

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **JOHNSTOWN**
County : **KILDARE**
Category : **A**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 18-07-97

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1997	Mark Awarded 1996
Overall Developmental Approach	50	35	35
The Built Environment	40	30	30
Landscaping	40	32	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	20	19
Litter Control	40	35	35
Tidiness	20	16	15
Residential Areas	30	23	22
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	32	32
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	300	231	228

Johnstown, County Kildare

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Thank you for your completed questionnaire and map which were helpful during the course of adjudication. The adjudicators still have not received your five year plan and would be grateful if you would submit it. You have a small village with a lovely old world charm to it. Because the village is so small, it should be easier to make improvements and in order to create a greater impression it would be helpful to try to innovate with some new projects. Your plan should be simple and realistic, covering 3 - 5 pages, together with a map outlining areas for improvement or particular problem areas. Try to get greater input from your local authority, business community, residents and schools. The visibility of the Irish language was an emphasis in this year's competition, and the adjudicators would like to see more emphasis on this.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

In considering the main aspects of buildings, there are two factors to be kept in mind, one is the quality of the individual structure, i.e., its presentation and materials used and secondly is the building in its overall context. Insensitive changes to individual buildings can destroy the overall character of the street. Buildings on corners, or at the end of streets assume greater civic design importance because of their location. Where such buildings are modified insensitively, or allowed to fall into disrepair, serious visual implications can arise. In your village this year, the Johnstown Inn was well presented. There is a need, perhaps, for more appropriate signage and architecture at its entrance. The area outside Crafts Spun Yarns was freshly painted and was neat and tidy. The Factory Shop, however, next door could be much improved. Could anything be done to improve the closed gate entrance at A.D.M. Also, the building next to the Johnstown Inn took from the overall appearance; you should try to work on this for next year. Johnstown Garden Centre was very well presented, enhanced greatly by good landscaping and colour.

LANDSCAPING

The appearance, maintenance and presentation of the public spaces (including amenity areas, open spaces, footpaths and streams etc.) are a vital aspect of civic design quality. Poor presentation of public areas can take away from high standards achieved by individual properties. Thankfully, Johnstown appears to have a good mix in terms of the built environment (particularly residential areas) and landscaped areas. Consideration appears to be given to landscaping of open spaces in Johnstown, which was encouraging to see. The rose bed area by the pump was an excellent presentation; well done. It is a pity that more traditional seating and bins could not be put in place. The picnic area was very well presented; congratulations to those involved. However, you should try to paint or replace the bin. The graveyard with its Celtic cross is a lovely feature for the village, and is somewhat

hidden away - it was well maintained, however, on the day of adjudication, apart from litter noted. The fencing into the old graveyard is quite unique and attractive. Try, perhaps, to put a seat outside the Council yard, by the shelter area to give it some purpose. The area outside Johnstown Garden Centre was beautiful and very well presented. Shrubbery was noted outside the entrance to Johnstown Gardens Park. Overall, try to work on landscaping the approaches, particularly from Kill, as a good impression could be created here and would help attract visitors into the village.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

Conserving nature is a new venture for many towns and can appear daunting at first. The adjudicators recognise that environmental programmes can take time to get up and running and even longer to assess their success. This section of the report requires an involvement of all groups, including schools in the village. The emphasis is on the conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats and the environment. Woodlands, rivers, ponds, hedgerows, open spaces, graveyards and walls are important habitats. The committee needs to identify the habitats in their area and then determine the appropriate actions to conserve and enhance these habitats. Guidelines in the Tidy Towns book offer other suggestions as to the type of initiatives you might undertake. Is there a local wildlife expert, or a member of the community with experience in this area, that your committee can draw on? In preparing an environmental programme for the village, there should be a year-round emphasis on environmental protection and promotion involving all members of the community. The next step is to identify what habitats are in your area - are there woodlands, wetlands, grasslands or other habitats such as urban spaces, cemeteries, walls etc. Prepare a survey and map, showing the areas of wildlife importance and areas of future importance, e.g. school grounds and gardens, derelict sites etc. Other steps involved in the preparation of the environmental programme for Johnstown would include identification of the flora and fauna in the area, preparation of a wildlife management plan as part of the area development plan and the identification of tasks to be carried out including conservation projects, wildlife gardens, areas of conservation, access, tree planting, information areas etc. These must be carried out in sympathy with the local landscape and must not be overwhelming visually, or environmentally. In this regard, in relation to Johnstown, the river bank offers opportunities for developing wildlife, as do other habitats, such as the graveyard, which was a nice amenity. In general, you appear to have a good approach in managing the wildlife area, allowing for both amenity value and protection of wildlife by landscaping certain sections of the stream, yet allowing for growth in other areas. Also, other areas that offer the opportunity for developing wildlife, are trees, and in this regard it is nice to see mature Beech trees on the approach from Kill.

