

Tidy Towns Competition 2023

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilkenny - Cill Chainnigh** Ref: **398**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **374**
Category: **H** Date(s):

28/07/2023

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2022	Mark Awarded 2023
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	59	60
Streetscape & Public Places	80	53	54
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	52	53
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	43	45
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	24	26
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	35	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	41	42
TOTAL MARK	550	362	374

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

It was a pleasure to visit Kilkenny as an adjudicator this year. The size and structure of the Keep Kilkenny Beautiful team of committee members, volunteers and network of supporting organisations is a testimony to the ongoing engagement of the committee over the past 41 years. Your use of experienced members, new recruits and school groups should make continuing good work possible in future years.

The Keep Kilkenny Beautiful entry was well structured, the layout was clear and the maps helpful in location of projects within the city. The contents page, page 2, was particularly clear and a useful summary of all the actions being undertaken by KKB. Incorporation of the pertinent SDGs for each category of entry was helpful. In coming years, you may need to consider how exactly these goals are being met through some measures of progress. An introductory guide to the UN Goals is at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> and is a useful way to consider how the work you are doing is contributing to sustainable development.

The ongoing management of such a formidable group of workers, events, planning and communication is admirable and that work is clearly reflected in the entry layout and delivery of projects.

While the maps are clear and useful online, they do not print easily. If possible, can you test print the map/s for next year. While the entry is digital it sometimes helps to have a physical copy of material while out and about

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

There is a wealth of historic buildings in use in the city. Previous adjudicators have commented on the quality of your built environment and the development continues. This creates a vibrancy that many historic buildings lack in other cities. Ongoing refurbishment and repurposing of old buildings is evident in the redevelopment of the Abbey Quarter in progress along the river and reaching back into the city. This work in progress will result in a sense of unity across the city centre from Green's Bridge south to Kilkenny Castle and beyond into the rural hinterland of the Nore river valley. I understand from your entry there are plans to link the Abbey Park north via a walkway under Green's Bridge. When all this work is complete it will be a formidable green resource for the city.

The Medieval Mile Museum and the Medieval Mile Walk is an ideal way to explore the city's history and see first-hand how much of your heritage continues to be a resource for the people of Kilkenny.

The streets of the city centre are a pleasure to walk through, around each corner there is something new to discover and plenty of spaces to stop and rest. A negative aspect of the street environments is the levels of traffic in the city. This is an ongoing urban issue but needs to be addressed. Traffic levels in the city centre are a distraction, create

noise and are possibly causing issues with air quality. The proposal for High Street, pedestrianised with cycle lanes is welcome, this type of street scape should be extended through as much of the city centre as possible. The current extension of the footpaths to the road is confusing, is this for pedestrians or cyclists or both?

Butler's Gallery was a highlight with work on nature and sustainability projects on display. The building, gardens and seating are typical of many of the visitor attractions in the city. One minor issue is the temporary fencing in the vicinity of the access from Bracken Lane, can this be tidied up?

The interpretative column detailing the city's history with maps and text are good but need refurbishment in the immediate future. The wear and tear of the boards is a testimony to their value and use.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

There is so much good work here. Parks throughout the city were pleasant to walk in and often with interesting details of design and layout. The parks on both banks of the Nore are real assets for the city, easily accessible, safe, planted in such a variety of styles from formal bedding to the wild nature as seen at the Abbey Park entrance at Bateman Quay. The footbridge across the Nore brings the walker to the library and takes us away from the hustle and bustle of the city streets.

The small-scale projects are ones that engage local communities young and old and are a welcome compliment to the large-scale landscaping projects of the city centre and its environs. Work on Acorn boxes in schools is helpful in engaging young people and establishing a stock of native trees for future planting projects. Keep a record of how well germination and subsequent development of trees goes in the coming years. It would be good to include a range of native tree species in this project in the next year or so.

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

Situated on the river Nore and with a wealth of green space in and around the city you have plenty of scope for 'nature' in the city. The work on monitoring species rich grasslands is important and should be continued. Keep monitoring how grass cutting and use of cuttings are impacting on species mixes. Education and awareness raising are central elements of the biodiversity project so again keep up your guided walks and talks.

Bioblitz activities are good ways for people to engage with habitats and can help children and adults to develop an eye for plant and animal species.

The Irish Hedgehog survey, <https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/irish-hedgehog-survey/>, might be a project for the next year. They can be easily monitored without having to see them directly. Contact your biodiversity officer for information on this.

While in Kilkenny I heard and saw a few Swifts in flight at various locations. Keep monitoring these birds and reporting on their numbers as they are a species in danger of being lost in the coming decades.

I was particularly struck by the quality of Newpark Marsh on Lovers Lane. This is an exceptional site, it needs no management, doing fine as it is but perhaps the information boards could be updated. Seating is perfect and the walk around the park was to the sound of birds and the occasional dinosaur.

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

You have identified a range of issues that relate to sustainability in the city, and these are all good ideas. The proposed energy masterplan is important, and I look forward to hearing how that develops in the coming years. The mobility plan is also welcomed it will I hope address the issues I raise re cycling and walking in the city. The collaborative town centre health check addresses the essence of sustainability, these health checks are useful to direct actions in the coming years.

