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LACK OF CRECHE PLACES PLACES A BARRIER TO PARENTS RETURNING TO WORK

The lack of creche places around the country is fast becoming a barrier for parents returning to work, a Senator has said.

Seanad spokesperson on Children and Equality, Mary Seery-Kearney, has called for the provision of additional childcare places and supports for parents as a matter of urgency, saying equality in accessing the workplace is dependent on adequacy of childcare places.

Senator Seery-Kearney said "Parents are being denied the opportunity to return to work by the absence of choice in available childcare. "Places in creches are at a premium and since the pandemic, places for babies are even harder

to secure. "Some solutions are to increase supply by the provision of capital funding for childcare infrastructure, to use existing school buildings and to remove the planning exemption obliging developers to provide a facility for 20 childcare places for every 75 dwellings built.

"A capital funding round for childcare facilities with planning permission will be announced in the coming weeks, as allocated in Budget 2023. "The Fine Gael Policy Lab published the 'Care of the Child' policy last year having engaged with parents, childcare providers and professionals working in childcare throughout the country. One of the calls, supported by me

and our parliamentary party, was for school buildings to be used when the school is not sitting, as a childcare facility. "School buildings and facilities are ideal for a diversity of afterschool activities and for breakfast clubs. It is my hope that this will be considered for inclusion in the capital funding announcement."

Senator Seer-Kearney continued: "Equality in accessing the workplace is dependent on there being an adequacy of childcare places across the country for parents wishing to avail of childcare. "As we all know, women are far more likely to be impacted by lack of childcare supports - 45% of women in Ireland have some

form of caring responsibilities compared to around 29% of men. "Recent data shows that despite women being better educated than their male peers, employment rates can drop 5% for women when you compare those with and without children, and the most obvious barrier to this is the issue of childcare.

"Capital funding will address the issue in the medium to long term, but won't offer any relief for parents in the short term. "Since January, parents using creches can save thousands of euros per year with a substantial reduction in childcare fees - but this does nothing for parents forced to use alternatives due to a lack of

creche places. "This inequality must be addressed - all parents in the workplace should receive the same funding whatever childcare model they choose - or are forced to choose.

"In the same way we recognise child benefit is applicable to all children, we need to ensure childcare policy and supports consider all parents and forms of childcare, not just those fortunate enough to have found a place in the creche system.

"Taken in the round, all of these measures will keep women in the workplace, an investment that will also benefit the State from a tax perspective," Senator Seery-Kearney concluded.

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FUND OF €250,000 ANNOUNCED BY CLONDALKIN BASED SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

A new €250,000 social enterprise fund has been launched in South Dublin County - and is seeking applications from enterprises and entrepreneurs, focused on making a social impact in the community. The 'open' fund has been announced by Clondalkin based Oakfield Trust and is to the value of €50,000 per annum for five years. The fund will be released in two phases of €25,000 during each year, with the first application window open from March 30th until May 12th. Oakfield Trust is a Clondalkin based

social enterprise and registered charity which has been successfully supporting community organisations and social enterprises in the locality for 26 years.

During that time it has provided a range of property-based supports to a number of projects in the Clondalkin area including: feasibility studies, start-up grants, business development supports, project loans, project management and capacity development. The new social enterprise fund is its first 'open fund'

which any interested and relevant party can apply for. Applications will particularly be encouraged from the Clondalkin and South Dublin County areas, but projects which reach outside the locality or nationwide will also be considered.

Oakfield Trust Chairperson Aileen O'Donoghue said she was delighted to announce the fund - and looked forward to the progress, energy and positivity it will build within communities. "We are announcing the next phase in our work, which is open social enterprise funding rounds twice a year for five years totalling €250,000. We are committed to the social enterprise model of community development and want to play as strong a role as we can not just locally, but nationally."

The open fund includes three categories which are 'Scale Up' funding up to €10,000 for an established social enterprise or entrepreneur,

'Get Started' funding up to €5,000 to develop a new social enterprise idea towards start-up and 'Explore Award' to enable an applicant to explore an idea which addresses a social issue. More information on eligibility, criteria and the application process available at www.oakfieldtrust.ie

Oakfield Trust is also delighted to announce that it will host an international

conference this May. The conference titled Social Enterprise in Ireland: Achieving Real Social Impact and Developing the Social Enterprise Space will take place on Wednesday, May 24 at the Wood Quay Venue in central Dublin from 9.45am to 1pm. It will include a combination of international experts speaking, panel discussions featuring key figures in the sector, and established

success stories presenting their experiences. Oakfield Trust is looking forward to some open and interesting discussion on what real and practical social impact looks like, and how those active in the sector can collectively grow social enterprise practice in Ireland.

More information on the conference and registration is available on eventbrite, or via www.oakfieldtrust.ie



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Pictured ReCreate Creative Exploration Officer Jo May; ReCreate Creative Reuse Director Aisling Folan; Local Enterprise Office South Dublin Head of Enterprise Tom Rooney; ReCreate General Manager Louise Parsons; Oakfield Trust Social Impact Manager Gareth Ebbs; ReCreate CEO Emma Connors and ReCreate Creative Assistant Inga Ozolina.

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SECOND CITY - AN EXCITING DYSTOPIAN ROMANCE NOVEL

During the very first lockdown Chelsea Keogh (24) from Dublin finally had the chance to write her first novel. Chelsea, who has a four year old son finally got the chance to write the book she had been thinking about for a long time. Chelsea added

“I am self publishing so I’ve done almost everything by myself. It’s taken me the guts of three years to turn my story into something I can be proud of”.

Second City is an exciting dystopian romance novel. It

centres around Lara, a young woman who is a bounty hunter.

