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AMENDMENTS TO SURROGACY LEGISLATION MUST GIVE PROTECTIONS

Amendments to surrogacy legislation which is due to be published shortly must give legal recognition to parents of babies born through surrogacy, a Dublin Senator has said.

Seanad Spokesperson on Children, Disability, Equality, Integration & Youth, Mary Seery-Kearney hopes the forthcoming Assisted Human Reproduction Bill with amendments will be a watershed moment in regularising the legal relationship of parents and their children born through surrogacy.

Senator Seery Kearney said "I believe that the long-awaited amendments to the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill 2022 are due to be published shortly. "It has been one year since the

Government approved proposals on international surrogacy. "Families who avail of surrogacy to have children are in urgent need of the framework and protections within the anticipated amendments and for those children already born via surrogacy.

"A precarious situation currently exists whereby if some terrible event denied a child born through surrogacy their biological father, the second parent currently has no legal relationship with their child, and that position must change with a pathway provided for regularising these lifelong relationships.

"Second parents often have to rely on the kindness of strangers to allow them make decisions about their own children, or having to

produce proof of court orders to enable them to prove they have the authority to make simple decisions. "We have seen recently the publication of the referendum wording on the definition of the family. It is important to remember that for a family with two children - one born via their mother, and one born via surrogacy - the current family provisions in the Constitution extend only to that first child. "The proposed amendments would not cover surrogacy families despite their broad inclusive scope, so this presses why these amendments are especially required.

"I do hope that consideration has been fully given to surrogacy leave along the lines of maternity and adoptive leave. "Currently there

are no provisions for intended parents of surrogate born children to take maternity type leave.

While some employers have introduced their own bespoke provisions, many have not and parents of surrogate born children are obliged to take unpaid leave, give up their jobs or go back to work prematurely as nothing in law affords them state supported time with their children. "Any new legislative measures on international surrogacy must include the protection of the rights of all children born as a result of international surrogacy arrangements and also to safeguard the welfare of surrogate mothers.

"I also hope that a provision will

be made to extend the IVF funding supports to families growing through surrogacy," Senator Seery Kearney concluded.



FINE GAEL

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TOM DUFFY'S CHRISTMAS CIRCUS - A BEWITCHING TREAT FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Tom Duffy Circus invites one and all to its Christmas Circus spectacular of 2023/24; a surreal, festive pantomime production electrified by an action-packed line-up of circus acts. Hosted at Tallaght Stadium (D24 FNK6) from December 14th 2023 to January 7th 2024, this immersive family experience is set to captivate the imaginations of both its youngest and oldest ring-side spectators; pairing cosy, classic Christmas theatrics with the bewitching curiosities of Duffy's ultra-modern circus – a memorable and unmissable

festive treat for the whole family.

Exploring the fictional wonders of time-travel, this year's Christmas event follows the heart-warming story of an elf named Happy, on a quest to deliver Santa's presents on time. But when the festive-phobic Grinch swipes every gift under the sun, a time-travelling fairy Godmother (played by returning Duffy Circus actress, Phoebe Dipple) takes the reins, turning back the clocks to stop Happy's Christmas disaster from snowballing out of control.

With a broken-clock plot twist, Tom Duffy's Christmas Circus unfolds a magnificent voyage through recent history, travelling from the Victorian era to the 1980s, its vibrant characters impelled to build a new time-machine to stop the Grinch once and for all.

Tom Duffy's Christmas Circus magnifies the extraordinary; the ineffable wonder of their pantomime production bedazzled by a colossal spectrum of bizarre and mystifying circus acts including contortionists, stupendous springboard jumpers and hair-hanging sensations, supercharged with unmissable performances by the modern circus favourite, Laserman, and the Circus's award-winning feat: The Wheel of Death.

