

Tidy Towns Competition 2022

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilkenny - Cill Chainnigh** Ref: **398**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **362**
Category: **H** Date(s): **06/07/2022**
26/07/2022

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021	Mark Awarded 2022
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	58	59
Streetscape & Public Places	80	50	53
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	50	52
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	40	43
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	23	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	41
TOTAL MARK	550	351	362

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu don bhliain 2022. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Adh Mór! Welcome to the 2022 Tidy Towns Competition Kilkenny City. Many thanks for your comprehensive submission – incredibly visual and engaging and you have actively taken on previous adjudicator comments in reducing its overall size. The text was succinct and the many photographs accompanying each project showed their progression and impact. The manner in which projects were hyperlinked showed how you were doing your utmost to make my job easier in navigating your submission and I have no doubt added significantly to your already heavy workload. Can I suggest that you combine your entry form and Projects Booklet into one document? This makes it easier for the adjudicator and for you too I think. Whilst it will increase the overall size of the document (something I know we are asking groups to avoid), see if there is scope on some pages to showcase 2-3 projects and leave 1 page for the more flagship initiatives. Finally, it would be helpful if your map could indicate the name of the project; us adjudicators try to stay below the radar when out n about so clicking on a tablet or computer may bring attention to our (hopefully!) stealthy activities. Overall though it shows the level of professionalism that exists in Tidy Towns committees and for this adjudicator was one of the finest examples of an entry form they've seen to date.

The Large Urban Centre category represents opportunities and challenges with regard to Community Involvement. On one hand there are so many other groups who have the potential to assist or collaborate on projects. On the other, as a voluntary group, this can represent huge logistical mountains to overcome. You mention in excess of 60 individuals and organisations; this is no small feat to coordinate; well done! This is all undertaken by a core committee and it is great to see new blood joining your group. I have seen reference to COVID and how it has reconnected people with their locality in quite a few submissions and these new additions bring fresh insights and new ideas. You quite rightly also reference the leadership the more senior members have dedicated to Keep Kilkenny Beautiful. I have no doubt this new mix of energy and ideas will only bring about wonderful things. You encourage participation by hosting 'open meetings', another good idea for people who are interested by your work but not yet sure about officially signing up. The businesses also show their support and in turn you have your annual awards. Many of the shops and cafes also proudly displayed Pride bunting (Face2 and Cake Face to name but two) in support of the local LGBT+ community.

You recognize the importance of communication with use of local media (both newspaper and radio) as well as social media and your website. Your flagship project was indeed one which required particular effort and for me was inspiring. To develop an 8,000 Tree Biodiversity and Climate Change Challenge, involving and leveraging support from your wider network, shows the impact community groups can have in addressing both the climate and biodiversity crisis... amazing and something you should be very immensely proud of. Not only did you meet your target, but you exceeded it!

I also noted the progress made on your 5-year plan. It was incredibly well thought out, submitting in tabular format with updates and plans for each year made it very easy for me to see where your focus lies as well as the sheer diversity of initiatives you have undertaken and for which you have planned. The only suggestion I would have here is to perhaps see if you could include the SDGs being achieved. This way you will have an 'at a glance' document that will show where some SDGs are perhaps not addressed and provide scope for projects to be developed around them. For more information on the SDGs check out www.tidytowns.ie as well as application form for the SDG Special Award.

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

There is major building work taking place in Kilkenny City and the manner in which you are marrying new and old architecture is fantastic. From the Brewhouse to the lovingly restored Tea Rooms and Toll House the streetscape of Kilkenny is a delight for the senses. Its medieval layout means that around every corner or street is a new building to marvel at; like a veritable architectural treasure hunt! Kilkenny is a thriving town and there was very little dereliction or empty retail units which was wonderful to see. I took the opportunity to take two walkarounds, one morning and one evening and on each occasion the town was bustling with activity. It was great to see a lack of clutter in your many lanes.

