

Tidy Towns Competition 2021

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilkenny - Cill Chainnigh** Ref: **398**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **351**
Category: **H** Date(s): **16/08/2021**
04/09/2021

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	58
Streetscape & Public Places	60	50
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	50
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	23
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	41
TOTAL MARK	470	351

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Fáilte Chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu 2021. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn. Go raibh maith agaibh as ucht bhur dtacaíocht le linn na paindéime. Lean leis an dea-obair. Welcome to the 2021 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Thank you for your entry and for your commitment to your place in these difficult times. Keep up the great work.

- With a population of 26,512 persons (2016), there are 20 core members in your committee and you have hundreds of volunteers who assist you as needed. Because of Covid restrictions, you work in pods.
- You work with many groups and now you have virtual interaction with most stakeholders.
- You receive support from many public bodies and private businesses, and you avail of TUS and employment support schemes. Your past success has helped to achieve funding for several projects.
- Communication systems include local and social media and you welcomed visits by committees from other participating towns.
- Liaising with 17 schools in Kilkenny is a major task and we note that all have success in achieving Green Flags. Having students participate in clean-up projects is good for everyone and will help them to care for our environment.
- Since 2019, your special projects you have had some success in the control of Himalayan balsam and some other plants. You have focused on biodiversity and in particular the Nore Vision project. Safer street access for pedestrians with reduced carriageways and other interventions are also mentioned. Well done on these various activities.
- You have participated in the competition since the 1980s and enjoyed great success with many awards, including the overall award in 1985 and 2014.
- In general, we prefer smaller sized applications because it takes less reading time for the adjudicator and more time can be spent looking at projects on the ground. In that regard, we are pleased to note that your application is 26 pages, but when we include another 36 pages on projects, the total exceeds 60 pages. We accept however that the size of Kilkenny city makes it difficult for you to reduce the page numbers but suggest one way of doing so is to reduce the length of descriptions to just two/three sentences.
- Your application form is well presented, and we are pleased that you have responded to comments/suggestions in the 2019 report.
- Having the projects in a separate document is a clever approach, especially when we can toggle over and back on the computer. The inclusion of pictures adds greatly to the presentation. While newspaper articles demonstrate that particular events did take place, there is little point in their inclusion because we do not have time to read them (even if they were in larger print). We suggest that they be omitted in future applications to save on space. Please just include good quality pictures of projects.
- The maps are well prepared, and the use of colour coding works well.

- The Tidy Towns Handbook has been revised and you can download it from the website. It includes plenty of suggestions for suitable projects to consider.
- Please note the icons for the 17 sustainable development goals which are printed on the application form. These are intended to assist you in considering future projects that relate to them.

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

The new 118 metre St Francis Bridge which was opened in 2017 has improved traffic congestion in the centre city and it seems it is the catalyst for more central city improvements. You have listed seven projects under this criterion, and we note how they have improved Kilkenny.

- You are no doubt very pleased that the former Alms House is now the new home for the Butler Gallery and has brought a new focus to the area, and more improvements are planned.
- Expansion of pedestrian areas in the city such as Lower James Street, will add to its attractiveness. The one way traffic system in High Street, Rose Inn Street and Lr. Ormonde Street will be a short term challenge for locals.
- The several schemes underway at the former Smithwicks Brewery, the Abbey Quarter and the Bauhaus Buildings will provide more opportunities for visitors to enjoy your historic city.
- You now have two open air farmer's markets on the Parade and on weekends outdoor artist exhibition provide added interest.
- The Abbey Quarter development now has a skate park and a sports and recreation facility.
- The revamped Market Yard and Parliament Street is now providing a streetscape that appeals to pedestrians with seating as well as outdoor dining spaces.
- Retention of old city walls in several location is also noted.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Kilkenny city has a network of open spaces in the city centre on the banks of the River Nore, Kilkenny Castle Park and open spaces in new housing schemes.

- As was the case elsewhere, these parks were invaluable for the community during the Covid19 pandemic in providing opportunities for exercise in a safe environment. We note that the management of these spaces has changed to a reduced mowing regime for the encouragement of wildflowers that support pollinators and you have listed seven locations where this is being practiced. The pictures of some of these places are very impressive.
- Equally impressive is the verge on the ring road where a narrow grass margin is frequently cut, and the rest of the area is allowed to grow and wildflowers to develop. We hope that litter accumulation in the long grass does not mean extra work for your volunteers.
- Your ambitious plans for the Closh Garden of Remembrance, including 8,000 trees are noted.
- Dunmore Biodiversity and Recreation Park has achieved planning approval and work is to commence soon on the 17 acre former landfill site.
- The tree cover master plan will entail cooperation with various groups such as schools and voluntary groups and will help to mitigate the impact of climate change. The proposal to plant 8,000 trees each year is impressive and we note that leylandii cypress trees were removed and replaced with native species.
- Work on the Ardnore/Riverview Park is noted where local residents are identifying (in Irish and English) the various plants growing there. Why not go one step further and include the Latin (botanical) names of the plants

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

You have an impressive city wide programme on raising public awareness of birds in Kilkenny in cooperation with Birdwatch Ireland and the National Park and Wildlife Service. The many activities include installing swift boxes with plans for more and for a survey as well.