In the warmth of Tom Duffy Circus new Big Top tent, each two-hour show features a brief intermission to restock on hot drinks, confectionery,



candyfloss and a carousel of other festive treats. For its third Christmas season at the Tallaght Stadium, Ireland's famed Duffy Circus immerses its spectators in its enthralling take on winter wonderlands, ribboning the wide-eyed imagination of the festive season through each

element of its performance. A family-run travelling circus touring through the last three centuries, Duffy Circus's established productions now feature the sixth generation of family performers, their festive staple of classic-meets-contemporary

entertainment studded with world-class acts gathered from all corners of the globe, including Maycon – Duffy's show-stopping new clown.

Tickets for Tom Duffy's Christmas Circus are available for booking at www.duffycircus.com



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Advertising: Anthony Russell anthony@newsgroup.ie
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FINE GAEL

A DECEMBER TO REMEMBER AT THE GLENEAGLE INEC ARENA

Get ready for a December filled with festive cheer and top-notch entertainment, as *The Gleneagle INEC Arena unveils its most EPIC lineup yet.*

Get ready to jingle all the way with the yuletide lineup that includes the brightest stars on the Irish music scene, internationally renowned podcasts, comedy galore, and intimate acoustic shows.

The Gleneagle INEC Arena is turning up the festive cheer, welcoming the biggest acts in music to ring in the holidays.

Christmas at the Gleneagle INEC Arena welcomes music heavyweights such as The Coronas, The Wolfe Tones, Bell X1, Jenny Greene and RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Cian Ducrot, Block Rockin Beats, Biggest 90s & 00s Concert and disco and more.

Have the lol's with Joanne McNally and Vogue Williams as they bring their award-

winning podcast, "My Therapist Ghosted Me," to the Killarney stage for the first time.

What better way to say goodbye to 2023 and ring in a New Year than with Damien Dempsey and a full band, supported by the talented Kiera Dignam.

The Gleneagle INEC Club curates a playlist of Irish talent, featuring The Stunning, Pa Sheehy, Ash, Hermitage Green, Chasing Abbey, John Spillane, The Academic and more.

Experience a magical Christmas concert with Sharon Lyons and Nils Wanderer as they serenade you with the songs of the season.

For country and folk aficionados, the lineup boasts Johnny Buckley, Michael English, Olivia Douglas, Gina and the Champions & Sharon Shannon, Mary Coughlan, and Frances Black. Enjoy a

night of live comedy with Bernard Casey, who will find out who's "Around for Christmas."

Master Magician Steve Spade will open the vault and unearth over 100 years of Magic and will bring you on a magical journey.

With shows and gigs suitable for the whole family, treat yourself to a full weekend of fun and frolics at the Gleneagle INEC Arena and for a truly memorable Christmas experience stay onsite at the Gleneagle Hotel.

As a guest of The Gleneagle Hotel, you can also enjoy free access to our nightly residents' entertainment and our extensive leisure facilities including a 25meter pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, steam-room, tennis, squash and an 18-hole Pitch and Putt course.

Enjoy a seamless night of entertainment with pre- or post-show dining in the lively

Backstage Bar or in one of the on-site restaurants.

Check out our full December line up and take a glimpse of what they have in store for 2024 at www.inec.ie. Tickets and stayover specials are available now at www.inec.ie.

inec.ie or by calling 064 6671555.

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SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL OPENS THE COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION PROGRAMME

South Dublin County Council (SDCC) has opened the Community Climate Action Programme (CCAP) for expressions of interest. Funding of €1.073m is available for local, not-for-profit community groups and organisations over an initial 18-month period to undertake local climate action projects, with additional funding available for projects with a Northern Ireland aspect. The overall objective of the Programme is to support and empower communities, in partnership with SDCC, to deliver projects that shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities in a considered and structured way to help contribute to national climate and energy targets.

