

# Cleaner Neighbourhoods Report 2017/18



**KEEP  
NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
BEAUTIFUL**

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NORTHERN  
IRELAND  
BEAUTIFUL

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful is the charity that inspires people to create **cleaner, greener and more sustainable communities**. Through our behaviour change campaigns and education on local, national and global environmental issues we are working to **improve the quality of people's lives, the places they live in and the places they love**.

# Key facts and figures at a glance for the period 2017-2018

**15%** The number of transects failing to meet the accepted standard for litter has remained at **15%** from last year

**6%** The percentage of transects with dog fouling present has held steady at **6%**



**273**  schools earned the right to fly a green flag, **25%** of all schools in the country

**12%** of transects surveyed were completely **free of litter**, up **7%** from last year

**5%** The spend on street cleaning services has gone up **5%** to **£45,562,534**

**437**

In 2017, there were an average of **437** litter items washed up by the tide per **100m** of Northern Irish beach, of which **82%** was plastic

**3,158**

Fixed Penalties were issued for **littering** during 2016-17

(the last complete year for which records are available)



**30%** of the operational time accrued by a mechanical sweeping machine is wasted because **obstructions prevent them from reaching the curb or pavement backline**



**256**

**Adopt A Spot**

groups have adopted a spot in their local area, committing to undertake four clean ups per year in 2017-18



**322** 

Fixed Penalties were issued for failing to clean up dog fouling during 2016-17

(the last complete year for which records are available)

# Foreword

At last, it has dawned on us all that pollution from litter, particularly single use plastics, is having a deadly effect on our fragile Earth. The BBC's excellent Blue Planet 2 and Sky Ocean Rescue are just two of the high profile media programmes to help bring home the horrific scale of the problem. No-one can now claim ignorance as an excuse for their littering.

Perhaps we were seeing the start of that awareness in the Live Here Love Here research carried out in March 2017, when we saw the percentage of people admitting to littering dropping to one in four people, down from one in three the previous year.

Could this be part of the reason that, whilst transects failing the litter standards (15%) and prevalence of dog fouling (6%) have held steady, we have seen a significant rise of transects that are entirely free of litter, up from 5% in 2016/17 to 12% in 2017/18? We know, however, that awareness and logical arguments won't often win the day. The environmental sector needs to better communicate those impactful stories that really provoke and stimulate behaviour change. Strong government action is crucial in combatting pollution and legislation may be necessary to ensure improvements in reducing the amount of non-recyclable materials being littered on a daily basis.

With waste and litter being devolved legislative matters the lack of a Northern Ireland Assembly is a real hindrance. Such a void for such a long period of time is disturbing and prevents any progress at the very time when litter pollution is top of the global news agenda. The political context is challenging, not least for those at the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), who have championed the levy on single use carrier bags, the development of a marine litter strategy and ongoing investment in the data collection detailed in this report.

Let me conclude on a more positive note. Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, as the Northern Ireland member of the European Litter Prevention Association, has been working hard to get litter on the wider policy agenda. As I write, we are on the brink of an historic event, with the inclusion of litter in the EU Waste Directive amendments (see page 23). At the heart of this is the explicit requirement on both producers and member states to finance and implement litter awareness-raising and prevention campaigns. Irrespective of the impact of Brexit, this is a clear direction of travel and a real opportunity for more producers to join Wrigley's, Coca Cola and McDonald's, and show their commitment to being part of the solution to littering.

The amendments also require the development of a national litter prevention strategy to combat all forms of littering; something Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful has consistently called for in the recommendations in this report. If all goes well this should be implemented by May 2020. We may all hold our breath.

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## Dr Ian Humphreys

CHIEF EXECUTIVE,  
KEEP NORTHERN IRELAND BEAUTIFUL



# Executive summary

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful is an independent charity that works with the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, local Councils and businesses to assist in improving our local environmental quality and increasing the cleanliness of our towns and countryside.

Our work includes managing Live Here Love Here, the largest single civic pride and volunteering campaign in Northern Ireland with over 111,000 supporting our campaign in 2017/18. We also manage the Eco-Schools environmental education programme and the marine litter survey, which can be viewed and downloaded at: [www.KeepNorthernIrelandBeautiful.org/marinelitter](http://www.KeepNorthernIrelandBeautiful.org/marinelitter)

This report is based on a number of sources: the litter and cleanliness data comes from a survey of 1,097 individual transects covering approximately 55km (or 34 miles) of streets and parks across all 11 Council areas, while fixed penalty records, spend on street cleansing data and information on enforcement and education activities was collected directly by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful from individual local authorities.

## Findings & Insight

- 15% of transects surveyed failed to make the acceptable standard for cleanliness. This is unchanged from last year and shows that more needs to be done for progress to be made across the board. However, with the number of transects completely free of litter increasing from 5% to 12%, it is clear that more resources are being deployed to certain areas. This is the highest level of total cleanliness observed since the Northern Ireland Litter Report began in 2010.
- The incidence of dog fouling has also held steady, with 6% of transects being affected once again. Although High Obstruction Residential areas had the highest percentage of transects affected at 11%, recreational areas actually had the highest fouling rate, at 2.25 per transect. This is perhaps due to the cluster effect, i.e. one dog foul attracting more dog fous.
- Rural roads and Industrial Shed and Retail areas seem to be disproportionately affected by litter when compared to residential, recreational and other retail areas. 39% of rural transects failed in our surveys, compared to only 3% in Primary Retail. This could be because cleansing resources are being focused on the areas with higher footfall and greater visibility.
- There was also a disparity between Low Obstruction and High Obstruction Residential areas. The failure rate for the low obstruction area was only 3 transects in every 100, the

joint lowest score in the survey, whereas the high obstruction areas were five times dirtier, with 15% of transects failing. This is perhaps due to the more restricted access to the kerb and pavement for mechanical sweepers in these areas.

- Obstruction to road and pavement sweeping has dropped by an average of 7% across all land uses and Council areas, increasing the amount of litter being collected by mechanical means.
- While the annual spend on cleansing has increased by 5%, the amount of fines being issued for litter and dog fouling has decreased by 13%. This perhaps shows a missed opportunity by Councils, when the cost of cleaning our streets and open spaces could be offset by the revenue generated from littering offences.

At the end of the report, a number of recommendations have been made as to how we can all move towards a litter free future together. They cover both national and local policy makers, but it has to be stressed that we can all do our part when it comes to keeping Northern Ireland beautiful.



## Interpreting this report

**Benchmark** in this report refers to the process of comparing the performance of one council against another, or of comparing NI results to those of other regions of the UK.

**Baseline** refers to the average of the results of the NI Litter Surveys carried out in 2012, 2013 and 2014 with the data mathematically weighted to reflect the amended landuse ratios used in subsequent surveys. Consequently, 'weighted baseline' figures may be different from those given in previous reports.

**Transect** is the term given to an individual survey site. For this survey it is a length of pavement 50m long, extending from the backline into the gully. In recreational areas it is either a 50m length of path plus 1m into the grass on either side, or an area of open space approximately 100m<sup>2</sup>, depending on which is more appropriate.

# Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful



Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful is the charity that inspires people to create cleaner, greener and more sustainable communities.

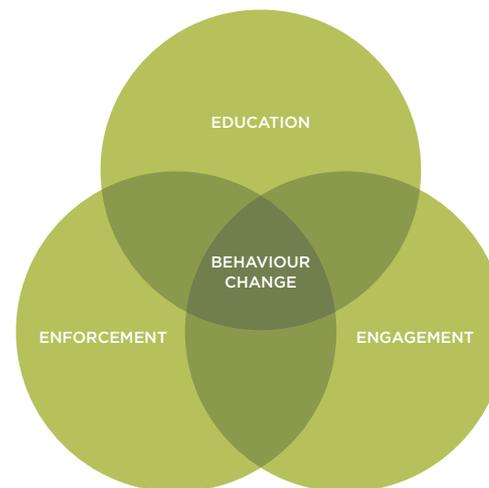
Through our behaviour change campaigns and education on local, national and global environmental issues, we are working to improve the quality of people's lives, the places they live in and the places they love.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful provides a range of programmes, services and initiatives that include:

**Environmental Education:** Eco-Schools is the world's largest environmental education programme. Focused on behaviour change, it encourages pupil led action. Northern Ireland is the first country in the world to have all its 1,152 schools participating and 25% fly the Green Flag, having reached the international standard.

**Engagement and Volunteering:** The BIG Spring Clean, a part of Live Here Love Here, mobilises tens of thousands of people every year in cleaning up their parks, sports pitches, streets and beaches. Live Here Love Here is raising the bar on anti-social behaviour by building civic pride and stronger communities.

**Environmental Standards:** Blue Flag for beaches and marinas, Seaside Awards, Green Flag for Parks, Green Key for the hospitality industry, the Green Business Award and the NI Environmental Quality Forum all help raise and maintain the quality of the places we live in and visit by setting national and international benchmarking standards.



For more information on our work contact:

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# Northern Ireland Litter Survey

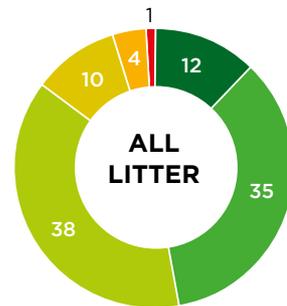
Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful have been collecting information about the amount and distribution of litter for over ten years.

Recognising in 2012 that litter was not the only indicator of the quality or cleanliness of a space, we began to monitor graffiti, flyposting and pavement staining, as well as specific information about dog fouling.

Readers should note that many of the statistics relate to the presence or absence of the indicator (e.g. litter or dog fouling), rather than the volume or amount dropped. Surveys are a snapshot of a site at the time surveyors arrive, so the results are sensitive to how thoroughly or how recently the survey site has been cleansed before data is recorded. Over the course of the 1,097 individual surveys, any effect this may have had is very likely to have been evened out.

The 2017/18 data was collected between July and October 2017.

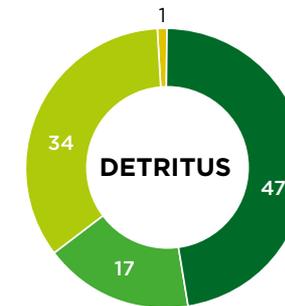
Councils that participate in the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Borough Cleanliness Survey receive additional detail, support and interpretation of this information online through our Data Hub resource. Currently, six Councils are participants in this programme.



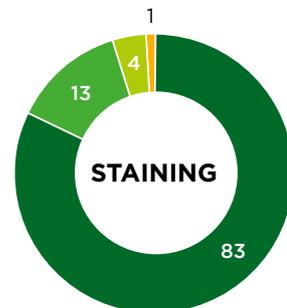
**Litter** is anything that is dropped, discarded or thrown down by anyone. It includes cigarettes, crisp bags, bottles and cans, receipts and many more things, as well as dog fouling.



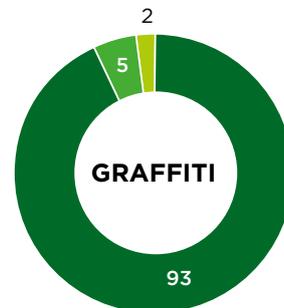
This is what the picture of litter would be like if we do not include dog fouling. We measure this because dog fouling is much more difficult for street cleansing to collect than other types of litter.



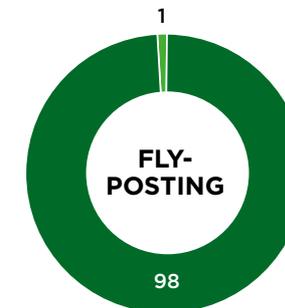
**Detritus** comprises small, broken down particles of synthetic and natural materials and includes dust, mud, soil, rotted leaf and vegetable residues, and fragments of twigs, glass, plastic and other finely divided materials.



**Staining** is all the substances that mark a pavement, and commonly includes chewing gum, oil, drinks stains and heavy discolouration.



**Graffiti** is writing or drawings scribbled, scratched, or sprayed illicitly on a wall or other surface in or visible from a public place. Murals and cultural artworks are not considered graffiti.



**Flyposting** is the placing of unauthorised advertising or posters in a public place, and includes stickers, bills and large posters.

