

*"Caring for our environment"*

Centre : **NEWCASTLE-WICKLOW**  
County : **WICKLOW**  
Category : **C**

**Results**

Date of Adjudication : 30-06-97

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1997	Mark Awarded 1996
Overall Developmental Approach	50	23	23
The Built Environment	40	22	23
Landscaping	40	22	23
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	17	16
Litter Control	40	25	24
Tidiness	20	11	10
Residential Areas	30	19	18
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	24	22
General Impression	10	4	5
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>164</b>

## **Newcastle, County Wicklow**

### **OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH**

Thank you for your completed questionnaire and map, which was helpful during the course of adjudication. The adjudicators did not receive a detailed five-year work plan with your entry this year and would welcome the opportunity to see this for next years competition. This plan should be simple and realistic, covering three to five pages, plus a map outlining the areas for improvement. In this plan, try to incorporate the historical and cultural uniqueness of your village and surrounding area, with accessibility and bilingualism to be evident. It is encouraging to see that efforts are being made by the community, but it is disappointing that you are not getting co-operation from your local authority. The visibility of Irish language was an emphasis in this years adjudication also. The derelict buildings in the town take from the overall appearance and these have not been attended to at time of adjudication. The dereliction in the heart of the village is, unfortunately, taking from the overall appearance of the village - this is one of the things that will have to be tackled. It is a major obstacle for you to overcome, which has been a problem for years. Improvements and maintenance are in evidence in certain areas of the village, but the dereliction does take from the overall presentation.

### **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 standards of maintenance of the few buildings in the village could be improved. Apart from The Bridge Inn, there is room for improvement in all other commercial/public buildings. However, the Church grounds and the school up from the village were very well presented, and are very attractive, as was the Watch Tower building which was excellently presented. The Community Centre; the highly sensitive derelict sites and Urells and the overuse of signage at the local shop, Quinns Stores, take from the overall appearance - improvements are needed in these key areas. Graffiti and litter was evident near the shop. The overuse of stickers on the window takes from the overall appearance. The Bridge Inn made a good effort with flowers, but there is somewhat of an overuse of boxes. What is disappointing to see is Urells - this and the building opposite - there is architectural heritage in these two buildings and is a pity not to see a better effort to improve them. Even the old petrol pumps could be a nice feature if painted up - you should try to maintain these if possible.

### **LANDSCAPING**

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. In general, the adjudicators felt that the southern half tended to be better presented than the northern end of the village. The picnic area opposite Seacourt was well maintained. But, if this is a picnic area, why not make it more accessible for visitors in terms of having displays, signage etc. It is felt that a better presentation could be made at the junction/road to Castle Manor near the bridge. Watch Tower House and grounds were very well presented, congratulations here. The raised bed near Quinns Stores is pointless, from the point of view that it is not attractive and the surrounding wall is too high for visual appreciation of the planting. Also, the area by the pump and by the rose beds on the northern end of the village had not been tended to this year and was very badly presented. There was long grass among the rose beds, the seats had not been painted - this is very disappointing, as this had not been done last year either. Planting was noted outside the B&B near here.

## **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 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? Newcastle has, potentially, a number of unique wildlife habitats having the stream running through the village - it was nice to see that this was litter free. Also, with the villages proximity to the marshes is an advantage that could be grasped. 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 Newcastle 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 can also do smaller projects such as reinstatement and repair of hedges, especially on approach roads, and old walls, woodland

fringes allowed to grow, riversides planted with bank protecting trees and protected from mowing and so on. It is nice to see the native trees coming on well near the picnic area, there are a whole range of hedgerows that could be developed.

## **LITTER CONTROL**

Litter management overall was not too bad in Newcastle this year, but, unfortunately, some was noted in several areas, for example, to the front of the Community Centre could be improved; sprinklings were noted at the bottle bank and also at the bus stop. It is important that proper and adequate litter bins are provided at the bus stop as it is an area where people/children congregate. An election poster was noted on the ground, although marks have not been deducted for this. You should approach your local authority and ask them what they are doing for Newcastle, specifically in regard to The Action against Litter programme. Maintain a vigilance in this area.

## **TIDINESS**

The overall appearance in Newcastle is one of a relatively neat and tidy appearance. On the approach roads, the verges had, generally, a rough cut and lack of attention. The grass had been cut at the tennis court area and was better presented this year, well done. To the front of the Community Centre, needs attention to the entire area, in terms of surfacing, weeds etc. Why not try to develop, say, a basket ball area or mini soccer on this. The car park at the site of the new oratory has weeds but it is noted that this is due for re-development. The car park at the Bridge Inn was well presented, well done. Other factors that take from the overall appearance is unevenness of the road boundary; perhaps the grass kerbing could be improved in parts here. Broken kerbing is still noted near the rose beds/pump. With regard to the margins, e.g. on approach roads, try to leave these partly wild, yet tidy to encourage wildflowers - this could involve mowing a slip of grass along but allowing areas further in along the verges to grow.

## **RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

The adjudication of residential areas includes front gardens, outbuildings, rear gardens, boundary walls etc. All these are considered in the presentation and maintenance of houses is important. Many fine premises with mature grounds were noted on the road to the Church of Ireland. At Seacourt, the front area was well presented this year but try to watch the weeds. At the rear, the grassed area was well presented and was litter free - litter bins might be helpful to prevent any occurrence. At Castle Manor, this is a very well presented park, apart from long grass by the trees and kerbing, which took from the overall appearance - this park just needs that extra effort to create an excellent presentation.

## **ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS**

On the approach roads into Newcastle, the approach from the south was not too bad - good surfacing was noted and fencing and landscaping on the left hand side. The Newcastle sign, however, needs to be painted up - planting could be improved

also. On the approach road from the north, the verges just had a rough cut and the sign needed to be cleaned - this could be improved as there wasn't a very tidy appearance. Approaching Newcastle from the N11, the sign on the right hand side of the road needs to be replaced and this area properly landscaped. On the left hand side, try to re-instate the footpath which is being overtaken by grass and weeds.

## **GENERAL IMPRESSION**

This section takes account of the overall integrated presentation of the village of Newcastle and is also an opportunity to reward exceptional effort in overcoming a difficult problem. The adjudicators recognise that problems exist in terms of support from local authorities, dereliction etc. These are problems common to all towns and there are no marks for aspirations or complaints. Marks are awarded, and available for achievements only. In order to succeed in this competition you are going to have to make a better effort. Even with the size of the village it is possible to make significant improvement and achieve marks at a faster rate than a larger town or village. Try to bear this in mind in reading this report. The overall presentation of Newcastle this year was good, but there is considerable room for improvement and evidence of work done was not that great this year, apart from one or two key areas, e.g. picnic area.