The story follows her as she is blackmailed by a dangerous man in order to save someone she loves. Being born on a man-made island that is impossible to leave is bad. Growing up on said Island as it falls to

pieces is worse. That’s life for Lara Miller, a bounty hunter on Golden Island; a place where dreams came to die. When dire circumstances require her to work with Gideon, one of the criminals ruining her Island, the last thing Lara expects is to find herself involved with a man named Roman Black. She has only ever heard stories of him, but nothing prepares her for seeing him in the flesh. He is



arrogant, rude and infuriatingly attractive.

Lara has to infiltrate Roman’s organisation and report back to Gideon, or else. Without much of a choice, Lara gets close to Roman, ready to take him down. Only to realise... spending so much time with him is dangerous in more ways than one. When the time comes will she be able to do what she has to

in order to save someone she loves? What will hurt the most when the truth comes out... the betrayal or the aftermath... She must take Roman down, but it’s not that simple. Not anymore.

The novel will be available on the 2nd of June. For more information follow Chelsea on TikTok @secondcitybook or you can pre-order on Amazon.



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LOCAL SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS NOW BACK ON TRACK

The delivery of 58 school building projects, including some local schools, is back on track following a temporary pause, a local TD has said.

Deputy Emer Higgins, TD for Dublin Mid West has welcomed the news that funding has been secured to guarantee and support the rollout and continuation of the Department's ambitious school building programme. Deputy Higgins said: "This pause to a number of school buildings was announced last month as a result of capital funding pressures.

"The Minister for Education, went to Pascal Donohoe with an ask of additional funding above the already approved budget, to provide for schools due new buildings and extension and I am delighted that the funding has now been secured to un-pause all of the impacted projects. "I have been working with Minister's Donohoe and Foley on this matter to highlight the case of some local schools who have been impacted, and I'm pleased to say that this issue has now been resolved and additional funding has been approved for these projects.

"In many cases rising construction costs,

meant that the approved funding no longer covered the cost of the project and the resulting pause was of particular concern for shovel-ready projects such as Holy Family Community School in my constituency in Rathcoole who were ready to break ground and at risk of losing their contractor due to the pause, so I'm massively relieved to have these projects back on track.

"Government is very committed to delivering an ambitious school building programme of new and modernised facilities in our school communities to provided better environments but also better inclusion for students with special educational needs and I know Ministers Paschal Donohoe, Norma Foley and Josepha Madigan have worked tirelessly in order to facilitate the delivery of these urgently required school building projects.

"Department officials will be individually contacting impacted schools to update them on their status and I am very much looking forward to seeing boots on the ground at school projects in my constituency in Dublin Mid West and right across the country," Deputy Higgins Concluded.

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY SPORTS PARTNERSHIP LAUNCH A NEW PETANQUE COURT IN GRIFFEEN VALLEY PARK

Active Cities in partnership with South Dublin County Sports Partnership and South Dublin County Council, launched South Dublin County's first public Pétanque Court. Located in Grifféen Valley Park, the new Pétanque Court will offer adults and children, of all abilities, a wonderful new openair facility in their community.

Launching the new court, Cllr Emma Murphy, Mayor of South Dublin County Council (SDCC), said "Active Cities is a nationally funded project with the aim of getting the people of South County Dublin more active. A key pillar of this project is to improve access to spaces and facilities for all. A perfect example of this is the Pétanque court here at Grifféen Valley".

On the day Owen Kelleher, Secretary of Grifféen Valley Pétanque Club, co-ordinated and hosted fun taster sessions for the public.

Attendees were treated to mini games, demonstrations and got to learn the basic rules of how to play. On the day Owen said "Pétanque can be played by anybody, local social clubs, disability groups, active retirement, school goers, Men's shedders, grandads, and youngsters, all are welcome. Grifféen

Valley Pétanque Club's goal is to develop the club and promote the game in the wider community."

Games will run every Sunday at 12pm. Why not pop along and join in? To learn more about Pétanque and Grifféen Valley Pétanque Club you can email Owen Kelleher at owen.kelleher@gmail.com.



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“It was worth going through all those hoops to be able to offer someone a safe and loving home”

“This whole process has been transformational. Before this we only had to worry about ourselves. This has made us more open to bringing new people into our lives, and to have faith in ourselves that we can provide an environment where young people can be safe. It’s also made us aware of what young people can face and to appreciate the stability of our own families.”

So says Dubliner Simon, who with his partner Marián, from Slovakia, began in summer 2022 providing respite care (short-term care to support foster carers and give them time off from helping the young people in their care). Simon works at Maynooth University supporting student diversity, while Marián has sometimes worked with Tusla providing interpreting services, so both men had an insight into what is required when it comes to supporting young people.

The couple have been together since 2009 and have lived in their two-bed apartment in Dublin for the past 10 years. They had never realised that fostering was an option for them until 2018, when

they saw an ad for same-sex couples to take up fostering. After attending an information session in November 2019, where two same-sex couples spoke about what it was like to be foster carers, they realised that it was in fact a feasible option.

Simon and Marián felt that offering respite/emergency care would be the best option for them as carers as they were both in full-time employment. And so began a 16-week process from summer 2021 for both Tusla and the couple to see if they would be suitable to take on the role.

“Tusla did a good job of laying out their stall - they warned us that the assessment process would be quite invasive,” says Simon. “There were consents needed, authorisations, one-to-one interviews, couple interviews, interviews with referees, with our families... they asked about our attitudes to different people, to religions; our parents’ attitudes... they looked at everything.” Simon says the entire process was thoughtful, very well structured and done in a step-by-step way that resulted in a 50-page

report that covered the most personal aspects of their lives. “We understood why we were being asked all these questions... I’m in awe of how much work our Assessing Social Worker put into that... to get our report over the line,” he says.