LITTER CONTROL

Generally, litter control throughout Johnstown was quite good this

year. However, small sprinklings of litter were noted between the white house and the Johnstown Inn. An increased vigilance is all that is needed to maintain an otherwise excellent presentation under this category. Unfortunately, one area that almost escaped the adjudicators was the large amount of litter adjacent to the Celtic cross within the cemetery, which is quite disappointing.

TIDINESS

In general, it would be great if undergrounding of wires could take place in Johnstown, as it would improve the appearance of tidiness greatly. The unoccupied white building down from the Johnstown Inn also takes from the overall appearance of tidiness, which is somewhat disappointing. The other aspect to be considered is, for example, dated or dirty signage, particularly finger post signs. In this regard, try to replace the Dual Carriageway sign.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Why not paint the white house opposite Derain Cottage, as this could be beautifully presented otherwise. The white building down from the Johnstown Inn, as mentioned above, needs painting. The residential area by the rose bed looked very well again this year, with several premises newly painted. (It is a shame the wires can't be removed from here.) An excellent effort was noted at a residence opposite the rose bed also, with excellent use of flowers and hanging baskets, well done. Overall a good performance under this category.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

On the approach road from Kill, grass had been cut but could have been neater. Try to sweep up mowed grass that had collected by the kerbs and detracted from the overall appearance. The approach would also benefit from more maintenance. It was welcoming to see mature Beech trees on both sides entering the village from this approach. Approaching Johnstown from the traffic lights, a very good presentation was noted, particularly helped through the work of Johnstown Garden Centre at its perimeter. However, weeds were noted by the yellow/black kerbing, which took from the overall appearance. Approaching from the Equine Centre, the triangle was partially painted. Weeds had been cleared which was encouraging to see. Some improved surfacing of roads, in general, would help improve the appearance under this category.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

The general impression of Johnstown this year was quite good. However, in light of the size of the village, the adjudicators feel that more could be done. In this regard, the adjudicators would love to see the submission of an innovative five year plan, where you are not afraid to experiment. You have a lovely village, something you should be proud of. Try to make further improvements for next year. The adjudicators look forward to subsequent visits.

SECOND ADJUDICATION (6/8/97)

The village was excellent in its presentation for our second adjudication also. This is the standard we have come to expect from Johnstown. There were very few problems in presentation but one or two opportunities for further enhancement. For example the green roadside verge at the banks of the small stream could be divided into footpath and verge as a path has been worn through the green area making it look rather patchy in places. The storage yards beside the Johnstown Garden Centre could be planted with trees or flowering shrubs behind the roadside boundary wall for greater enclosure. Some weeding was necessary to kerbs at the Conservatory Centre and at the Craftspun Yarn centre. These were noted by the first adjudicator also. As you are aware the large white building beside the Johnstown Inn is in need of repainting or whitewashing to its roadside facade. A litter bin across from the Inn could be touched up also. Flower displays looked tremendous and are a credit to those responsible. The elegant simplicity of the banks of the stream was stunning and provided a quiet oasis adjacent to the busy carriageway. Some consideration might be given to developing the triangular green area on the 'Naas' - 'Westham Farm' accommodation junction and to planting the wire and post fencing inside the green verge on the main road with hedgerow.