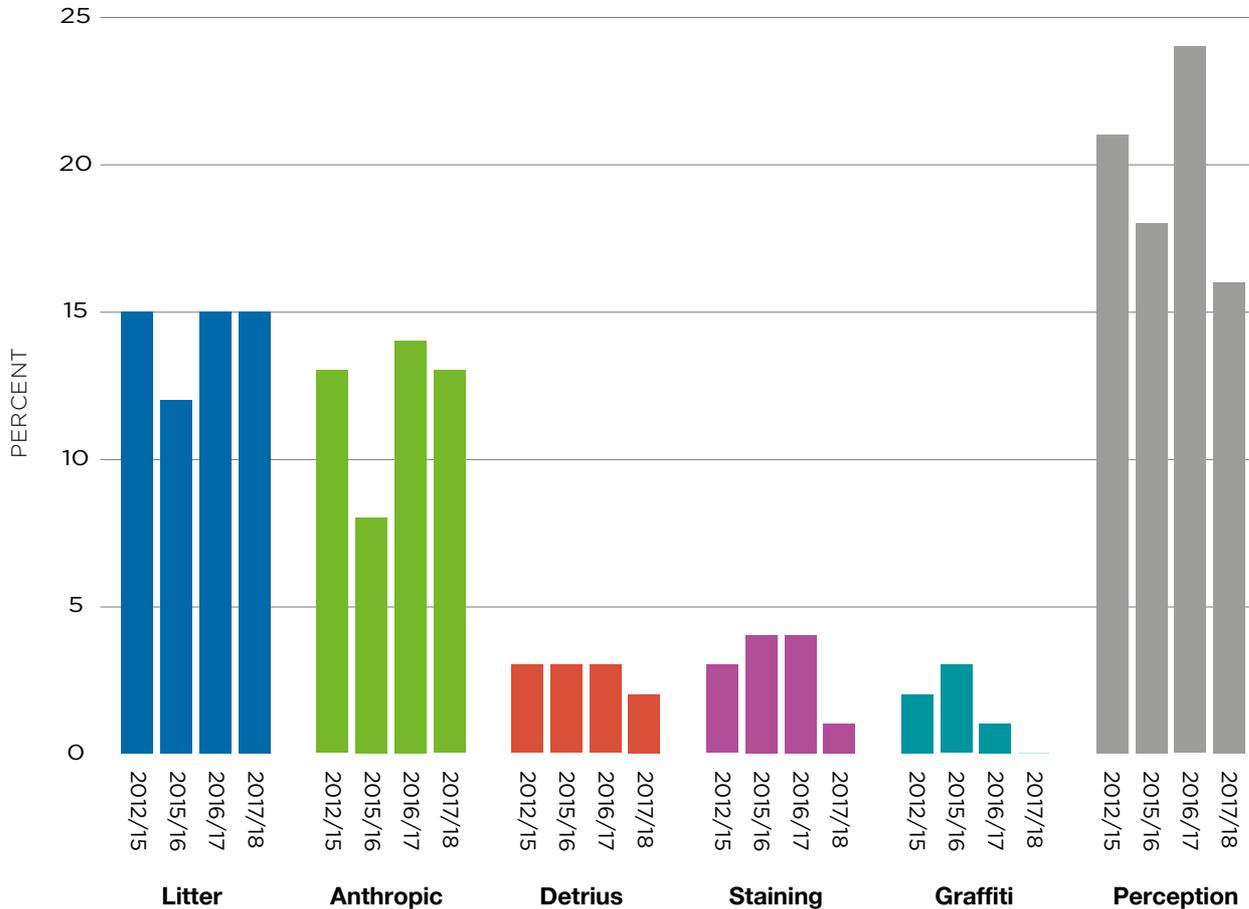
The rings above show the percentage of transects surveyed that were allocated each of the seven grades available (see key). Each ring represents each of the different cleanliness indicators that we measure in our survey. Totals may not equal 100 due to the rounding up or down of figures to make whole numbers.

**KEY**

- **Grade A (pass)**  
Completely free of indicator (litter, detritus, graffiti etc.)
- **Grade B+ (pass)**  
Predominantly free of indicator apart from some small items
- **Grade B (pass)**  
Many small indicator items or one larger item
- **Grade B- (fail)**  
A few larger indicator items
- **Grade C (fail)**  
Many larger indicator items
- **Grade C- (fail)**  
Accumulations of larger indicator items
- **Grade D (fail)**  
Transect is heavily affected by indicator, both widespread and accumulated

## The trend in pollution indicators

2012-15 is the baseline against which current performance should be compared.



**Flyposting** has more or less been completely eradicated as a littering issue over the last few years thanks to monitoring, reporting and action from local authorities.

**“Layby and area under hedge full of litter”**

Rural road  
**Glengormley**

**“Pristine!”**

Residential area  
**Ballyclare**

**“Build-up of detritus in parking bays”**

Residential area  
**Antrim**

**“A few drinks bottles from sports events”**

Playing fields  
**Randalstown**

**“No litter, but ridiculous amounts of graffiti!!”**

Public walkway  
**Portadown**

**“Incredible concentration of alcoholic drinks bottles and cans”**

Rural road  
**Armagh**

**“School kids smoking in the trees nearby – lots of cigarette packets and butts on the ground”**

Residential area  
**Keady**

**“Cars parked all over the pavement”**

Residential area  
**Belfast**

**“Silly-string causing particular staining”**

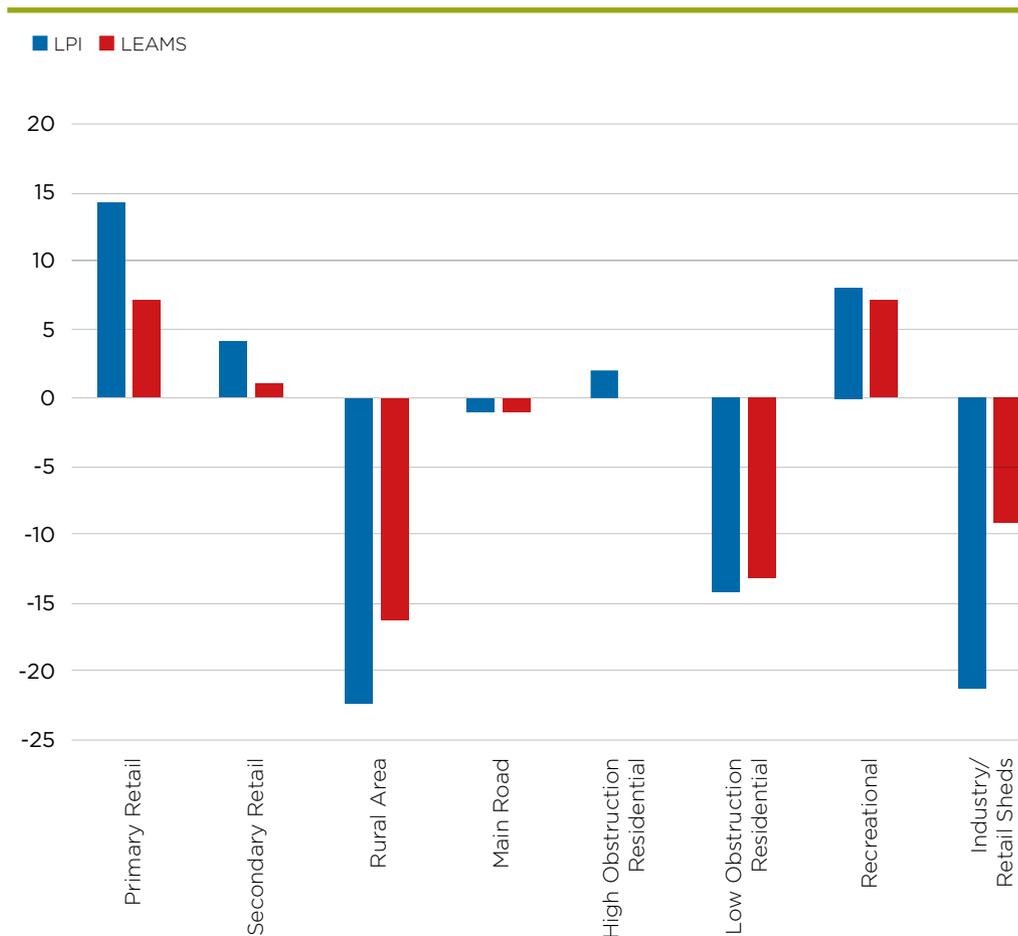
Children’s play area  
**Ballycastle**

# LEAMS

## Local Environmental Audit & Management System

LEAMS is an alternative method of measuring litter and other indicators, which is used in both Scotland and Wales. Unlike the pass/fail indicator used in Northern Ireland, LEAMS scores are generated by assigning a value to each grade, and then calculating the average value of all the grades assigned. It differs from the Litter Pollution Index (LPI) in that a LEAMS score takes account of how clean or littered a transect is, rather than just whether it is a pass or a fail. For example, Councils A and B might both have an LPI of 12, indicating that 12% of their transects have failed to meet the acceptable standard for litter. However, if all of Council A's failed transects were 'grade D', but all of Council B's failed transects were 'grade C', then Council B would have a higher LEAMS score. This allows for a more accurate analysis of the survey data, which may be preferable for local authorities when setting targets or allocating resources.