Church Road and Lane were lovely and I looked through the gates at the Orchard Project, something I look forward to returning to. St. Canice's Church and Tower were beautifully presented. I climbed the tower on my last visit to Kilkenny for the first time and the view at the top was spectacular; mind you you'd want a head for heights. At Friar's Bridge there were restored old buildings with newer residential areas nearby - great to have such life and full time residents in a town centre. Your Thomas Woodgate Memorial was very poignant. Your new Riverside Walk at the Abbey Quarter is stunning and probably the best I have seen in Ireland; a deserving winner of the Urban Land Institute Award. To think this park will be doubled in size is astounding. It is a wonderfully dynamic space within a short stroll from the city centre. As your Vision Statement for this area stated – a seamless complement to the medieval city. It will be wonderful to see tenants set up shop in the Tollhouse and Tearooms – the attention to detail in their restoration is noteworthy. The variety of seating and wonderful lighting makes it accessible to so many and I loved how you showcased and incorporated the older heritage elements/ruins into the design, seeing them as a heritage asset – not an eyesore. The skate park was very busy and I wonder is there scope here to develop a structured street-art project developed under supervision by the users here. It would further go towards fostering a sense of place for everyone in the community. Are there places for an enhanced entrance design at the New Road entrance?

As I crossed over the Green's/New Road Bridge there was a beautiful view up and down the river. Is there scope here for some rail mounted interpretative panels? You have another expansive park on this side of the river; the amount of public green space is truly impressive in Kilkenny. In the Peace Park (near the Green Bridge entrance) is a bin located in the middle of the grass between two benches; must be awkward for maintenance personnel and also a little visually odd, could it be relocated to the path edge? The Boxing Club mural was fantastic; perhaps there might be scope to expand this to cover the adjoining metal sheeting and blockwork in the future or a green wall of ivy. The mighty Kilkenny Hurlers statue in the public plaza area looked iconic and nearby shops like Kittys Cabin and Butterslip added a great splash of colour.

At the new, impressive Brewhouse building, it is facing the back of the theatre – could something be done here to reduce this visual impact. Perhaps a mural for which Kilkenny has so many of (like the Smithwicks and St. Kieran St murals)? Have you considered developing a Street Art walking trail? The entrance to Market Cross carpark needs painting as does the odd street bench. The benches will no doubt be addressed as part of the annual maintenance programme by the local authority. This adjudicator has been known to attend Scrumdiddlys on many an occasion; I just wonder with its central location could the owners perhaps adapt their signage and branding to reflect the more vernacular heritage and traditional shopfronts at this location. I have seen this done in other towns by major multinationals.

The colourful umbrellas in Market Street Shopping Centre were eye-catching as are the many traditional shop fronts. Even your post office has retained its original signage which is wonderful to see – however there is an empty planter and flagpoles above the front door which needs attention. Your tourist office looked well and I went to the window map to get my bearings. However, the fabric used makes the street names quite hard to read – could this be looked at? I went towards the Museum and saw your plaques; they are such amazing accomplishments but seem quite hidden away here. Is there potential to move them? I could go on and on about your wonderful streetscapes but some standouts for me were the Left Bank building, Rothe House and the Heritage Council headquarters. Shops and offices such as Lamber de Bie, Ossory Youth, Kilkenny Bookstore and Fragola Café all contribute to a wonderful walking visitor experience.

Kilkenny has a wealth of outdoor seating; of which I made great use – sitting from time to time to jot down notes about my visit. From street benches to the Market Yard to Ormonde Street to the (temporary but still lovely) Watergate Urban Park this wealth of outdoor seating must have been well used during the Pandemic. I note from your submission that there are even more plans in the pipeline for outdoor space and seating which is most welcome.

I cannot end without a special mention to your amazing Museum. The exhibits, use of innovative design ideas and digital media was out of this world. The Kilkenny Room and its variety of archival material and succinct yet informative audio tour all made my visit thoroughly enjoyable. A little disappointed I didn't find all of the elusive Lego

figures but just makes we want to return again. The staff were incredibly friendly and helpful – a tremendous asset to the town.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Kilkenny could give a masterclass in urban landscaping. The variety of planting styles and structure was out of this world and represents a real investment in the shared outdoor space. Maintenance and upkeep was to a very high standard from your large parks to your smaller areas like at the Watchtower.

