

Tidy Towns Competition 2007

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Blackrock** Ref: **460**
County: **Louth** Mark: **249**
Category: **D** Date(s): **03/07/2007**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2007
Overall Development Approach	50	42
The Built Environment	50	29
Landscaping	50	35
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	24
Litter Control	50	36
Waste Minimisation	20	11
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	25
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	249

Overall Development Approach:

Blackrock continues to impress the adjudicators and make great strides in the tidy towns competition. The Committee of 10 people are to be commended for their enthusiastic and organised approach that has seen their performance consistently improve every year. It is noted from the entry form that both the level of participation in the tidy towns competition is good with 10 members on the Committee. Close contact has also been made with a wide number of statutory bodies including Louth County Council, and other organisations such as LEADER. Just as importantly, the Committee appear to be very well organised and are to be commended on the level of voluntary commitment that they have achieved. Volunteers are attracted from a wide variety of groups and organisations with backgrounds as diverse as the sea scouts and the ICA. This is a major achievement and full credit is due to the Committee as the purpose of the tidy towns competition is to encourage participation from the wider community. Significant levels of sponsorship have also been obtained reflecting a financial commitment to the competition. The contacts with the schools are also noted. The adjudicator would also like to thank the Committee for submitting the detailed plan and map with their entry form – this was very helpful during the adjudication. The detailed 3 year action plan was noted as was the additional documentation on the ecology of Blackrock, posters and leaflet.

The Built Environment:

Blackrock is an attractive small town that has undergone very significant expansion in recent years. Buildings of note include the Church, the School and the Old Boathouse. The Main Street, which has recently been resurfaced has a range of attractive buildings including Bradleys Pharmacy, the Stone House and the Clermont Arms. The shopfronts observed are also particularly attractive, with café acqua and the Bayview Inn deserving special mention. The very well maintained promenade (with its new information boards) provide a lovely backdrop to the Main Street and views across the Bay. Proceeding south, there is a lovely mix of both traditional and contemporary dwellings to be seen. The AOH Hall is an interesting building, but is remains in

very poor condition. It is hoped that this building can be retained and refurbished and a beneficial use found for it in the near future. Outside of the town centre, Blackrock is characterised by a series of residential areas, a good number of which appear to have been constructed in the last 10 years. The main roads are normally occupied by relatively large dwellings that have been carefully maintained by their owners. The provision of a new Centra shop in the old skating hall is noted.

Landscaping:

The Committee have been working particularly hard on their landscaping projects for this years competition. Impressive planting beds were noted on the main approaches to the town close to the 'Welcome to Blackrock' signs. It is considered to be an excellent idea to use seaside plants and features, thereby giving Blackrock some distinctiveness and identity. Of these, the most impressive planting was to be found on the approach road to the south from Castlebellingham and from the north via the Loakers. In the opinion of the adjudicator, the most attractive landscaping was to be found on the promenade. The Committee deserve full credit for both the quality of the planting beds and displays, but also for the wide variety provided. Planting was also observed along the coast road and in a number of the estates which is discussed elsewhere in this report.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Blackrock has a number of high quality wildlife and natural amenities that cover a range of habitats. The ecological study included with the application is impressive as it provides detailed information on the two types of marine areas in Blackrock - marine areas and terrestrial areas and its contents were noted during the adjudication. This is an impressive study and marks have been given to reflect its importance. However, it is noted that the objective of this study was to identify the flora and fauna and to raise awareness of these in Blackrock. Therefore, it represents an important first step as proposals will now be required for management plans for the areas that are considered to be the most significant in the study to enable the conservation of them into the future. It is the opinion of the adjudicator that if the findings of the ecology study are implemented and they result in management plans and conservation of these areas, a bigger increase in marks can be expected in future years. It is also noted that other initiatives such as the provision of information boards at the Loakers and the construction of a new village park at Sandy Lane are underway. Once these projects are completed, additional marks can be expected under this category.

Litter Control:

A very good standard of litter control is being achieved in Blackrock. This is clearly the result of the hard work of the Committee with their regular litter patrols and their involvement in the National Spring Clean Initiative. Well done! The marks awarded under this category for Blackrock reflect that high standard achieved as they are among the highest achieved in the county.

Waste Minimisation:

This is an area that is becoming increasingly important in the tidy towns competition. The efforts of the Committee to date are to be commended as many actions have been undertaken such as segregation of waste following litter patrols. However, it is the opinion of the adjudicator that additional actions could be undertaken and that a bigger emphasis could be given to this category in your action plan. The Committee is encouraged to explore additional actions that would help to minimise waste in Blackrock. This would include identifying a second site for a bring centre to cater for the rapidly growing population in Blackrock and possibly providing litter bins that enable the segregation of waste, particularly in areas like the promenade and the foreshore. The Committee is also encouraged to investigate the provision of composters to individual houses. Finally, the Committee should strongly consider providing a composting area so that the resulting compost can then be used in your ongoing landscaping projects. Actions such as these will significantly improve your performance in this category in future years.

Tidiness:

Generally speaking, a relatively high standard of tidiness has been achieved in Blackrock. Further improvements are likely when the undergrounding of wires will be complete and we await this development in 2008. However, there are some areas within the town that would benefit from attention. The entrance to the park on Sandy lane was not in particularly good condition, while the small overgrown area opposite Oliver Plunketts Church was very untidy looking. It was disappointing to note that the weeds at the entrance to the cemetery identified in last years report were not acted upon. The area in front of the AOH Hall required weeding and some sign poles (with no signs) were noticeable at Rock Road and at Cocklehill opposite the Hideaway.

Residential Areas:

The quality of the residential areas and those of individual properties was generally high in Blackrock. Full credit is due to the majority of property owners for their careful maintenance and planting. Estates that were

particularly well maintained and planted include Earlsfort, Seafield Road, Rockville, Hamilton and the Meadows and Gort na Gloine. Rathmount, the Saltings and Ard Shee were also very impressive estates. Some areas had a lower standard of presentation. They included Birches Lane which was in particularly poor condition, with extensive amount of weeds evident. The same could be said of Blackrock Cove, where the surfacing and the maintenance of the verges was very poor in parts. At the entrance to Rockmount, poor surfacing and weeds were evident while the entrance to Sandy Drive required maintenance.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach roads to Blackrock are for the most part good, with a high standard of surfacing and road signage. Generally speaking the roads around Blackrock were in good condition, despite the high levels of construction that have been taking place.

General Impression:

This is a very impressive performance by Blackrock and the Committee are to be commended for their hard work and commitment. More importantly, there are a number of projects that are about to be implemented and this will provide for a very strong next year.