

Survey finds two-thirds of towns 'heavily' or 'very heavily' littered

IBAL league table shows stark contrast between North and South

The majority of towns in Ireland are 'heavily or 'very heavily' littered, according to a new survey by Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL). First results of the All-Ireland Anti-Litter League, which ranks towns according to their litter levels, also showed Northern towns to be significantly cleaner than those in the South, with Armagh and Enniskillen claiming two of the top four positions. Wexford and Fermoy were the only other towns to achieve 'litter-free' status. The Coombe-Liberties area in Dublin finished at the foot of the table.

The All-Ireland Anti-Litter League, launched last October at Croke Park, involves 26 towns representing every county in Ireland, plus 3 from Northern Ireland, being assessed for litter by An Taisce and ranked in a league table according to their performance. 4 readings will take place over the course of 2002.

The average rating for towns in the South was 59 points out of a possible 100, compared to nearly 78 points in the case of Northern towns. Armagh and Wexford achieved the highest rating, with 85 points. Tuam and the Coombe-Liberties fared worst, with 43 and 40 points respectively.

Speaking at a press briefing in Dublin today, Dr Tom Cavanagh, Chairman of IBAL, commented: 'Local authorities should seriously take stock of their current anti-litter efforts in light of these results. It is clear that not enough is being done to protect the "Emerald Isle" image that is so vital to our economy. The tourism and food industries are dependent on a clean, litter-free environment, as is our attractiveness to direct foreign investors. This applies at a local level as much as nationally, as local authorities may learn to their cost.'

Dr. Cavanagh continued: "The role of enforcement in tackling drink-driving is acknowledged. We must look at litter the same way. People cannot be sweet-talked into using dustbins, especially if those dustbins are already overflowing. IBAL believes it will take punitive measures to alter the behaviour of individuals and businesses in towns and cities.' According to the most recent official figures available, litter fines are being issued at a rate of less than six per week per local authority area. Only 50% of fines issued are paid.

Dr Cavanagh was critical of the doubling of the on-the-spot fine to €125: 'On the surface this may appear to represent greater enforcement, but IBAL believes its impact will be the very opposite. There will be great reluctance among wardens to impose such a heavy penalty for individual offences in smaller towns. The higher level of fine is appropriate for certain offences, but frequent and consistent imposition of fines is what we need.'

'Cleaning up these towns will have a major positive impact on our environment, but it is only the first step,' continued Dr Cavanagh. 'There are around 30 significant towns not covered in the League, including urban centres where the litter problem is most acute. It is beholden on the Government to take up the challenge and finish what IBAL has started. This means setting standards for all local authorities and publishing their performance in a similarly transparent fashion.'

'Tackling litter is itself just a first step, which can trigger fundamental change. The cleaner the local environment the greater the civic pride in that environment, which in turn can result in a more attractive all-round environment. We see evidence of this in 'picture postcard' towns in Continental Europe.

Indeed, the Tidy Towns Competition has had this effect on villages in Ireland – we need to bring it to towns and cities.’

Set up in 1996, Irish Business Against Litter encompasses more than 30 member companies, employing in excess of 70,000 staff.

IBAL “ALL IRELAND” ANTI-LITTER LEAGUE

JANUARY 2002

PRELIMINARY ROUND RESULTS

Position	County	Town	Litter Rating	GRADE
1.	Armagh	Armagh	85	A
2	Wexford	Wexford	85	A
3.	Fermanagh	Enniskillen	82	A
4.	Cork	Fermoy	81	A
5.	Monaghan	Monaghan	75	B
6.	Leitrim	Carrick-on-Shannon	72	B
7.	Limerick	Newcastlewest	68	B
8.	Clare	Ennis	67	B
9.	Tyrone	Omagh	66	B
10.	Westmeath	Mullingar	65	B
11	Kildare	Newbridge	65	B
12.	Donegal	Letterkenny	63	C
13	Kerry	Tralee	63	C
14.	Waterford	Tramore	62	C
15.	Wicklow	Bray	60	C
16.	Kilkenny	Kilkenny	59	C
17.	Meath	Navan	58	C
18.	Cavan	Cavan	56	C
19.	Roscommon	Roscommon	55	C
20	Offaly	Tullamore	55	C
21.	Longford	Longford	54	D
22.	Sligo	Sligo	53	D
23.	Tipperary	Clonmel	52	D
24.	Carlow	Carlow	51	D
25.	Louth	Drogheda	50	D
26.	Laois	Portlaoise	49	D
27.	Mayo	Ballina	48	D
28.	Galway	Tuam	43	D
29.	Dublin	Coombe/Liberties	40	D

CATEGORIES

GRADE A	‘Litter free’ status	80+ pts
GRADE B	Moderately littered	65 –79 pts
GRADE C	Heavily littered	55 – 64 pts
GRADE D	Very heavily littered	less than 55 pts

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