This path led to the day when the couple finally came face to face with the first young girl to whom they would be providing support.

“When the social worker left, we were just looking at each other, but then I showed her around the apartment, she got the lay of the land,” says Simon. “We headed out to the shops and got things she liked to eat, then we started to plan together how this stay would go. “We were blessed; she was very chatty and had been in foster care for many years, so she knew how things worked. She returned to us a number of times after that, which was nice because it showed she felt comfortable in our company.”

With Tusla providing enhanced support meetings for new foster carers, the couple listening to the Irish Stories



Pictured Foster carers Simon Ahern and Marián Molcan

from Foster Care podcast and also having joined the Irish Foster Care Association, both Simon and Marián feel they are well supported and that social workers always put the couple’s needs first.

Aside from that first placement, the couple have also provided respite for a 10-year-old boy, and they are about to discuss the possibility of providing respite one weekend a month for a 14-year-old girl. “The assessment process was challenging, but it was worth going through all those hoops to be able to offer someone

a safe and loving home.” It’s a journey that they clearly don’t regret and one that has taught them so much...

Says Simon: “We’ve learned a lot about communicating with young people - how you sometimes need to stick to your guns when they push against boundaries, how to communicate when they might challenge you, and what to listen out for - times you might need to escalate things if there are disclosures.” Marián adds: “We really care about making the young person feel welcome and respected in

our home, and this approach seems to be working for us.”

It has also given them a keen insight into the work that Tusla does. “A huge amount of work is happening to support young people and to keep them moving forward,” says Simon. “It has been eye-opening to see this; to realise how lucky we are and how much work needs to be done to support these vulnerable young people.”

To find out more about the different types of care you can provide, see fostering.ie



Tusla Fostering

Tusla in South Dublin are looking for foster Carers in all local communities including Rathfarnham, Lucan, Clondalkin, Inchicore, Ringsend, and Adamstown.

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YOUNG DUBLIN RACING DRIVER CONTINUES IN JSCC



15 Year old Daire Flock from Tallaght is set to compete in his second season of car racing in the Junior Saloon Car Championship (JSCC.) With 10 podiums and 5 fastest laps in his first season he will be looking to challenge for the 2023 crown.

There will be plenty of action for Daire with 10 rounds in the season calendar, which includes four triple header meetings totalling twenty-four races, a record breaker for the JSCC. Speaking to young Daire, Newsgroup had a chance to get his thoughts on the season ahead. "I am very excited to be racing for Westbound Motorsport for a second year and to improve on last year and push for the championship. The JSCC is a good starting

point for any young driver's circuit career as its age range is limited for 14-17 year olds. Racing on the UK's most famous circuits such as Silverstone and Brands Hatch, Daire will be fighting against 29 other teenage stars battling it out for the overall championship.

Daire will be running under the Westbourne Motorsport team, statistically the most successful JSCC team there is and this is what team boss Ben Colburn had to say "We are really pleased to have Daire onboard with us for a second year. Pre-season testing has gone really well so far for Daire, and we will be looking at challenging for the JSCC Championship with him. Further information can be found at www.dfmotorsport.co.uk.

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SKY UP ACADEMY STUDIOS ON TOUR PAYS A VISIT TO ST KEVIN'S COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Sky Up Academy Studios On Tour concluded its journey across Ireland and the UK at St Kevin's Community School, Fonthill Rd on Friday 31st March. The event was attended by Mayor of South Dublin, Emma Murphy

and hosted by Sky News Correspondent Stephen Murphy.

Sky's touring e-vehicle creative studio aimed at tackling digital inequality helps students to develop digital skills as well as

knowledge of different careers across the media and TV industry. The Sky Up Academy has been visiting secondary schools throughout Dublin over a 6-week period, reaching over 1,200 DEIS students.



Pictured (L-R): Karl Monroy (13) Alex Monahan (13) Cllr Emma Murphy - Mayor of South Dublin, Stephen Murphy - Ireland Correspondent at Sky News & Cian Downey (13)

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ST ANNE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL HOST FIT SQUAD



Fitness and healthy eating should start at a young age. That's the message pupils at Walkinstown's Assumption Senior Girls' National School and Tallaght's St Anne's Primary School heard when they recently hosted the popular children's fitness initiative 'Fit Squad'. Delivered by Irish fitness expert Sharon Flanagan, and supported by Fyffes, the visits saw over 230 pupils participate in the active workout which included advice on healthy eating, demonstrations of exercises young people should do and tips on how to use leisure time to stay physically fit.

This school year it is expected that some 7,500 pupils nationwide will participate in the interactive fitness sessions, adding to the over-20,000 pupils who have taken part in it since it was first launched in 2018. Schools interested in receiving a similar visit can find details online at www.fyffesfitsquad.ie

LUCAN STUDENT REACHES FINALS OF NATIONAL ESSAY COMPETITION



The Law Society National Essay competition received over 80 essays from 38 schools across 14 different counties. Each student submitted a 1,500-word essay examining the topic, "The law and social media: striking a balance between freedom of expression and responsible usage."

Dublin students Saoirse Reilly, The High School, Rathgar and Huriyah Baqer, Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan won merit awards. Cathy Hoi Ying Wan, Alexandra College; Hannah Lyons, Loreto High School Beaufort; Vlad Grosu and Annabell Nabulele, Lucan Community College; and Aodán Jordan, Andrew McGee and Harry Murphy, of St. Vincent's Castletknock College were also among the 32 finalists that attended the event at the Law Society.

