

"Caring for our environment"

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

Results

Date of Adjudication : 11-07-1999

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1999	Mark Awarded 1998
Overall Developmental Approach	50	23	34
The Built Environment	40	25	25
Landscaping	40	25	25
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	17	16
Litter Control	40	25	26
Tidiness	20	12	13
Residential Areas	30	21	20
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	20	21
General Impression	10	5	7
TOTAL MARK	300	173	187

Blessington, County Wicklow

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Thank you for your completed entry form together with your very attractive 3 year plan. An A4 map of the town would be helpful to the adjudicator. Try to present this for next year and include areas that have been improved which helps to ensure that the adjudicator knows all the improvements made. The adjudicator also noted your comments on the entry form in relation to the competition and appreciates the difficulties that you have. However, other large and small towns have succeeded in overcoming many of these difficulties and have been very successful. Resulting improvements made through the competition bring economic benefits as well as improving the visual impacts of the town. All commercial interests in the town should therefore give you their full backing. Try to emphasize this in your discussions with them. Also, continue to seek support from your Local Authority, for example, in relation to Litter Management Plans, which Local Authorities must prepare every 3 years. Enquire with your Local Authorities in what their plans are for Blessington in this regard. Also you might encourage key users to adopt a spot, for example, Roadstone may take on a responsibility for improved maintenance on the approach road from the North. Shop fronts and commercial premises now have a responsibility under new litter laws to ensure that the front of their premises is litter free and this is badly needed in Blessington in several areas so try to get this message across also. The range of residential developments taking place, must allow for adequate and attractive landscaping. Blessington has a number of unique features. The town's proximity to Blessington reservoir also provides considerable scope for amenities development and the fact that it is a linear town means emphasis must be placed on the approaches as well as the main street itself. Your development plan sets out clear priorities and objectives; however until you start achieving success in some of these, it will be difficult to motivate others to support you.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Blessington has a number of very attractive buildings which occupy prominent positions along the main street. The Downshire House Hotel was well presented on day of adjudication, the School and Church grounds were generally well maintained. The Community College was very well presented. Ulster Bank and the Credit Union area was also very well maintained, well done. Good examples of shop fronts were Nugent Estate Agents, Mason Interiors, The Office Shop, Doyles was newly painted and the Post Office was well presented; the new Community Centre was noted and was well presented. Try to paint the Church of

Our Lady; Eastern Health Board had been painted, but try to paint the wall outside. Other premises would benefit from painting, for example, James Miley. Also, there is scope for improvements of signage in some premises, for example, the West Wicklow House, which could be much improved. Its flower boxes were not maintained. The grass could be better maintained outside the Engineers Office. There are other examples of well presented premises, including Houlihans Solicitors, Garden County Fine Foods in the industrial estate and the entrance to Blessington Adventure Centre. Overall there are a number of fine premises in the town, many of them well maintained. The attractiveness of the linear main street and the importance of several key buildings requires a need for other premises to be more sympathetic to their surroundings.

LANDSCAPING

School grounds were very well landscaped, well done. Stat Oil was well maintained, the shrubbery at the corner by the bus stop on the approach from Dublin Road was noted. Planting was also noted outside Charles Camping. The landscaping by the Church could be perhaps improved. The planted flower box using the old boat near the engineers office was a nice touch, try to expand on ideas like this. Overall though, there is considerable room for improvement, e.g. the area around the Naas road junction was badly maintained.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

In light of the current expanding area of Blessington, it's important that you plan for the future to allow for incorporation of wildlife and natural amenities into the overall town development. In this regard, Blessington is blessed with its proximity to Blessington reservoir which provides extremely important natural amenities for its development of wildlife. It's good to see that you've identified the role that schools can play in this but also try to enlist the help of local wildlife experts in order to see how you can develop under this category. The road leading to the Blessington reservoir is also quite good, with a number of mature trees and hedge rows before leading onto the reservoir area. This obviously provides important habitat close to the village.

LITTER CONTROL

Litter was noted outside Texaco garage and also the corner shop was quite bad on day of adjudication. Litter was also noted by the seat in the park and on the approach road from the lakes. Litter was also evident all the way down the Naas Road and it was also very bad outside the Community Education Centre. While the adjudicator's visit took place at the weekend, which obviously is a busy time for the town, it

really was unacceptable and greater efforts are needed in this regard. First of all premises now have a responsibility as mentioned above to ensure that the area directly in front of them is litter free and this should be conveyed to owners. You have to ensure that litter bins are provided in areas. Try to tackle key areas where litter is occurring. This would entail liaison with schools and residential estates. This area will have to be tackled for next year.

TIDINESS

Generally the visual impact noted by the adjudicator when driving through the town was that the approach roads could be neater in terms of the way they are presented. Presence of signage on premises on the main street also tends to take from an otherwise tidy appearance; even back areas need attention, for example, the car park behind the AIB which is very untidy. Also things like removal of overhead wire and signposts such as the Wexford/Naas sign need to be replaced.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

There are some very good examples of well maintained gardens throughout Blessington and well done to those involved in maintaining them. These include Naomh Iosaf and also the house next to it, Highlands House B&B, Beech Dale, Glenview Court, Ashton Deer Park. The entrance to Mountain View could be improved. At Lakeview, the shrubbery at the Go Slow sign was not maintained. Litter was quite bad but some good individual efforts were noted.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

On the approach road from Baltinglass grass verges along the left hand side were long and the presence of legal signage is much improved. However, long grass by poles and the "Keep Blessington Tidy" sign tend to detract from the appearance. Long grass was also flowing out of flower baskets on poles! Surely this is not the intention! At the junction with the Naas Road presentation was quite dismal and this focal point needs urgent attention for next year. It is actually quite dangerous moving out of this junction onto the main road because of long grass. On the approach road from Dublin, shrubbery was noted at the corner by the bus stop. The right hand side had long grass, broken fencing; closer in weeds were noted on the right hand side. Shrubby was also noted but again long grass was evident along this stretch. Approaching Blessington from the lake, provides a lovely vista with mature trees, however the long grass and weeds again by kerbs, take from the overall appearance, not helped by either by graffiti on the Blessington sign.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

Even though the adjudication took place at the weekend, lack of effort, for example, in the presentation of the approach roads, together with other key areas with long grass growing out of what should be magnificent flower baskets growing on poles tended to suggest to the adjudicator significant progress is needed in Blessington. Try to work on the comments made in this report for next year and in particular try to tackle the approach roads which have the most immediate impact as one nears the town.