

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **BRAY**
County : **WICKLOW**
Category : **F**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 30-06-97

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1997	Mark Awarded 1996
Overall Developmental Approach	50	36	33
The Built Environment	40	27	26
Landscaping	40	26	24
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	18	16
Litter Control	40	29	28
Tidiness	20	13	12
Residential Areas	30	20	19
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	28	27
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	300	204	192

Bray, County Wicklow

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Thank you for your completed questionnaire, map and detailed town plan, which was a pleasure to read and gives just one indication of the strong commitment and professionalism which the Beautiful Bray Association gives in approaching this competition. It is always a pleasure to visit Bray; to see continued improvements and to see excellent examples for the competition through voluntary effort and support from the community and how this brings about radical and much improved changes in the urban environment. As the town advances in the competition and generates greater marks in each category, it becomes more difficult to allocate additional marks, once you reach the higher levels of the category, so one or two extra increases are an excellent indication of effort. The visibility of the Irish language was an emphasis in this years competition; try to encourage more of this; it was nice to see it on litter bins etc., however, try to incorporate it into names. It is great to see that you have got to grips with litter, which, for many years, was a problem, and which went against Bray. Now it is time to continue with the good work by concentrating, particularly, on some of the buildings. The adjudicators acknowledge that a lot of work has gone into the preparation of the plan, and even greater work has gone in to follow through with work throughout the year, congratulations in this regard to all those involved, including Beautiful Bray Association, the Urban District Council, Wicklow County Council, FAS and all the volunteers down to every member of the community who has got involved, well done. The adjudicators would have loved to have seen a proposal for the sea front, which was not included in the appendices.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

While there are many fine buildings throughout Bray, the adjudicators feel that this is an area that could be tackled, to help improve the overall appearance. The majority of public buildings are well presented this year including St. Cronans, in particular; its grounds are very well presented; the adjudicators thought that it was good to see that the attractiveness of the Town Hall building has not suffered from the presence of McDonalds, in fact the area adjacent to it was immaculate with litter bins in evidence. All the other public buildings were very well presented, including the Heritage Centre/Tourist Office, the Court House area; the library; churches etc. Service Stations are also generally well maintained. It is nice to see a well cared for monument opposite Bray Bowl. Some premises that deserve a mention include the DART Station; ODriscolls; Salmon Interiors; Molloys; the Vevay Inn; John Kavanaghs (lamps not really necessary as they are not in-keeping with the authenticity of the building). There is considerable room for improvement; many other premises could either be painted up, replace their signage etc. At the Mayfair Hotel, better effort could be made by having better maintenance of less baskets. Industrial areas are generally well maintained and Windsor/Herbert is an attractive new building. The buildings

opposite the DART Station could generally benefit from upgrading, as could many of the shops on the Main Street, and on Quinnsboro Road. Every town in Ireland is different - each has its own unique history, topography, buildings and even use of building materials - but the most important town in Ireland is your own. Much of the overall impression of any town is dictated by its buildings. Each building is unique in its own way and collectively these buildings contribute to the unique character of the town. The best approach is a good mix of residential and commercial enhanced by sympathetic landscaping and appropriate use of building materials. Try to include greater bilingualism in your signage throughout the town, as the Irish language is part of our distinctiveness and identity is important in defining our sense of place, so try to make it a more visible part of our daily lives. The presentation of heritage buildings is to be commended. 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 civic design importance because of their location. Where such buildings are modified insensitively, or allowed to fall into disrepair, it can have serious visual implications. It should be remembered that it is not necessary for new shop fronts to be traditional, or Georgian in character - simple, modern style shop fronts are often more appropriate; an example of this is the new Windsor/Herbert building on the approach road. A well presented forecourt would attract more business than overuse of sandwich boards. The Urban District Council might be able to provide an enhanced advisory service to developers in looking at what options are available. Traditional designs have been used, why not consider the use of plaster and, if using timber, avoid the use of varnishing - a better affect can be used through painting, as varnish tends to weather very easily. It is disappointing to see the on-going deterioration of the National Aquarium on the sea front.