Chairperson of the Law Society's Education Committee, Richard Hammond SC, said, "This competition aims to encourage young people to engage with the law and consider their own legal rights, how the law impacts society. This competition aims to inspire students' learning and develop their creativity

in an engaging way. We were delighted to welcome our student finalists, their parents, guardians, and teachers, to the home of the Law Society of Ireland at Blackhall Place to celebrate their achievements." The Gráinne O'Neill Memorial Legal Essay Competition honours the life and legacy of the late Judge Gráinne O'Neill. In 2014, Gráinne became the youngest judge in Ireland when she was appointed to the District Court. Gráinne died in 2018 following a period of illness but, during her life and especially during her years as a judge, Gráinne worked diligently to apply the law in a fair, rigorous and compassionate manner. The competition was initiated The Hon Mr Justice Keenan Johnson of the Circuit Court, in collaboration with the Midland Solicitors' Bar Association in 2019. This is the first year the competition invited entries from transition year students across the country.

"It's fitting that we can bring Gráinne's legacy to a national platform, and to continue to make a difference to young people, their learnings and their lives," Mr Hammond SC said.

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RATHFARNHAM REBELLION TRAIL LAUNCHED

The addition of the Rathfarnham Rebellion Trail to the South Dublin County Heritage Trail App was officially launched by the Mayor of South Dublin County Council, Cllr. Emma Murphy at Pearse Museum on Wednesday 5th April. The addition of Rathfarnham as a trail to the app has been funded by The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media through their Decade of Centenaries programme, and developed in partnership with South Dublin County Council Libraries and the Council's County Promotion Unit.

Rathfarnham is the third village trail to be added to the app, joining Clondalkin and Tallaght. The Rathfarnham Trail has 17 individual heritage points of interest in and around the village. The combination of image, text and audio

for each point of interest makes the experience both immersive and engaging for the user, bringing the social and cultural history to life.

The fully interactive and user-friendly app is available in Irish, English, French and German, and by using Android or Apple maps directs users to nearby places of interest. The app is free to download to mobile phones and tablets by searching "South Dublin County Heritage Trail".

Rathfarnham village's historical importance to the Irish War of Independence is a key component of the trail. Sites such as Pearse Museum/St Enda's School, Rathfarnham Castle, Butterfield House, Loreto Abbey and the old Rathfarnham RIC Barracks are some of the points of interest for history buffs. Speaking at the launch the Mayor of South Dublin, Cllr.

Emma Murphy said, "I am confident that the launch of the Rathfarnham Rebellion Trail will highlight the area's significance in the Irish War of Independence and promote Rathfarnham as a centre of Irish Culture.

The app is a valuable education tool and is an engaging experience for users."

Speaking of the importance of one of the trail locations, Pearse Museum/ St Enda's School, the Mayor continued "It is particularly relevant to host the launch of the Rathfarnham Rebellion Trail here, in one of the most important buildings to the foundation of the State. Padraig Pearse walked these hallways, taught in these classrooms, and inspired Irish patriotism, that would lead to his ultimate desire of a fight for Irish freedom. In this very space, Pearse

created an epicentre of Irish Art, Culture and Education, that although nowadays may be seen as the norm, in his time, was no less than an act of defiance and bravery".

Ralph McGarry, of the County Promotion Unit at the Council's Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development Directorate said "Digital technology has changed how visitors interact with the tourism sector in recent years. More and more people are accessing information through digital means, be it through their smartphone, tablet, or QR

codes, to help search for and book holidays, secure tickets to visitor experiences, or access information on places of interest. Digital trails through mobile apps are one such way people are engaging with their surroundings.

It is essential nowadays to offer visitors to our County, and locals alike, information about the amazing stories untold all around us. The Rathfarnham Rebellion Trail as part of the South Dublin County Heritage Trail provides an immersive means of exploring and interpreting the amazing stories of this

wonderful place, and in so doing enhancing the visitor experience".

"The Rathfarnham Rebellion Trail is just one of many investments South Dublin County Council is making to develop the visitor economy locally which includes developing the Dodder Greenway, and progressing the opportunity to develop a mixed-use hospitality, retail, lifestyle, offering at the Castle Courtyard at Rathfarnham which will have the potential to create employment and investment in the area", he continued.



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ABANDONED VEHICLES - MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION!

Dublin Mid-West Sinn Féin Councillor Derren Ó Brádaigh has welcomed the downward trend on the number of vehicles being reported as abandoned to South Dublin County Council. Following a request for information, the statistics for 2022 compare favourably to the preceding 12 months.

On receipt of this response to an official question at a recent Area Committee meeting, Cllr Ó Brádaigh said "Whilst there is still an amount of work to do in order to further reduce the number of vehicles abandoned on our many streets, housing estates and car parks, the report indicating that this trend is moving in the right direction is a very welcome one! This is something I have pursued since being co-opted onto the council in December 2020.

"I asked the same question for the period Jan - Dec 2021 last year, and whilst attempting to raise awareness of the issue and encouraging SDCC to provide greater information to the public in terms of accessing automated treatment facilities (ATF's) and the procedure in doing so. The

number of vehicles at that time was 526 compared to a much-reduced figure of 374 for 2022, representing a decrease of almost 30%. I can only commend the local authority in working to better effect with others to address this, that has wider environmental implications also.

"In my own constituency of Dublin Mid-West, this has been an ongoing issue over recent years. Some of the problem relates to the relative ease at which cheap cars have been acquired to simply illegally 'rally' before often being set alight. The lands around Kishogue had begun to resemble something akin to a car graveyard. Separately, some cars are simply not being insured or taxed due to the pressures of a continuing and escalating cost of living crisis, which includes increased fuel, insurance and maintenance costs.

In other circumstances, a percentage of vehicles simply reach their end of life and owners are not always clear on the correct procedure for disposal. The evidence from this comparison now suggests that there is real progress that can only be welcome."