## LEAMS vs LPI (Relative to average)



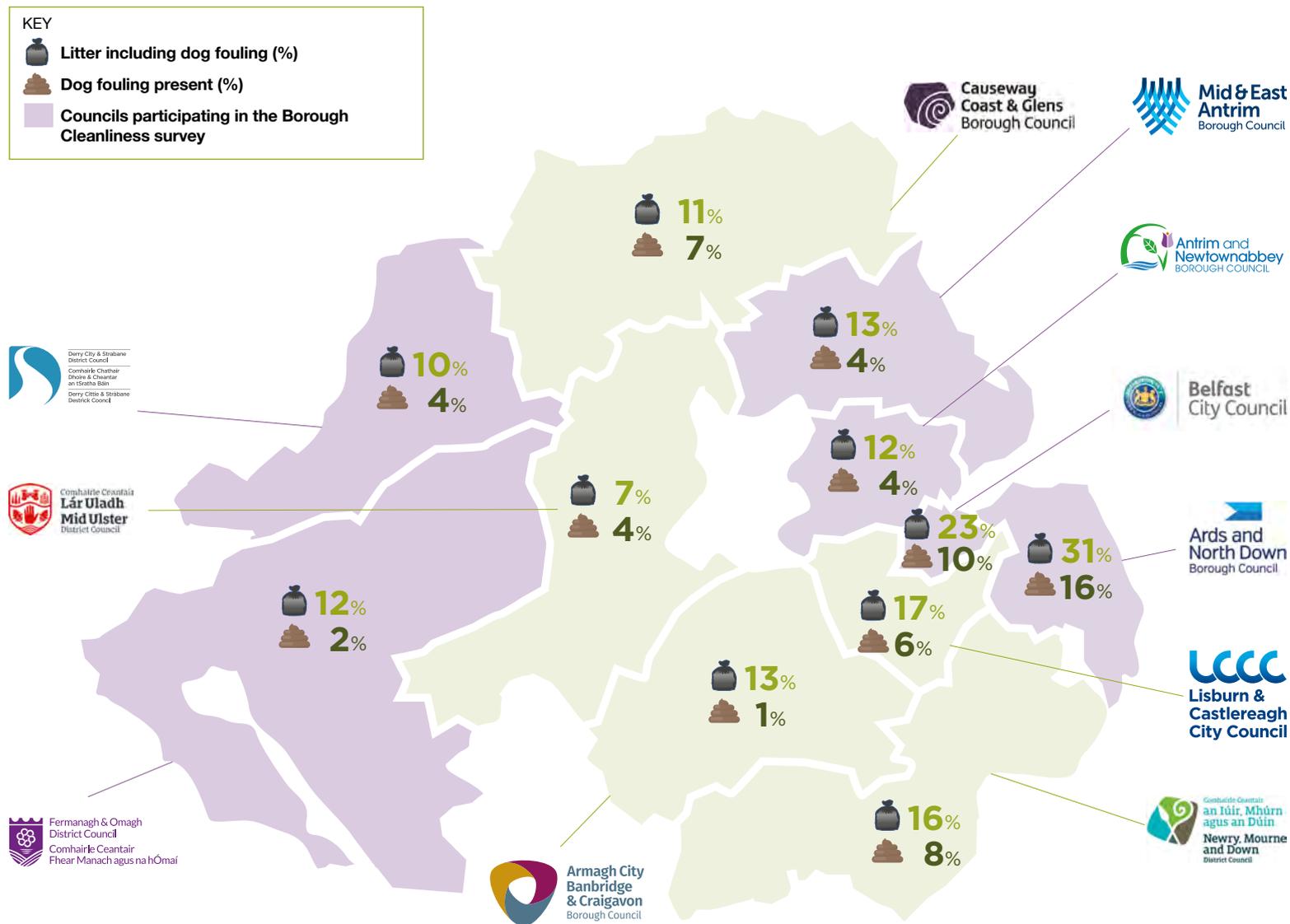
**This graph gives a representation of how clean the eight land uses are in terms of both the Litter Pollution Index and the LEAMS score, relative to the mean for each system.**

If we look at retail, for example, we can see that the LPI figure would suggest that the 'Primary Retail' transects are much cleaner than average (+14%), whereas the LEAMS score gives a more conservative figure (+7). This indicates that although they had a much better pass rate, they weren't completely clear of litter. Likewise, 'Industrial and Retail Shed' areas look to be much dirtier than average by their LPI (-21%), but with a LEAMS score 9 points below the average, not all the transects failed badly. Going by the LPI scores alone, a Council looking at the graph above might be tempted to divide scarce resources equally between 'Rural' and 'Industrial and Retail Shed' areas, as they appear to be equally as dirty. The LEAMS scores however, show that the rural transects surveyed were in fact dirtier than their industrial counterparts and probably have a greater need of those resources.

# Mapped survey results for each Council

## Transects badly affected by litter or dog fouling

The percentage of transects which fall below the required standard for litter, and the percentage of transects on which dog fouling was observed in each Council area.



## Dog fouling

The improvement in rates of dog fouling across the eight different land uses has been one of the big success stories over the last two years. This year, figures have dropped in all areas apart from Main Road and High Obstruction Residential, although it should be noted that in both of these land uses the 2017/18 figures were still lower than those from 2015/16.

While High Obstruction Residential transects showed the highest incidence rate of dog fouling, it was actually recreational areas which appeared to suffer the most from the cluster effect. Transects affected by dog fouling showed an average of 1.49 dog fous across the eight land uses, whereas those in recreational areas alone had 2.25 dog fous. This may be the same dog using the same spot repeatedly, or the presence of dog fous may be signalling to other dog walkers that they don't need to pick up after their own dog.

