

Litter League shows towns starting to clean up their act

IBAL warns that tourist season is 'peak season for litter'

The latest Irish Business Against Litter survey shows towns making progress in the fight against litter. Nonetheless, the majority of towns remain 'heavily or 'very heavily' littered and IBAL is warning that litter levels are likely to increase as the tourist season approaches. The second round of the IBAL Litter League, conducted by An Taisce last month, shows Fermoy to be the cleanest town surveyed, with three other towns achieving 'litter-free' status. Coombe/Liberties remains at the foot of the table, behind Longford and Sligo. Mullingar, Navan and Carlow are the most improved areas, while Tralee and Monaghan suffered the biggest falls. Fermoy has now been installed by Ladbrokes as 3/1 favourite to top the league when it concludes in December.

Latest standings in the All-Ireland Anti-Litter League are as follows:

Position	County	Town	Litter Rating	GRADE
1.	Cork	Fermoy	84(81)	A 'Litter-Free'
2.	Westmeath	Mullingar	82(65)	A 'Litter-Free'
3.	Wexford	Wexford	81(85)	A 'Litter-Free'
4.	Armagh	Armagh	81(85)	A 'Litter-Free'
5.	Fermanagh	Enniskillen	80(82)	A 'Litter-Free'
6.	Meath	Navan	77(58)	B Moderately Littered
7.	Limerick	Newcastlewest	70(68)	B Moderately Littered
8.	Carlow	Carlow	69(51)	B Moderately Littered
9.	Tyrone	Omagh	68(66)	B Moderately Littered
10.	Cavan	Cavan	67(56)	B Moderately Littered
11.	Clare	Ennis	67(67)	B Moderately Littered
12.	Leitrim	Carrick on Shannon	66(72)	B Moderately Littered
13.	Kilkenny	Kilkenny	65(59)	B Moderately Littered
14.	Waterford	Tramore	65(62)	B Moderately Littered
15.	Monaghan	Monaghan	63(75)	C Heavily Littered
16.	Tipperary	Clonmel	62(52)	C Heavily Littered
17.	Kildare	Newbridge	62(65)	C Heavily Littered
18.	Laois	Portlaoise	61(49)	C Heavily Littered
19.	Offaly	Tullamore	60(55)	C Heavily Littered
20.	Wicklow	Bray	59(60)	C Heavily Littered
21.	Roscommon	Roscommon	58(55)	C Heavily Littered
22.	Donegal	Letterkenny	57(63)	C Heavily Littered
23.	Galway	Tuam	56(43)	C Heavily Littered
24.	Louth	Drogheda	55(50)	C Heavily Littered
25.	Mayo	Ballina	54(48)	D Very Heavily Littered
26.	Kerry	Tralee	52(63)	D Very Heavily Littered
27.	Sligo	Sligo	49(53)	D Very Heavily Littered
28.	Longford	Longford	47(54)	D Very Heavily Littered
29.	Dublin	Coombe/Liberties	38(40)	D Very Heavily Littered

The three Northern towns in the league continue to surpass the performance of those in the South. The average rating for towns in the Republic was up from 59 to 62 points out of a possible 100. This compares with 76 points in the case of Northern towns.

The state of road surfaces is factored into the results, as IBAL considers this fundamental to a town's presentation. The top-ranking town, Fermoy, was among those to suffer on this criterion.

'The improvement in litter levels is evidence of the League taking effect among Local Authorities,' comments IBAL Chairman Dr Tom Cavanagh. 'The spectacular progress in towns such as Navan and Mullingar shows that litter need not be a complex, long-term problem. Concerted effort can yield immediate gains.'

'The League is predicated on the belief that exposing the performance of local authorities in this very public way will compel them into action. The Government itself has been running tables of this kind for some time, but keeping the results under wraps means they are ineffectual.

'IBAL has been encouraged by the impact of the league at a grassroots level, with initiatives specifically geared to raising towns' rankings in the league.* Nonetheless, with more than half of towns 'heavily or very heavily littered', the League results are an indictment of Local Government paralysis on an issue that affects both economic prosperity and quality of life.

'The summer season brings with it increased outdoor activity and increased tourist traffic to our towns and villages. Much of it occurs at weekends, when clean-up procedures are often suspended. Widespread litter is the result. Local authorities need to put proper 7-day systems in place for this key period. Otherwise we will quickly see these ratings drop - at a time when we need to present the country at its best.

Tourism is not the only industry that is contingent on a clean environment, but it is clearly an important one. There is evidence that overseas visitors are being dissuaded from coming here because of litter levels.'

Ladbrokes have announced new odds for the League, with Fermoy and Mullingar shortened to 3/1 and 4/1 respectively. Also short-priced are Wexford, Armagh and Navan, all at 6/1. Tralee has gone out to 20/1 from 16/1 while Coombe/Liberties remains rank outsider at 33/1.

Notes:

*Meath recently announced an 'inter-county' litter league, where towns and villages in the county compete against one another for cash prizes.

An agreement between political parties led to Fermoy being deemed a 'Poster-free' zone over the course of the General Election campaign.

Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) is an alliance of companies sharing a belief that continued economic prosperity – notably in the areas of tourism, food and direct foreign investment - is contingent on a clean, litter-free environment. Enforcement of litter laws, as opposed to public awareness campaigns, is the most effective means of ensuring this in our towns and cities.

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