In Dean St. carpark there is a raised area at the back, is there something that could be done here – seems like it has great potential. There are some dead trees in the new Riverside Walk which need removing, nothing major and something that always happens with a new planting scheme. Also make sure to monitor the tree ties. Your X&O Sculpture is wonderful; some weeding is needed though at the paving. Also, your pollinator area behind seems to have become quite rank with grasses dominating – is this cut annually and collected as advocated by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan?

The semi-wild area after the boxing club is again another fantastic example of your dynamic approach to landscaping your parks. I did note some invasive Winter Heliotrope in the beds, be careful of this species as it can spread rapidly both within and outside the planters. The Park opposite the old IMC cinema was well maintained but the large pollinator mural somewhat jarred with the lack of pollinator management here, though I note plans are in train for this area. Well done for consulting with the community here.

At St. Canice's Parish Church there was lovely planting with two nearby benches to appreciate it. The Castle Park was, as always, a wonderful experience to visit and your partnership with the OPW in terms of tree planning and rewilding is a great community-public sector collaboration. Well done for engaging with and supporting the residents of Fuchsia Care Home, it once again showcases your open and inclusive attitude to achieving shared objectives, a class example of SDG17: Partnership for the Goals.

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

Well done on your continued involvement with swift conservation and Birdwatch Kilkenny. These fascinating birds need our help though I was delighted to see so many of them on my evening walk around the city. I note your survey recorded 76 nest sites – no doubt your many older buildings are helping provide suitable nesting sites along with artificial boxes in the Heritage Council. Your commitment to tree planting is also a huge boost for local biodiversity and with the planting taking place throughout the city this will enhance the spread and benefits to local wildlife. To have exceeded your targets is a phenomenal achievement. You are also adopting an educational/sustainable approach to the tree planting with the Acorn Project. It is great to see such projects which salvage seed, plant in partnership with local schools and in time translocate the whips out into the environment. Your invasive species project with Nore Vision is an excellent initiative. I noted in other towns and villages along the Nore the presence of Himalayan balsam but very little in Kilkenny city, no doubt as a result of your work. Be very careful with Giant Hogweed, its sap causes a nasty burn. No doubt this was covered in your training.

Sharing knowledge and raising awareness is a key role played by Tidy Towns groups throughout the country. Your nature walk with Nore Vision is a great example, led by none other than Eanna Ní Lamhna! By being trained as Ambassadors you also help Nore Vision spread the word even wider; citizen science meets citizen advocacy! Another citizen science achievement is your involvement in the water quality monitoring project and litter removal from local watercourses – wonderful to see the involvement of new nationalities to your town. The LAWPRO funded training programme for teachers is a wonderful partnership; is the curriculum site specific or is this something you could share with other groups?

KKB is doing marvelous work in the area of pollinator management; from formal landscaping with pollinator friendly species to managing existing wild areas for wildlife. The manner in which you are monitoring the effectiveness of these new regimes with baseline and follow-up surveys is a great approach. You have fostered partnerships with agencies such as the OPW and Kilkenny County Council which means you are targeting much larger areas. However, and importantly, you are also working with the local community through your Gardening for Nature course. The species richness that is ensuing will support a wide variety of wildlife. However as mentioned in the Green Spaces and Landscaping section consider the extent of wild grassland at your roundabouts as well as making sure areas (like behind the X&Os sculpture) are receiving their annual cut. If not, grasses will once again dominate and become rank.

