

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilkenny - Cill Chainnigh** Ref: **398**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **342**
Category: **H** Date(s): **23/06/2019**
03/08/2019

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	56	57
Streetscape & Public Places	60	47	48
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	48	49
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	38	39
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	21	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	41	41
TOTAL MARK	470	337	342

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Kilkenny (Cill Chainnigh) páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachmhara 2019. We welcome you Kilkenny to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2019. The adjudicator would like to thank you for the welcome given to the adjudicator by your Cathaoirleach on your behalf which accompanied your entry.

Kilkenny City has, for well over half a century, been a leader in its recognition of its city's wonderful historic and built heritage. The pioneers of those times who held belief and commitment to their native (or indeed adopted) city would today be well pleased with all those people committed to 'Keep Kilkenny Beautiful.' Before architectural conservation became 'fashionable' the people of this city had begun. This community has not let up over the years and your entry to this year's competition 'cements' that in the adjudicator's view and in the view of the public at large. Nowadays the remit of community has broadened to include all those issues so pertinent to - not alone the future of your city - but to the future of our earth.

We salute all your volunteers in person - and also those amongst you who administer your volunteer programme. It is hard to imagine how "many hundreds of citizens" can be mobilised - despite their volunteering - to attend to tasks in an ordered fashion. It is a mammoth operation. Your local heroes and your residential area associations are important constants in this operation. Schools, clubs, individuals, societies etc. all help. GDPR administration has - as you say been no easy task for volunteers. Your regular monthly meetings dependably happen every month on the same third Thursday. Supplementary meetings also take place to coordinate voluntary and statutory work. Sometimes you have appropriate guest speakers.

You are honest in your assessment that you are lucky to be so well supported by statutory and voluntary agencies - as well as local businesses - which allows you to concentrate on your voluntary work rather than having to worry about fundraising. Many Tidy Towns groups would greatly envy this 'luxury'. Indeed in your chairperson's introductory letter you specifically mention your local authority's support twice. You also list relevant local authority officers who assist your work. Of course your work ethic over the years has led people to believe that their support - be it statutory advice or business support will be 'well spent'.

Your communication methods are traditional and modern, and we love your 'Kenny the Cat' logo. In your attached entry you include a number of extracts from the extensive press which you received over the last 12 months. (Unfortunately this adjudicator had to buy a magnifying glass in order to read these extracts! The print was extremely small. Perhaps next year you might enlarge it somewhat.) However we appreciate the fact that you gathered these extracts tidily into your submission rather than submitting 'flyaway' newspaper cuttings. Perhaps we are incorrect in this - we perused your website - but did not find a Facebook page. And do you think that it would be

advantageous to have such to attract a more youthful audience? The easy 'inter-activity' of Facebook could also generate some helpful ideas. One of the nicest aspects of our competition is the cooperation between various centres - despite the obvious competitiveness as well. We admire your efforts in this regard. And well done on keeping those 'non-intranet friendly' people in touch by telephone or through personal contacts!

Liaising with the large number of schools you have in Kilkenny requires proactive input. However this will be to your advantage in the longer term, as the youth are the future of your city. Your work with transition year students and your support for the Gaisce Awards are testament to this. Your Green Schools Bee Friendly project is noted, and we look forward to hearing more about the topical issue of climate change in relation to working with your concerned youthful population.

Your invasive species programme has been one also where extra effort has been applied. Your signage projects are ongoing and successful. Cabling in Patrick Street is another project where a particular effort was applied during the last year - as is your annual awards program, your extensive planting of native trees and fruit trees and your work with regard to the repainting of shop fronts / upper facades.

Your success throughout the last 40 years in national competitions speaks for your endeavours. Certainly you have achieved highly with regard to Tourism - but we are still delighted to know that - although it is important - it is just part of your vibrant community. You benefit from the location of many national institutions and businesses in your city. What you say about your being "continually amazed and heartened about your influence in the city" says a lot about your character and your commitment. We wish you every success with the concurrent special awards applications. (Perhaps next year you might consider entering some further awards categories?) Congratulations on your success in last year's competition and in other awards - such as IBAL.

Your entry form and accompanying documentation were beautifully presented. It made the work of the adjudicator somewhat easier - given the extensive area to be adjudicated. Thank you for your tabulated Tidy Towns Plan. A map(s) of a centre is a most important part of any entry. With regard to your maps however we have some reservations. The city centre map was not fully helpful to the adjudicator, as it failed to name a number of streets and other significant features. Whereas it did concentrate on the projects proposed - it became somewhat cluttered due to the number of projects on a map of its scale - understandably thereby omitting some street and lane names - and thereby made adjudicating the city centre in total more difficult. Next year we suggest you either provide a larger scale map - or provide 2 maps - one with projects and the other with all streets, lanes and significant features shown. It guided the adjudicator to the list of projects, but failed to name many streets and lanes and other significant features where the adjudicator wished to comment. Were it not for the two additional maps which the adjudicator picked up at the hotel where the adjudicator stayed - 'Free Kilkenny Visitor Guide Map 2019/2020' and the second map 'Kilkenny City of Delights' - picked up at the tourist office - the adjudicator would have had difficulty in identifying comments for you in this report in relation to the city centre in general and its streets/lanes etc. The environs map was, however, helpful. We appreciated your duplicate maps which were portable on a long enjoyable (very wet) day in your city and we apologise for their 'tattered' return. (The Sunny South-East?!). Well done on the consecutive numbering of projects on your maps concurrent with projects described in your entry as required in Entry Guidelines. It shows that you carefully read the Entry Guidelines and this is a good starting point!

