

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Blackwater** Ref: **126**
County: **Wexford** Mark: **248**
Category: **B** Date(s): **04/07/2008**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2008 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 35 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 34 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 33 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 24 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 35 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 4 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 16 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 25 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 34 |
| General Impression | 10 | 8 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 248 |

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for the concise application form, the attached map and brief for the proposed new brochure for this the most idyllic of villages.

I would concur with last years adjudicator's comment on the need for the inclusion of a map with distinct legends in your new village brochure.

Irrespective of my need it certainly would be a bonus for visitors to the area.

It was the adjudicator's first visit to Blackwater for some years and like similar sized places, especially those with coastal accessibility, the transformation has been fairly staggering.

Unfortunately one cannot determine the weather and the adjudication day was a dull and sometimes very wet one.

Your interaction with both the local authority and the greater local community is to be praised.

Good to note that the Committee has fostered a strong relationship with the local school.

Comments in last years report under this section alluded to the fact that there seemed to be a drop in standards from the highs of the 90s – something you had in common with the Wexford hurlers!

Maybe its time to restructure and put in place a 3 year plan of achievable work actions that will benefit the village in the years ahead.

The Built Environment:

The RC Church is a striking building and, in common with other churches in the county, has unusual architectural features such as the distinctive bell.

The colour scheme is bright and inviting and shows that old features can be retained without having to endure the austere look that often is associated with rural churches.

The community hall adjacent was bedecked in colourful hanging baskets.

The National School was also very well presented and a credit to those entrusted with its upkeep and this includes the children of course.

Whelan's Bar is an old style establishment and it was undergoing preparation for painting on the day. Some people get a little irritated by the ubiquitous Guinness Signs but at this stage after all the years in existence they look a little traditional! and not too obtrusive.

The core area, which includes the relatively new development that houses Corrigan's Londis Shop and the Blackwater House Hotel, was well maintained and does blend in well with the remainder of the village.

It was noted that a lot of mini stores like Londis have included very good disabled access facilities.

Cunningham's Bar and Ger Corrigan's Bar are two fine well presented establishments of different architectural design and either could be included for shop front award.

Suttons is a well managed service station and convenience store and surprisingly for such establishments this one was very orderly.

The problem of dereliction is a little less acute than in other places and one notes from your submission that a few have had planning notices placed on them, which suggests either a new development completely of extensive renovation works.

Landscaping:

As one might expect from a former Irish representative in Entente Floral the standard of both village landscaping and individual planting was quite high.

There was a nice variation in the type of planters from the stone wall as one enters from Kilmuckridge, to the replica currach at the junction for Ballyconnacar Stand to the individual stone container at the name sign across the way from the RC Church.

For one do not advocate the planting of annuals such as annual begonias and busy lizzies the base of trees that said what was observed in Blackwater was very tastefully done.

The use of trees to break up sections of the village is very effective.

Some planting arrangements that contain low maintenance shrubs were a little weedy and need to be tended to more regularly.

The 1798 Garden is of excellent layout but if not looked after could get a little cluttered.

In what turned out to be a horrible day weather-wise, the planting arrangements were greatly admired for colour and for effectiveness.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The myriad of trees of varying species and maturity were admired and these are part of the natural habitats that wildlife flourishes within.

The advantage of having such a free flowing river – it flowed too freely during the rains of the day – is that it offers so many options for riverbank walks and other forms of man made supports that help the promotion and preservation of wildlife.

The river walk down by Cunningham's and on to the footbridge could be improved by simple measures such as a basic clean up, provision of low timber fencing, clearing of unsightly "thorny wire" and such like.

When you have your wildlife survey complete do bring it alive by getting wildlife information board produced and involve the school children in this exercise as they will embrace it with gusto.

Wexford artist Eileen Lambert produced an excellent work of quality for the Poulpeasty community earlier this year, it is sited in the local school grounds and worth a viewing if you are going to go down this route.

New bird boxes were observed on trees in the central area of the village near the river bridge and the precariously positioned statue of Our Lady.

Litter Control:

The litter control was good on the day and bins were appropriately placed at various points in the core and at the outskirts in the village.

The river walk is an area that could be problematic and a number of bottles and wrappers were seen strewn in the bushes and in the water, it's just a case of being vigilant and putting a "don't litter sign" at the entrances to the walk.

The idea a limiting mechanism on the bins to prevent small bags of rubbish being pressed into already full receptacles is an excellent idea and one which was born out of necessity. I presume.

The regular picks are paying off and credit to the locals who are engaged in this process as it is hard to maintain a high standard when you have such a seasonal influx of people.

Waste Minimisation:

The segregation of newspapers and other paper products at the school and the recycling of aluminium cans at the centre near the area actions that are in keeping with the principles of the Race Against Waste campaign.

Do consult the website of the above campaign to get both simple and more advanced project ideas that would be suitable for the community in Blackwater.

Simple composting projects and mulching of grass cuttings are now the norm in some communities.

If you are about to develop a specific project consult with the School principle as it is important to get children educated in this concept at an early as possible stage.

Tidiness:

St Brigid's GAA Grounds needs to be revitalised and tidied up, paint walls, re do traditional sign writing and clean up the surrounds, simple and basic but it would completely change the look for the better.

The dereliction problem has been noted elsewhere and it is something that has to be dealt with in a sensitive manner in small communities such as Blackwater.

Do keep encouraging people to address dereliction black spots and make them presentable at least.

The vacation of holiday homes for long periods is another potential problem that could affect the tidiness rating of coastal villages like Blackwater.

Is there any engagement with a representative of the owners of these properties?

Back areas and gateways were for the most part well presented, weed control was good considering that the weather was pretty poor and did not help the situation.

The posting of notices in shop windows is something that is a problem in most villages and towns and unless somebody comes up with a novel solution it will continue, even very high achievers in the competition have difficulties in this respect.

Residential Areas:

One found it hard to detect from the attached map the number of residential areas old and new that exists in Blackwater.

Traversing the village to find out was not such a pleasant exercise on an evening which could only be described as miserable weather wise.

Cois Abhann is a nicely presented estate but the escallonia shrubbery has grown out on to the footpath and makes walking on the path neigh impossible, prudent use of a petrol hedgecutter is a suggested method to rectify this.

The Riverside development has a nice complement of well presented homesteads but the shrub bed at the entrance is becoming a little choked.

There were one or two developments, one near the footbridge at the Riverwalk ,that look like they are holiday homes as the curtains were drawn in many houses and while the surrounding areas were well landscaped the properties themselves were a little tatty.

It is hard for a voluntary committee such as TidyTowns to address all these issues all you can do is spread the message of a better Blackwater through local newspapers and newsletters.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The entrance from Curracloe was excellent with an inviting name plate and Entente Florale sign complemented by stone wall planting, the road surface was in an acceptable condition.

The entrance from Kilmuckridge was of similar standing to the above and the Enniscorthy entrance had the best road surface observed in the village.

All entrances had verges and hedgerows treated in accordance with guidelines for wildlife preservation and respect for the nesting season.

General Impression:

The committee are to be commended for the honest assessment of the difficulties that it has to encounter in its work.

You have to realise that as a voluntary group there are certain things that fall outside your remit and all you can do is use your collective or individual influence to effect change where needed.

The village has gained an increase in marks this year by making some basic additions to the work actions.

I would advise the committee to expand its membership and try and attract new blood that would be willing to put effort into TidyTowns work.

Do consider putting together a basic 3 year plan that has achievable goals and this will help give the group some focus and feedback where needed.

You are wished well in the future years ahead.