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

Adjudicators have seen an explosion in allotments throughout the country. I fully appreciate how it is hard to keep up with demand and this approach to sustainable food production / wellbeing is great to see here in Kilkenny. It is a welcome policy that artificial fertilizers and sprays are prohibited; totally unnecessary at this scale of production. Bosco's Garden is going one step further and importantly sharing that knowledge online. Their Instagram page is great. Your tree planting project is a major sustainability initiative also, sequestering carbon, releasing oxygen and protecting soils during extreme climate events. Well done to you and the Lions Club for promoting the Conscious Cup Campaign and to the local businesses for engaging with you; a 12-fold increase in under a year is a phenomenal accomplishment and will hopefully result in a reduction of single use cups. Are you making local businesses aware of more sustainable single use options like compostable cups for those customers who don't have a reusable cup?

Keeping old bicycles in use and for two such great causes is admirable! Your schools, as are schools throughout the country, are shining beacons of environmentalism. So many green flags, in particular at the VEC who showcased their achievements proudly. The crochet project addressed so many issues; raising awareness about the plight of children in South Africa, ensuring old wool was used and not disposed but also connecting like minded individuals in a common purpose. Something that I think so many communities have done successfully throughout COVID-19.

The SEAI SEC programme is a fantastic approach to embedding knowledge and affecting change locally. Why am I not surprised you were the first group in Kilkenny to register! Between this and practical measures like the Home Energy Testing kits you will help others migrate to more efficient use of energy and perhaps over time a move to renewable sources. In the current climate (pardon the pun) we need to look at where we source and how we consume our energy more and more. There are 2030 targets we must meet and that is to limit an increase in global temperature to only 1.5 degrees; which in itself is not ideal. Lots of initiatives here in the last 12 months – I hope you entered some Special Awards.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

For a city of your size, with a maze of lanes, streets and approach roads, litter was remarkably absent. The odd piece here and there (very obviously fresh) but all in all a credit to your volunteers and the local authority ground staff. By encouraging young people to join your Picker Pals initiative you're not only securing the future volunteer base of KKB but instilling a sense of place in them that will reap rewards in the longterm. Like so many other groups you have a daily presence on the streets litterpicking. The value of this to the local authority and the community is immeasurable; well done. Graffiti too was minimal and I refer you to my suggestion about the Riverside Park and a structured, street art project there. You have invested a lot in murals which is admirable, what is even better to see is your commitment in maintaining them which is often overlooked. There are ample bins for people to leave their litter and I loved how you tailored the bins to reflect the streets e.g. slimmer standard street bins for confined areas but larger capacity Big Belly bins on wider thoroughfares such as St. Kieran's Street. Some shops throughout the town used bollards as stands for signs; try and discourage this as it is something that could get out of hand. There was loose cabling attached to a street pole to the side of Mokum. Could this be tidied up? Not by you of course but something to flag with the local Council Engineer. Nearby is a vandalized Eir phonebox with both phones ripped out. Unless Eir plan an upgrade ask them to remove them entirely. An audit of your pole mounted modular tourist maps and panels would be a good idea. Some (only a few mind you) could do with freshening up. Railing at the entrance to St. Mary's Lane (Dunnes Stores side) needs cleaning.

The railing near the River Court Hotel entrance needs some attention. Also, as I crossed over St. John's Bridge I noted your 'Irish River Life' interpretative sign which needs upgrading and is now in an area overgrown. If no longer needed, consider removing it.

Your many bring centres were all very well presented and for a Large Urban Centre you do an amazing job at keeping it tidy and litter free. It is no wonder you are in the Top 10 IBAL with a rating of 'Cleaner than European Norms'. Keep up the great work. Your local shops also help with your endeavours and there are so many I could mention (some already under Streetscapes) so for here I will just give a big shout-out to all of them. Congratulations on making Kilkenny City so attractive and for your support of KKB.

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

Kilkenny has such a wealth of residential areas, from the older traditional town-centre terraces, to newer town centre developments to the established and currently under development estates on the outskirts. It is a thriving community and it was lovely to see this reflected in the Butler Gallery project. Not only was it wonderful for longterm residents but also for those newer arrivals who got to appreciate the history and heritage of where they had moved to. Placemaking is incredibly important; something KKB also facilitate through encouraging people to volunteer with them.