Communities can play a critical role in driving such positive change. In conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Climate

and Communications, SDCC will support this through the CCAP. Project sizes include small (up to €20,000), medium (€20,000 - €50,000) and large (€51,000 - €100,000). SDCC is committed to supporting interested groups in making an application. SDCC's dedicated Community Climate Action Officer is available and can be reached at climatechange@sdbulincoco.ie. The application window is open for 12 weeks until 6th March 2024.

Mayor of South Dublin County, Cllr Alan Edge said: 'I am delighted to see the opening of the Community Climate Action Programme in South Dublin County. This programme emanates from real citizen feedback, through the national Climate Conversations, where it was clear that citizens and communities want to do more to fight the climate crisis. This programme

affords them an opportunity to do just that, whether communities are new to climate action or more established in this space. I look forward to working with my Council colleagues and local groups in implementing the programme'.

Teresa Walsh, South Dublin County Council's Director of Environment, Water and Climate Change, said: 'In developing our new Climate Action Plan 2024-2029, the Council aims to be at the heart of climate action locally. The Community Climate Action Programme is an opportunity to collaborate more closely with local communities and organisations. This will help us to drive and widen our local climate action response.

More information on the programme can be found at <https://www.sdcc.ie/en/climate-action/community-climate-action-programme/>



Pictured Mayor of South Dublin County Council Cllr. Alan Edge and Ian Jackson Community Climate Action Officer. Photo by Ben Ryan.

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Barry Andrews MEP

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CONCERN OVER LONG SOCIAL HOUSING WAITING TIMES IN SOUTH DUBLIN

People Before Profit Councillor Madeleine Johansson has voiced her profound concern over the persistently long waiting times for social housing applicants in South Dublin County Council.

The issue was brought to light during the December Council Meeting when Councillor Johansson tabled a question seeking clarification on the waiting times faced by social housing applicants in the region. In response to the question, the Chief Executive provided data outlining the average waiting times for social housing allocations in South Dublin County Council's administrative area, categorized by bedroom requirement.

The figures were nothing short of alarming with 1 Bed: 8.8 years, 2 Bed: 10.2 years, 3 Bed: 9.8 years, 4 Bed: 10.4

years and Overall Average: 9.8 years. Councillor Johansson expressed her deep concern regarding these staggering waiting times, emphasising the human impact of such delays on vulnerable individuals and families in need of stable and secure housing. "These waiting times are simply unacceptable."

Behind these statistics are real people, struggling every day with the uncertainty and insecurity of not having a place to call home. It's disheartening to see that despite the pressing need for social housing, the waiting lists continue to grow, and the waiting times are pushing a decade," said Councillor Johansson.

The Councillor highlighted the urgent need for a comprehensive and effective strategy to address the

housing crisis in South Dublin, urging the Council to prioritise the development and implementation of measures that would expedite the allocation of social housing.

"People Before Profit is committed to advocating for the rights of those in need, and we will not stand idly by as our community members face such prolonged uncertainty. We call on South Dublin County Council to take immediate and decisive action to address this housing crisis and work towards significantly reducing these unacceptable waiting times."

New housing in Clonburris is being built very quickly by private developers, we need to see the same speed when it comes to social housing developments." Councillor Johansson concluded.

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2,500 TREES AND NEW STEPPING-STONE FORESTS PLANNED

Councillor Derren Ó Brádaigh has welcomed the news that South Dublin County Council will plant as many as 2,500 new trees as part of a winter tree planting programme. The Council's Public Realm Section also intends commencing a programme of mini-woodlands or stepping-stones forests around the county, proposing to select three locations from the parks in the Lucan and Palmerstown-Clondalkin-North Clondalkin.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh said "At the November Area Committee meeting we learned that the Council now intend to identify three very welcome locations within the two local electoral areas of Lucan and Palmerstown-Fonthill, to begin planting new mini woodlands. These are small dense areas of native trees, sometimes referred to a stepping stones forests or as Miyawaki forests, using a method developed by Japanese Professor of Botany Akira Miyawaki. This is something that I have

supported and advocated for during my time as a local councillor.

