CLEANER NEIGHBOURHOODS

LIVE HERE LOVE HERE



Report 2025-2026

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A note on our name

Live Here Love Here rebranded from Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful in 2026 – adopting the name of our flagship community campaign. This change more closely aligns our name and purpose, creating one recognisable environmental movement.



What is the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Report?

The Cleaner Neighbourhoods Report provides a yearly analysis of Northern Ireland's local environmental quality.

The report sets out to give clear, unbiased information about anti-social behaviours, such as littering, dog fouling and graffiti. In total, the report is based on surveying Northern Ireland's cleanliness levels in the following areas:

- **Litter** – anything that is dropped, discarded or thrown down by a member of the public. It includes cigarettes, confectionery wrappers, crisp bags, bottles, cans, PPE and many more things, as well as dog fouling.
- **Detritus** – comprising small, broken down particles of synthetic and natural materials. This includes dust, mud, soil, rotted leaf and vegetable residues, and fragments of twigs, glass, plastic and other finely divided materials.
- **Graffiti** – 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** – the placing of unauthorised advertising or posters in a public place, and includes stickers, bills and large posters.
- **Staining** – all the substances that mark a pavement, and commonly includes chewing gum, oil, drinks stains and heavy discolouration.

All sites, or transects, are assessed to establish the extent to which they are degraded by the presence of each of the pollutants noted above. The transect is then given a pass or fail award and allocated a respective cleanliness score, both of which contribute to creating the overall picture of Northern Ireland's environmental health and performance.

To generate the most accurate and insightful analysis of pollution in Northern Ireland's different landscapes and communities, the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Report collects local environmental quality data from a diverse and standardised range of transects that extend to all parts of the country. The full set of land-use types surveyed are: Primary Retail, Secondary Retail, Rural Area, Main Road, High Obstruction Residential, Low Obstruction Residential, Recreational and Industry/Retail Sheds. Finally, as well as providing a summary of the Northern Ireland litter survey, which looks at pollution indicators around the country, the report includes details on enforcement actions taken by councils, including the number of fixed penalties issued for littering and dog fouling, and the associated estimated cleansing spend costs for taxpayers.

Methodology



The 2025 Northern Ireland litter surveys were carried out between the months of July and September. From this work we calculate two separate but related scores. The Litter Pollution Index is the percentage of transects that failed to reach an acceptable standard of cleanliness. The LEAMS approach of measuring litter assigns scores based on an assessment of litter presence, type and source. LEAMS scores record standards of cleanliness (Grades A to D). This year's report is based on 1,100 surveys conducted across Northern Ireland (100 surveys per council area).

Summary

The Big Picture: Findings and Insights

29%

OF TRANSECTS SURVEYED in 2025 failed to reach the acceptable standard for cleanliness (Grade A to B). This is a 10% deterioration on the 2024/25 results.[1]

66%

THE LEAMS SCORE, which reflects the average score out of 100 of all transects surveyed, decreased to 66%, a fall of 7% from 2024/25.

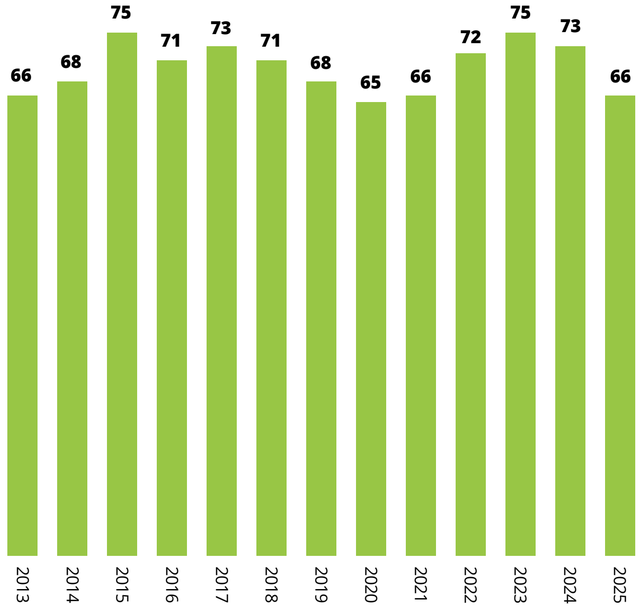
5%

DOG FOULING – was present on 5% of transects, up from 4% in 2024/25. A minor increase indicating that this issue is still to be addressed.

