

Capitals 'a blot on landscape' as country cleans up

Next year's Capital of Culture has 'serious litter problem', says business group

The latest survey by Irish Business Against Litter into litter levels around Ireland shows a major improvement in the state of our towns and cities. Only 4 of thirty towns examined as part of the Anti Litter League were deemed 'seriously littered' or 'litter blackspots'. These include the main urban centres of Dublin City, Tallaght and Cork City, next year's European Capital of Culture.

"Our main cities have tarnished what was otherwise an encouraging result," declared IBAL Chairman Tom Cavanagh. "The study was conducted over the summer period, when tourist numbers are at a peak. Despite the efforts of most towns to improve their litter levels, the main gateways to the country remain plagued by litter. Sadly, this is what visitors first encounter on hitting our shores."

Overall cleanliness levels rose to 73, a 16% improvement on this time last year and 33% better than at the outset of the League in 2001. From an initial average of 55 points, the areas have improved to within striking distance of the target figure of 80. The majority of towns continue to be littered, but the number of 'litter-free' towns has doubled to 8. Also, the number of litter blackspots or seriously littered towns fell dramatically, from 14 to just 4. Cavan was the country's cleanest town, for the third time since the League began. The survey was carried out at weekends by An Taisce in accordance with international standards.

"It is ironic that the home of next year's Capital of Culture should find itself the dirtiest city in the country," continued Dr Cavanagh. "With the eyes of the world on Cork next year, the Corporation needs to get its priorities right. I don't believe a city can legitimately claim to be a showcase for culture if its streetscapes are strewn with cigarette butts, wrappers and chewing gum." The An Taisce report criticised the city's main street as 'filthy' and the approach roads as 'projecting a terrible image for visitors entering the city'. Car and truck drivers discarding litter from their vehicles is pinpointed as a source of litter in these areas.

The League bears out IBAL's contention that the litter problem is concentrated in urban centres. The 9 city areas surveyed yielded an average rating of 68, compared to an average of 75 for towns. Overall, three-quarters of the areas surveyed managed to improve their litter rating compared to this time last year.

The most spectacular improvement was in Galway City, which achieved 'litter-free' status (80 points or over) despite languishing at the foot of the League earlier this year. "Galway has rightly received criticism for its litter levels in the past. This remarkable performance - in the height of the tourist season - shows how progress can be made in a short spell of time if a Local Authority gets behind it," commented Dr Cavanagh.

Results of the 2nd round of the 2004 Anti Litter League are as follows:

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|---|----------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Cavan | Clean to European norms |
| 2 | Athlone | Clean to European norms |
| 3 | Monaghan | Clean to European norms |

4	Wexford	Clean to European norms
5	Carlow	Clean to European norms
6	Castlebar	Clean to European norms
7	Galway	Clean to European norms
8	Tralee	Clean to European norms
9	Fermoy	Littered
10	Drogheda	Littered
11	Dun Laoghaire	Littered
12	Longford	Littered
13	Navan	Littered
14	Newbridge	Littered
15	Clonmel	Littered
16	Dundalk	Littered
17	Letterkenny	Littered
18	Portlaoise	Littered
19	Roscommon	Littered
20	Swords	Littered
21	Waterford City	Littered
22	Limerick	Littered
23	Bray	Littered
24	Kilkenny	Littered
25	Maynooth	Littered
26	Sligo	Littered
27	Dublin City	Serious litter problem
28	Cork City	Serious litter problem
29	Tullamore	Litter blackspot
30	Tallaght	Litter blackspot

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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.