In your project book - projects number 49 to 54 inclusive elaborate on your community planning and involvement. Project 49 refers to the Green School theme. We were impressed with the numbers of flags listed for all the listed schools. However on our journeying around the city we saw very few Green Flags flying proudly. An example of an exception was the observation of a flag at Scoil Eoin Dé. It is a pity when these flags are not exhibited. Project 50 refers to your many annual city award schemes encouraging businesses and citizens/residents alike. Well done to Spring Hill Court on their achievement. It was intelligent to cancel the private garden and competition last summer - thereby avoiding the temptation for people to ignore the water hose ban. Project number 51 refers to your media coverage. Our earlier comments apply here. However we are impressed with the range of topics covered by your local media in your support. Project 52 refers to your engagement with, cooperation and encouragement of other Tidy Towns centres. We have already referred to the benefits of this project. Festivals in Kilkenny form project 53. There is nothing like a good festival to get a community together - and your variety of festivals numbering over 50 is impressive. There is something for everybody when there is such a choice of themes. Finally, project number 54 refers to your involvement in pride in place and you list the relevant participants. Well done on all these projects!

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

This adjudicator remembers being impressed on a visit to Kilkenny a number of years ago - on seeing a local authority van with "public realm" emblazoned on its side. It seemed that Kilkenny had grasped the idea of public realm at an early stage. Whereas the adjudicator had visited Kilkenny on a number of occasions as a visitor, this was the first adjudicating visit this adjudicator has made.

You highlight the new city Art Gallery, the Mediaeval Mile Phase 7 and the City Wall Heritage Interpretation as 'must see' projects. However the adjudicator visited all projects - as well as a vast tract of the city centre on foot. Project number 1 - the new city Art Gallery is making great progress and will lend itself to developing further the far side of the river Nore where already your County Hall is located. This is a really lovely building which up to now remained undiscovered to the general visitor, and it is great to see its future unfolding. Connecting this cultural quarter with the existing Carnegie Library forms connectivity - and onwards via the existing pedestrian bridge leading to the other bank of the river and the nearby proposed and commenced Abbey Cultural Quarter. We noted in another part of your submission that you will include a new city library in your Abbey Cultural Quarter in the Mayfair building (we noted the planning notice for the Mayfair building as we passed). What are the plans for the Carnegie Library then?

We observed the ongoing refurbishment to the Good Shepherd Centre. This general elevated area centred on St. Canice's Cathedral was very quiet on an early Sunday afternoon with the simple sound of birdsong being the only background noise - until the tourist train arrived unexpectedly around a corner. (The noise of the occupants was greater than the noise of the train!) St. Canice's Cathedral is indeed the centre of your mediaeval core, and the Bishop's Palace suitably functions as the national headquarters of The Heritage Council. One small amount of graffiti on a backdoor and a concrete block infill of an external fireplace in this area might be looked at before next year. We admired Kilkenny limestone with its lovely fossils - on paving in this area. We were impressed with the continuing inhabitation of this area in such delightful areas as the terraces around Loretto view. (The relevant bilingual sign might be conserved). We had approached the Cathedral from Dean Street along Coach Road - and this area is also very beautiful and peaceful. We descended via St. Canice's Steps). Well done on your good quality handrail along both sides of these steps. They were very necessary for everybody on a very wet and slippery day. We have a photograph of the St. Canice bust sculpture - as it was then located - between High Street and Parliament Street. We note that the bust has been moved to a different site at the small hard landscaped area at the base of the Steps. Perhaps it is not as striking as it was in its 'isolation' heretofore. We somehow felt that it has 'lost' its stark impression amongst the other signage, seating, lighting, rubbish bin - and the - we considered was an intrusive element here in the monochrome area i.e. The Ireland East coloured wheel. But that is a personal opinion.

Internal upgrading of the City Hall (Tholsel) is ongoing. The importance of making the building more accessible considering its varied use is lauded. One comment we would make in relation to this structure is that we feel the hanging baskets attached thereto detract visually from its architectural integrity. Inserting such items into a Protected Structure also interferes with the structure. We realise that these are there of long-standing and we leave it to your judgement as to how to proceed in this regard. One thing that left a lasting impression on the adjudicator was the lovely calming sound of bells chiming each 15 min interval.

The Abbey Creative Quarter is an excellent example of the redevelopment of a large brownfield site. Here as a consequence the ruins of another mediaeval ecclesiastical building will be retained and opened up to the public. The smarter travel principles involved in this major work will benefit the entire city. We look forward to seeing each phase proceed annually. It is indeed an ambitious project. This is a long term project stretching forward, and we wish you well with all its phases

Universal access for all is an admirable project. It is citywide, and we congratulate you and praise you for your commitment to this enormously important project. You have approached this in the proper manner following three years of consultation. No doubt you have consulted widely with all agencies committed to accessibility for all and with the affected public. The age-friendly library activities are noted. The new signage along the riverbank draws attention to the lack of public lighting for biodiversity reasons, but also makes clear that the walk is accessible to all and indicates where steps may be encountered.

The Mediaeval Mile is in its phase 7. With regard to the paving upgrade in general in the general Castle area we felt that the four or five different types of paving in this area were somewhat 'clashing' with each other. The Castle, we feel would be better set off by simpler surfacing/paving. However this is something to consider into the future in drawing up future surfacing proposals. We noticed that some of the road paving was coming loose - particularly along edges. Upgrading of The Parade lighting and the pruning of The Parade trees - together with the provision of wider paths shows your commitment to this core area of the city. Another comment we would make in relation to The Parade area is that we felt - when viewing the tourist guide information on the structure in the Parade from a distance - the information looks like commercial advertising -until one came closer and realised it was directional and mapping information. We feel that a more appropriate visual interpretation of this data would improve the overall impression.

The Medieval Museum is a great addition to the City and conserves an important building. We admired the modern architecturally pleasing extension. However we were very taken aback by the untidy surrounds of the site of the Museum. We discuss this in greater length under the Tidiness category but it also affects your standard here - given the core significance of this part of your streetscape. Given the prominence of this historic building - and the fact that all visitors are invited to visit - we strongly suggest that you attend to this issue urgently during the coming year insofar as you are able.

