

Parade and Mayor's Walk, Kilkenny, Urban Design Competition

Kilkenny Corporation and Kilkenny County Council promoted a one-stage architectural competition for the restoration and improvement of the existing Parade and Mayor's Walk area, adjacent to Kilkenny Castle. The RIAI were retained to co-ordinate the competition. The urban design competition was open to architects, landscape architects, planners, urban designers and artists in the EU. The promoters were seeking designers who would be responsible for the design and who could secure the realisation of that design through the mechanism of a conventional building contract. The assessors considered a collaborative approach to be the most appropriate for this project. Competitors were required to submit one A1 drawing and a written report. There was a prize fund of £10,000: £5,000 to be paid to the winning entry, and the balance to be distributed at the discretion of the assessors. The project budget was IR£700,000.

PROGRAMME	Registration opens	1 June 1999
	Submission of entries	31 Aug 1999
	Assessment and report	2-3 Sept 1999
	Announcement of results	5 Sept 1999

ASSESSORS

Ciaran Crotty	Councillor, Kilkenny County Council
Don O'Sullivan	County Engineer, Kilkenny County Council
James Brett	Chairman, Kilkenny County Council
Joe Gannon	County Manager, Kilkenny County Council
Michael McGarry	Architect, McGarry NiÉanaigh Architects
Neil Hegarty	City Architect, Cork Corporation
Pat Gannon	Architect, Office of Public Works
Patrick Shaffrey	Architect, Shaffrey & Associates
Tony Patterson	Mayor of Kilkenny

There were 37 entries, and three general approaches were evident: using geometry/pattern, building/landscape elements, or terracing. The assessors sensed a tendency to over-structure the space, and many misread the essential urban design challenge. The decision of the jury was unanimous.

First

Grace Keeley and Michael Pike

The assessors considered the entry by Grace Keeley and Michael Pike the most appropriate strategy and best capable of development into a comprehensive design.

The description of the space as a figural entity (an urban floor) and the significance to the High Street/Kilkenny Castle relationship marked this scheme out. The proposal, by way of its simplicity and clarity of purpose, recognises that the essential nature of the existing space (the new perspective) is ingenious, and the location potentially defines and circumscribes vehicular movement in the space.

The removal of the railings and the absorption of Mayor's Walk into the main space were not considered essential to the scheme, and merits re-examination.