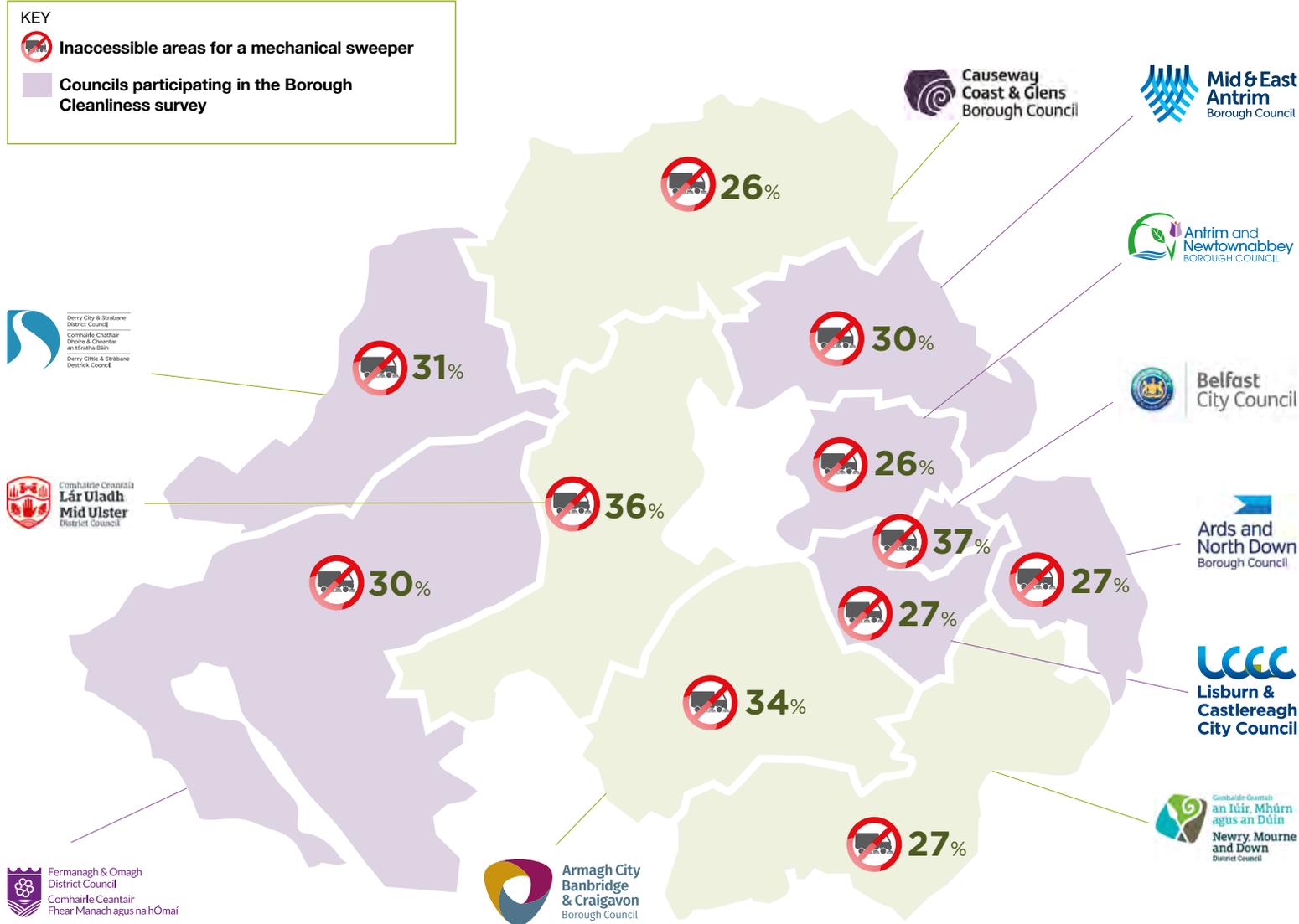
There have been successful behavioural change, or nudging campaigns run by various Councils to directly address the issue of dog fouling. Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful has produced a number of posters to help with these initiatives, which are now available upon request. See our website for details.

### AVERAGE FOR ALL OF NI:



## Obstruction to sweeping

The average percentage of each transect that a mechanical sweeper would not be able to access in each Council area. The analysis is based on the ability of standard-size sweepers to access the kerb and channel and for the smaller single-operator versions to travel along the pavement. The availability of such machines to Councils is not considered.



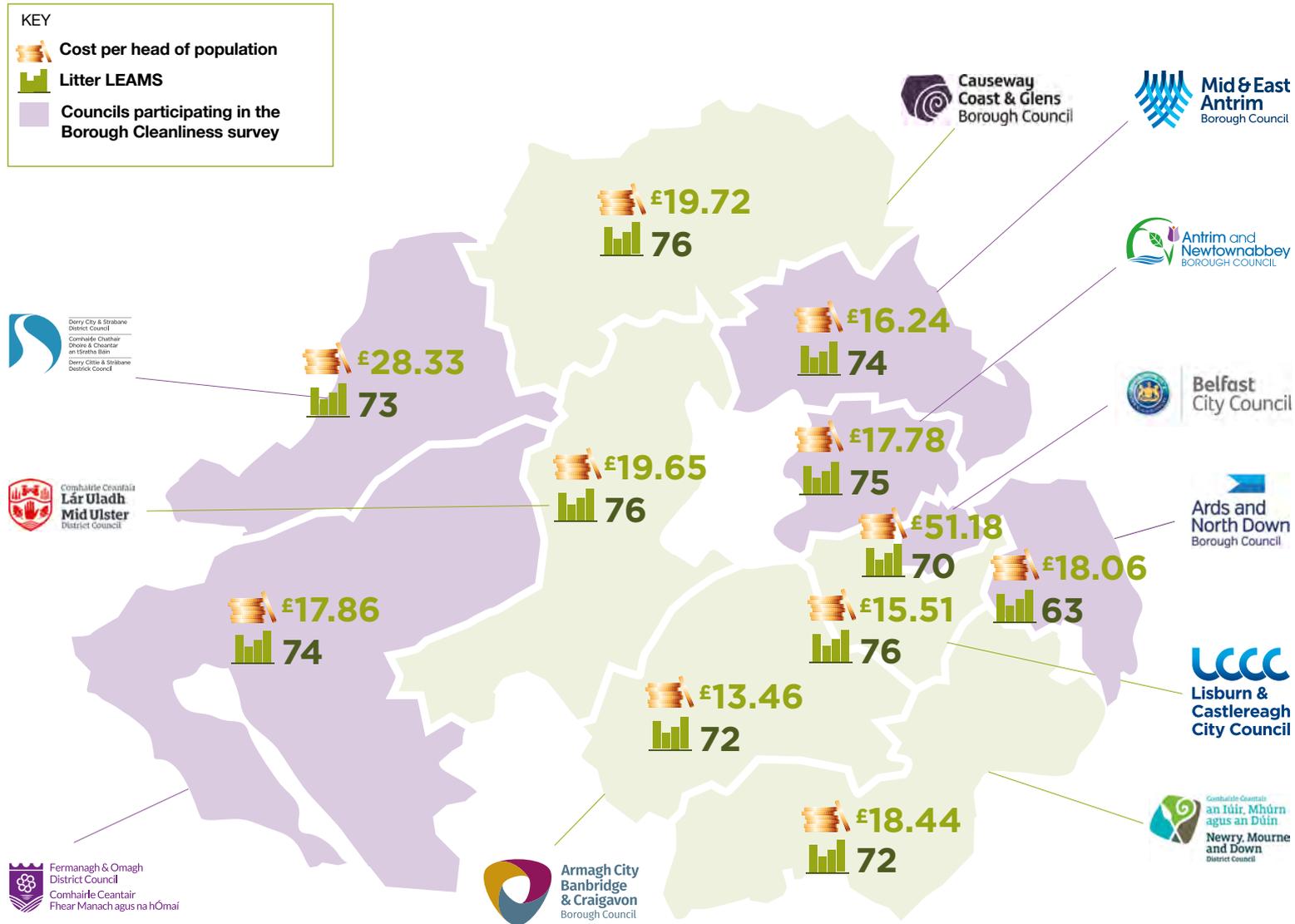
## Obstruction to sweeping

A significant issue in any cleansing routine is the ability to fully exploit the cleansing resources available. If a mechanical sweeper is unable to access an area then the choice becomes: a) leave any litter and detritus; b) task a sweeper on foot to an area, or c) schedule a return to an area in the hope that the obstructions will have moved. The majority of obstructions are parked cars preventing access to the kerb, but other obstructions, especially in retail areas, include fixed signs, movable signs, inappropriately placed street furniture and poorly designed sites that would prevent access, especially outside retail areas.



