

Tidy Towns Competition 2007

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bray** Ref: **256**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **254**
Category: **H** Date(s): **18/06/2007**
10/08/2007

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2007
Overall Development Approach	50	44
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	22
Litter Control	50	24
Waste Minimisation	20	14
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	32
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	254

Overall Development Approach:

The difficulties experienced in dealing with no less than three Local Authorities are appreciated, with their consequent delays and frustrations. Nonetheless, you have progressed reasonably well in some areas. When submitting your documentation, please do mark in pen onto your (very small) map all sites which must be seen (we hope we have not missed any, but it is possible that you could be earning additional marks by supplying more information) and also please show the the names of all streets and housing estates on the map. This is because street name signs are singularly scarce in Bray - some streets have them, some don't: this could well be an item for your agenda when making requests to the Councils.

The Built Environment:

The completion of the Civic Plaza off Main Street has been the major advance under this heading. Part of the complex, including the excellent Mermaid Theatre, was open last year. The relationship between the buildings makes for an interesting dynamic; the work is cool and commanding without being domineering. These buildings were photographed and entered for the architectural award. Vehicular and pedestrian access is poor, and the hoarding round the original Victorian house gives an indeterminate air, but it is assumed that these matters are on the list for dealing with. It will be interesting too to see the results of the major developments on the Dargle Road and it is hoped that provision is already in place for the extra traffic that will be generated. The Heritage Centre and Tourist Information Office appeared to be in process of refurbishment, and the improvements surrounding the elegant Bandstand are most welcome. Several well designed and well maintained commercial buildings were admired in the Boghall area, though it has to be mentioned that a minority could do with cleaning and tidying up. The Churches, the Fire Station and the preennially charming Old Town Hall were favourably noted as usual, but the Railway Station is showing the effects of wear and tear.

Landscaping:

It is a hard enough task maintaining the existing landscaping and bedding without providing more. The Peoples' Park at Lower Dargle road really lives up to its name; it is an unobtrusively successful urban amenity, with the splendid mature trees across the river giving a sense grandeur. The park off Boghill road is nicely kept and the children's playground clean and colourful. Many open greens and grassed roadside verges to the south of the town lend a welcome a feeling of space to the nearby housing estates. The grotto on Newcourt road was well tended, while the grounds of the Open Day Centre were typical of well-kept private and institutional curtilages. The roundabouts were invariably well planted, and it was surprising to see so many tubs, window-boxes and hanging baskets surviving the unusually wet weather.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Not a great deal of initiative has been shown under this heading over the past year. Much of what happens in the future will clearly depend upon the result of the Special Amenity Order which is awaiting completion. The introduction of interpretative panels on the sea front is also awaited - another location which cries out for the same is the Dargle riverside. The Cliff Walk remains a wonderful introduction to its area of exceptional natural beauty. Your tree planting programme has been favourably noted and young trees were seen to be flourishing in many places though the new trees in Herbert Road were not noticed - but it is a very long road and we must have passed them several times.

Litter Control:

It is good that you have taken steps to remove graffiti and chewing gum. In general, the town was reasonably free of litter in its main streets and suburbs, though in a few isolated spots this was certainly not the case. On Adelaide road and Seapoint road there was not so much litter as rubbish, and the west end of Herbert road was surprisingly littered. The bring bank off Boghill road (not the new recycling facility) was badly littered. The neighbourhood of the railway station and part of Boghill road were also quite littered at the time of the visit, though we know that this is a variable.

Waste Minimisation:

This is an unusually high mark under his heading, and is due to the new municipal recycling facility off Boghill road. This is a major advance, and it was good to see large number of citizens making use of it. (Incidentally, it is not shown on your map and it was only by chance that we noticed the small sign pointing to it: we had supposed that the old bring-bank near the school was the recycling facility and were not impressed!) This subject is becoming more and more important and you are ahead of most other centres. Congratulations.

Tidiness:

Again, while the main streets and suburbs were quite tidy, a number of discrepancies have a way of catching the eye in an unpleasing way. The ugliness and clutter of the frontages and signage on amusement arcades at the south end of the Promenade is of epidemic proportions: resorts in Britain and the continent manage to draw the crowds without such a concentration of unsightly advertising: there is a line to be drawn between visual fun and garishness. In a curious kind of way, the dull looking hotel in this vicinity seems to compound the problem. (Even more curious, Fontenoy Terrace at the extremity of this area is one of the best kept places in the town.) The railway bridge was still seen to be rusty. The site which has been advertised for development for a long time immediately opposite the station entrance grows more and more dissolute, a nasty introduction to the town for travellers by rail.

Residential Areas:

It is the Victorian and Edwardian houses that give Bray its distinctive character. The two pleasantest residential areas in Bray are at the top and bottom end of the Promenade - the elegant Martello Terrace and the previously mentioned Fontenoy Terrace. Most of the older homes between the railway and the main street are presented with real pride, and streets of smaller terraces to the west are also very nicely kept. Newer estates, such as Briar Wood and Brook Wood, were admired, especially where young trees were growing up and attention was given to landscaping. Imaginative use of building materials was noted at Pemberton. Herbert Rise is promising. The very extensive estates in the Boghill-Southern Cross area are remarkably well kept though littering, as mentioned above, can have an adverse effect. Interesting newish apartment buildings were noticed near the junction of the Dargle road with the M11.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Road surfaces and paving are generally good throughout. The new footbridge over the N11 is a remarkable feat of engineering. Street furniture, including lamp standards, are of good quality. The link roads and by-passes with their sequence of well planted roundabouts are impressively laid out and work very well, but traffic control in the town centre still leaves much to be desired.

General Impression:

Bray is definitely improving year by year, thanks to your efforts and those of the Local Authorities, though progress is fairly slow. A feature is how well individual householders keep their homes so attractively. Bray is now a very large urban centre experiencing all the problems comcomittant with such centres, and is coping well. Very best wishes in your admirable endeavours

Second Round Adjudication:

The second round adjudicator had not visited Bray for many years and was pleased to have the opportunity of returning on a fine August morning. Bray is a large town of geographical and environmental contrasts. The busy and heavily trafficked central axis of Main Street contrasts with the much more relaxing and generally better presented Strand Road and Esplanade areas. Apart from some of the waterside amusement facilities this area still retains strong echoes of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. However in the heart of Bray along the Main Street the quality of many shop fronts and signage is quite poor and some buildings need maintenance or at least repainting. The new Civic Centre area was indeed a surprise in terms of the architectural success that has been achieved here. This development is a little compromised in the eyes of this adjudicator by the very poor entrance area off Main Street where the adjudicator counted up to fourteen signs on the rusty green and blue gates here. It was however in terms of litter control on the day of the second round adjudication that caused the real disappointment for the adjudicator. Litter along the Main Street, at the river bridge at Castle Street and in front of the Sealife Centre was present in some quantity. However the Peoples Park was the real disappointment in terms of litter control. The vast quantity of litter noted at the steps down into the Park and below these steps from the Lower Dargle Road was really quite sickening. Some of this litter appeared to have been present for some time and this would have been a terrible introduction to the People Park for any visitor. It is noted that there are plans to close off this area but this does not excuse the situation evident on the day of second round adjudication. Graffiti was noted as another difficulty along the Main Street and in the park area. The plans for the new Bray Town Centre now on hold were examined by the adjudicator and hopefully this major project will be able to proceed in the future. The drawings are certainly highly impressive.