- The eradication of invasive plants is a never ending task which it seems you are managing well and reporting locations of plants to the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Well done on clearing 12 km of river bank in the past two years.
- The Nore Vision project seems to successfully engage the community with the aim of restoring good ecological status to all tributaries to the Nore. Well done.
- The Biodiversity Well-Being project is aimed at bringing biodiversity values to individual homes by encouraging them to have wildflowers in their gardens which will attract more birdlife.
- The Breaghagh and Poccocke wildlife corridors is a major challenge for your volunteers. Well done on the removal of 'legacy urban trash', if only people would refrain from dumping in rivers, wouldn't the world be a much better place. It seems like this project will be ongoing for several more years.
- The work on four historic graveyards is noted. We presume you have followed the guidelines issued by the Heritage Council. The important Newpark Marsh is used as an outdoor classroom for schools. Plans are underway for an extension to allotments and the acorn project is noted.

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

This criterion is usually a problem for committees, but such is not the case for Kilkenny.

- The impressive list under the heading of reduce waste and recycle has organisations such as the Lions Club promoting paper bags, a promotional event for Dunmore Recycling and Waste Disposal Centre and sustainable replacement of plastic bottles in schools as well as many other initiatives.
- The safe school zones project entails walking, scooting and cycling to school to reduce the use of cars. A reduction in parking facilities in favour of providing safer places for cyclists and pedestrians. The project is being monitored to assess progress.
- Under the heading of doing more with less, improvements to amenities such as improved seating,

improving cycle routes and charging more for car parking to encourage a transport modal shift. Well done to the Junk Kouture project.

- A half hourly bus service using four buses across two routes.
- A gardening for nature to focus on more biodiverse gardens, using apple trees. I recall that more than 20 years ago, Kilkenny had fruit trees planted in several streets and wondered if they are still there. Perhaps an update on them for next year would be nice. You won €1,000 from the Tree Council of Ireland for that project as the winner of the Trees Award.
- A stop food waste project entailed pledges from stallholders to minimise waste through various means.
- Other projects included climate action, clean energy city and county,

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It can be very difficult to keep a busy city like Kilkenny clean and tidy and in that regard, we congratulate your success in the 2021 IBAL survey where you were national winner for the fifth time. This is no doubt due to many factors not least of which is the cooperation between voluntary groups such as yourself, the local authority, the business community and the people of Kilkenny.

- We note your strategy devised because of the Covid restrictions.
- Collected material was segregated for recycling purposes.
- The clean-up of rivers is already noted.
- Several initiatives were undertaken, including a musical bin for positive reinforcement and we note the use of Facebook campaign.
- You have use murals already and have more planned.
- Painting of premises is ongoing, but some owners of vacant buildings are not cooperative. Some buildings being restored.
- Several initiatives such as the annual clean-up are undertaken annually for litter control.

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

Your estate competition is a great way of encouraging higher standards and we note the more recent emphasis on encouraging residents to plant more pollinator friendly plants in their gardens and adopt a reduced mowing regime on green spaces to encourage wildflowers to develop. Well done on having a competition in 2020.

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

When approaching Kilkenny, most people will come via the ring road, and we have already noted the successful management of the roundabouts and roadside margins. Two new roundabouts are also being managed in this manner.

You have detailed specific improvements made at Greens Bridge which has influenced local residents to improve their streetscape. St John's Terrace has also been improved with sash window replacements and pollinator friendly plants in the gardens and we note the steps and façade Poe Kiely Hogan's house in Patrick street. Patrick Street also won the 2019 'Street of the Year' award.

Concluding Remarks:

Kilkenny is a beautiful historic city, and you are commended for the wonderful work you have done over the years in keeping it looking its best. We look forward to receiving your application in 2022.

Second Round Adjudication:

We enjoyed The Parade Outdoor Market on the day of adjudication. It was great to see the local food markets and exhibitions on such a busy day. This area surrounding the castle was litter free and is well presented. We admired the planters on the street and hanging baskets on the lamp posts. This area also has plenty of outdoor seating which is so functional particularly on market day. Skate Park is a significant recreational amenity in the city for all to enjoy. We noted the provision of additional outdoor seating areas in the Market Yard and Parliament Street in addition to the bins. We are pleased to see the wildflower area at Kilkenny Castle and we noted the Windgap Hill Amenity Area with outdoor seating on the Dublin road entering the city. The wild flowers on the KK Ring road are eye catching and colourful. We could see the work that has gone into reducing grass cutting and verge management which will benefit the pollinators. There are many shop fronts in the city centre maintained to a high standard. We admired The World's End and E. Connell on John Street. The Kilford Arms Hotel and Bridie's General Store are also eye catching and presented well. We commend you on keeping the city centre litter free. We noted the absence of litter in smaller areas also such as St. Mary's Lane. The street signage in the city centre is of a high standard and we were impressed with the area outside of the The Left Bank. The large Roman numeral clock on the building next to 'The Field' is impressive in addition to the hanging planters outside The Field and AIB on High Street. We were pleased with the standard of the approach roads. Bennetsbridge roundabout on the Dublin road is welcoming and we liked the planters and its overall appearance.