in good order. The recently added Ancient East Sculpture nicely frames this vast urban space. The pedestrian-friendly Castle Parade is a busy hub. The various back lanes were a joy to wander around – all clean, clearly identified and adding to the wonderful Kilkenny atmosphere.

Concluding Remarks:

Your committee is well organised and promotes a strong sustainability ethos. You have taken much time to share your experiences and offer other Tidy Towns groups advice. Residents of Kilkenny are obviously proud of where

they live and the reasons why are obvious. This excellent standard isn't achieved without man people working hard behind the scenes. Well done to all, you are doing Kilkenny proud.