Patrick Street and Ormond Street have become exemplar projects for other streets in the vicinity of High Street and the areas of highest footfall. The paving on Patrick Street - allowing for outdoor eating spaces - looked very well. The work carried out on Irishtown was an important endeavour. Good luck with the work on Vicar Street. Last year's adjudicator will be pleased to know that Mitchell House at John's Bridge is now under renovation.

We would suggest that you take care with the proposed flood lighting of John's Bridge and your other general floodlighting proposals. Floodlighting has a number of effects which need to be considered. These involve light pollution of the skies, injury to biodiversity such as bat habitats, the encouragement of lichen growth on historic buildings, and certain use of resources however minimal to provide the light - as well as some traffic distraction. This is not to say that floodlighting is all bad but needs careful consideration and control.

We very much liked the new City Wall interpretive signage at Tilbury Place. It is restrained and attractive. The Talbot Tower signage is located on a very attractive incidental space in a quiet, somewhat unfrequented part of the city. Well done on your walls repair work in the important area around the Black Abbey and also on your plan to implement the specialist report in relation to the wall at the River Breagagh. We admired the stone inserts in the

pavements representing the line of the city wall, which we observed in places such as on Ormonde Road.

One thing that struck this adjudicator forcibly was the omnipresence of moving and parked cars throughout the city. It seemed that the only places free of the motorised vehicle were St. Kieran's Street/stepped alleyways/ or (very few) lanes. This detracts hugely from the enjoyment of the built environment/streetscape, from the Mediaeval Mile and indeed from the enjoyment of the entire city. Because of the huge numbers of tourists - including tour groups - concentrated on the city centre footpaths - the entire impression of vehicles and humans is one of 'moving clutter'. Perhaps your citizens and public representatives would 'bite the bullet' and consider pedestrianising at least the main artery - such has been done in some other cities and large towns of similar size throughout this country? We are sure that a satisfactory traffic solution can be found by imaginative transport experts. This effect lessens as one travels throughout the immediate environs of the city centre, but is still recognisable in unexpected traffic on a quiet lane or in the many car parks. Car parks can be planted to minimise the visual effect even if it requires sacrificing some car parking spaces. No doubt you have considered this issue in relation to your ongoing projects and the parking solutions required in general. It is an important issue in order to advance the city's image and experience - and indeed progress in this category.

Another issue that struck this adjudicator was the concentration of streetscape projects in the busy city centre, with areas outside this perhaps a little forgotten in places. It is correct to work from the core outwards, but it is important not to forget 'the outwards'. Projects under other category headings were more evenly dispersed. However in this regard we applaud you for entering the city as a whole and not confining your entry to the centre.

The final major issue which struck this adjudicator was the fact that there were so many empty premises, premises just having closed, premises for sale or premises to let - or premises moving address within the core area. A prime example of this was the three-storey Willoughby's premises (with its lovely timber sash windows) facing The Parade. The insertion of (albeit up-to-date) newspaper sheets throughout its windows really did nothing to lessen the impact of such an important premises being vacant - if anything is added to the eye-catching nature of its 'abandonment.' Perhaps some closures may have to do with an owner retiring from business - but not all could be for that reason. Another example is the Art Gallery beside Rothe House. As a visitor in your city we cannot really comment as to the cause of this movement away from the city centre of businesses which have been central to the city's development. We did read in the local newspapers that there is concern as to increases in rates and that this may be one of the causes. We understand too however that local authorities have to raise finance to run a city. The local newspapers say that there are more than 50 city centre businesses in this situation. This - if correct - is a 'frightening' number. And given the number of such premises we encountered, the calculation does not surprise us greatly. We cannot argue whether this assessment of the cause is correct or incorrect. It may be important to consider the age-old adage not to 'kill the goose that laid the golden egg'. The number of closed premises in relation to the overall number of operating premises looked more like the situation we might expect to encounter in rural towns in areas in decline - and not expected in a seemingly thriving city. Like other adjudicators before us we admired the great individuality of the businesses in the city centre and in particular on High-Street. Kilkenny has not 'fallen prey' to generic high-street businesses moving in with their ensuing lack of individuality. We would hate to see this happening, but fear that it may - with so many properties looking to new owners. Quite a number of premises which are 'to let' or 'for sale' are deteriorating. One such premises was a Lessperts (with cigar importer sign in the window). A public house called the Black Cat also looked unused. Other still very well maintained premises such as Sean Byrne's convenience store and off-licence near St Mary's Cathedral are closing. In fact the notice in the window said that the closure was on the night of our visit. This looked like a very interesting traditional shop -another part of a city neighbourhood lost - at least pro tem.

We admired some lovely traditional sash windows which remain within the city centre, together with attractive hood moulding - for example that at the Market Deli by the Market Slip. Obviously you have encouraged the insertion of internal shutter screening rather than barricade-like external shutters to businesses. Nonetheless there are some external shutters remaining such as at Paul's shop, and although we admired the lovely gold lettering on P.T. Murphy's - the closed double shutters beneath the gilt name sign detracted. The otherwise well presented ground floor of Goods shop facing the Medieval Museum also included an external screen. Some screens could benefit from repainting - such as that at Argos. The internal screen at B. Mc Eneaney was noted, but the strident six down-lighters detract from this shop frontage. Can you encourage the insertion of integrated down lighting in any new planning proposals? Lines of somewhat haphazard external down lighting are disappointing throughout the streetscape. Does your local authority have an Architects' Department - or can professional advice be sourced to deal with streetscape issues such as this?