Your Annual Awards is a great way to reward local estates and gardens who are central to your adjudication by TidyTowns every year. Over 90 awards is amazing and no doubt a huge investment of time and effort on your part. To think you do all this on top of your litterpicks, graffiti removal, biodiversity and sustainability projects and so much more is a credit to your committee. I took you up on your suggestion to pay particular attention to De la Salle Place and it was beautifully presented with very proud homeowners. I toured about 10 other estates throughout the town and there was one commonality throughout – a distinct pride in their place and their town. I don't envy your judges having to decide the winners each year!

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

This category could nearly be an entire competition entry in itself for Kilkenny – to say you have numerous approach roads, streets and lanes would be the understatement of the century. However, you approach their care and maintenance with the same enthusiasm and dedication as the other aspects of the TidyTowns competition. There is crossover with this and other categories so I won't repeat myself with regard to some measures.

You have such a wide area to cover and are quite rightly trying to incorporate biodiversity friendly landscaping into your schemes. I am particularly impressed that you are using science to advocate this approach with baseline versus post-management botanical surveys. On my way into the city along a new section of road with cycle lanes

there were amazing pollinator verges. However, the path and cycle lane were quite weeded. This may detract from your biodiversity work so needs to be addressed. Also, roundabouts such as Bennettsbridge, Waterford and Kells Road could benefit from a thinner mown strip – all you need is one narrow outer rim regularly maintained to let people know this is purposeful management.

Your Cootes Lane project was, yet again, another wonderful example of you collaborating with other organisations. The 'Cat Walk' was a great way to get people to walk throughout the entire town and the different designs were wonderful. Active Travel projects are supported by an underlying strategy developed by Kilkenny County Council which is admirable. As a 15-minute city there is great scope to encourage people to cycle. I wonder could a bike hire scheme as available in Dublin and other areas be an option here? Streets and lanes were well maintained and I very much enjoyed the variety of streetscapes around each corner and how surfaces seamlessly blended into one another.

Concluding Remarks:

Well done on your wonderful submission and the continued hard work across all categories in this year's competition by you and your partners!

Second Round Adjudication:

We were delighted to be asked to visit Kilkenny and to be second round adjudicator for the 2022 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. We had visited Kilkenny many times as a tourist and so we were delighted to get the opportunity to see it from a more critical viewpoint. This time in addition to visiting the tourist locations we also visited the laneways, hidden green spaces, back lands and bridge underpasses. Every time we visit Kilkenny we are pleasantly surprised by the improvements to the city and this visit was the same – you have made amazing improvements in terms of reusing old buildings and creating new public spaces for the community and tourists to enjoy.

Thank you for your application form, projects and maps document and your Keep Kilkenny Beautiful Action Plan 2021-2027. Maybe also include here a section for projects/activities undertaken and completed so that you will feel you have achieved a termination of a project/activity – a seminar, nature walk etc. We also suggest you give a tiny amount of information about the projects ... don't make it a long paragraph.

The town is centred around the castle area and the busy areas of High Street, Parliament Street, St. Kiernan's Street and John Street Lower. Add to this the River Nore and its quays and we have the core of the town. As we walked along Bateman Quay, we were entertained by two boys who decided we should have a demonstration of them diving from the pedestrian bridge – very skilfully done and we have the photos! This is a regular occurrence and they told us they love to swim in the river. We also loved the lanes connecting the streets and back areas – these are quite special.

There are wonderful buildings and structures of historical and architectural merit in Kilkenny – Kilkenny Castle with its great parkland of 21 hectares, The Tholsel, Rothe House, the Courthouse, Butler House, the Carnegie Library and the fine single-arch hump back St. John Bridge over the River Nore. Add to this the many churches of note – St Canice's Cofl Cathedral, St Mary's RC Cathedral, St Canice's RC church, Black Abbey RC church, St. Francis's RC church, St. John the Evangelist RC church etc. We love when historic structures are put back into use and you converted St Mary's Cofl church into a wonderful Medieval Mile Museum. We compliment Kilkenny Co Co on the wonderful conversion/renovation work.

