



Press release
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IBAL Survey reveals most towns “heavily littered”

Litter levels rising around the country

Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) today announced the first results of the Anti-Litter League 2003. Overall results were disappointing, revealing that the majority of cities and towns surveyed were 'heavily' or 'very heavily' littered. Of the towns that competed in 2002, 14 have seen a deterioration in litter levels in the last six months, while only 7 have improved. Cavan, which topped the league, was one of only three towns to achieve 'litter free' status. Dublin City Centre and Galway were among those graded 'very heavily littered', with Sligo at the foot of the table.

30 areas are being assessed by An Taisce this year, including, for the first time, the major urban centres of Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. In addition to this, there are separate assessments of third-level colleges and bus and railway stations.

Commenting on the results, Dr. Tom Cavanagh, Chairman of Irish Business Against Litter, said: "The funding received from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has allowed IBAL to extend the League to include major cities, thus giving a more complete view of litter in this country. Litter management is a more difficult task in cities than small towns, and the league table bears this out - the average rating for our cities is 'heavily littered.' These results show just how far we are from the pristine city streets that are commonplace on the Continent." IBAL has stressed the economic importance of clean cities, noting that 70% of visitors to the country use Dublin as a gateway.

"The findings indicate that the progress achieved last year, when litter levels were reduced by 15%, has not been maintained. It is particularly disappointing to see last year's winner, Carlow, and Wexford - both previously 'litter free' - slipping dramatically this time round. The League has shown that with concerted effort, a town's streetscapes can be transformed rapidly. But for a town to reap the social and economic benefit, the effort must be a sustained one. IBAL does not subscribe to once-off clean-ups, but to systematic action by local authorities to prevent and eliminate litter. This clearly isn't happening."

A parallel survey of train and bus stations found major stations to be heavily littered. Galway train station came in at the bottom of the league with a rating of "very heavily littered", with Limerick and Kent station in Cork among 13 stations branded heavily or very heavily littered. By contrast Waterford emerged litter-free, along with 8 other stations. Dr Cavanagh commented: 'These results confirm that our major stations - hubs of activity for business people and tourists - are not being maintained according to the levels of cleanliness and hygiene which paying commuters deserve. Furthermore, Iarnród Éireann and Bus Éireann are in contravention of the Litter Act in failing to keep our stations free of litter.'

A similar study of third-level colleges found Trinity to be 'litter free', while UCD was branded 'heavily littered'. UCC, UCG, DCU and UL were all graded 'moderately littered'. "Our universities hold the key to our future – our future opinion leaders, future businessmen and women and future parents," commented Dr Cavanagh. "Practices on campus point to future behaviour in society."

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Mr. Pat the Cope Gallagher, T.D., shared Dr. Cavanagh's disappointment at the first results of the 2003 League which show overall anti-litter performances down on last year's levels. "Litter pollution is largely an urban problem and combating it requires effective and targeted action," Minister Gallagher said. According to the Minister "the League's crucial role is to focus on those urban areas that are heavily and very heavily littered to encourage more concerted efforts at local level to tackle litter pollution."

"There are no short cuts to achieving a litter free status", continued the Minister. "The League 2003 results to date clearly point to the urgent need for proper litter management, over time, by the different sectors of the community – it's not just the local authorities that have a role to play."

The Minister pointed out that success in the League requires action not only by local authorities, but must also involve strong support from local communities and the business and commercial sectors, if litter is to be tackled successfully in urban areas. "Such an integrated approach is at the heart of the Government's national anti-litter strategy, the Litter Action Plan", he said. "The IBAL League will help bring about changes in public attitudes, and thus help to change the behaviour of people who litter - our success depends on tackling the causes as well as the effects of littering," concluded the Minister.

The Department is contributing €50,000 towards the administrative costs of the 2003 League, with the aim of developing the League to its full potential as a national model for tackling litter pollution in urban areas.

IBAL ANTI-LITTER LEAGUE - Round 1, 2003

Ranking	Town / City	Rating
1	Cavan	Litter-free status
2	Kilrush	Litter-free status
3	Fermoy	Litter-free status
4	Dun Laoghaire	Moderately littered
5	Clonmel	Moderately littered
6	Kilkenny	Moderately littered
7	Tralee	Moderately littered
8	Waterford	Moderately littered
9	Limerick	Moderately littered
10	Monaghan	Moderately littered
11	Portlaoise	Moderately littered
12	Carlow	Moderately littered
13	Longford	Moderately littered
14	Mullingar	Moderately littered
15	Cork Central	Heavily littered
16	Ballina	Heavily littered
17	Bray	Heavily littered
18	Carrick on Shannon	Heavily littered
19	Drogheda	Heavily littered
20	Roscommon	Heavily littered
21	Tallaght	Heavily littered
22	Letterkenny	Heavily littered
23	Newbridge	Heavily littered
24	Tullamore	Heavily littered
25	Dublin city centre	Very heavily littered
26	Navan	Very heavily littered
27	Wexford	Very heavily littered
28	Galway	Very heavily littered
29	Swords	Very heavily littered
30	Sligo	Very heavily littered

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Editor's note

Set up in 1996, Irish Business Against Litter is an alliance encompassing more than 30 member companies, employing in excess of 70,000 staff. Members share 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.