



**Press Release EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.00 am Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2010**

## **Cities getting dirtier as majority of towns clean up their act**

- ***A record 39 towns now classed as “Litter Free”***
- ***Wicklow and Limerick City are ‘Litter Blackspots’***
- ***IBAL: litter enforcement to be taken away from local authorities?***

Ireland’s main cities are getting dirtier despite the country being cleaner overall, according to the final 2009 survey of towns and cities by business group Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL). The study revealed that two-thirds of the 60 towns surveyed are now classed as “Litter Free”. However, the majority of our cities are ‘littered’, with Limerick one of only two ‘litter blackspots’ in the country. This has prompted IBAL to call for a rethink of how our litter laws are being enforced on businesses in these areas.

**Ireland’s cleanest town will be announced at a ceremony in the Merrion Hotel, Dublin this morning.**

A key finding of the survey was that Ireland’s major cities are lagging behind the rest of the country, with none receiving a “Litter Free” classification and Dublin City and Cork City both branded as “Littered”. Most disappointing was the news that most cities slipped in their rankings since last year, with Galway City dropping from a “Litter Free” classification.

“The reasons behind the lack of progress in cities are not hard to detect,” comments Dr Tom Cavanagh, Chairman of IBAL. “Despite what the Litter Act says, local authorities are not compelling businesses to keep the visible areas inside their property, such as car parks, forecourts, shrubberies and basements, as well as pavements, clear of litter. They will fine individuals, but are not prepared to enforce the law on businesses.” As part of the survey, almost 50 public houses on main streets were found to be in breach of the litter law.

“Until we have a rethink of how litter enforcement is managed locally, the nationwide clean-up will never be complete. Maybe the task should be taken away from local authorities altogether, as it is in some other countries.”

An Taisce’s report for Limerick City indicated that out of *“twenty sites surveyed only three of these were Clean to European Norms”*. William Street was described as having *“Heavy levels of a wide variety of litter dominating the street”* and the approach to Parkville Court and surrounds was recorded as *“a terrible site and neglected area within Limerick – it was a complete eye-sore”*. Wicklow was also named as a Litter Blackspot with the report revealing that *“Coates Lane and Lidl/Heatons both had a serious litter problem: much of the litter at these sites appeared ‘old’, indicating a lack of thorough cleaning.”* By far the most heavily littered site surveyed in Wicklow was Crinion Park – this was a litter blackspot and described as *“in a terrible state and clearly abused and neglected by those responsible for the maintenance.”*

39 out of 60 areas surveyed were placed in the ‘litter free’ category this year, compared to only 2 when the survey began 7 years ago. To illustrate the improvement, the points scored by Monaghan in finishing 37<sup>th</sup> in this year’s ranking would have sufficed to make the town the cleanest in the country in 2002.

“Of course, we are delighted to see so many towns attaining ‘Litter Free’ status,” continued Dr Cavanagh. “We’re constantly hearing of the need for competitiveness, and IBAL views clean, well-kept environs as part of the competitiveness of Ireland as a tourist product and as a food exporter.”

The spectacular success of the IBAL campaign is witnessed by the recent approach made by Copenhagen Corporation to the group. The *Copenhagen Kommune* has requested IBAL’s assistance in helping the city, already acknowledged as among the best maintained in the EU, to achieve its aim of becoming Europe’s cleanest capital by 2015.

IBAL continues to highlight chewing gum as a major litter problem, as, unlike other litter types, it remains on the pavements indefinitely. “Now that the Government’s partnership with gum manufacturers has concluded, we are awaiting word on whether they will treat the issue seriously by introducing the long-awaited gum tax. We will still be walking on chewing gum thrown on our streets today for the next 25 years.”

To mark their success, the top 10 towns in the IBAL League each receive a number of birch trees for planting locally. These are provided by the Irish Tree Centre, an IBAL member based in County Cork.

**-ENDS-**

For further information contact Cullen Communications.