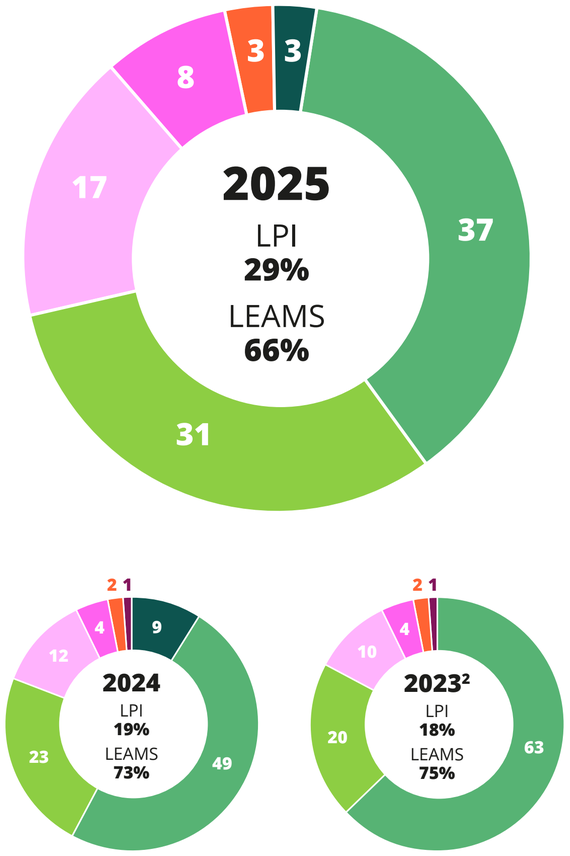
1 This year's report is based on 1,100 transects. Samples informing this report have been collected from all Northern Ireland councils. These 1,100 surveys give a good representation of Northern Ireland, with a margin of error of +/- 3%.

2 For quality assurance purposes, in 2023, grades A and B+ (high passes) have been presented together.

LEAMS



LEAMS is an alternative method of measuring litter and other indicators which is used in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Unlike the pass/fail 'Performance Indicator', LEAMS scores are generated by assigning a value to each grade (A=3 B=2 C=1 D=0), and then calculating the average value of all the grades assigned. This average is presented as a percentage of the total available points for the transects surveyed. It differs from the Performance Indicators, in that LEAMS scores take account of how clean or littered a transect is, rather than just whether it is a pass or fail. Scores closer to 100 indicate better performance. It is easier to set a target under the LEAMS system; 66 is the point at which performance is considered acceptable, as it equates with an average grade B.



KEY

Grade A (pass)
Completely free of indicator (litter)

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 rings (left) show the percentage of transects surveyed that were allocated each of the seven grades available (see key above).

Litter Pollution Index (LPI) denotes the percentage of transects that failed to meet acceptable standards.

Totals may not equal 100 due to the rounding up or down of figures to make whole numbers.

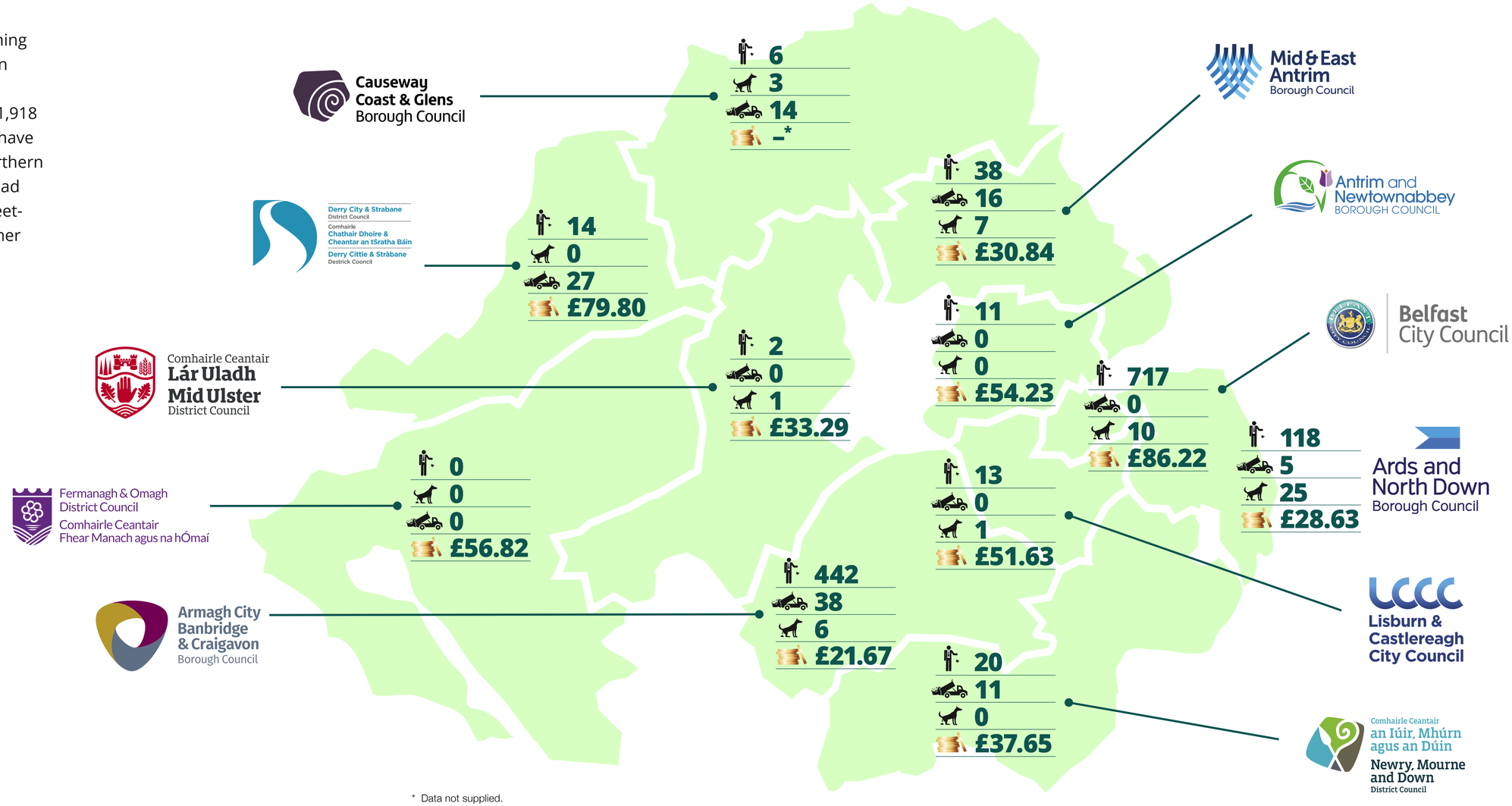
Total Cleansing Spend and Use of Fixed Penalty Notices