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TALLAGHT DISTRICT HEATING NETWORK AND ENERGY CENTRE OPENS

Minister for the Environment, Climate & Communications and Transport, Eamon Ryan TD and the Mayor of South Dublin County, Councillor Emma Murphy, officially opened South Dublin County Council's (SDCC) Tallaght District Heating Network at the Heatworks Energy Centre in Tallaght. Trading as Heatworks, Ireland's first publicly owned, not-for-profit energy company, is now providing low-carbon heat to public buildings in the area. The development of this innovative, low-carbon initiative has been led by SDCC with the assistance of its energy agency, Codema.

The network initially will provide heat to 32,800m² of public buildings. Customers of Heatworks include SDCC and Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin). Buildings heated by this project include County Hall, Tallaght

County Library, the SDCC Innovation Centre-Work IQ, and 133 affordable apartments, which will connect in early 2025. The university buildings include the Main Building, the Sports-Science, Health and Recreation Building, followed by the new Catering College (CAET), to be completed in 2024.

The network uses excess heat from Amazon Web Services' (AWS) data centre to provide low carbon heat to the network customers. AWS has included heat-collection systems in their new facility which provides this recycled heat at no cost as part of its broader sustainability commitments. HeatWorks will assist Ireland in meeting its EU 2030 national heating and carbon-reduction targets. [TP1] It is estimated that in this first phase of delivery, the carbon emissions reduction in the

Tallaght area will be over 1,500 tonnes per year.

Heatworks contracted Fortum, a large Finnish energy company with extensive district-heating experience throughout Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, to carry out the design, construction, operation and maintenance of the Tallaght District Heating Network. South Dublin County Council initiated this pilot project, to exemplify the environmental value and potential of District Heating in Ireland.

The collaboration between SDCC, AWS engineering teams, Fortum, and the Dublin energy agency Codema has resulted in a low-carbon solution, optimising the potential of recyclable heat combined with innovative heat-pump technology - the first example of its kind in Ireland. The Tallaght

District Heating Network was partly funded by the European Union's Interreg NWE programme (Heatnet), Project Ireland 2040 Climate Action Fund, SEAI and through direct funding from SDCC. In the Government's Climate Action Plan 2023, the increased ambition is that Ireland will reach up to 0.8 TWh of district heating by 2025 and up to 2.7 TWh by 2030.

Speaking at the Official Opening, Minister Ryan said; "This is a leading example of how energy that would be otherwise be wasted is now being used to heat local public buildings, a university and people's homes, and I know that there are plans to go beyond this in time. It's also a working demonstration of smart private-public partnership and an indication of the transformative role that district heating can play in our new more energy

efficient and decarbonised energy mix. In our Climate Action Plan 2023, we have set out our increased ambition for district heating. I anticipate that our district heating steering group will shortly publish its recommendations on how we can reach these targets, led by our local authorities and facilitated with private sector involvement as is the case here in Tallaght."

Councillor Emma Murphy, Mayor of South Dublin County Council said; "It gives me great pleasure to be here for the official opening of such an innovative project in South Dublin. Through the delivery of a project of this scale and ambition, South Dublin County Council are

truly leading the way when it comes to climate change innovation and sustainability in Ireland, which citizens in the county can be incredibly proud of. We look forward to seeing the next step come to fruition, when the district heating network will provide sustainable heating to new homes in the Tallaght area."

Mike Beary, AWS Country Lead said: "AWS has been investing in Tallaght for 15 years now and we are proud to be a part of the community. We love the ambition and spirit of innovation that this first-in-the-nation project embodies. HeatWorks will benefit our neighbours for years to come and help the country meet its 2030 renewable energy targets."



TALLAGHT, LUCAN AND CLONDALKIN STUDENTS FEATURE IN ART COMPETITION



Young artists who submitted entries to this year's Texaco Children's Art Competition, including a number locally are currently having their works evaluated as the judging process gets underway. Pictured is adjudicator, Noelle McAlinden admiring three of the entries received this year - a work entitled 'Igggy' by a pupil from Citywise Education, Tallaght (left), another entitled 'Ray' by a pupil from St. Kevin's Community College, Clondalkin (centre) and a third entitled 'Shadowed Light' by a pupil from The Kings Hospital, Lucan. Winners in the seven age categories, including one exclusively for artworks by young artists with special needs, will be announced in mid-April. Currently in its 69th year, the Texaco Children's Art Competition is the longest-running art sponsorship in Ireland. First held in 1955, it is hosted by Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited - the company that markets fuel in Ireland under the Texaco brand.

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NATIONAL SPRING CLEAN & DUBLIN COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP DAY 2023

The Mayor of South Dublin County, Cllr Emma Murphy helped launch this year's National Spring Clean month in South Dublin County and The Dublin Community Clean-Up Day, which is on Saturday 22nd April.

At the launch in Tymon North, she was joined by

Tymon North & St Aongus Tidy Towns and Cllr Charlie O'Connor. An Taisce's National Spring Clean is Ireland's largest anti-litter initiative which runs for the month of April and interested community groups who are planning a community clean-up during the month of April can apply online at: www.nationalspringclean.org for a clean-up kit.

Mayor Cllr Emma Murphy praised Tymon North & St Aongus Tidy Towns who "work tirelessly to improve and maintain their area" and she commended the group on all the hard work that has already been carried

out, considering they only started out on their Tidy Towns journey. Showing the commitment they and many other groups have in making change and improving their local communities. The Mayor "encourages everyone to get involved in National Spring Clean or The Dublin Community Clean-Up Day".

South Dublin County Council has been supporting The Dublin Community Clean-up Day for the last several years, as it encourages all members of the community to come together and make improvements to our county.

It is only when the community, business and the Council come together can we really achieve so much. Dublin Community Clean-up Day is supported by An Taisce and the 4 Dublin local authorities. For more

information please visit www.dublincommunitycleanup.ie. The Council is committed to making South Dublin a litter free county.