Clare O'Grady Tel: 01 6689099/ 087 7819375, [cogrady@cullencommunications.ie](mailto:cogrady@cullencommunications.ie)

Dawn Burke Tel: 01 6689099/ 087 215 6942, [dburke@cullencommunications.ie](mailto:dburke@cullencommunications.ie)

#### **IBAL Anti Litter League Finale Results Table 2009**

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Town/City</b>	<b>Status</b>
*	Bray	Clean to European Norms'
*	Cavan	
*	Clonmel	
*	Drogheda	
*	Longford	
<b>Winner from above 5 towns to be announced on Monday</b>		
6	Wexford	Clean to European Norms'
7	Carlow	Clean to European Norms'
8	Sligo	Clean to European Norms'
9	Celbridge	Clean to European Norms'
10	Blanchardstown	Clean to European Norms'
11	Ballincollig	Clean to European Norms'
12	Dundalk	Clean to European Norms'
13	Mullingar	Clean to European Norms'
14	Trim	Clean to European Norms'
15	Portlaoise	Clean to European Norms'
16	Navan	Clean to European Norms'
17	Roscommon	Clean to European Norms'
18	Dun Laoghaire	Clean to European Norms'
19	Tramore	Clean to European Norms'
20	Shannon	Clean to European Norms'
21	Killarney	Clean to European Norms'
22	Leixlip	Clean to European Norms'
23	Dungarvan	Clean to European Norms'
24	Ballina	Clean to European Norms'
25	Castlebar	Clean to European Norms'
26	Kilkenny	Clean to European Norms'
27	Fermoy	Clean to European Norms'
28	Swords	Clean to European Norms'
29	Balbriggan	Clean to European Norms'
30	Newbridge	Clean to European Norms'
31	Newcastlewest	Clean to European Norms'
32	Midleton	Clean to European Norms'
33	Ashbourne	Clean to European Norms'
34	Thurles	Clean to European Norms'
35	Enniscorthy	Clean to European Norms'
36	Youghal	Clean to European Norms'

37	Monaghan	Clean to European Norms'
38	Lucan	Clean to European Norms'
39	Cobh	Clean to European Norms'
40	Waterford City	<i>Moderately Littered</i>
41	Buncrana	<i>Moderately Littered</i>
42	Tullamore	<i>Moderately Littered</i>
43	Arklow	<i>Moderately Littered</i>
44	Gorey	<i>Moderately Littered</i>
45	Galway City	<i>Moderately Littered</i>
46	Ennis	<i>Moderately Littered</i>
47	Tuam	<i>Moderately Littered</i>
48	Tralee	<i>Moderately Littered</i>
49	New Ross	<i>Moderately Littered</i>
50	Cork City	Littered
51	Dublin City	Littered
52	Naas	Littered
53	Nenagh	Littered
54	Ballinasloe	<i>Seriously Littered</i>
55	Tallaght	<i>Seriously Littered</i>
56	Letterkenny	<i>Seriously Littered</i>
57	Athlone	<i>Seriously Littered</i>
58	Mallow	<i>Seriously Littered</i>
59	Wicklow	Litter Blackspot
60	Limerick City	Litter Blackspot

## **Longford: 5<sup>th</sup> out of 60 towns / cities surveyed.**

**A great year for Longford. Three of the approach roads were excellent. The Bus Station and Railway Station were both top ranking sites. The Main Street was moderately littered and this wasn't helped by the apparent lack of cigarette butt disposal units – the installation of some could make all the difference.**

**R393 Approach Road: Clean to European Norms.** This was an excellent approach route into Longford, creating a very positive first impression of the town. The road surface /signage / markings were in good condition and overall appearance was enhanced by some flowering and notices.

**Main Street: Moderately Littered.** A small amount of litter took away from an otherwise well presented main shopping street. Cigarette butts were particularly pronounced and surveyor didn't see any cigarette butt disposal units.

**Longford Bus Station: Clean to European Norms.** A very good site – there were plenty of litter bins in the area surveyed – clearly the station staff are very attentive.

**Longford Railway Station – Interior: Clean to European Norms.** The overall presentation of the interior of the station has been enhanced with new doors / furniture / signage – it was an excellent site and very well maintained.

**Longford Railway Station – Exterior: Moderately Littered.** With a quick clean-up this could easily be a top ranking site – a small scattering of litter took away from an otherwise good site.

**Ardee Approach Road: Clean to European Norms.** The individual gardens along this approach road were well maintained. Road surface / signage / markings were in good condition – the overall impression created was very positive.

**Mollaghan's of Longford: Clean to European Norms.** This was a very tidy environment with a complete absence of litter.

**N63 Roscommon Approach Road: Moderately Littered.** There were stretches of this route which were rough and uneven, a magnet for litter – one particular area with red and white boarding was most noticeable.

**L1151 Cloontion Approach Road: Clean to European Norms.** A clean and tidy approach road into Longford with a virtual absence of litter.

**Scoil Clociar Naomi: Moderately Littered.** It is quite unusual to have a Green Flag School not getting the top litter grade – a variety of litter was scattered throughout, all of it food related.