The grounds of St. Mary's Cathedral and its precincts looked very well. The Mother of Fair Love school nearby was presented in a very neat fashion. Perhaps its railings might benefit from a repaint. We noticed satellite dishes on the front of a number of houses -for example at Faice Séamus. We would encourage you to campaign to eradicate any move to an increasing number of satellite dishes on the front elevations of buildings. People need to be aware that this is a planning issue and such dishes detract from the streetscape in general. Friars' Bridge Lane is a mixture of new apartments and old buildings. Once again the issue of satellite dishes occurs, and some repainting of the apartment buildings would be desirable. In general in this area - old stone and new buildings along the Breaghagh River were well presented.

One of the few modern architecture inserts into city centre Kilkenny to date has been the new Courthouse - which is reality is in an area not greatly frequented by pedestrianised visitors. Obviously its siting was connected with the old Courthouse. However it will have 'company' close by in the new cultural quarter. This is important as this century's architectural expression needs to add its footprint to your city, and the talented architects in your city need room to

express their talent. Kilkenny to date appears to this adjudicator to lack nuclei of significant modern architecture - even modern churches appear absent.

Some well presented out-of-town public buildings impressed the adjudicator in their maintenance/presentation such as the Garda station at Dominick Street.

Your use of Irish in various ways is commendable. Your bilingual street signs looked very well. We admired the good Irish lettering on the Áras at Nowlan Park. In the city we admired the shop front of Ó Riada in Parliament Street, which was well maintained and also the Ó Mórdha shop front - which is to let - with its lovely gilt lettering (and down lights which detract). And although An Poc Fada's upper floor elevation could do with a face-lift - nonetheless the use of Irish is good

There are many examples of good cast iron railings throughout the city and these should be conserved. An example would be the good railings and gates fronting the terraced houses opposite the McDonogh Junction on the old Dublin Road. Some of these - as well as some other observed cast iron railing would benefit from attention. Good railings were also observed on Patrick Street near the junction of Ormonde Road. Some fine Georgian door cases were also observed on Patrick Street.

Some laneways such as Chapel Lane appear to have received more attention than other laneways and alleyways. Of particular note here and elsewhere were the jostle stones serving the narrow lane. The laneway known as New Building Lane needs attention to the walls at the entrance and to the ceiling of the arch above. Nearby, by contrast, the modern Market Cross access looked really well with its delightful colourful display of rainbow hued umbrellas. This reminded the adjudicator of the Christo and Jean-Claude public art umbrella project in California and of some Italian arcades. Cabling at the entrance to Pudding Lane is strident.

In High Street - premises such as RJ Ryan contrast with the dilapidated condition of the disused motor garage premises adjacent. The former appears to be one of many long-term family businesses in your city, as discovered through reading one of your local papers. Nearby the freshly painted Pandora premises and the stark - but uncluttered - Post Office building caught the eye. The rise and fall of roof levels adds interest to the streetscape of High Street.

Infill development has been successful in many areas - one such example being the area near St. Canice's Church which includes the traditional red and white butchers' premises/ St. Canice's parish building and the new Affidea building.

The Smithwick's building and the old Courthouse looked well. Nearby a large banner/advertising hoarding attached to railings (for a riverboat) detracted from the adjacent double limestone door case with its beautiful fanlights. We liked the simple name sign on the Allen's premises. Mitchell House will be a wonderful 'end stop' to John's bridge as one approach from the city, when complete.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

A very attractive feature of Kilkenny's landscaping programme is the fact that both natural free-flowing landscaping and formal landscaping have their place, as suits the city's status as a formal space in its centre and less formal space in its off-central areas. From the Castle gardens to open river marshland the scene changes. There are formally planted roundabouts such as the roundabout serving Dean Street/ Butts Green/Water Barrack. An example of an artistically landscaped roundabout was that between Lidl and Aldi shops in the area south of Nuncio Road. Formal beds were admired nearby at the roundabout end of Dean Street and in a raised bed fronting the boundary wall of St. Canice's church. Those in front of the Carnegie Library also looked well. You are to be commended on your maintenance of these colourful formal beds. An example of a meticulously planted raised stone bed was that near the Watergate Theatre as one approaches Parliament Street.

Along the pedestrian bridge at John's Quay we noticed some gaps in the flower boxes attached. This created a little distortion of the overall visual context. We also noted the modern habit of attaching locks to the bridge. Most of these represented visiting couples, and we were rather amused by the fact that one of these locks also had a timer attached! (We noted the commemoration of John Egan Mayor - as well as your Smarter Travel plaque on the city side of the pedestrian bridge).

We admired three lovely new trees in the grounds of the Mother of Fair Love school near St Mary's Cathedral. Some bright poppies were seen in its front garden.

We really liked St. James's Park redevelopment. It is classical in its simplicity and its cleanliness. Its simple grassed areas with natural stone edging, its hedges, and trees at its perimeter create no 'fuss' but rather a great sense of enclosure. The statue is well presented, as are the six seats. The Park is set off by the enclosing traditional terraces of townhouses. Please note our comments under Roads etc. below with regard to accessing this lovely park.

The river paths and appropriate railings along the Breagh River were enjoyed. This is a lovely natural Greenway full of trees and native shrubs. The river was in good flow and extremely clean. This is an unspoiled 'to be treasured' area which you have recognised in your recent study. As one walks from the river on Dean Street views of St. Canice's Cathedral were admired - but a white three gabled building in need of attention (beside the House of Stoves) detracts from views of the St. Canice's Tower.

We very much liked the large scale boxed tree planters with attractive wooden seating and unified pink floral displays on Patrick Street. Conversely we feel that the planters at the area containing the new interpretive walkway signage by John's bridge are unnecessary and superfluous - given the natural amenities of the river. Furthermore these planters looked quite minimal in their contents.