The overall reported cost of street cleaning in 10 councils across Northern Ireland in 2024/25 was £36,010,464 There are an estimated 1,759,126 people living in 701,918 households within the 10 councils that have reported cleansing spend figures in Northern Ireland, meaning that each rate payer had an average annual bill of £51.30 for street-cleansing services, irrespective of whether they personally dropped litter or not.

KEY

- **Fixed Penalty Notices –** Litter
- **Fixed penalty notices –** Fly tipping
- **Fixed penalty notices –** Dog fouling
- **Cost per rate payer**

Map shows FPNs issued in each category



* Data not supplied.

How Do You Solve a Problem Like Litter?



There is a suite of policy measures, from Fixed Penalty Notices to improving waste infrastructure, that can help make a difference. Further in this report, you can read the different approaches that Live Here Love Here believes we need to take to improve our litter situation across Northern Ireland. One key solution to highlight, though, is behaviour change. Any strategy that hopes to improve our litter picture must include changing the attitudes of those who drop litter and expect someone else to pick it up.

We survey public attitudes towards littering to understand perceptions and the challenges we face in changing behaviours in Northern Ireland.

Awareness is not the problem. 87% of people we surveyed agree that littering is a major problem in Northern Ireland today. 5% disagree that this is the case, with the rest undecided.

That 13% who either disagree or are not convinced about the seriousness of the issue reinforces the case that we still have some distance to go to bring home the anti-litter message. The vast majority of people in Northern Ireland get it, but there is still a minority of people we need to connect with and bring with us on our journey to a cleaner NI.

We also aim to understand the extent to which the public understands the impact of litter in Northern Ireland on the allocation of scarce resources. We have highlighted in this report that it costs councils over £36 million[1] to clean up litter locally. 78% of the people we asked thought that litter affects our rates. 15% didn't know, with 7% believing it had no impact. Again, the vast majority get it, but a minority still are not linking the financial cost of dropping litter.

The findings of our research tell a story with many positives that reinforce the work Live Here Love Here is doing across Northern Ireland, but they also reveal the direction of travel for the future. We need to change the attitudes of people who do not link littering costs to the world around them.

Environmental action is linked to improving our local budget bottom lines, our mental health, and our wildlife. A key part of improving this is consistent, far-reaching education and communication campaigns to reach those who are sceptical and yet to be engaged.

1 The overall reported cost of street cleaning in 10 councils across Northern Ireland in 2024/25 was £36,010,464.

Attitudes to littering[2]:

87%

agree littering is a major problem in Northern Ireland today

81% believe littering has an impact on mental health

94% believe littering has an impact on animal welfare

78% believe littering has an impact on business and domestic rates

2 Findings based on a survey of 1,000 adults in Northern Ireland, carried out in March 2026.

Worst Offenders 2025

These are the four types of litter most frequently found on transects.

