



Press Release – Embargoed until 0.00 on Monday, 5 September 2022

Litter survey shows only a quarter of beaches and harbours are ‘Clean’

- *Litter levels increase in coastal areas despite fall-off in Covid-related litter*
- *Many popular beaches have declined to ‘moderately littered’*

The annual nationwide survey by business group Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) of beaches and harbours has shown litter levels on the rise, with only 8 of 33 areas surveyed deemed ‘Clean’. Among the areas branded ‘heavily littered’ were Cork Harbour at Blackrock Castle and Dublin’s Grand Canal Dock and Tolka River. Alongside its impact on tourism and recreation, IBAL is warning that coastal litter has grave implications for the future of our planet.

Beaches, harbours, rivers and their immediate environs were monitored by An Taisce in June and July. While Tramore was again clean, many popular beaches slipped to ‘moderately littered’ status, among them Lahinch, Brittas Bay, Curracloe, Portmarnock, Strandhill and Clogherhead. Bundoran was again ‘littered’. By contrast, Salthill improved significantly.

“Unfortunately the improvement observed at our beaches last year seems to have reversed this time round,” commented IBAL’s Conor Horgan. “We had hoped that the decline in Covid-related litter might bring an improvement in overall cleanliness, added to the fact that many who staycated last year would have travelled abroad this summer. Our most popular beaches are not heavily littered, but they’re not as clean as they should be.”

The seafront in Bray was again praised, as was Dun Laoghaire, but Kinsale and Dingle deteriorated to ‘littered’ status, alongside Bantry and Lough Rea. Improved areas included Dogs Bay in Galway and Castletownbere in Cork.

At the bottom end of the table, there was dramatic fall in cleanliness at Grand Canal Dock in Dublin, which was ‘heavily littered’. An Taisce reported “heavy levels of a wide variety of litter, both alcohol and food related ... litter was both land-based and water-based and long-lie and short-lie”.

“It jars to see the neglected state of an area which has been the subject of millions of euros of investment and attracts so many business visitors. I don’t believe this would be allowed persist in other European capitals,” commented Mr Horgan.

Annesley Bridge in Dublin was deemed heavily littered and suffered ‘very high levels of casually discarded food and alcohol items’, while ‘the river bed continues to harbour larger, long-lie items like shopping carts, scooters, clothing and traffic cones’.

While acknowledging the work of community groups in Blackrock Castle in Cork, An Taisce cited 'evidence of land-based dumping and miscellaneous items including car tyres, construction signage, a rubber dinghy and stroller', which contributed to a 'heavily littered' rating.

Covid-related litter on the decline ... but not coffee cups

Unsurprisingly there was a fall-off in Covid masks and gloves found, but also in alcohol-related litter which was linked to lockdown. Coffee cups remained a significant litter item, however, present in half of the areas surveyed. The most common forms of litter found by the assessors were cigarette butts, sweet wrappers and plastic bottles.

"Every day it seems we hear more of the dire consequences which marine litter, much of it plastic, holds for our planet," adds Mr Horgan. "We need to impress on people that simple individual actions such as discarding a coffee cup – or even a cigarette butt - have implications which stretch beyond the local environment."

With 10 million tonnes of plastic ending up in our oceans each year, it is estimated that there will be more plastic than fish in our oceans within 30 years. Research shows a single cigarette butt can contaminate up to 200 litres of water.

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Source:

<https://ourworldindata.org/plastic-pollution> / <https://plasticoceans.org/the-facts/>

IBAL coastal litter survey 2022*

Clean To European Norms

Bray seafront	Wicklow
Dun Laoghaire harbour	Dublin
Keem beach	Mayo
Killiney beach	Dublin
Mountshannon (River Shannon)	Clare
Old Head beach	Mayo
Salthill beach	Galway
Tramore beach	Waterford

Moderately Littered

Ballybunion beach	Kerry
Brittas Bay	Wicklow
Castletownbere harbour	Cork
Curracloe beach	Wexford
Clogherhead beach	Louth
Dog's Bay beach	Galway
Doolin pier and harbour	Clare

Dungarvan harbour	Waterford
Killybegs harbour	Donegal
Kilmore Quay harbour	Wexford
Lahinch beach	Clare
Portmagee harbour	Kerry
Portmarnock beach	Dublin
Skerries beach	Dublin
Strandhill beach	Sligo

Littered

Ballinacurra	Cork
Bantry harbour	Cork
Bundoran beach	Donegal
Dingle harbour	Kerry
Kinsale harbour	Cork
Lough Rea (Loughrea)	Galway

Heavily Littered

Annesley Bridge (River Tolka)	Dublin
Cork Harbour (Blackrock Castle)	Cork
Grand Canal Dock	Dublin
White Bay beach	Cork

*Areas surveyed comprise waterfront and immediate environs. Within each category, order is alphabetical.