They encourage everyone to avail of the many resources provided by the council to improve and enhance your area. Some of these resources include the Social Credit Scheme which supplies volunteers with clean up materials and more. Details for all the above can be found at www.socialcredits.ie



Pictured are Cllr. Emma Murphy Mayor of South Dublin and Cllr Charlie O'Connor with local residents at the Children's Garden in St Aongus' Park for the launch of Dublin Community Clean-Up and National Spring Clean.





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COUNCILLORS WARN OF CONSEQUENCES FOR LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Sinn Fein's Dublin mid-west Cllrs William Carey and Derren O'Bradaigh in a joint statement have said that the news that South Dublin County Council are to use the temporary exemption of the part 8 planning process is a dangerous precedent and a blow to local democracy. At April's full council meeting councillors were informed of the proposed use of the derogation that allows local authorities to by-pass the normal planning process in relation to residential projects. The derogation is to be used initially in relation to 10 projects that have been in the pipeline for some time. A list of these projects was presented to council on Tuesday.

In December of 2022 the FF/FG government introduced an amendment to the Planning and Regulations 2001. The amendment sought to by-pass the Part 8 planning process and was intended to speed up the delivery of housing. However according to Cllr William Carey, this will have no real impact on the delivery time. Instead, the new process will simply deny councillors their limited powers to affect planning and building in their local authority area. The implication of this action is a blow to local democracy and could have future permanent consequences for the future of the planning process.

Speaking at the council meeting, Cllr Carey sought assurances that despite the Part 8 process being bypassed councillors would have their views properly taken account of when representations would be made in relation to the projects. Cllr Carey said, "We all want a speedier process and less bureaucracy, but this derogation will not have any serious impact on the delivery of these projects. Rather, it will simply deny the right of councillors to approve of housing developments within the council's jurisdiction."

Cllr Carey pointed out that, "in the past 4yrs since my election there has only been one Part 8 denied by councillors", (and this was to preserve the use of sports grounds in the Knocklyon area). Cllr Carey added that delays in housing delivery can not be attributed to the

democratic process being undertaken by councillors. The derogation will shorten the official time line for approval from 20 weeks to 8 but the real time delays have always been in the administrative blockage between the councils and the relevant government departments controlling the purse strings. The recent news that there was an underspend of over €1bn by the dept in the delivery of housing projects had nothing to do with the Part 8 process.

Also commenting Cllr Ó Brádaigh said "Due to continued failure of government housing policy to adequately plan and meet

real time housing need, we arrive at a sticking plaster juncture and worryingly away from good practices. This exemption compromises and dilutes processes that are in place for very good reason. Concerns here are twofold - We risk alienating residents and the general public from affording them reasonable and fair public consultation and secondly, this wilts away the important democratic role of the councillor."

Cllr Carey concluded, "it would seem that the minister is engaged in a process of misdirection to excuse his own failures and incompetence as a minister".

2023 LUMPER SCHOOLS PROJECT



CCIFV Launch 2023 Lumper Schools Project at the Department of Education. Committee for the Commemoration of Irish Famine Victims (CCIFV) Members Michael and Betty Blanch, Billy and Carol Byrne, Launch the 2023 Lumper Schools Project at the Department of Education on the 30th of March 2023, present Scoil Santain Gael Scoil Tallaght Aobha and Cadhla Blanch a Lumper Pack of seed potatoes and information booklet.

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The LSP is an all Ireland program supported by the Glens of Antrim Potatoes Michael McKillop who resurrected the Lumper from near extinction, grows the Lumper commercially and sponsors the LSP for a number of years. Dunnes Stores are collection points and partners in the project, without the assistance and support of both companies the LSP would not be happening. For schools wishing to participate in the 2023 Lumper Schools Project please go on line to Scoilnet Department of Education for your Free Lumper Seed Potato Pack and Information Booklet.

Happy planting and a bountiful 2023 Lumper potato harvest.

LIFTING OF EVICTIONS BAN CAUSING HUGE CONCERNS

The lifting of the no fault evictions ban by the government is causing "huge concerns in the community" local representatives have claimed. People Before Profit representatives Gino Kenny TD and Councillor Madeleine Johansson made the claims following the lifting of the ban on the 31st March. About 1 000 people attended a rally outside the Dáil on the 1st April calling on the government to reinstate the ban and to take stronger measures against the rising cost of living. New figures from the RTB show that almost 10 000 notices to quit were issued to tenants in the last 6 months of 2022 (Q3- 4 741 and Q4- 4 329).

Gino Kenny TD said: "I've had a number of families and individuals contact me in recent weeks because they are facing eviction. Other renters are afraid that they will be next. "We are giving tenants advice on

how they can stay in their homes, from checking that their notices are valid to going to the RTB and even possibly over holding. Every tenant will have different circumstances but at this stage we are saying to people that they should stay in their home if they have nowhere else to go. "We are urging anyone with an eviction notice to get in touch with us or other organisations such as Threshold for advice and help."

CLLr Madeleine Johansson added: "We have been talking to people on the doors in North Clondalkin over the last few weeks and there are huge concerns in the community about evictions. Because of the large number of notices being issued in 2022 almost everyone knows someone who is facing eviction.

Others already have family members who are homeless

or are couch surfing. "I'm one of the 4 329 households that were issued a notice to quit in Q4 of 2022. On the 3rd April there were only 565 properties available to rent in Dublin and only 174 under €2 000 per month. We, and thousands others, will have nowhere to go. I refuse to volunteer for homelessness and will stay in my home for as long as possible.

"We need South Dublin County Council to allocate additional resources to the processing of the tenant-in-situ scheme to allow as many tenants as possible to stay in their homes. At the moment I have been told that there is a backlog of requests from landlords and tenants for the council to buy properties where tenants have notices to quit."