## Cleansing spend vs LEAMS

Litter LEAMS was calculated from survey data collected by trained surveyors between August and October 2017. Spending figures were collected from individual Council financial statements, which are available on Council websites (reported on 30/01/18), and the projected population of each Area from the NI Statistics and Research Agency.



## Cleansing spend

The total average spend on street cleansing across all of Northern Ireland in 2016/17 was £45,562,532. With a total of 793,208 households in Northern Ireland this means that on average every rate payer was charged £57.44 for cleaning the streets, even if they are not personally a litterer.

Please note that these figures relate to 2016/17, and are therefore one year behind the figures in the rest of this report. Because of careful auditing and the public presentation process public finances go through, the approved figures are only made available in autumn of the following year.

AVERAGE FOR ALL OF NI:





# Marine litter

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful conducts four surveys on ten reference beaches every year on behalf of the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

This survey was designed to provide a baseline figure against which to measure progress toward what is termed Good Environmental Status (GES) under the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

In March 2018, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful published their 2017 Marine Litter Report, receiving wide coverage across all media channels. The report highlights the many effects of marine litter, including the harm it poses to wildlife, along with the particular issue of microplastics.

The full report can be found here:

[www.KeepNorthernIrelandBeautiful.org/marinelitter](http://www.KeepNorthernIrelandBeautiful.org/marinelitter)



*Volunteers have removed close to 1,000,000 pieces of litter from ten beaches since the surveys began in 2012.*

*Between September 2012 and October 2017, an average of 510 items of litter were observed per 100m of beach around Northern Ireland. Those items break down as shown here:*



**Wood**  
10

**Plastic gloves (heavy duty)**  
12

**Plastic and polystyrene pieces**  
< 2.5cm  
60

**Plastic drinks caps and lids**  
33

**Other sanitary items**  
6

**Drink Cans**  
21

**Plastic string and cord**  
diameter < 1cm  
66

**Plastic food wrappers**  
27

**Other metal items**  
14

**Plastic fishing nets**  
9

**Tyres/belts**  
3

**Plastic shotgun cartridges**  
8

**Oil drums/jerry cans**  
1

**Paper**  
3

**Bottle caps**  
2

**Plastic and polystyrene pieces**  
> 2.5cm  
71

**Other rubber items**  
9

**Plastic drinks containers**  
42

**Other cloth items**  
6

**Medical**  
1

**Other glass items**  
4

**Other plastic items**  
38

**Plastic bags**  
16

# Live Here Love Here

## In 2017, Live Here Love Here:

- Supported over 111,000 volunteers in clean-ups and other civic pride actions
- Removed 141 tonnes of litter
- Operated a Small Grants Scheme that was 5 fold over-subscribed, which supported 143 projects
- Developed and delivered significant media coverage including TV, outdoor and social
- Grew with the welcome addition of McDonalds from the business sector in 2017 and we are delighted to have Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council on board from 2018 onwards

## Community Awards 2018

The Live Here Love Here Community Awards, hosted by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, celebrate the tremendous efforts of groups and individuals across the province who embody the values of Live Here Love Here. This year's event, held in the Belfast Harbour Commissioner's Office was sponsored by ISL Waste Management Ltd. Compered by TV Presenter Joe Mahon, the evening was filled with inspirational tales from volunteers who have and continue to instil pride in our local communities through practical environmental action.

Applications for the Live Here Love Here Community Awards 2019 will be launched late 2018 on our website at

[www.livehereandlovehere.org](http://www.livehereandlovehere.org)



These organisations are partners in Live Here Love Here (Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council from April 2018):



## The Edge Youth Centre



Ballynahinch is a community often defined by high suicide rates or traffic jams on the way to Newcastle. Since beginning this project, we have seen a new definition for our town - unity, hard work and investment. We are seeing young people and their parents, grandparents, neighbours coming together for a cause that will bring about a space that will benefit the community on many levels. A space to connect and learn, qualifications, new hobbies and interests, new relationships, food for families struggling financially and the support to develop these skills in their own homes/ gardens, young people learning the importance of giving back and having an interest in our society etc. In the three months we have been building the garden I have seen an improvement in generations in our community finding a common interest, teaching each other new skills and seeking ways of using the tunnel to bring about support to the wider community.

A highlight for me has been the generosity in the volunteers offering their time and resources to help the construction process; from giving up time, taking holidays in their work to help us, donating items from their homes that they no longer use or see purpose for in garden etc.

## Melmount & East Bank Estates Community Associations Forum

Our project was to develop a vacant piece of disused and over grown land within the Ballycolman Estate that would promote community cohesion, enhance the area concerned and engage local people in environmental initiatives. After consultation with the local community association it was felt that a mini allotment would best serve the project. Our area of concern suffers from high levels of deprivation and unemployment and has suffered greatly from our troubled past. The mini allotment would facilitate a safe and peaceful area for local residents to sit and ponder and find ease from stress related issues and concerns.

The mini allotment is aimed at encouraging our younger folk to take part in environmentally friendly initiatives that will enhance the immediate area and educate them on the varying aspects of a positively maintained environment as well as the healthy benefits of home grown produce. The project was delivered in conjunction with the Strabane Health Improvement Project which is made up of people from various backgrounds, ages and health requirements. A lot of these people suffer from alcohol and drug related issues arising from the political conflict and has such this project afforded them the opportunity to positively give something back to the local community as well as being appreciated and involved in local community action and development.

The project also brought together people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds in an initiative that allowed for the promotion of good community relations throughout the immediate area.



Before and after photographs of the project.

# Education and awareness campaigns

Alongside the Live Here Love Here campaign, Councils and community organisations run various education initiatives and workshops which buttress wider-scale campaigning.

All eleven Councils were offered the opportunity to contribute a case study for this section.



## Scoop that Poop

In January, Ards and North Down Borough Council launched a major new campaign aimed at reminding all dog walkers to 'Scoop that Poop' or face a hefty £80 fine. The Council is determined to address dog fouling as it has the potential to ruin residents' and visitors' enjoyment of our otherwise beautiful outdoor spaces. The key messages of the campaign are **supervise** your dog at all times, **pick up** their waste and **bin it** (any litter bin will do), and **report** offenders to help the Council target enforcement efforts where they will be most effective.