Your many green and communal spaces are well presented. We loved the walkway along the River Nore which brings us to Bennettsbridge to the south and will extend to the Green Bridge and possibly further to the north? The new Abbey Quarter which was busy with walkers, people sitting chatting, families meandering with children cycling etc. is an excellent urban space. We think the rain will cause streaks along the Corten steel sign which is a pity, so it will wear/age badly. The planting along this area is wonderful – trees, shrubs and flowers making it a very attractive walkway. Kilkenny Cat Walk Art enhanced the hoarding to the construction site as did the information board on the Urban Park Project. The guys in the skateboard park are delighted with what has been provided – we chatted to a few who then gave us demonstrations. We loved this use of the space under the bridge and they liked it too as it was also close to the river so they could also have a swim. Maybe provide some hoarding where they can also practice their mural art form? There are also other pleasant urban places/pocket parks for people to sit and chat – along The Parade, beside the steps to St. Canice's Cathedral from Vicar Street, at the junction of Parliament Street and St Kiernan's Street, near the courthouse (although planting beds and trees would improve this area and make it more user friendly), etc. We noted the plan for Watergate Urban Park – another area for the community and visitors to sit and chat. We admired that the limestone slabs were retained along the laneway into the Smithwick's new area reminding us of the horse drawn carts which were used to deliver the barrels of ale.

Newpark Marsh Park is a hidden gem – but it would be good to remove the bike that's thrown into it. The trees planted in the Newpark Primary Care Centre are maturing well – the suckers need to be removed and we also recommend that the ties and stakes are checked. This needs to be undertaken on other trees around Kilkenny where we saw sucker growth and poorly staked trees.

We noted that various high rendered block walls have had ivy or other climbers planted and we approve of this which will not only be more visually appealing in the streetscape but also be a food source for insects, birds and small mammals.

The maroon band on new street signs was peeling in quite a few locations making them difficult to read and unsightly – truthfully the old street signs were better. Why were they replaced?

The finger signs are excellent – clearly indicating direction and length/approximate time of journey to be walked, which is crucial for the visitor. We noted a number of disused phone boxes – eircom and Vodafone – which need to be removed. They are not in use and some have the glass/Perspex panels broken. We also noted a GR post box and VR post box still in use ... are there other historical post boxes?

There are a number of large planting beds around the town where flowers of one variety have been used e.g Dean Street /Coach Road junction. The beautiful petunias on the pedestrian bridge are quite striking. Hopefully flowers are also in place during the autumn / winter – perhaps winter pansies?

We note your involvement to plant trees and hedgerows on 12 sites and we are delighted to read this. There are streets with trees which were admired and we suggest that other city streets could benefit from tree planting e.g. Dean Street beside the carpark area (and there are others). The main structural elements in the landscape and one of the main structural elements in a streetscape are trees. Trees are known to have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. By planting and caring for trees, you help reduce pollution, improve your surroundings, improve the appearance of your community and increase the value of your property. In addition, they provide shade for humans, food for insects and food roosting sites and nesting sites for birds. Discuss this with the area engineer and hopefully you will improve the tree status of Kilkenny's streets. The Acorn Project seems interesting – we look forward to reading as it advances.

In addition to the baskets on poles and the many many street planters there were window boxes, hanging baskets and planters on a number of the residences and business premises in the centre of the town which made Kilkenny's streetscape extremely pleasant. Litter was minimal and the litter we noted had been recently dropped, so compliments to the litter pick up team.

It was a pleasure to visit Kilkenny again, albeit from a more critical viewpoint. You are involved in a great many projects which is to your credit. Well done on your hard work which is reaping its just rewards. We agree with the comments of the first-round adjudicator on rationalising your application form. We agree with the marks awarded by the previous adjudicator.