

## **Nationwide clean-up continues but reduction of weekend cleaning a “major worry”**

### ***Cities falling behind towns in latest IBAL litter survey***

Litter levels throughout the country have improved once again with over 68% of Irish towns and cities now classed as “litter free” according to the latest litter survey by Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL). However, the group is warning that many areas are likely to suffer this summer with the large-scale reduction of weekend cleaning due to budget cuts. A further concern is that cities’ are not doing as well as the towns as the peak tourist season begins.

The survey of 60 towns and cities, conducted by An Taisce on behalf of IBAL, revealed Wexford to be Ireland’s cleanest town, ahead of Ennis. The number of “Litter Free” areas nationwide hit a record high of 41. Athlone and Mallow were the country’s sole litter blackspots, with Arklow ‘seriously littered’.

“We are delighted to have so many areas classed as “Clean to European norms” in this first round of the 2009 litter league,” commented Dr. Tom Cavanagh, Chairman, Irish Business Against Litter. “However, we fear a deterioration over the summer as weekend cleaning budgets get slashed in many areas. We saw over the June Bank holiday weekend how beaches were seriously affected by the lack of weekend cleaning, and it is quite evident in this survey with beaches in Buncrana and Tramore being classed as “seriously littered”.

“As summertime brings tourists and outdoor activity to most areas this is a major worry, which is not limited to beaches, but extends to all public places.”

IBAL estimates that many local councils are making, on average, savings of €750 per week when cutting their weekend cleaning budgets and contend such a saving to be a false economy. “Litter is one area of spend where any cuts will be immediately visible, in littered pavements, parks and beaches. Set against the significant time and money which local hotels and shops have invested in tourism over the past decade, these cuts are small – but they can be enough to undo the good work done in any town,” added Dr. Cavanagh.

“In recent years Ireland has improved its performance on environmental and green issues in the eyes of our visitors. It is essential that this trend continues and the recent reduction in weekend cleaning and litter collection particularly at visitor attractions is a serious threat to the level of visitor satisfaction and must be addressed urgently by all local authorities” said John Power Chief Executive of Irish Hotels Federation and member of IBAL

Tourism is worth approximately €6billion to the national economy each year. 70% of the 8million annual tourists enter the country through Dublin, one-third of them during the summer months.

In contrast to towns, Ireland’s cities are not showing much improvement in litter levels over the last year. Galway was classed as “Moderately Littered” with Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford all graded as “Littered” areas. “These are all critical tourist hubs,” Dr Cavanagh continued. “Hundreds of thousands of tourists will be arriving here this Summer and most will be arriving into one of these cities. A positive first impression is a vital element of our tourist product.”

11 new areas were included in the 2009 Litter League with Shannon, Tramore and Ballincollig among those achieving “Litter Free” status.

Both Athlone and Mallow came in for much criticism from An Taisce, achieving the lowest ratings in the league, as “Litter Blackspots”. The worst site surveyed in the entire league was found in Athlone, an area near the Kilmartin N6 roundabout “is being used as a dump” and “was the most heavily littered site surveyed” and was described as an “eye sore and a health hazard”. The survey also revealed that the approach roads in Athlone were the cause of much litter with the Dublin approach road in a “terrible state”. The Roscommon approach road had a “long-term build up of litter” and the Tuam approach road “was another very very poor site”

In Mallow it was reported that the Tesco Car Park was the most heavily littered site in town.

The inspectors found supermarket car parks generally to be a particular source of litter, with Tesco, Dunnes Stores and Costcutters all cited as magnets for litter in different areas. In contrast, train stations around the country fared very well and showed great improvements since the beginning of the league.

**-ENDS-**

**For further information contact Cullen Communications.**

**Claire O' Grady Tel: 01 6689099/ 087 7819375, cogrady@cullencommunications.ie**

**Dawn Burke Tel: 01 6689099/ 087 215 6942 dburke@cullencommunications.ie**

**Editors note:**

Set up in 1996, Irish Business Against Litter 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.

As part of the IBAL Anti-Litter League, An Taisce monitors all towns of population 6,000 and over, independently in accordance with international grading standards.

**IBAL Anti Litter League 1st Round Results Table 2009**

Ranking	Town/City	Status
1	Wexford	'Clean to European Norms'
2	Ennis	'Clean to European Norms'
3	Youghal	'Clean to European Norms'
4	Carlow	'Clean to European Norms'
5	Dun Laoghaire	'Clean to European Norms'
6	Swords	'Clean to European Norms'
7	Balbriggan	'Clean to European Norms'
8	Longford	'Clean to European Norms'
9	Roscommon	'Clean to European Norms'
10	Killarney	'Clean to European Norms'
11	Sligo	'Clean to European Norms'
12	Monaghan	'Clean to European Norms'
13	Shannon	'Clean to European Norms'
14	Celbridge	'Clean to European Norms'
15	Ballincollig	'Clean to European Norms'
16	Bray	'Clean to European Norms'
17	Tramore	'Clean to European Norms'
18	Newcastlewest	'Clean to European Norms'
19	Newbridge	'Clean to European Norms'
20	Tuam	'Clean to European Norms'
21	Cavan	'Clean to European Norms'
22	Lucan	'Clean to European Norms'
23	Leixlip	'Clean to European Norms'
24	Navan	'Clean to European Norms'
25	Cobh	'Clean to European Norms'
26	Dundalk	'Clean to European Norms'
27	Drogheda	'Clean to European Norms'
28	Tralee	'Clean to European Norms'
29	Midleton	'Clean to European Norms'

30	Thurles	'Clean to European Norms'
31	New Ross	'Clean to European Norms'
32	Ashbourne	'Clean to European Norms'
33	Fermoy	'Clean to European Norms'
34	Letterkenny	'Clean to European Norms'
35	Dungarvan	'Clean to European Norms'
36	Mullingar	'Clean to European Norms'
37	Ballinasloe	'Clean to European Norms'
38	Ballina	'Clean to European Norms'
39	Blanchardstown	'Clean to European Norms'
40	Castlebar	'Clean to European Norms'
41	Enniscorthy	'Clean to European Norms'
42	Galway	Moderately Littered
43	Clonmel	Moderately Littered
44	Tullamore	Moderately Littered
45	Buncrana	Littered
46	Dublin City	Littered
47	Cork City	Littered
48	Limerick City	Littered
49	Nenagh	Littered
50	Naas	Littered
51	Kilkenny	Littered
52	Waterford City	Littered
53	Portlaoise	Littered
54	Trim	Littered
55	Wicklow	Littered
56	Gorey	Littered
57	Tallaght	Littered
58	Arklow	Seriously Littered
59	Mallow	Litter Blackspot
60	Athlone	Litter Blackspot