The campaign supports and reinforces the Council's recently transformed approach to bringing environmental vandals to task, with the number of dog fouling fines issued between 1 April and 31 December 2017 increasing by 68% and £62,000 worth of fixed penalty fines being imposed for dog control and littering offences.



Keeping with the environmental protection theme, this campaign was funded from a new fund established by Ards and North Down Borough Council using some of the landfill tax savings generated by the phenomenal response of householders to a range of new household waste recycling initiatives. The new £200k Recycling Community Investment Fund ensures that the Council 'pays back' to the community for its efforts on recycling, using saved landfill tax to help further protect and enhance the local environment of the Borough; this type of reinvestment will continue as long as the residents of the Borough continue to sustain and improve their recycling habits.



## Adopt-a-Street

Adopt-a-Street is a scheme launched by the legacy Craigavon Borough Council in November 2013. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council currently supports groups across the Borough, who go out to clean and maintain their areas in between times that the street cleansing teams are there. The Council hands out litter pickers, gloves, bags and hi-viz gear if necessary and can offer collection of bags as part of the scheme. To date the Council has approximately 100 areas adopted and registered with the scheme.

The last recorded figures show that approximately 5,000 black bags of litter have been collected through the initiative.

## Wheelie Big Challenge with Belfast City Council

2017 saw pupils from 34 Belfast schools investigate and engage in practical actions to reduce waste, particularly food waste, in school and at home by reducing, reusing and recycling. Botanic Primary School placed food caddies in all their classrooms and managed to reduce the food in their bins by over 90%. They went on to impress the judges at the Wheelie Big Challenge competition in June and scooped first prize and £500 for their eco work.

Ruth Van Ry, Environmental Education Manager, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful said: *“The Wheelie Big Challenge is an action based, fun project and competition for all schools in Belfast to think about how they could improve the environment by reducing waste and recycling more. We are delighted to be once again supported by Belfast City Council and are looking forward to seeing all the interesting ideas from schools. We invite all school pupils in Belfast to put their eco-thinking caps on and get involved”.*

Alderman Tommy Sandford, Chair of the People and Communities Committee, Belfast City Council said: *“We are pleased to be working with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful again on this competition, building on the success of the past few years. This competition gives schools the opportunity to win great prizes while helping to protect the environment and reduce waste disposal costs. With research showing that around a third of food is wasted, we hope this competition will encourage pupils and their families to think about the food they waste at home and in school and do something about it.”*



# Eco-Schools

Eco-Schools forms an important element of the anti-littering education package in most Councils in Northern Ireland.

The Eco-Schools programme was developed by the Foundation for Environmental Education, is actively run in 67 countries around the world and is acknowledged as the world's largest pupil led environmental education programme, engaging over 15 million young people. It also provides an excellent foundation for delivering many of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. There are now 273 schools across Northern Ireland that have been awarded the coveted Green Flag, the pinnacle of the programme. As well as undertaking detailed learning on three environmental topics, schools must maintain a litter free environment to achieve the Green Flag. Schools are reassessed every two years, ensuring that all participating pupils receive regular anti-litter messaging.

At the heart of the Eco-Schools programme is a very simple 7-step process supporting long-term behavioural change and promoting the environmental message beyond the school gates into the surrounding community. Northern Ireland was the first country in the world to have every school registered with the programme.



Eco-schools operates with the support of:





# The rural litter issue

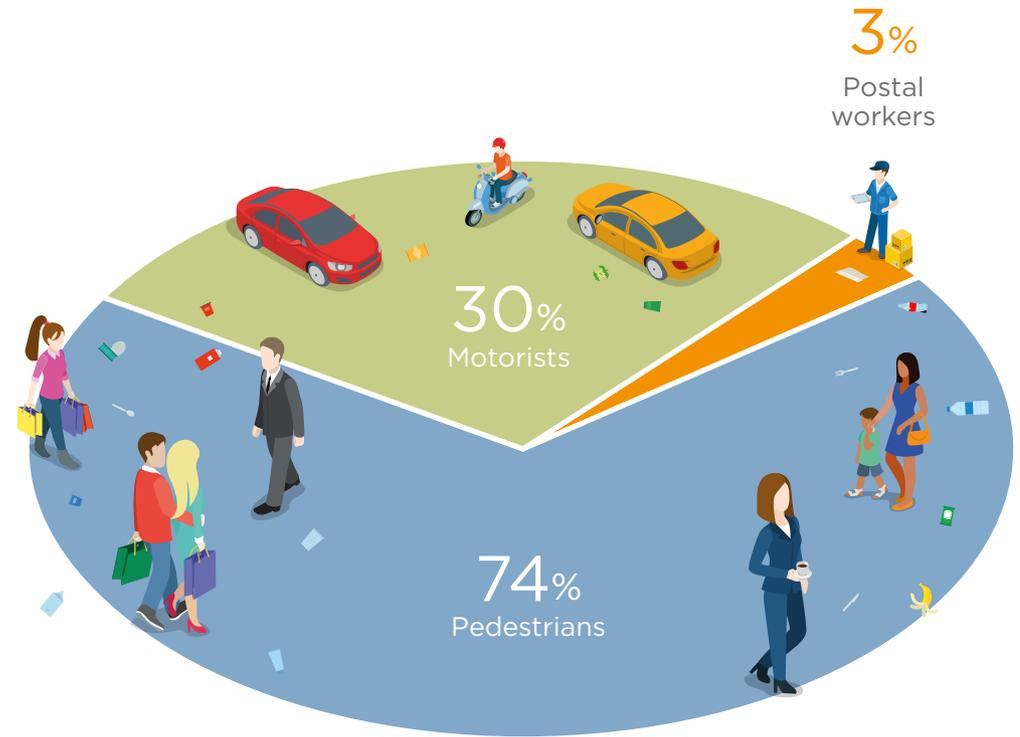


39% of rural transects surveyed in 2017/18 were unacceptably polluted by litter.

Compare this to both primary (3%) and secondary retail (13%) and it is clear that there is a difference in the volume of rubbish accumulating in these areas. This is most likely explained by the way cleansing resources are allocated to each area. In the main towns and cities, sweepers and teams of litter pickers are deployed on a daily basis, whereas very few Councils are able to clean the rural roads in their areas very often, due to fears over the health and safety of their staff.

\* Average LPI across both Primary and Secondary Retail areas.

# Sources of litter



During the survey, a decision is made by the surveyor as to the most likely source of the litter found in each transect.

The reasoning is based on type of litter, land use, footfall, presence of fast food outlets and the weather. The graphic above shows the four

most common sources of litter. It should be noted that multiple sources can be ticked for one transect. From the table below we can see that more litter is coming from motorists and less from pedestrians this year when compared to 2016/17. This is mostly due to the increase in rural litter, 95% of which comes from passing cars.

