

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Blessington** Ref: **713**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **218**
Category: **E** Date(s): **25/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	0	29
The Built Environment	50	0	30
Landscaping	50	0	25
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	0	18
Litter Control	50	0	32
Tidiness	30	0	15
Waste Minimisation	20	0	8
Residential Areas	40	0	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	0	25
General Impression	10	0	6
TOTAL MARK	400	0	218

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for entering the TidyTowns competition 2012. The TidyTowns movement are delighted to have the town of Blessington back in the competition after a break. Thank you for your completed entry form, detailed map and supporting documentation and most importantly a copy of your three year plan. Your committee of six people's engagement with local authority, local businesses and the local Schools is a way of using the proper channels of publicity. Parish newsletter, Facebook etc., all add to communicating with the community at large. As a result of this publicity your committee grew from 6 to 25+ people. You have put in place a good foundation to achieve the objectives you have identified in your 3 year plan. The adjudicator admires your first action addressing the black spots in the town. The TidyTowns has the word Tidy in name and nature and by addressing the litter black spots in the town you have achieved a sense of pride within the town and have set a foundation for moving forward.

The Built Environment:

The town of Blessington is a vibrant town with many fine buildings of interest starting at the square. The old market house now known as Credit Union House is a very historical building dating back in history to the 1800. The Devonshire movement also has an important place in the towns history. St Marys Church and grounds were well presented and the Four Stone Tree using the stones from the entrance to St Marys Church is a way of retaining history through this landmark. The Ulster Bank is another of the historical buildings of the town. There are many fine businesses that add to and make the streetscape of the town attractive. The west Wicklow house is a focal point of the town and on the day of adjudication was vibrant and busy with many people enjoying refreshments outdoors. The town has some unoccupied premises which is similar to almost every other town. How to deal with the problem is not always easy. Try to engage with the owners and local authority and hopefully this may bring results.

Landscaping:

The town has some fine aspects of landscaping such as Glending woods in the background. There are some nice mature trees through the town along with some attractive landscaping. The tree surrounds need attention such as removal of weeds. Good landscaping enhances the built environment by softening the hard edges of buildings. When planting trees on approach roads try to create an impact by planting one tree species on each road. Also avoid planting at the base of trees as the plants compete with the tree for food and water. Try and look at a more sustainable approach to landscaping such as planting hedges and shrubs that will provide all year round colour and food for wildlife. Plant containers provide a good location for annuals and herbaceous plants but should not be used on grass areas but placed on hard surfaces. Hanging baskets and window boxes add colour and this was noted greatly throughout the town.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

It is noted from your entry that you hope to develop a trail with Blessington Trails. Do try and involve the School children in carrying out a study of the area to gather baseline information on the species and habitats found in the community. Professional help may have to be obtained but you may have some members in your group that are wildlife experts in this area. The report of the study should give indications of the most important habitat areas and species as well as recommendations for their correct management. Any study carried out should be submitted with next year's application.

Litter Control:

The town of Blessington has to be commended on the work they have done towards addressing the litter black spots in the town. The before and after picture submitted with your entry clearly shows the amount of work that you have done. Weekend litter is a big problem in most towns. Continue to work with the council in upgrading the bins and work as you are with the community to combat litter. The committee along with the local authority are encouraged to enter an anti-litter campaign and to get each estate involved. This way you are highlighting the problem and also trying to address it. Well done on your work to date and the plan that you have in place to carry out work in this category.

Tidiness:

The town centre was generally tidy on day of adjudication. The Bring bank and clothing bank were tidy. There was however weed growth along kerbs and along roadside fencing. There was also some graffiti spotted by the adjudicator. Do try and work with the local authority in maybe spraying the weeds at the kerbs. If this problem could be addressed together with the litter there would be a remarkable improvement in the tidiness of the town. Traffic management in the town allowed traffic to move freely with good parking.

Waste Minimisation:

In this category entrants are encouraged to take steps to actually reduce the production of waste in the community. The composting of leaves and grass cuttings and using the compost for landscaping is one example of reducing waste. This adjudicator noted that the Schools are involved in the Green Schools programme. Work along with them to create awareness. Other recommendations are to carry out a waste audit. The race against waste booklet from the TidyTowns unit has some helpful guidelines on the carrying out of such an audit. Segregate the waste collected during litter clean ups. Work with businesses to encourage waste reduction programmes and recycling facilities. You are using the parish newsletter, Facebook etc. Continue to use these to circulate waste minimisation literature to homes and businesses in the town. Encourage the community to join the Greener Homes programme.

Residential Areas:

The approach roads to the town were generally good. Grass around the Blessington signs needs to be cut back. The verges and hedges were neat with some lovely trees. St Joseph's road had a nice park in front. There were some uneven road surfaces and some signage that needs to be cleaned and painted. The village name plate needs to be washed. In this category we must remind entrants that hedge cutting between 01st March and 31st August is not permitted as per Section 40 of the Wildlife Act 1976.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

There was a good mix of residential areas, some private houses and estates. Generally the houses were all well presented. Glenview and Oak Drive just to mention a few had some nice stone work, nice trees and well maintained gardens. There were also some very well maintained private gardens. The best kept estate competition is a superb way of encouraging residents to maintain and improve their estates and this in turn will help the TidyTowns competition. There are some unoccupied houses and unfinished estates that take from the town. You can only continue to work with the owners and local authority in trying to address this area.

General Impression:

As mentioned earlier the town of Blessington is welcomed back to the competition. The town is a pleasure to visit and adjudicate and the adjudicator is confident that with your strong committee and plan for the next 3 years that your participation in the competition will be rewarded. You have set a good foundation to achieve this by addressing areas for this year. Continue with this good work. The adjudicator wishes you success in this year's competition and in the coming years.