The linear park/ loop walk along both banks of the river Nore is a wonderful resource for the city, and we were impressed with the informative new signage beside the Kilkenny hurlers' sculpture. The smaller scale limestone column in honour of all Kilkenny citizens who died in past wars is a lovely piece of sculpture in this area. Seating here looks somewhat haphazard as it does not follow the line of the paving. We think it would look better if the seats were straightened to follow the vertical or horizontal paving edges. We commend you for including key distances on the signage for the walks - as on a very wet evening is helped us to plan a route. This is also very important for people with young children or for people with mobility issues. Having access to the riverside walks from such a central city location is good. One can plan's one's walk taking in the different amenities and points of interest as one's interests dictate. Well done on providing signage at the suspension bridge and additional planting at the Peace Garden which looked well on adjudication day - despite the incessant rain!

Your list of stakeholders with regard to sustainable grassland projects is interesting. The grasslands are located strategically at various points throughout the city. You are maintaining wildflower areas at three locations. Perhaps you can add to these sites into the future. Sanding of all-weather grass paths and the improvement and increase in signage is welcome.

It is good to see native species been planted on approaches to the city which sets the tone for the good landscaping projects in store for the visitor. Hebron Road tended to look a bit bare in places - so the new tree planting will help. Further planting near historic sites was noted - at the Castle area and at the Black Abbey. Well done on accessing funding for the River Walk linking Bateman Quay to the Nore and we look forward to seeing this project progress. This extends the river area interest outwards from the core.

The good paving and delightful semi-mature trees in the Black Abbey area - together with the seating (which interestingly was sited so that the seats faced in opposite directions allowing for a person to follow the sun shine) was almost visually obliterated by the number of cars parked in the area. Some of your work in this category concerns maintenance but also upgrading of existing excellent resources. You have a lot of excellent resources in your inherited environment to maintain and we salute you for that!

On an annoying unimportant note of detail for you (we are sure) -The Colles Horse Trough was unplanted - or no growth was appearing. As the trough had soil we expect that you intended it to have growth.

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

We visited the Newpark Marsh Park with its freshly painted turquoise/white signage. On a quiet Sunday evening the area was filled with birdsong. Perhaps you could paint its field gates. We observed the pollinator signs in the Park. The clubhouse with window grilles near the Astro turf basketball court nearby detracted a little from the setting. Have you thought about getting the local school involved in nature surveys here?

On our visit we were not lucky enough to see the Peregrine Falcon circling the area around St Mary's Cathedral. But we are delighted to know that you have this rare bird of prey and the buzzard frequently visiting the steeple.

Coach Road with its high stone walls and stone-wall vegetation is a little oasis of biodiversity within the delightful precincts of St. Canice's Cathedral. The same can be said for the area around Church Lane.

We noted that the colourful yellow dandelion was left for the pollinators behind the cast iron bollards and chains at Watergate. Perhaps a little explanatory sign here for the public might be appropriate - lest they accuse you of not weeding. It would also be good publicity for your Pollination promotion - as the small area is on the main tour artery.

Your bird habitat and awareness programme is indeed extensive and involves practical on-the-ground works such as the raptor nesting box, woodland management bird box, and maintenance as well as a number of talks and walks together with important survey work. Eradicating invasive species is a slow and painstaking operation and needs to be addressed in a professional manner. You are currently in year five of that program. Do not lose heart - it is a worthwhile venture.

We can really see how the outdoor classrooms in the area around the Breaghagh River and Newpark Marsh provide on-the-doorstep access to unspoiled biodiversity. As we walked from Black Mill Street across the river and onto Dean Street the tranquillity of this area and its unspoiled nature was appealing. The undisturbed area beside the river on both banks, together with the stone walls providing other habitats were a delight to find in close proximity to such a busy city centre. This area - despite being close to a busy roundabout seemed a place 'apart.' The tranquillity not alone will encourage wildlife but also hopefully provide stress relief for the students! We applaud you for the projects you list in relation to this area which are in progress or planned. Well done on involving local residents also.

An innovative approach involving the probation service is afoot in four historic graveyards. We all know how nature-rich graveyards are. This will be brought home to visitors to the graveyards through the erection of information boards in due course. The work at the various wells is being conducted a tasteful manner. We assume archaeological advice was available. Swans and ducks are in safe hands in your city. You have made a huge effort to inform the people of the city about nature and biodiversity through weekly articles, garden talks, and talks on tree

heritage. The organic gardening talk must- inter alia - surely help those people involved with the various allotments.

We know you are very proud of your putting the B in KKB. And your project book shows this clearly in the delightful bee cartoons on almost every page. (We are not surprised that you adopt the bee as your County insect given its traditionally accepted colouring!) The beekeeping course will have brought many people 'into the fold' and ongoing maintenance of fruit trees etc. and the encouragement of late grass cutting will hopefully be followed by individual gardeners. Well done to the children of the CBS primary school and the children of St John's Parish for wildflower endeavours !Last year's adjudicator suggested that you try to document year on year to see what increase you are supporting. Have you looked into this?

You do not tell us but we noticed on your new signage at the Noreside that public lighting is switched off at 10 PM support of local habitats and wildlife. This board draws attention to the importance of such aspects of your work and also is important from a public safety point of view.

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

You have listed 11 projects under this category heading. Plastic is being outlawed. However it is important to remember that for some disability issues plastic items remain necessary for various reasons. There is indeed a Facebook page asking for consideration in not putting a blanket ban on products required by the disability sector. Interestingly you encouraged non-mechanical floats and presentations in this year's St Patrick's Day parade. It would be interesting to have heard what percentage of participants took this step. The apple juice pressing and the encouragement of home-grown food products saves on the transportation of food into the city. Your Green Schools will have lots to say in relation to sustainable transport initiatives. Indeed with so many schools involved in the Green Flag project we feel that perhaps a special subcommittee of students might be formed to advance (with you) sustainability efforts in general in the city It is good to know that some of your restaurants are buying into this type of project by using locally produced food ingredients. Considering the number of restaurants in Kilkenny we hope that those listed will be joined by many others in the future. Your green charter extends to stallholder owners

Like other cities of your size there is a move to provide pilot electrical bus services. Meanwhile your cycle ways and shared areas promote sustainability. City walking tours and city cycling tours together with the tourist train help also.

