

General waste is unavoidable for many businesses and organisations, is very expensive to manage and dispose of and involves significant costs. Litter is waste that has not been disposed of properly. The term 'littering' means throwing objects on the ground instead of disposing them in a bin. Littering has economic, legal and environmental impacts, it causes damage to plants and animals and littering impacts negatively on the tourism industry.

Litter is the most visible form of pollution and is to the detriment of our environment which can impact residents, tourists and businesses in our community. The management and monitoring of litter is a constant work in progress. Our volunteers consistently try to monitor and clear litter each week in an effort to keep Balla clean. This litter plan is based on, Partnership, Prevention and Actions.

## **Partnership**

Balla Tidy Towns have developed strong partnerships over the years with members of the Community, Schools, local Businesses, local organisations, Mayo County Council, Rural Social Scheme (RSS) and PEL Waste Management System in order to enhance and care for the environment. The PEL BriteBin first installed in Balla in 2017 has been transformational as far as Balla Tidy Towns efforts with Litter Management are concerned and we feel that this partnership is key to achieving the behavioral change required to deal with litter control.

These partnerships is evident in the hundreds of voluntary hours that go into enhancing and keeping Balla clean each year as well as the high level of participation in the green school initiative and the tremendous support from all our partners.

## **Prevention**

Preventing litter is a key element of our strategy for litter management. If litter volumes decrease, our litter management activities would become more manageable, with our limited manpower, and our resources could then be refocused on other initiatives to enhance our community even more. Litter prevention needs to focus the responsibility for litter on the individual and promote a change in attitude and behavior at that level in order to affect a societal shift towards making littering unacceptable behavior.

Raising awareness of litter prevention, litter management and community clean ups and engaging with local Businesses to achieve increased participation in environmental activities and taking responsibility for their own area is a priority. Fostering litter awareness and litter prevention amongst school children through the Green schools/Green campus programme is also something that deserves special attention. We will also participate in An Taisce/ Tidy Towns/Cleaner Community Campaigns, Litter Action League and Best Kept Burial Grounds competitions.

We intend to communicate our litter prevention message in a manner that focuses on personal responsibility and achieving behavioral change and also target litter types that are most prevalent focusing on cigarette, food, sweet and beverage packaging litter. It is also important to make householders more aware of their litter management responsibilities with specific emphasis on current changes in waste collection regulations. We employ all communication methods to push our message on litter prevention and use Facebook, our Webpage [www.Balla.ie](http://www.Balla.ie) and Digital Community Noticeboard at the Balla Community Resource Centre.

We also participate with other Litter Prevention Initiatives with Mayo County Council and have applied to participate in the Anti-Litter & Anti-Graffiti Awareness Initiatives programme. We are also involved in the

planning of a 'Community CCTV scheme which as well as Community Security will have the benefit of litter prevention.

We will work closely with Mayo County Council litter wardens who are playing an increasingly important role in advising and educating community members and local businesses on their personal responsibility and legal obligations in relation to preventing litter and managing waste.

### **Actions**

1. Develop a regular schedule to carry out litter picking, street sweeping, empty bins, weeding etc.
2. We continue to organise National Spring Clean and organise regular cleanups.
3. Bins degrade naturally over time, and we strive to have such bins replaced with PEL BriteBins. The option of retrofitting existing bins to meet standard specifications will also be examined with Mayo County Council and Tommy Griffith of PEL
4. Prioritise litter black spots and other troublesome areas that need special attention and draw up an action plan involving local community members – this will involve the local river and green areas.
5. Waste is often left at recycling banks which looks unsightly, We will routinely inspect and clean up around the bottle bank sites and clothes recycling banks.
6. Continue to tackle issue and raise awareness around dog fouling.
7. We will roll out the "Keep a Kilometer" Scheme with Local Businesses, Resident Associations and local communities to increase participation in local environmental care.
8. We will reorganise our resources to be flexible enough to deal with our urgent priority issues.
9. We must react to incidents of illegal dumping ranging from household waste to disposal of residual waste in public litter bins and work to expose the responsible party and take an appropriate course of action on the matter.
10. Continuously engage with Mayo County Council Environmental Officer, Litter Wardens and Operations Staff who collect refuse on a regular basis after community cleanups.

### **Some Facts about Litter**

1. Common litter objects include fast food, paper, gum, aluminium, glass, plastic & cigarette butts.
  - Cigarette butts take up to ten years to decompose
  - Recycling plastic saves twice as much energy as burning it in an incinerator
  - Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a TV for three hours
2. Litter on streets forces Councils to divert money away from public services
3. If litter is already present, people don't see the harm in adding a little bit more. If an area's clean already, it helps if residents stay vigilant & keep it that way – prevention is key.