

Waterford City fares well in IBAL's 2019 litter survey

Waterford City is again Cleaner than European Norms in the final litter survey of 2019 by business group Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL). It occupies 11th spot in the ranking of 40 towns and cities.



The People's Park, Waterford Court House, the Cultural Quarter, Barronstrand Street, the River Walk along the Quays and Plunkett Train Station received special mention.

Meanwhile, Ballybeg has failed to retain its 'clean' status of 2018 and is 'moderately littered' in 33rd. Overall litter levels in Ireland's towns were up on a year ago, but all city centres were clean.

The An Taisce report for Waterford City Centre stated: "Waterford City continues to score highly in the IBAL Anti-Litter League. The Waterford Walls initiative is very much a feature throughout the city - this project is something that could easily be replicated in other towns / cities throughout the country. The Community Garden at New Street - very poor in the previous survey - was boarded up, depriving the city of what should be a lovely calm, green space in its centre. With so many top ranking sites in Waterford City there were some which deserved a special mention - People's Park, Waterford Court House, the Cultural Quarter, Barronstrand Street, River Walk along the Quays and Plunkett Train Station - there is clearly great pride in the presentation and maintenance of these sites. There was little change at the Bring Centre outside the Bus Eireann Depot - the overall presentation was a very poor one. Another heavily littered stretch of road was Penrose Street."

The report for Ballybeg stated: "It is disappointing that in both IBAL surveys in 2019, Ballybeg failed to retain the 'clean' status it had earned the previous year. Fewer than half of the sites examined were free of litter. The top ranking sites included residential areas of Glencarra and Meadowbank, Musgrave Business Park, Tesco and Ballybeg Community Development Project at the Campus - not only did they score well with regard to litter but they also presented well. By far the lowest ranking site was Common land by St. Saviour's GAA Club - this wasn't just littered but subject to major dumping (e.g. builders' rubble / radiators). A derelict site at Ryan's Bar and Lounge was not quite as bad but still presented poorly with burnt debris and sacks of clothing at the clothing bank."

Kilkenny topped the IBAL litter rankings for a record 4th time, having last won in 2014. It finished ahead of Killarney, which was 3rd in 2018, and Swords at the top of the table. In all, 21 of the 27 towns inspected were deemed clean, a great result but down on previous years.

The past decade has brought a 13% reduction in litter levels in our city centres, while litter in towns has remained constant over the same period.

"We've seen the fruits of the greater attention given to keeping our city centres clean," explains Conor Horgan of IBAL, "to the point where they are now almost as clean as our towns. In 2019, for the first time, all were deemed clean."

IBAL has been surveying disadvantaged city areas over the past 5 years but has seen little reduction in litter over the period.

Sweet wrappers, chewing gum and cigarette butts remain the most common forms of litter on our streets.

“Perhaps no one item illustrates the link between litter and the broader environment better than the cigarette butt,” contends Conor Horgan.

“Cigarette filters are essentially single-use plastic which readily winds its way into our sewers and rivers, adding to the problem of plastic pollution, which threatens to see more plastic in our oceans than fish by 2050. Yet every day we see people nonchalantly flicking butts onto our pavements.”

From next year, an EU directive will force tobacco manufacturers to cover the cost of cigarette butt collection and processing in an effort to drastically reduce the numbers of cigarettes disposed of in the environment.

“Alongside regulation, we would like to see active recycling of butts, which would encourage their proper disposal, as once a butt is littered on the ground, it cannot be recovered,” said Conor Horgan.

Irish start-up NoButts.ie is turning butts into cellulose acetate for re-use in sunglasses and other products and is looking to set up supply arrangements with local authorities.

IBAL is offering to facilitate the setting up of a pilot programme to recycle butts in Kilkenny, as winner of the League. In addition, a number of trees will be planted courtesy of The Tree Centre in Fermoy.

2019 marked the 17th year of the IBAL Anti-Litter League.