Sources	2016/17	2017/18
Pedestrian	77%	74%
Motorist	27%	30%
Postal workers	3%	3%



# EU Waste Directive Amendments

For the first time ever, the EU is set to have a cohesive policy on litter and the prevention of littering set out in a legally binding text. This is potentially a monumental moment for all the EU member states, but how much of this will be transitioned across in the first instance to the UK and then adopted by our Northern Ireland Assembly after Brexit is yet to be seen.

## **The breakthrough actions are as follows:**

- 1. Litter is a shared responsibility** between competent authorities, producers and consumers and they all must now play a defined role in the fight against littering behaviour.
- 2. Dropping litter must be an offence** across all member states and the penalties should be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.
- 3. National litter prevention strategies** must be adopted by member states as an integral part of their waste management plan to combat and clean up all forms of littering.
- 4. The link between land and marine litter strategies is key** to their success and member states must take full account of their EU marine environment and water directives when their national litter prevention strategies are being created.
- 5. Member states must identify and address products that are the main sources of littering and take measures to prevent and reduce litter from these sources.**
- 6. Producers must pay for public information and communication campaigns on the prevention of littering.** Products not covered by an existing scheme will now have to be included.
- 7. EU member states are required to develop and support campaigns** to raise awareness on the issue of waste prevention and littering.
- 8. The EU Commission is charged with promoting information exchange** between member states and those involved in producer responsibility schemes.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful has been campaigning for some of these steps to be taken for a number of years, as outlined in the recommendations of previous reports. These have evolved over time and our recommendations overleaf reflect on these recent amendments to the EU Waste Directive, along with other issues such as single use plastics that have captured the public's imagination and brought important issues into sharper focus.

# Recommendations

These recommendations are what Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful believes would be necessary to meaningfully reduce littering, dog fouling and related environmental incivilities in Northern Ireland. We have given priority to those recommendations that deal with the cause, rather than the effects.

## For national policy makers

- 1. Northern Ireland needs a comprehensive litter strategy that tackles the causes of litter.** This would need to include a joined up approach across education, credible levels of enforcement, increased public engagement, and the sharing of scarce resources.
- 2. Hold all bodies with responsibility to equal account.** Although not legally responsible for litter collection, the Department of Infrastructure, particularly Transport NI and the Rivers Agency, should be held to account on an ethical basis for the appropriate cleansing regime of all areas in their remit. This includes actively managing and penalising contractors who fail to collect litter before cutting or clearing work is undertaken. Other public and private land managers should also be held to the same standard.
- 3. Support initiatives and campaigns to reduce particularly harmful types of litter.** The spotlight has been shone on single use plastics as posing a real long-term risk to our environment and wildlife. More should be done to address such issues, including the promotion of viable eco-friendly alternatives and spreading of best practice throughout the hospitality industry.
- 4. The Assembly; relevant Departments; beverage producers and environmental groups should examine the costs, benefits and hurdles to adoption of a container deposit return scheme.** Such schemes have, at a cost, been effective

in reducing this item of litter where they have been introduced. The process should consider the practicality of introducing this and other viable options on an all-island basis, all UK basis and solely for Northern Ireland.

- 5. Clear obstructions from streets to improve cleansing outcomes.** Consideration should be given to a requirement that residential areas are kept clear of vehicles between designated times on given days in a month, to allow unfettered access for street sweeping. With almost one third of a mechanical sweeper's operational time wasted due to parked cars blocking access, this would significantly improve the outcomes from street cleansing operations while reducing the resources required.
- 6. Clear guidance is required for the treatment of littering by the courts.** This should contain structured guidance against which fines, penalties and other options issued during court proceedings can be set. This would ensure that fair and reasonable penalties are applied consistently, removing the opportunity to cheat the system and take to court a defence case that is without merit, on the possibility that the sentence will be less costly than paying the original Fixed Penalty Notice.
- 7. Adopt a suitable benchmark for all land managers.** This entails the development of a local environmental quality performance indicator for all Councils and other major land managers, based on the current surveys carried out by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful.

## For local policy makers

- 1. Schemes that reward desired behaviours should be promoted on an equal footing with enforcement.** Examples of these schemes have already been successfully trialled in parts of Northern Ireland and are growing in popularity across most Council areas.
- 2. Provide education for new dog owners.** New owners should be required to attend a basic awareness course when registering a dog for the first time. Ignorance of welfare issues and owner responsibilities should not be allowed to reduce the amenity of shared spaces.
- 3. Prioritise behaviour change above provision of additional disposal facilities.** The presence of one or more bins on a transect has no statistically significant impact on litter or dog fouling outcome suggesting that bins that are there are often ignored. To reduce the number of people who litter it would likely be as cost effective, if not more so, to invest in ways of encouraging bin use than to simply install more bins.
- 4. Support initiatives and campaigns to reduce particularly harmful types of litter.** The spotlight has been shone on single use plastics as posing a real long-term risk to our environment and wildlife. Local businesses could be encouraged to adopt the alternatives through a reduction in rates or subsidised purchasing scheme.

**5. Councils should work for a consensus on support for, and application of, enforcement practices.**

An apparent 'postcode lottery' in enforcement rates creates a resentment of the system, rather than an understanding and positive attitude towards it. Harmonisation is needed to project a clear and unambiguous message to the public regarding the treatment of offenders.

**6. A greater role should be played in Public Realm procurement and planning by cleansing service departments.**

Examples of cluttered layouts, inappropriate street furniture selection and primacy of aesthetic considerations impair the ability of cleansing services to maintain an environment, resulting in increased maintenance spending and reduced amenity over the lifespan of the scheme.

## For other agencies

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**1. Study in greater detail the link between litter and dog fouling and social cohesion, economic progress and deprivation.**

Litter has been linked to depressed economic performance in the local area. Understanding what effect littered streets have on high street shopping may help to revitalise town centres. High levels of litter have also been linked to social problems, including disrepair and a rise in antisocial behaviour and criminal activity. Effective solutions to the litter issue may raise the standard of living, economic outcomes and even mental health in many areas, and improve social cohesion.

**2. Study in greater detail the effect of poorly kept private land on surrounding public areas.**

Resources are required to determine the extent to which poorly kept private space, litter and scrap lying in gardens, and state of repair has an effect on the amount of litter in the public space. This would allow us to understand better the relationship between littering by residents and by transients, and help formulate effective focused solutions to local littering issues.

## Education and awareness raising actions

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**1. Improve co-operation between stakeholders.**

Better integration of existing programmes such as Eco-Schools and Live Here Love Here with Council messaging on litter and waste, could allow for development and production of a larger or more diverse range of resources, and facilitate a more consistent approach across individual channels and agencies.

**2. Share information and ideas more widely.**

Greater sharing of information should be the norm, including sharing of education and enforcement endeavours through groups such as the Technical Advisory Group, Chief Environmental Health Officers Group and the NI Environmental Quality Forum. This could improve the quality of individual actions by making available a wider range of skills, experience and creativity, as well as greater resources.

# And if you still don't think neighbourhood cleanliness is a problem...



To discuss how we can work together to tackle littering please contact:

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