The fashion junk couture has become a popular project in sustainability. Reuse month last October used crafts to promote recycling and the bicycle repair workshop and the great Mens' Shed movement provided further impetus to reusing and recycling. Creative writing also played its part. The reuse of cycles for Africa helps. As last year's adjudicator mentioned emphasis on recycling/reuse and segregation is good – but to get to the kernel of this issue we must find ways to prevent the production of waste in the first case The Stop Food Waste project is potentially a major project and we know that you have provided a workshop over four weeks on this issue. We would be very interested in finding out if you have any statistics next year to see what the effect of this has been with your residents. How many - if any houses participate in the national Green Homes scheme? Home energy saving audit kits were available from the library. Do you have any results from these audits? The Three County's Energy Agency and the Irish office of a wind farming design company are in Kilkenny. Electric car charging points are still low in number but hopefully will increase. We wondered if the public realm truck we saw some years ago is the one now to be replaced. Replacement LED public lighting in the city the size of Kilkenny has and will be of greater importance as non-led lighting is replaced. The climate action by school students was universally supported this year. We will be interested to see what comes out of that in your city schools.

Overall we feel that you can still improve your sustainability standing (and markings in this category) with good professional advice from the relevant agencies. Like last year's adjudicator we feel that you need to establish baselines and then keep records of where you save on waste - and in doing so can monitor your achievements annually. Kilkenny is a very large city with a large number of businesses. Could you conduct a study in relation to the sustainability efforts of businesses and industries in the city as a whole? Would local businesses and industries get involved in their own waste audit and see where they can eliminate - what in time becomes waste from their operations? Meanwhile we will be interested in finding out the level of plastic waste produced in the local business community when the survey is completed by the transition year students. You have not indicated the number of businesses involved in the survey as far as we can see. Have you considered seeing how much the harvesting of rainwater for gardens and local individual residences can /will help? We would recommend that you keep in touch with the Environmental Awareness Officer of your local authority whom we are sure would be very happy to help you to advance in this category. The Tidy Towns Handbook will also help you to come up with ideas and the local waste prevention website - which you can link to from the Tidy Towns website is also a good source for new ideas.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The biggest surprise that we got early on our extensive walking adjudication of the city was the condition of the area around the new Medieval Museum. Standing at the gate way to the museum and looking back towards High Street the lower storey of the four-storey building (which was painted green) looked very scruffy and in need of paint. This would be a visitor's viewpoint on exiting the museum towards High Street. The laneway connecting the Medieval Museum to St. Ciaran(Kieran) Street leaves a lot to be desired with regard to its building stock. The good paving and delightful stone walls surrounding the museum are 'confronted' with a dreary continuation of the backs of properties. One has a planning application in situ. The others - and indeed it - badly need painting and upgrading - especially as the sign for the tourist office currently directs people along this route. There was also a little graffiti on the Crotty Bakery elevation. The cartoonlike mural on the Crotty Bakery door did not, we feel, fit in with this mediaeval quarter. And beside this there were wires/ gutters / an electricity meter on a sub standard background

wall. The Framemakers premises beside the tourist office stood out in bright contrast to the rundown approach from the museum. Beyond the tourist office the tunnelled passage was unsightly. Two 'no parking signs - one near the entrance to the museum itself needed renewal. Further graffiti and murals - together with unsightly window grilles did nothing to enhance the laneway route in the opposite direction - towards the back of the Tholsel. Here again the roof of a tunnelled area under a building's first-floor was in very poor condition. There was further graffiti on a black door, and many walls requiring attention closer still to the St. Ciaran Street pedestrian sign. The way out onto High Street from this point is set in a walled festooned with downpipes. Further graffiti was noted on a dirty cream door and on a dark blue door with a grille in front. All in all this forms a poor and unfair introduction to Kilkenny for the visitor. Perhaps you have tried to do something about these precincts and have failed in trying to engage with owners/occupiers? But if so it is a pity that you did not tell us.

Despite general high standards there were other areas and instances where improvement is needed. An example would be the junction of William Street and High Street (by the corner of the optometrist). The wall on the William Street side - would benefit from repainting, as would the upper floors of Richard Duggan and Sons. The strident row of projecting down lighting on the same premises detracts from this streetscape also. Good footpaths and paving on William Street - together with the delightful mature trees - contrasted with other premises such as Duggan's (empty) and Sabo (for sale). Wooden entablatures at a restaurant frontage looked very well. The row of cream /grey/ pale pink and green houses at the top of William Street were well maintained. The modern building and Methodist Church form an interesting contrast at the top of the same street.

Other corners which would benefit from attention are those between James Street and High Street and James Street and Kickham Street. The linear effect of the good paving on James Street leads the eye towards the tower of St. Mary's Cathedral and 'invites one' along this route. Again we admired the good tree planting along this street. Christmas stars on James's Choices premises looked incongruous, and we noted that this building is to let. We hope that its new owner will repaint. We wondered however about the hard surfacing around the tree bases and how this impacts on the health of the trees. Further empty units were noted at the side entrance to the Market Cross shopping centre - and auctioneers' notices and large scale window advertising somewhat detracted. Yet another empty premises was noted on the access to the car parking area across the street from the side entrance to the Market Cross shopping centre. Finally at the Kickham Street end of James Street we wondered could be a more aesthetically pleasing height barrier be provided?

We were disappointed that the brackets for banners along St. John's Quay were empty in this - the height of the tourist season. Perhaps these brackets are going to get new banners or perhaps the banners were away for cleaning?

