

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **FEAKLE**
County : **CLARE**
Category : **A**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 15-07-2001

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2001	Mark Awarded 2000
Overall Developmental Approach	50	33	33
The Built Environment	40	29	29
Landscaping	40	27	27
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	18	17
Litter Control	40	28	27
Tidiness	20	12	11
Residential Areas	30	22	22
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	27	27
General Impression	10	6	6
TOTAL MARK	300	202	199

Feakle, Co. Clare

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Feakle is situated in a spectacular location overlooking surrounding hills and essentially follows a ribbon development pattern along a mid-contour. The entry form could have described the circumstances that the village has to contend with, so as to provide a better understanding for the adjudicator of issues and context that the village must handle. This information is generally contained within a 3-5 year works program and development plan that highlights the aspirations and goals of the committee and includes a works program in the context of what was achieved each year. Essentially this document tries to direct the works program towards long term investment. Feakle requires such a document and this will help explaining issues to third parties if funding is sought. The mark for this category will definitely improve with the submission of such a document.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The straddling nature of the main street develops a character that is very relaxed and full of surprises for different sections of the street. The works at the intersection of the Town Square provide one of these discovery points where the new works allow for a well used amenity space. The mosaic boards and statue allow for interest though there is possibly the need for more planting. The small stream and bridge are another event along the main street that has very good paving and interesting treatment, the small weir with falling water at the base of the wall makes the space very intimate. There are many elements along this street that require long term repair works. It is noted that the ash tree that is commencing a new life at the base of the stone steps leading to the first floor of a barn/ shed, must be re-located before it does structural damage. The GAA grounds could improve the presentation of their boundary wall, as it is quite messy. Loughnane's Hostel is a sensitive new addition to the streetscape. In general the new works associated with the main street all demonstrate a preference to work in sympathy with the existing heritage and this must be commended.

LANDSCAPING

The landscape is the most important feature of the village and it begins with the display of good roadside hedging and some wonderful arched trees over the road. The urban area is quite defined by strong groups of terraces with intersperse mature vegetation. All of this reinforces the rural context of the village. Important issues are the future planting schemes, which must use native plant selection, and recommendations would seek a certain amount of evergreen plant material within the urban stretch. The

current use of potted plant material is effective but only satisfies a short-term result. This approach should be altered on the exit road towards the thatched cottages where the tub plantings should be replaced with long-term plantings of trees to define the edge of the road. The centre of the village has excellent examples of flowers in pots and the display of the hanging pots with the birdhouse is an illustration of the fun that can be achieved. The treatment by the small stream with the painted branches is again a novel idea and works well for adding interest to a space. The plants in the Square area should be transplanted from the plastic tubs

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

There is a wonderful opportunity to develop a wild life project in the centre of the village, by using outdoor boards illustrating ecology of the surrounding landscape. The local school should be a prime motivator in this project. There is a need to explore this category with an element of creativity and use it to emphasise an aesthetic that responds to the surrounding countryside. This is stated as the landscape treatment for both public and private areas relies very heavily on foreign plants. The mark was raised because of the current integration of the countryside with the village.

LITTER CONTROL

This element of the competition is very well handled and no litter was noticed in the village.

TIDINESS

The village has a neat and tidy appearance, which is well presented, but there is some dereliction that needs to be addressed so that the streetscape does not get run down. An aspect of tidiness is the whole interpretation of how the village is presented and this should be tackled in the development report with emphasise on colour selection for the houses.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

There is only a small component of this land use in the village. For the most part residential development along the street is terraced and thus has limited potential for displaying anything except the architecture. In the lower part of the village beside the GAA grounds the gardens are well presented but the lead in road is in need of a sharper image. The three thatched cottages make for a very pleasant scheme. The various thatching systems are a useful presentation of the different forms of thatch, it is interesting but the traditional thatch with no display at the ridge was the preferred example when adjudicating.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

The main street has just had a portion of the footpath paved with tarmac. This raises the standard of the pedestrian

areas and makes these spaces clearly defined from vehicular space. It is a pity that the Local Authority did not use a concrete finish as this is a more typical rural finish and would have visually connected into the existing footpath system. Consideration for this element of material selection throughout the village is something that should be addressed in the development plan.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

The village is charming and has a latent number of aspects that can easily tackled so that the overall mark can vastly improve. It is recognised that the small number of members will have an impact on making major improvements and this does put a strain on time-scales for village improvements. The recommendation to get the development plan in place is perhaps the most urgent issue so that tasks can be prioritised and support groups found.