LANDSCAPING

There is good evidence of on-going works taking place throughout the town of Bray; the fact that it is a particularly large area within the boundary means that considerable effort needs to be made in order to (a) maintain existing landscaped areas and (b) initiate new projects, so the work that has been done in this regard is acknowledged as a great effort, well done. There are many fine areas of landscaping, most of the parks and open spaces are very well presented, for example, The Peoples Park, the sea front, etc. Projects that have been developed and not yet completed, for example, flower beds outside the National Irish Bank had not been maintained. There is also good evidence of grass cutting, but try to watch weeds as this needs extra vigilance. The car park on the Strand Road was also much improved, with cobble locking noted. Cobble locking was also a new feature on the Quinnsboro Road, and the traffic calming measures by National Irish Bank, as comments above, had not been properly landscaped yet. Flower baskets were not yet in their prime; the adjudicators were sorry to miss them but acknowledges the work going into them. A nicely

maintained flower bed was noted opposite OToole Harbour Bar. Some tree planting or water feature in front of the church open space on the Main Street might be nice to help soften the surrounding buildings. The entrance to Killruddery House could be enhanced on the Southern Cross Road, while heather was noted near the roundabout near the Greystones approach road. The cemetery car park was well maintained again this year. The grassed area by the Nurseries needs more attention and the area outside Bray Pigeon Invitation Club was also quite bad again this year. Overall, the adjudicators acknowledge the efforts that have taken place, on approach roads at roundabouts and throughout the town and along the sea front.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

It is good to see that you have recognised a number of important habitats in your town and the adjudicators look forward to further developments near the Dargle River Walk; the Bray Head Walk; the Cliff Walk and Bellevue Wood Walks. The only wildlife panel noted was in the scenic car park, but there was evidence of wildlife throughout the town, for example, in the amenity area on the Upper Dargle Road, and also the large number of swans in the harbour area. 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 offers 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 coastal habitats, 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 Bray 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. You might also encourage residents and schools to get involved in this project.

LITTER CONTROL

As stated, in previous years, litter control continues to impress the adjudicators, particularly, in light of the size of the town of Bray. All the main areas, including the Main Street, shop fronts and approach roads were generally neat and tidy and litter free; however, on the Upper Dargle Road, sprinklings of litter were noted. At Fassaroe Park, broken shopping trolleys were noted - a concerted effort is needed here; sprinklings of litter were noted outside the Denture Centre. Overall though, an excellent effort here and one which the adjudicators have tried to reward.

TIDINESS

This section takes into account the colour, screening and signage, including bilingualism and recycling facilities, the absence of fly posting and graffiti, the control of weeds at kerbs and base of buildings and the overall visual tidiness of the town, including its buildings, wire scape, approaches etc. Under this category, the main areas in the town, including the sea front and the Main Street were generally tidy, some of the buildings do take from the overall appearance, and efforts to overcome this will have to be tackled over the longer term. In residential areas, such as on Sidmorton Road and Meath Road there is generally, a very tidy appearance with good effort and lack of cluttering. The Upper Dargle Road is an area that needs to be tackled, in terms of landscaping as the overgrowth took from the overall appearance. A gate way near the roundabout on the Greystones road also was a bit untidy, and the DART car park is also an area that needs improvements, as it was particularly bad at time of adjudication with broken glass etc. Fly posting and graffiti is not a problem, apart from one or two isolated places on outlying areas.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Generally, residential areas were well maintained this year. The only problem would appear to be the presence of weeds along kerbs. The new developments on the Southern Cross road should mature in time, so long as good attention is given to landscaping. It was good to see proposals for environmental improvements at Fassaroe Park, congratulations and the best of luck on this. There are many examples, too numerous to mention, of good residential estates. Overall, a good effort here.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

There is evidence of improvements and maintenance along approach roads. On the approach road from Hills of Bray, the roundabout/motorway area was well maintained. A new wall and tree planting was noted, which is not yet complete on this approach road. Further in along on the right hand side, it does need considerable landscaping; you might try and tackle this for the coming year. Continuing in, there was a much neater appearance, which was good to see, with cut grass and no litter evident, with flower beds noted, well done, however, weeds along kerbs take from the overall appearance as one was getting close to the town. On the approach road from the north, weeds at the roundabout and the cobble locking should be tackled; tree planting was noted; at the Bray signs, it was nice to see the use of Irish. Approaching Bray from the Upper Dargle Road, as stated above,

additional landscaping is needed here and measures for on-going maintenance. On the Southern Cross road, which is still undeveloped, try to replant the dead trees. Other areas such as the King Edward Road; Putland Road; Sidmonton Road and Meath Road were all very neat and tidy, well done. On the Old Connaught Avenue, the approach could be improved. The adjudicators would welcome greater evidence of greater facilities for disabled, for example, seating.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

The overall integrated presentation of the town of Bray this year was very good, congratulations on the effort involved. Praise is due to the volunteer labour force who help out the Tidy Towns Association each year. The adjudicators recognise the fruits of your labour and trust that each member has gained satisfaction from seeing both the town improved and marks improved under this competition. Ultimately, it is your own town in which you live and work and it is hoped that you generate satisfaction from seeing a much improved tidier town.