

Major cities slammed as 'blackspots' as litter levels in towns improve slightly

Prevalence of chewing gum in over 40% of sites legitimises proposed tax
'Our reliance on tourism demands greater levels of cleanliness' says IBAL

Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) today announced the most recent results in the 2003 Anti-Litter League. While the survey revealed a 3% improvement in litter levels nationwide since the previous study, the average rating in major urban centres deteriorated. Cork City, Dublin City centre, Swords and Tallaght were all labelled 'litter blackspots'. Cavan emerged as the cleanest town, with Kilrush, Kilkenny and Fermoy also achieving litter-free status.* The study confirmed chewing gum as one of the most common forms of litter on our streets.

The An Taisce survey of 30 cities and towns produced an average litter rating of 63 points, denoting a 'serious litter problem' in the country as a whole. Just under half of the areas surveyed fell into this category.

Our major cities suffered a setback, with an average rating of just 57 points. Waterford, Limerick, Cork and Dublin have all slid down the league table. Swords in County Dublin was the country's worst "Litter Blackspot" with 40 points. Only Galway, widely slammed last June for its performance, has improved, from 28th to joint 15th position.

The litter inspections took place at weekends during the month of July, at the height of the tourist season. IBAL contends that weekend cleaning is essential, as this is when towns and cities are most enjoyed by locals and tourists alike. According to Dr. Tom Cavanagh, Chairman, Irish Business Against Litter "European cities can manage to stay clean 7 days a week, 365 days a year. There is no reason why Irish towns cannot maintain the same level of cleanliness. Our reliance on tourism demands it. It is vital that we show our best front when our towns are on show to large volumes of visitors." The An Taisce report concludes that 'Ireland of the Welcomes certainly needs to wash its face.'

The survey found that chewing gum was present at 41% of sites surveyed, legitimising the proposed tax on the product, according to IBAL. "Chewing gum is the most serious form of litter we encounter - not only is it highly prevalent, but is extremely expensive to remove," commented Dr Cavanagh. "Like the plastic bag tax, a Government levy on this product is an enlightened step, but the extra revenue generated needs to be invested in taking it off our streets. The levy should be at least enough to cover the regular removal of gum from the streets." He added that pedestrian zones, though attractive enhancements to urban areas, are focal points for young people, making them particularly susceptible to chewing gum-based litter.

IBAL is looking to an improvement in litter levels of the order of 10% in the final survey of 2003, to be announced in December.

Dublin's Heuston Station and Limerick's bus and rail stations are among the country's dirtiest, according to a related IBAL study of rail and bus stations. In contrast, Galway's train station has improved to rank among the cleanest, alongside Waterford and Kilkenny.

Editors 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.

Rank Order Round 2 Anti Litter League 2003

Ranking	Town / City	Rating
1.	Cavan	Clean to European norms
2.	Kilrush	Clean to European norms
3.	Kilkenny	Clean to European norms
4.	Fermoy	Clean to European norms
5.	Longford	Moderately Littered
6.	Carrick-on-Shannon	Moderately Littered
7.	Carlow	Moderately Littered
8.	Drogheda	Moderately Littered
9.	Ballina	Moderately Littered
10.	Roscommon	Moderately Littered
11.	Mullingar	Moderately Littered
12.	Bray	Moderately Littered
13.	Waterford	Moderately Littered
14.	Limerick	Moderately Littered
15.	Galway	Moderately Littered
16.	Clonmel	Moderately Littered
17.	Monaghan	Serious Litter Problem
-.	Navan	Serious Litter Problem
18.	Portlaoise	Serious Litter Problem
19.	Wexford	Serious Litter Problem
-.	Dun Laoghaire	Serious Litter Problem
20.	Cork	Litter Blackspot
21.	Newbridge	Litter Blackspot
24.	Tullamore	Litter Blackspot
25.	Sligo	Litter Blackspot
26.	Tralee	Litter Blackspot
27.	Tallaght	Litter Blackspot
28.	Letterkenny	Litter Blackspot
29.	Dublin	Litter Blackspot
30.	Swords	Litter Blackspot

*refers to a Cleanliness Rating of 80 points or above, conforming to the standard prevailing in European cities and towns.

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