Darragh Adelaide commented: "New research shows that 7 out of 10 young adults are considering



emigrating. The housing crisis is pushing young people out of the country because they can't afford to move

out of the family home and they see no future in terms of being able to afford their own home. It's sad to see

another generation of young people emigrating because of failed government policies."

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Mercedes-Benz S-Class - A Bespoke Luxury Plug-In



By Breda Corrigan

The Mercedes-Benz S-Class is a luxury saloon that has frequently earned the title of 'best car in the world', and it has dominated the luxury saloon class for decades. Every generation has introduced new technology that rivals often struggle to catch up with, and which eventually finds its way to smaller cars within the Mercedes-Benz model range. Measuring in at almost 5.3-metres in length and 1.95-metres in width, there is no denying that the new Mercedes-Benz S-Class LWB Saloon commands an imposing presence on the road. The elongated side view, with its perfect proportions and flush-fitting door handles, highlight the cars' superior aesthetics. The striking front end exudes supreme style and character, while the rear design boasts a full-width chrome strip connecting the two-part lamps.

Huge All-Electric Driving Range.

The S580 e has a 28.6kWh battery, which is huge for a PHEV, and this results in an electric range of up to 102kms in real-world driving. Short journeys have the potential to be totally fuel free, and even when the refined and punchy petrol engine does make an appearance, it does so in a manner in keeping with a luxurious premium limousine. With its supremely-serene driving characteristics, quiet tyres and almost no air buffeting at speed, the S580 e is as magnificent to be chauffeured in, as it is to drive. The infotainment system can be operated by way of fingerprint, face or voice recognition.

Once it learns your habits (such as your usual commute, calendar entries, or if you phone someone at a specific time) the system will start to suggest navigation directions, or the

option to phone someone you frequently call. The lithium-ion battery can be charged using a DC rapid charger in 20 minutes (10 to 80 per cent) and under four hours using a 7.4 kW home wallbox.

Interior Space - Like Never Before.

Under the front centre armrest there is a larger-than-average storage cubby complete with two USB-C plugs and wireless charging, and there is even a storage tray behind the floating centre infotainment screen. Additionally, the S-Class has ample door bin storage space, a large glovebox, and a huge amount of cabin space for all occupants. With a wheelbase measuring in at over 3.2-metres there is an abundance of legroom available, but head and elbow room is also impressively-generous throughout. For the proper S-Class experience, you need to try it from the back seat, and this will certainly reinforce the realisation that you are sitting in what is quite simply the most luxurious limousine this side of a Rolls Royce.

Test Car.

My test car was a Mercedes-Benz S-Class S580 e LWB with an AMG Line exterior that truly complimented the High-Tech Silver metallic paintwork, while the Macchiato Beige/Magma Grey Nappa Leather upholstery highlighted the immense comfort on offer to all occupants. Optional extras fitted to my test car included 20" AMG multi-spoke alloy wheels, high gloss burr walnut trim, and an Advantage Package consisting of a panoramic roof, 360-degree camera, and a Driving Assist Pack. A hugely-impressive array of standard equipment adorns the S 580 E, including key features such as acoustic ambient

protection, AIRMATIC suspension, interior ambient lighting, exterior ambient lighting with projection of brand logo, Burmester™ 3D surround sound system, dash cam, digital radio, ENERGISING AIR CONTROL, hard-disc navigation including live traffic information, heated front & rear seats, heated washer fluid reservoir, INTELLIGENT PARKING PILOT, KEYLESS-GO with flush-fitting door handles, MAGIC VISION CONTROL, MBCONNECT, MBUX augmented reality for navigation, MBUX entertainment system, OLED central display (12.8-inch HD), wireless charging for mobile device, and remote boot lid closing, along with cutting-edge safety and driver assist systems. Power comes from a 3.0-litre, six-cylinder petrol engine plus an electric motor that work in unison to deliver an impressive 510bhp and a massive 750Nm of torque. This enables the car to sprint from 0-100km/h in just 5.2-seconds, on its way to a top speed of 250km/h (where permitted). When the S580 e commences every journey with a fully-charged battery, a potential fuel consumption figure as low as 0.6-litres for every 100km driven on a WLTP combined driving cycle can be achieved.

You will barely notice the switch from electric to petrol power (and vice-versa), so smooth is the integration of the two power units, and so well insulated is the stunning interior. You do hear it when accelerating hard, but as this is a meaty 3.0-litre straight six-cylinder unit, the noise isn't unpleasant by any means. At first glance, you might think that steering a car that is almost 5.3-metres long would be a nerve-racking affair, but you would be mistaken, as the car is packed with technology to help make urban driving as easy and comfortable as possible. The Mercedes-Benz S-Class is

capable of driving itself on the motorway, although EU law means full-autonomy can't be activated at present. The S-Class is one of the most comfortable motorway cruisers that money can buy, and the car can accelerate, brake, steer and change lanes by itself, as long as the driver keeps their hands on the steering wheel. The car glides effortlessly over road imperfections and speed bumps, with the standard air suspension providing occupants with ultimate serenity on every journey. Thanks to excellent levels of body control, plenty of grip from the beefy tyres and accurate steering, the S-Class is a car that can be driven quickly with confidence. All versions of the S-Class come with electrically adjustable seats and an electrically adjustable steering wheel so it takes no effort to get a comfortable driving position, while a memory function makes it easy to return them to the correct position after someone else has used the car.

Verdict & Pricing.