Evans Lane opposite the old Courthouse/Smithwick's was a little dull with some derelict premises. Between this lane and Rothe House an unoccupied premises had no proper guttering, and the rain poured down incessantly on passers-by.

The wall at the vocational school - as well as the Ossory Youth building on Lower New Street could be painted - especially as this street now provides visitors access to visit the Talbot Tower - likewise the Clubhouse hotel car park gate pillars.

In the Hebron area we noticed some excessive signage - such as the signage on the access splay area to the O' Loughlin Gaels sports complex. In this area also the walls of Nowlan Park need attention. Furthermore a large political poster opposite the turnstiles of the complex (beside a restaurant) requires removal. The Nore golf range located in a treed and leafy area had a well planted entrance - but a poor sign.

We observed just a little litter outside the curved exterior of the enclosed Newpark Eurospar shopping centre. And there was one overflowing bin by the river on the green riverside sward in front of a hair/beauty premises (over the wall beside the picnic bench). A rubbish bin across the road from St Mary's Cathedral precincts was full - with a very slight overflow

On Ormonde road the double black gate

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

The very fact that so many residential estates enter your awards competition says a lot about the enthusiasm there is throughout the city to keep your residential areas well maintained. It is good to see also that you recommend improvements and help guide the volunteers in the right direction. Congratulations to each of the winners last October.

Thank you for the photographs of the spring bulb planting commenced during the past year and for the introduction of fruit trees which you say ripen in warmer Kilkenny! (I don't think much ripening happened on the adjudicator's visit - watering yes but ripening no!) It is good to see that your residents associations include both private and local authority residential areas. We noticed that you have a specific competition for local authority estates. Upgrading areas serving residential users - be it in residential estates or within the city proper is important. We wish you success with the continuing upgrading of Vicar Street. You have given us examples of such works. And you also have included accommodation for the homeless in your Good Shepherd Centre.

In the area around Dominick Street - and between it and the Fire Station there are many well-kept local authority dwellings with leafy surrounds. Kilkenny abounds in many leafy mature residential suburbs with settled detached

houses - located behind good stone walls with much planting. Such an area is found on the approach from Freshford in the region of the Loretto School.

Railings fronting the fairly modern single storey terrace of houses fronting Cathedral Square car park would greatly benefit from repainting

Some houses stood out in our walk around the city. One such was the house with the red door and Virginia creeper/ground floor hedging framing its windows on Black Mill Street. There are some good stone houses along John's Quay -presenting a good image to the river. A lovely terrace opposite the pedestrian bridge was admired with its redbrick door and window surrounds. We greatly admired the well presented bright blue house and its wonderful limestone door case and fanlight on William Street. There were many more - too many to list.

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

You have a comprehensive series of projects to provide planting of trees, shrubs, and flowers on your approach roads and lanes and streets. We have referred to some of these projects noted on our walk around already under the Landscaping category. Be careful with the insertion of hanging baskets and window boxes. Planting in the soil is far more sustainable, and watering of window boxes on historic buildings can cause damage to the fabric and associated timbers of the buildings' windows. We note your use of sustainable mulch.

We felt that the pedestrian crossing should be located at the tourist office at Rose Inn Street and not further down the street. It was clear that the river walkway was open by the River Court hotel because of the clear signs on the building under reconstruction. However there is no pedestrian crossing from the River Court side of the river to connect with the continuing river walkway as one heads towards the library and pedestrian bridge. In fact there is no path along the immediate riverbank when one manages to cross this busy junction across from 'Matt the Threshers' until the path recommences further along John's Quay.

Another area where safe access to the pedestrian is denied is in accessing the re-vamped St James's Park. There is no safe crossing to the main entrance to the park from St. Mary's Cathedral side. Likewise there is no dish on the footpath to facilitate mobility issues - although the kerbing on the park side is not as high as the kerbing on the cathedral side, where there is no tactile paving.

We found it rather strange that there was no pedestrian crossing from Dean Street at the fingerpost sign for St. Canice's Cathedral - and this is a very busy thoroughfare. There were two signs for the cathedral - one older and one newer. The new sign mentioned a two-minute walk and also contained directional signage to the Black Abbey, the Medieval Mile and the Round Tower. Perhaps this situation could be rationalized?

Approach roads mostly join the outer ring road on the approach to the city. Would some rationalisation of signage on the approaches outside the ring road be possible? For instance on the Bennetsbridge approach there are a few signs introducing Kilkenny and a large sign relating to an exhibition. The black and white Kilkenny sign on this approach was partially obscured by vegetation. Would it be possible to combine signage into one single location and perhaps provide a lay by where traffic could rest and read the introductory signage safely? Well done on the painting of railings at the community Orchard on this approach and on the Waterford road approach. The local Lions club appear to be involved in much of this work. Well done to them! We have already referred to the good condition of signposting throughout the city.

The Callan Road /western environs is an area which we will look forward to hearing more about in due course. Congratulations to John Street for their success in the Street of the Year Award 2018. Your resident and cafe awards are also noted together with the tourist hostel and station awards. The railway station is like an approach road in a centre insofar as first impressions are concerned. Whereas the railway station was disappointing architecturally - as it has been so modified, the station was spotlessly clean late on a Sunday evening. Full marks on this to all those responsible!

Just on the outside of the ring road between the Bohernatounish roundabout and the Waterford Road roundabout there is very nicely laid-out shopping area also containing the Hoban hotel. Some security fencing on commercial premises facing the exit might be landscaped.

On the approach by Talbot's Inch some weedy footpath edging was noted around the Handball Club. The Phoenix Business Park signs were dirty and some freestanding signs on this Freshford road approach might be removed. The dog track had restrained signage

Well done on all your cycle track initiatives such as those along Granges road in the vicinity of Loreto School. These cycle tracks are critical for the future development of the city, and in particular are safe and useful in the vicinity of your various schools.