The work to introduce electric bikes is welcomed. How well are they being used, monitoring of their use in the coming year will help plan for further capacity. It might be useful to conduct a survey of users to a profile of who is availing of the bikes and what improvements might be needed.

The bike fest is a good idea to raise awareness of the values of cycling. You now need to focus on how the streets of Kilkenny and the surrounding suburbs can be made more cyclist friendly. I visited Kilkenny by bike and was disappointed at the limited network of poorly connected cycle lanes. Cycle lanes, and less road traffic are important incentives for cycling.

The City Bus scheme is welcomed and its expansion. Keep monitoring numbers and promote its use as this will help reduce car use and make roads safer for walkers and cyclists.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

In all my walking and cycling through the city I spotted very little litter. What I did see was cleaned up by the litter patrols which were visible throughout the city centre during my inspection. Your actions to address comments by last year's adjudicator are noted. The activities of volunteers in your Picker Pals campaign, the maintenance of murals and the river clean ups all give a sense of a place being cared for and that care is clear when walking around the city and its environs.

Only one item caught my eye, a shopping trolley in the stream by the skateboard park in Abbey Park. If it is not already gone someone needs to collect it.

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

There are as you noted many estates in the suburbs of Kilkenny and the competition to judge the best of the 80 that entered for your awards night had resulted in a generally high standard of maintenance and presentation of housing and green areas throughout Kilkenny.

Along O'Loughlin Road, adjacent to Nowlan Park there are new and established estates doing good work on their environments, it would be good to support this with some work on the bare walls of the Nolan Park and the adjacent street scape.

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

The many approaches to the city are well managed and this is clearly an ongoing task that makes big demands on a voluntary organisation. The emerging network of cycle lanes is welcomed. As I noted I cycled into and around the city and it was frustrating to find cycle lanes come and go and often not link to each other or merge suddenly into traffic. This is something all towns are grappling with so I urge you to continue with your plans to develop a sustainable transport plan for the city.

One of the magic elements of Kilkenny is the laneways that criss cross the city centre, any I traversed were immaculate and always took me on to a new vista or attraction.

Concluding Remarks:

Well done on presenting a very clear outline of your activities of the past year and your plans for the future. It was a pleasure have the opportunity to spend time in Kilkenny and to see the good work a community can do to maintain and develop its environs. I wish you all the best for the future. Keep up the good work.

Second Round Adjudication:

Well done on presenting a very clear outline of your activities of the past year and your plans for the future. It was a pleasure have the opportunity to spend time in Kilkenny and to see the good work a community can do to maintain and develop its environs. I wish you all the best for the future. Keep up the good work.

This was the second-round adjudicators second visit to your thriving city in 12 months, as we last attended to see the wonderful Ras na mBan in the city core. It once again lived up to its reputation as a welcoming and historic riverside city of a scale that is both human and bustling with life. As the first-round adjudicator pointed out your entry form was much improved and the digital links from the contents page to the individual projects was a neat feature. One item to take note of is that we can only adjudicate projects that are completed and on the ground. A significant number of projects mentioned in both the Streetscape and Landscape sections were still at planning stage. This caused a little confusion on our visit as some of the architectural visualisations in the entry were so realistic, we looked hard to find a completed project on the ground... to no avail.

Your focus on shop fronts and premises presentation seems to have been a success and we would follow this by asking premises to look to their upper floors to further improve streets and reduce clutter. Along John Street redundant signs/ lighting/wires and other old alarm boxes etc could be removed to further reduce clutter. Over a summer weekend the streets were clean and litter free, both morning and evening, which must be no easy task with the number of visitors you attract.

As ever your commitment to green spaces and their benefits for both visual amenity and biodiversity is second to none and we very much enjoyed the value these spaces bring to the city setting. Your commitment to tree planting will ensure the long-term presence of an urban forest in the city and your methodology to liaise with other community and youth groups to gain support for the tree programme is great to see. Grass and verge management is fantastic, and we loved how you are following up your biodiversity management with ongoing surveys to monitor the success of your changed landscape management. Thank you to your KKB voluntary Biodiversity Team for their input into these important tasks. One scheme we were disappointed in was the Kilkenny Floral Mile which was designed to be a long urban meadow. This contemporary planting scheme requires the correct low maintenance at the right time to thrive. It was overrun with bindweed, thistle and self-seeded buddleia. An informed rejuvenation plan is required here along this lovely riverside park which will only be enriched as your Abbey Park is extended.

The Bolt bikes were seen in use in various parts of the city and the bike stations were neat and appropriately sited. Having 80 city estates taking part in the competition is an amazing achievement and shows the pride residents take in their home place. We were so impressed at the vista of the flower rich grassland to the sloped entrance areas at Melville Heights. An absolutely beautiful sight.

We very much endorse the views of the first-round adjudicator. With all your planned projects, around the Abbey Quarter and beyond, Kilkenny has much to look forward to. Thank you to the many hands that make the work you carry out possible and the hundreds of volunteers who support you. We can't wait for our visit next year.