The incredible Mercedes-Benz S580 e oozes premium comfort, luxurious refinement, incredible performance, up to 100km of pure electric driving, and outright desirability. Annual road tax is just €140 thanks to a WLTP Co2 emission figure of just 18g/km. Pricing for the S580 e starts at €156,355 in rear-wheel drive format, with a 4MATIC all-wheel drive available from €160,075. Additionally, an S450 e variant with 408bhp is available, and is priced at €143,965. The new S-Class is also available with petrol and diesel engine options for buyers who are not quite ready for plug-in hybrid power. The S-Class offers a wide range of individualisation options for the exterior and interior design, allowing for ultimate personalisation in the process.

NOVENAS FOR LAURALYNN

MIRACLE PRAYER Dear Heart of Jesus in the past I have asked for many favours. This time I ask you for a very special one. Take it, dear Heart of Jesus, and place it within your own broken heart where your Father sees it. Then in His merciful eyes it will become your favour and not mine. Amen. Say this prayer for three days. Promise publication and favour will be granted no matter how impossible. Never known to fail. With grateful thanks to Our Lady for favours received. And thanks to the Sacred Heart for favours received. P.M

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LOCAL PUPILS DONATING PRE-LOVED SHOES TO TOWNSHIP CHILDREN

From the 17-28th April, pupils from across Dublin take part in a national campaign to collect tens of thousands of gently worn shoes from all over Ireland and send them to underprivileged children in Southern African townships. Some of the local National Schools who are already registered to take part in the campaign so far include Scoil Úna Naofa in Crumlin, St Kevins Girls in Kilnamanagh and Bainrion na nAingal in Ballyfermot.

Parents nationwide are being sent up into attics and under the stairs, to dig out pairs of sports shoes which are still in good condition, but which have been outgrown by their owners in Ireland. 'Meet & Greet' collection campaigns are also being ran by some League of Ireland soccer clubs, where fans can donate shoes to a team player over a designated afternoon.

The campaign is being ran by In My Shoes, who in the pre-Covid world, worked with schools and families across Ireland to collect 15,000 pairs of used sports shoes and send them to school children in South Africa & Lesotho. This year they have greatly expanded the campaign to ship thousands more pairs of shoes to help underprivileged children.

Shoes are more than just foot protection in an African

township; they can be the difference between a hopeful or bleak future. Helping to improve regular school attendance and completion, where a walk to school can be miles, they give learners safety, improve self-esteem and open doors to after school sporting activities. The campaign has struck a chord with Irish children, parents, and teachers. Schools have been very engaged with prior campaigns, as it allows them to promote giving, from one child to another, and gratitude for what we have.

When the shoes are collected, they will be brought to a pop-up sorting facility in Sligo designed to check, sort and pack up to 15,000 pairs of shoes a day. The sorting blitz will run for two weeks and be 'staffed' by teams of volunteers with diverse backgrounds, from Transition Year students, to corporate teams, and even a team made up from the new Ukrainian community in Sligo.

In My Shoes have attracted some significant support from major corporations for this campaign: International courier UPS have partnered to collect donated shoes from every national school in Ireland. Smurfit Kappa are producing thousands of custom designed boxes to carry donated shoes to Africa.

In My Shoes are working with a host of South African NGOs and organisations who are in need of shoes to help deliver their aims - these include the more well-known Connect Support Academy, Catch Trust and Masi Sports, as well as many more.

In My Shoes began a few years ago as an idea floating around in the mind of Sligo native Ciarán McHugh, seeing township kids in South Africa going barefoot. He felt that every child should be afforded the basic necessity of a pair of shoes. This idea has now evolved into an expanded plan to send thousands more pairs of shoes to the needy children. Ciaran said: "I have never been involved in a project before where so many wanted to do so much for so little.

In My Shoes seems to be a cause of its time. A simple idea but one with the potential to impact thousands of lives, in however small a way, by connecting individual acts of kindness. With shoes come school, and education, a hopeful future"

To get involved with the 2023 'In My Shoes' campaign visit inmyshoescharity.org. The campaign runs from 17th-28th April, and schools are encouraged to register via the website.

If you would like a Novena published please send a postal order or cheque (Minimum of €10 per prayer) made out to Laura Lynn Children's Hospice, along with your Novena to:

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YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY BOOSTED BY AMAZON DONATION

A charity working across Ireland to support young people's mental health has received a donation of €1,000 from the Amazon fulfilment centre in Dublin.

Jigsaw aims to make youth mental health a national and local priority through the provision of advice and

support, both online and in person, to young people aged 12-25 years old across Ireland. The donation from Amazon will help Jigsaw to make sure that young people across Ireland continue to get all the mental health support they need, no matter what their situation. Following the donation, the team from

Jigsaw was invited to the fulfilment centre in Dublin to meet the Amazon team and share more about their work across Ireland.

Speaking on the donation and visit, Sam Moloney, an Area Manager at Amazon in Dublin who ran the fulfilment centre's mental

health initiatives, said "Jigsaw provides fantastic support for young people's mental health, and we were delighted to have the charity's team on site to meet us and share more about their work. I'm pleased we could lend a helping hand with a donation, too."

Kyran Brady, who works as an Area Manager at Amazon in Dublin and nominated

the charity for support, added "I'm glad Amazon is supporting Jigsaw with this donation. Many young people rely on the charity for guidance and support, and I'm really pleased that Amazon is recognising this by donating to the cause." Matthew Oakes, from Jigsaw's Communications and Fundraising team, said "Jigsaw help young people with their mental health and

every donation helps make that happen. We would like to give a huge thanks to Sam, Kyran, and all the team at Amazon for their donation, and for being so welcoming when we visited them."

The donation to Jigsaw was made as part of Amazon's programme to support the communities in and around its operating locations across the UK and Ireland.



Pictured: L-R: Sarah Byrne and Barry Dempsey from Jigsaw alongside Kyran Brady and Sam Moloney from Amazon Dublin.



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