

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **BLESSINGTON**
County : **WICKLOW**
Category : **C**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 16-07-97

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1997	Mark Awarded 1996
Overall Developmental Approach	50	30	28
The Built Environment	40	23	21
Landscaping	40	22	19
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	16	15
Litter Control	40	24	24
Tidiness	20	11	10
Residential Areas	30	20	19
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	20	21
General Impression	10	6	5
TOTAL MARK	300	172	162

Blessington, Count Wicklow.

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Thank you for your completed questionnaire and five-year plan, which was very helpful during the course of adjudication. It would be great if you could develop the findings of the building facade survey carried out last year, as a number of premises would benefit from painting. You have a very attractive town which, potentially, could be very much improved; for example, works around the Square over the last few years have helped improved the appearance, and you have a lovely resource in terms of the reservoir nearby. The adjudicators look forward to your plans coming to fruition.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Some nice premises were noted during the course of adjudication this year. These included the Downshire House Hotel; Credit Union House; Blessington Pharmacy; OConnors; Highlands B&B; Ulster Bank which was newly painted; Hennessys Pub but try to remove the stickers from the grocery next door to it; the two churches and schools were very well presented; the Horse Shoe arch feature is a very attractive architectural design; try to conserve this and other unique features in the town. Blessington Bearings and Engineering and West Wicklow House would both benefit from a painting. The Square was very nicely presented and set off well with attractive buildings behind it, e.g. Ulster Bank. Plastic could be removed from a number of premises including The Candy Store. The building owned by the VEC could be much improved. Garden County Fine Foods was also well presented and the entrance to Lakeside Leisure was noted with new pillars and gates, but the area outside could be much improved. At Halla Naomh Iosa, nice cobble locking creates a nice tidy appearance outside this hall.

LANDSCAPING

The adjudicators commend the grounds of the churches and schools which were generally well presented. Well done in this regard. Landscaping at the service stations was generally quite good, in particular, Statoil Service Station. The cemetery was well maintained, with a nice Celtic cross noted. The GAA grounds were okay; a new landscaped area was noted at the Dumping Prohibited sign by the school, well done. Mature trees create a very positive visual effect along the approaches from Dublin. Try to expand on the use of flowers and tree planting. The appearance, maintenance and presentation of the public spaces (including amenity areas, open spaces, footpaths and streets etc.) are a vital aspect of civic design quality. Poor presentation of public areas can take away from high standards achieved by individual properties. Appropriate siting and selection of trees and shrubs for an all-year round effect should be considered carefully.

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 town. 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 town, there should be a year-round participation in environmental protection and promotion involving all members of the community and providing access for all. The next step is to identify what habitats are in your area - are these woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, or other habitats such as cemeteries, walls etc. Prepare a survey and map, showing the areas of wildlife importance and areas of potential importance. Other steps involved in the preparation of the environmental programme for Blessington would include identification of species list of the flora and fauna in the area; preparation of a wildlife management plan as part of the area development plan; work to be carried out including conservation projects, wildlife gardens, areas of conservation, access, tree planting, information areas etc. This must be carried out in sympathy with the local landscape and must not be overwhelming visually, or environmentally. In particular, the lakeshore is an important amenity, and a walk along the road towards the lake could be very valuable, as there are lovely mature Beech Trees. There are a number of forested areas nearby too, and could these be developed or enhanced?

LITTER CONTROL

Try to replace the litterbin by the phone kiosk near the VEC building. New bins were noted along the main street, which is good to see. In relation to litter itself, it was not too bad; however, some sprinklings were noted in minor places; not a bad performance, but try to maintain vigilance in this regard.

TIDINESS

It was good to see recycling facilities. The town, overall, has a tidy appearance, helped by a nice tree lined Main Street and well-presented Square. Try, if possible, to include in your programme the undergrounding of wire cables along the Main Street.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Residential areas in Blessington were very well presented this year; congratulations to those involved. Particularly noted, were Glenview Court; West Park; Ashton; Beechdale and Beechwood Park; all were very neat and tidy and congratulations to those involved. Within the other residential estates, i.e. Mountain View;

Rocky Pool; Rocky Pool Crescent; Lakeview and Carrig Glen, there was a mixed effort, with room for improvement. Some very good individual efforts were noted at Peter Finnegan Park. Overall, quite a good performance in this section.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

The approach road from Naas was very good, helped by the efforts of residential estates and the Community College. Closer in on the right hand side needs more attention; the broken fence was noted on the left hand side, as well as litter this junction needs considerable attention. On the approach road from Dublin, repaint or replace the Blessington sign. Good effort was noted with planting by the sign. On the right hand side, broken fencing was noted and this could be improved. Grassed areas could also be neater. Further in, grassed areas had been neatly cut, which was good to see. Approaching from the south, illegal signs seem to be a problem; grass verges on the left hand side had not been cut back, nor was the right hand side much better; try to replace the Blessington sign. Approaching Blessington from the lake was very appealing with mature Beech Trees; however, grassed verges needed cutting at time of adjudication; some litter was noted here on the left hand side also.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

The general impression of Blessington this year is that it has some fine buildings and nice features. It is well located and laid out with a nice mature tree lined Main Street, creating a very good visual appearance. The adjudicators wish you luck in your Tidy Towns plan. There is considerable work there, which is very ambitious. Keep up the good work, and the adjudicators look forward to further improvements next year.