

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Blackrock-Louth**

Ref: **158**

County: **Louth**

Mark: **224**

Category: **D**

Date: **10/08/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	38	37
The Built Environment	40	27	27
Landscaping	40	31	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	21	21
Litter Control	40	31	30
Tidiness	20	16	15
Residential Areas	30	27	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	25	24
General Impression	10	8	7
TOTAL MARK	300	224	218

Overall Developmental Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Blackrock to the 2005 Tidy Towns Competition. Blackrock has managed to combine three aspects that of - a dormitory town, a seaside resort, and a town of real character. The successful combination of those characteristics is unusual. The adjudicator was highly impressed by the very degree of organisation that exists within your Tidy Towns Committee and how very well structured you activities are. The presentation of Blackrock to the standard that you have achieved in 2005 is not easy, and the larger the town the harder it is to achieve such standards. The map provided for the adjudicator was really helpful as was the very comprehensive document. Your Committee appears to have a very high degree of community support both in terms of time commitment and finance. It is not surprising therefore to read of the extensive media coverage that you have achieved during the past year.

The Built Environment:

The map provided for the adjudicator indicated listed buildings. It would have been very interesting to know what all those buildings are and why they are listed. Perhaps you can develop a town trail using these buildings. The Main Street follows closely the line of the old traditional Blackrock village and the built environment in the town reflects the older village. Some shop fronts could benefit from improvement and a few plastic shop front signs were noted. Consideration should be given to replacing all these with more traditional materials. Projecting advertising signs were noted on a number of premises and the issue is how many of these are genuinely necessary from a commercial

point of view. The AOH building is in need of painting and the presentation of the National School was quite good. At the School the railings should be painted a bright colour and the addition of some hanging baskets would add an extra element of colour to the building. The Millennium Monument is a beautiful piece of sculpture that fits a water side location so well. A large white building at the northern end of the town had been sold and hopefully the re-development of this site will be totally appropriate to the location. Nearby the Bring Centre was quite well presented.

Landscaping:

The landscaping in the town was really excellent and the half barrels along the sea front combine so well with the natural stone. Trees and other planting have been skilfully used to break up the car parking area along the sea front. On the other side of the road the hanging baskets were looking colourful and fresh on adjudication day. The 'Blackrock in Bloom' and the 'Hanging Baskets & Gardens' Competitions are excellent initiatives as are the various other competitions that you organise or help to organise. Many of the housing estates have made an excellent contribution to the overall image of the landscaping in Blackrock. The raised landscaped area opposite the Claremount Arms also looked very colourful.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The wildlife plaque at the northern end of the Promenade needs to be freshened up and perhaps this is not the best location. As an alternative perhaps a copy of this plaque could be provided near the Millennium Monument.

All towns and villages have the presence of wildlife to some degree. It is important that your Tidy Towns Committee examines this potential further, and see what you can achieve. If you have not already done so, the starting point is to have a habitat survey carried out of the wildlife in your area in which the species in each of these habitats is identified. Suggested habitats to be considered include the following –

- Urban habitats – gardens, waste ground, walls, graveyards, hedges
- Wetland habitats – rivers, ponds, lakes, canals, reed marsh, bogs
- Woodland habitats – forests, hedgerows, plantations, parks
- Grassland habitats – roadside verges, parks, wet meadows, dry grasslands

To carry out the survey properly will require assessing each of the habitats all year round and at different times. This need not be an expensive survey. Perhaps there is a knowledgeable local person who might undertake this task for you. Using the results of the Wildlife Survey your next step should be to draft a simple plan outlining how to preserve the identified habitats and investigate the possibility of new ones. For example perhaps there is an old pond in your area that is disused, but with a little work could be an important area for wildfowl. It is most important to try and involve the local school children in this project, and there are often teachers who may have an interest in this subject who would be willing to help.

The adjudicator noted that you are working towards Blue Flag status with Louth County Council and the adjudicator wishes you well in this excellent initiative. The various walking routes were noted and perhaps these might be sign-posted with length in kms to encourage visitors to use them.

Litter Control:

The adjudication took place on a warm July morning starting at 8.30 am. The adjudicator drove through the town on the previous evening and many visitors were present. It was therefore surprising to find the following morning that though some litter was present on the Main Street it was not that serious. By 9.00 am litter sweeping was under way on the Promenade. This is a performance to be commended. The adjudicator noted that you have a team of 28 litter patrollers and the patrol map provided for the adjudicator was really interesting - the first time that he had seen such a map provided by a Tidy Towns Committee. Litter control on the approach roads and housing estates was generally quite good.

Tidiness:

Your performance in the Louth County Council Tidy Districts Competition was noted. At the entrance gates to the Football Club, the long grass and weed need to be removed. A similar tidy up was needed in the corner area by the Clothing Bank which looked quite untidy on adjudication day. Opposite the Ard Shee estate the verge on the sea side of the road looked rather untidy and needed attention. Generally the level of tidiness was quite high.

Residential Areas:

The adjudicator visited quite a number of the housing estates marked on the map provided and was quite impressed by the high standards observed. At The Crescent a very attractive terrace of two storey white painted houses were noted, beautifully presented. Excellent landscaping was noted at Rathmount, together with fine stone walls along by the road side. At Carrig Ard an open space towards the back of the estate was noted, and the road surface in this estate needs attention. Superb hedging at the entrance to Elm Park caught the eye and fine mature landscaping set this estate off to best advantage. At Beech park the grass open spaces needed improvement in presentation and the grass needed to be cut back from the tops on the road kerbing. The low maintenance approach to landscaping at the entrance to The Ferns was notable as was the use of the Irish language for road names in the estate. Roses caught the eye at the entrance to Seaford Gardens and again good landscaping was a colourful feature. Good landscaping at the entrances to many estates is an excellent feature of Blackrock as noted for example at Rockcourt. It was most encouraging to see so many housing estates playing a key role in the overall environmental presentation of Blackrock.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

On the Sandymount approach well presented verges were noted as was the attractive landscaping at the town sign. The blue and white street and road signs were noted as being a highly useful feature for the visitor. Re-surfacing of Seaford Road was under way at the time of adjudication and this will make a big difference to that area. The approach from the Drogheda side was equally impressive as that noted on the northern side of the town.

General Impression:

Blackrock is a highly impressive town where the Tidy Towns Committee and the community have managed to preserve the real character of the older village while at the same time allowing the town to develop as a busy seaside resort. Congratulations to everyone involved.

Second Round Adjudication:

Blackrock-Louth was being enjoyed by many on the warm sunny day of second adjudication. The built environment boasts many fine buildings and shopfronts, the Clermont Arms was especially admired for its presentation and the National School looked as if it had been recently painted. There are a lot of development sites with work in progress throughout the town and it is likely to be a few years yet before it reaches its full potential. The visual amenity status of the promenade is high with its hard and soft landscaping including sculpture. Flower displays and other landscaping throughout the town were appreciated; are the two soft triangular shaped areas on the Rock Road being landscaped also as work appeared to be in progress on the day? The foreshore area at the Crescent has considerable amenity potential, are there any plans for further development here? Has progress been made on the proposed shore walk to Dundalk? Recently surfaced roads and footpaths have been noted; the roadside edge at the signs for Cockle Hill and the Coast Road looks bad. The display of roses in a private garden inside the nameplate on the Coast Road were breathtaking for their beauty.

