

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **DONARD**
County : **WICKLOW**
Category : **A**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 15-07-97

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1997	Mark Awarded 1996
Overall Developmental Approach	50	34	33
The Built Environment	40	23	22
Landscaping	40	27	26
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	17	15
Litter Control	40	28	28
Tidiness	20	14	13
Residential Areas	30	16	16
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	24	22
General Impression	10	6	6
TOTAL MARK	300	189	181

Donard, County Wicklow

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Thank you for your detailed form and excellent map which was very helpful during the course of adjudication. Donard was looking very well on day of adjudication and congratulations to the efforts made by all. The adjudicators have still not received your plan and look forward to your submission for next year. You appear to have an excellent community spirit throughout the village. There is still room for improvements in one or two areas, but try to address these within your plan. This 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 years competition, as was accessibility for the disabled and elderly. In relation to accessibility, Donard is to be commended for the excellent work you have done in cobble locking and re-paving throughout the village. Try also to incorporate the historical and cultural uniqueness of the village in your plan; on targeting one or two key projects for improvement.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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 for a good mix of commercial and residential enhanced by sympathetic landscaping of open spaces (which you have achieved very well) and appropriate use of building materials. 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, it can have serious visual implications. There was a mixed presentation under this category this year. First of all the adjudicators commend the excellent accessibility, and improved accessibility that you have created throughout the village with your paving programme, well done in this regard. There is a need for redevelopment of more derelict sites; it is good to see one or two buildings up by the hall renovated. A new wall was noted near Palladius park, well done. The school grounds were well maintained, but try to paint the No Trespassers sign and resurface the area outside it. The Post Office would have benefited from a painting. The Church was painted but weeds were noted in the car park and dumping of masonry waste and bags to the rear was noted. Paint the telephone kiosk. The Church of Ireland was very well presented. The new Credit Union was noted, well done. Try to paint the

boundary wall of the Eastern Health Board. The caravan park is a very nice amenity in the area and was looking very well on day of adjudication. It was also very tidy outside Conrons. The Garda Station was disappointing; it needs to be improved, as does its perimeter wall. The derelict buildings on School road were not looking their best as in previous years. It was nice to see another new vacant building redeveloped near the grotto. Finally, the Pinnacle Bar had made a good effort with flower boxes, but try to improve the sign.

LANDSCAPING

There was an excellent presentation under landscaping this year, congratulations. 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. Thankfully Donard has performed well under this section this year, well done. A number of areas were looking very well at time of adjudication. The adjudicators noted the landscaped areas outside, and opposite the Post Office, and also the area adjacent to the pump and derelict buildings was also looking well. It was nice to see Oak Trees coming along the approach road towards the school. Your investment in the trees here will reap benefits for many decades to come. You also have a historic graveyard, where work was taking place at time of adjudication. The park by the statue was looking magnificent at time of adjudication; well done; it is a very nice feature for the village. Overall a very good performance.

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 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 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 village, 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

Donard 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. One particular area which would be useful would be the development of a school wildlife project, or even a wildlife garden in the school. Well done in cleaning up the stream on the approach from the west; while there might be short term damage caused here, hopefully, in the long term this may be a nice feature for the village.

LITTER CONTROL

Litter control was not too bad in Donard on day of adjudication. The adjudicators commend the weekly litter clean-ups. However, on inspection, sprinklings of litter were noted by Ivy Cottage; at the turning circle in the residential estate and on the road from the west; opposite the shop on the Main Street. Improved vigilance this should overcome this minor problem. It was also encouraging to see a skip in the residential park for the clearing of rubbish.

TIDINESS

The village of Donard looks very tidy this year, relatively litter free and cobble locking throughout the village complemented by well maintained landscaped areas. Try to paint the finger post signs which take from the overall appearance, and also try to remove gravel along kerbing.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Within Palladius Park, the grassed area is much improved this year; the grass on the green had been cut. At the turning circle, it was very disappointing again, with long grass, litter and weeds in evidence - you also have not put up the nameplate yet. Throughout the rest of the village, there are good individual efforts noted. There is obviously a strong pride among residents here. Also, the premises whose entrance is just down from the Church of Ireland could be better presented as the gateway needed to be tidied up. The village has only one residential estate and the adjudicators visit this every year; the fact that you are not coming to grips with the turning circle is something that is disappointing - surely the Residents Association could tackle this project for the coming year.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

The approach road from the N81 along School Road, was very good but try to paint or replace the sign. Approaching from the church, weeds were noted along the gully on the left hand side; this could have been better presented, otherwise the right hand side was very good. Approaching from the west, very good along the right hand side with grass trimmed back, the left hand side was quite bad obviously due to re-developments taking place. By the Donard sign, there was briars overgrown, making it difficult to see. Approaching from Palladius Park, the new wall that has been completed is to be commended, well done. Try to landscape the

grassed area in front of this and also replace the Donard nameplate, which has suffered from graffiti. The Main Street has a very neat and tidy appearance, apart from the litter mentioned above.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

The general impression throughout the village of Donard this year is one of a neat and tidy village, which could look a lot better; however, this is not helped by bad surfacing in places. Donard has demonstrated how it can bring about major improvements through the cobble locking project, landscaping in the square etc. Try to look at the village under all headings in order to improve in this competition. You have a wonderful village and the adjudicators enjoyed their visit and look forward to repeated visits for many years to come. Good luck for 1998.