These percentages represent the number of transects that were observed to have a certain type of litter. This is not reflective of the quantity of any litter type found within the transects, whereas LEAMS and LPI figures do reflect litter volumes. Whilst dog fouling is not a 'worst offender', it is reported here as it carries it own unique enforcement penalties.

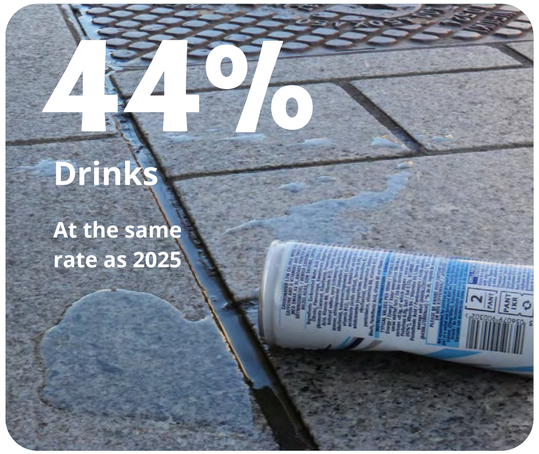
In 2025, we improved our methodology for the review of cigarette litter by recording the number of cigarette butts found, in addition to recording whether they were simply present or not.

Our team counted 10,371 cigarettes across the 1,100 streets surveyed. This equates to approximately nine cigarettes for every 50m of street surveyed.











Recommendations for Individuals, Government and Business

Tackling the litter problem in Northern Ireland requires a combined effort from everyone.

We need to use an evidence-based approach that can change behaviours for the better, reducing the litter we are finding. This report has raised the need to view this as a priority and to make litter a central focus of government environmental strategies and policy initiatives in the coming years.

Following are the actions we would like to see as a focus in the coming year.

1 Publication of the Litter Strategy

As an organisation, we have long called for the publication of a Litter Strategy. This needs to develop a joined-up approach towards changing behaviours through education and awareness campaigns that can go alongside proper enforcement measures. Live Here Love Here would also encourage strong collaboration with the environmental non-governmental organisation sector in developing this strategy.

2 Promoting Stronger Communities

We welcome the Environmental Improvement Plan's commitment to create cleaner communities with less litter by 2030. This report has highlighted that there are still many problem items we are finding as litter, and it is important that the Executive supports local councils in effectively tackling some of the most commonly found items on our streets. Anti-litter approaches should also feature in other efforts to improve communities and public health.



3 Changing the Conversation about Litter

Our research has highlighted that, for a small minority, the impacts of littering are still not being properly recognised. Our behaviour change campaign promotes an anti-litter message, and reports like this one calculate the cost of littering, but this needs to be supported and enhanced to reach those in our community who are either ignoring the message about littering's impact or not hearing it. Funding can be reallocated to projects and campaigns that work towards changing the behaviour of individuals and corporations. Our Eco-Schools programme is already working with our young people to instil the importance of looking after our environment, and in 2024, the Generation Nature pilot project was launched to help student teachers develop practical environmental skills to manage school grounds that support biodiversity and help fight the climate emergency.





4 A Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in 2027

Live Here Love Here welcomes the progress that is being made on the introduction of a DRS into Northern Ireland in late 2027. This will see consumers paying an up-front deposit for specified drinks containers. Returning the empty packaging after use to designated collection points would allow the deposit to be redeemed. We would encourage Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to develop a suite of effective communications approaches to build public awareness of the benefits of this scheme for themselves, businesses, and the environment.

5 Enhancing Research about Litter

We note that the Environmental Improvement Plan includes a commitment to reduce the number of single-use plastic items. Our Marine Litter and Cleaner Neighbourhoods Reports are an important source of information on our littering problem. We would encourage DAERA to continue to support this research to better understand this important problem. Therefore, enabling more targeted policy responses to effectively reduce commonly found items on our streets.

6 Enhancing Collaboration

Tackling the litter problem involves many different levels of government, different parts of society, business, and the eNGO sector. All of these groups can play an important role not just in shaping policy responses to the challenges facing our environment, but also in informing what success looks like. If everyone is going to play their part in reducing litter, they need to have a meaningful role in determining the steps we need to follow and then informing the indicators by which we measure success. Live Here Love Here would encourage a flexible and collaborative approach.

7 What you can do to help

We have a range of programmes that are open to volunteers to help us make Northern Ireland's environment a better place for all of us. You can sign up to Adopt A Spot or myEarth to do your bit to help. Visit **www.liveherelovehere.org** for more information.



CLEANER NEIGHBOURHOODS

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



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