Your road infrastructure is good and serves the various needs throughout the city. Wide roads service the Hebron industrial area.

At the Black Mill Street end of the Black Abbey the tourist information sign was very inaccessible due to the parking of what appeared to be large motorcycles covered with silver tarpaulin. Should a resident in this area have a need for such parking perhaps it can be accommodated elsewhere. Likewise a large vehicle was parked on the

well-paved footpath adjacent. Perhaps this had something to do with the fact that it was still possibly late Mass time in the Black Abbey when we visited this area.

Parking along footpaths was noted in a number of locations throughout the city. This should be discouraged, as it is anathema to people with mobility issues, sight issues, parents with buggies etc. Several examples of this were noted on Black Mill Street. It also makes a street/road/footpath look untidy.

We would like to see an increased number of disabled parking spaces. The disabled space at St. Canice's Cathedral on Coach Road would probably accommodate a minibus. But what if others arrive in their private cars simultaneously?

Concluding Remarks:

This adjudicator looked forward very much to adjudicating in your city and was not disappointed. You are in the higher echelons of the competition for a number of years, having successfully been a national winner a few years ago. At this level finer the details of each category become important. In entering the entire city remember to be as careful with the environs as the city centre.

Do 'attack' the problem of the Medieval Museum environs before next year. Do try to find willing eyes to adopt the various bring centres. Do try to spend more time working on sustainability issues at a macro scale. We think you are tremendous in your consistency annually.

The only complaint we had was the weather - about which you can do nothing. We walked for six hours around the city centre in the rain and then drove for a further three hours in the rain around your environs! Once again we apologise for the bedraggled appearance of the maps which we carried on the day. Our camera was very busy all day long, and we wonder if it will ever 'recover' from the damp conditions! But it did not dampen our appreciation for your Trojan work ethic and efforts!

(Whereas the interior of buildings does not concern us we couldn't but note that access to the tourist office in Rose Inn Street required climbing of an internal stairs.)
Go n-eiri libh i rith na blianta atá romhainn!

Second Round Adjudication:

On a busy bank-holiday evening, whilst standing on John's bridge, your adjudicator observed a wonderful sight – two otters feeding and playing in the Nore, accessing the bank by the 'managed for wildlife' sign! By allowing even this short stretch of the foliage on the western bank to grow longer, the necessary cover was provided so the otters could ignore the party-goers in the area (many of whom stopped to debate what they were watching – seals? ducks? Ah - otters!). You have done great work for this category of the competition – congratulations on the 14 pairs of breeding swifts at Kilkenny castle. Further projects involving schools monitoring water-quality are commendable. How many fruit trees have been given out to residents now? Are all estates covered or can you target areas where more are needed?

It was a poignant weekend to visit as demolition had just commenced on the brewery. You are wished the best for this development. Empty properties were mentioned by the previous adjudicator - you are known for your excellent festivals and pop-up shops that may avail of some of these premises as a temporary measure? Your adjudicator did feel that the balance of old and new buildings works quite well - some of the newer buildings still need some 'bedding-in'. You are commended for the great management of the older buildings in the City. So, Thanks to a local guide, we understood the imagery of the blue-faced Petronella being burnt on the pyre. Whilst created some time ago – this hoarding and mural still works well and maybe a little interpretation could help here (as could the cutting back of ivy growing over her head!)?

New street furniture worked well – the integrated lights in the landrails at the pedestrian footbridge were a clever safety feature. The spaces between the planters here allowed for views to the river. As mentioned, - watch the habit of padlocks here as you could end up with the problems faced by the Pont Des Arts bridge in Paris which collapsed under their weight. However, there seems to be a push away from the planting of perennials for pollinators and now planting appears more formal with a lot of begonias and petunias planted now providing strong bursts of colour – but are these pollinator-friendly? Your entry says you use pollinator-friendly plants but traditionally they offer little for wildlife. Near the pedestrian bridge, the formal public gardens on the bank of the Nore, just north of the Carnegie Library, looked wonderful. The design, position and maintenance here made this area highly presentable, and the best thing was that most of the planting included pollinator-friendly varieties.

Cycling provision was excellent and the linear park was enjoyed providing quick and safe access into the city. Repaired bikes sent to the Gambia is another worthy project. This adjudicator found cycling around the centre of Kilkenny was an easy way to avoid traffic congestion by our first adjudicator on pavements and roads! Japanese knotweed was under treatment at the linear park near to the community orchard where apples would soon be ready for harvesting! Works were being carried out at the end of the path to remove vegetation (possibly on a private site) and sadly hydraulic fluid was leaking from machinery here.

Under litter & tidiness, the first adjudicator highlighted several issues. This adjudicator felt that on a bank holiday weekend you did great work. Bins were clean and serviced and little litter was observed – just some boxes at bottle banks. One area of focus could be at Market Yard as there were cigarette butts and a lot of chewing gum in and

around tree pits. Fresh cable ties were noticed on poles around the main traffic routes near the fire station and garda Station. The sewer-vent pipe on Vicar Street needs attention. The bottle banks have a standard large KCC metal sign that is beginning to look tired and could be updated –plinths and wooden frames are an idea for these in places. The infamous Nore Dragon Paddlers were seen in action – congratulations on their community award. At the other end of the city, the swimming point on Bleach Road was enjoyed – clean, nicely managed and great to have life-guards here. Maybe a pop-up bin with a frame could be provided here to prevent the rubbish bags being ripped?

Wooden railings were observed at the Retail Park – could they be planted up with hedging behind to add more to this area?

Overall, we would like to thank you, Kilkenny, for a lovely entry and your efforts and hard work by all over the last 12 months. Refresh yourselves with the changes in direction/policies of adjudication categories and you will quickly get back on track. You have a good understanding of the competition, but it is your cross-community support and the fact that nearly everyone has helped makes the Kilkenny TidyTowns entry an excellent entry.