

‘One from the Hills!’

Brendan Roche has this great proposal: “Let’s remove one piece of litter from the ground every time we go hiking.” He explains why



I imagine that we all get a buzz from hiking in the hills, be it from overcoming a challenge, reaching a summit, seeing a stunning view or simply experiencing companionship with our fellow hikers. We particularly get great pleasure from our interaction with the beauty of our stunning mountains. However, occasionally, when we encounter litter on our hikes, we may experience the opposite – anger and bewilderment at such outrageous behaviour by our fellow human beings. There is no doubt about it: **beauty dies where litter lies!**

Experienced hikers know to leave nothing but footprints behind. Unfortunately, some others are the complete opposite in this respect and leave all sorts of rubbish. For every problem, there are many solutions, but I would like to suggest one simple solution to reducing the growing problem of litter on our hills: we should simply promote the practice that, when we are out on the hills, we bring back home just **one** item of litter for recycling. This **‘power of one’** will work to reduce, and eventually eliminate, this national travesty.

Consider the numbers involved and the possible mathematics. I go out hillwalking perhaps forty-plus times a year, so I would bring home approximately forty-plus pieces of litter for recycling. Now, multiply this by the tens of thousands of regular hillwalkers that there are and it becomes tons and

tons of rubbish being recycled.

The good example of removing one recyclable item from the ground each time we go hiking would also highlight the problem to others with or near us at the time. With support and publicity, the most likely outcome from this campaign would be that there would be little or no litter left on our awesome hills and mountains.

It is important to note that this initiative potentially only works if you confine your efforts to just removing **one** item on each visit to the hills. **Why so?** Removing a greater number of pieces of rubbish on each visit would spoil the hikes for you and ultimately lead to disillusionment and abandonment of the practice. So, stick to **one** item. It is simple and it will work. Try it.

National Spring Clean Week is the time for a club or individuals to perhaps organise a clean-up on a bigger stage, where there is a more serious problem. So, go on! Adopt this simple practice and promote it, so that we will have the cleanest, as well as the most beautiful, hills in the world!

It is so simple to remove one can or piece of plastic or a glass bottle on each hike. We have shown the world how to do it with plastic shopping bags and, surely, we can do the same simply with the litter on our beloved hills? It’s a winner, so let’s do it!

We have Tidy Towns, so why not **Tidy Mountains?** What a novel and simple way to contribute towards putting a bad year behind us, and a wonderful and enchanting environment henceforth before us.

Do it. Think and do. **“One from the Hills!”**

Hillwalker Brendan Roche is the founding Chairperson of Setanta Mountain Goats Hillwalking Club. He is also founder and member of Blackrock Tidy Towns, Co Louth, winner of Ireland’s Tidiest Small Town in 2019 ■



Let's all #CleanTheHills

Let's take responsibility for the hills and crags where we recreate, writes **Aisling Kennedy**

It was raining – a lot. We walked back down to Ticknock car park after being up at the top of Three Rock in the Dublin Mountains. Then we saw it, a wet chocolate bar wrapper lying on the ground. We all considered pocketing it, but none of us picked it up.

We all know that plastic does not ever fully decompose. It just breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. There is strong evidence to suggest that these tiny pieces of plastic do get eaten and

make their way into the food chain. One of us should have picked up that chocolate wrapper!

There is a **Clean Coasts** initiative, the **#2MinuteBeachClean**. Imagine if every single person collected rubbish for two minutes each time they visited the beach. Imagine if every person who went out hillwalking or climbing picked up some rubbish while they were out! It could be a **#CleanTheHills!**

Of course, it is not possible for all

kinds of rubbish on the hills to be cleared up by hikers. Larger items such as dumped mattresses will not fit in your jacket pocket! However, the county councils provide telephone numbers and email addresses to report these larger pieces of rubbish.

We are the people who benefit most from these beautiful areas. If we want to keep them pristine, then we need to take responsibility for what other people leave behind ■



...and let's start now!

Aisling Kennedy's challenge to hillwalkers and climbers aligns really well with Brendan Roche's **'One from the Hills'** proposal that, when we are on the hills, we should all bring home just one item of litter for recycling – see **Viewpoint**, opposite page.

Mountaineering Ireland has decided to promote the **One from the Hills** initiative. Start now by carrying a small bag with you on your next outing, to take home one item, such as a drinks can or that wet chocolate bar wrapper that we all try to ignore.

Always keep safe – put your hand into the bag and use that to pick up the litter, thus avoiding direct contact with the item.

If you come across bags of rubbish or other illegal dumping, report it to the local council, or the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 1850 365 121** (Republic of Ireland), or the **Environmental Crime Unit** (Northern Ireland), **028 9056 9453**. You can also download the EPA's **'See it? Say it!'** app and use that to report dumping, littering or other pollution.