"I am delighted that we are upping the ante in recognition for the need to plant far more trees within our communities to help sequester carbon dioxide and improve the quality of the air we breathe every day. The Council currently remove an average of 400 trees per year, so it is essential that we are always planting far more trees than we are removing at any given time.

Ó Brádaigh, a councillor representing the Lucan and Palmerstown-Fonthill areas said "In addition to the three mini forests, the winter tree planting programme will see 2,500 new trees planted over the course of six months throughout the Councils jurisdiction. From this figure, approximately 300 new trees will be planted in Lucan and 180 in Palmerstown-Fonthill. There will be a dozen native species that will include such

trees as Oak, Cherry, Beech, Birch, Pine and Rowan. The locations of these new trees are already mapped throughout the County. Once the locations of the stepping stones forest sites are identified, the elected members will be notified to complete the site selection process.

Ó Brádaigh added "This is an important investment toward Climate 'Care' and is a key objective of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and County Development Plan. The average cost of each new tree can vary depending on the level of maturity, but average approximately €150 per tree.

This constitutes a €375,000 spend and just part of a vitally important investment, as we tackle the ever-pressing challenges of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, providing important wildlife habitat, and addressing the biodiversity crisis with the continued introduction of wetlands too."

Beannachtaí an tSéasúir

Seasons Greetings & Thankyou to all my Constituents & Friends

Seán Crowe TD

Dublin South West Sinn Féin

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IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION REMINDS PEOPLE OF BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT LINE SERVICE THIS CHRISTMAS

Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF), a leading organisation dedicated to providing support to those dealing with loss and grief, wants to remind people about their Bereavement Support Line service, available from 10am to 1pm, Monday to Friday.

The service aims to provide solace and support to individuals who have lost a loved one, friend, or colleague, allowing them to openly discuss their

grief and loss. This service is not exclusive to recent bereavements but is also open to those who have experienced loss in the past. Callers to the line may have lost a parent, spouse, child, sibling or close friend.

Some deaths have been sudden and unexpected, others coming after an illness. IHF say that all callers are welcome and that people mourn different relationships - for example

we have had callers who struggle with the loss of a pet. Additionally, professionals in the healthcare sector, such as general practitioners, occupational therapists, nurses, and hospitals, can also contact the support line for information regarding local bereavement services available to their patients or clients.

Family members and friends seeking information about bereavement support for

their loved ones can also reach out to inquire about counselling services or social support options. In 2022, under 1,500 calls were made to the Bereavement Support Line. Surpassing these numbers, the line has already received over 2,000 calls up to the end of November. While the service has seen a slight increase in male callers, currently standing at 30% compared to 26% in 2022, IHF believes more efforts are needed to encourage male participation.

Catherine Tierney, Bereavement Clinical Lead at the Irish Hospice Foundation said "Our experience is that men are more reluctant to reach out and phone the line. Perhaps it's a cultural thing - Irish men aren't known for talking about their feelings so easily, culturally it might have been seen as a sign of weakness to cry or show emotion. Thankfully that is changing. But the research also tells us that some men prefer to channel their grief into a project, something constructive or physical. Like getting involved in the charity that supported their loved one, starting a new charity or advocating for better services. We want to spread the message in Dublin that the bereavement support line is here for anyone missing a loved one this Christmas"

All agents working on the support line are volunteers who have received training in grief and loss and in how to provide support over the telephone. Many of them have completed Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland Masters in Loss and Bereavement or Professional Certificate in Children & Loss programs.

Anonymity is highly respected by the Bereavement Support Line, allowing callers to remain confidential. Callers

only need to provide their contact details if they wish to receive leaflets or signposting information. Bereavement Support Line 1800 80 70 77.

PATIENT IT SYSTEM WELCOME BUT FURTHER ROLLOUT NEEDED

Mark Ward TD has welcomed the introduction of IT system at the National Forensic Mental Health Service. Deputy Ward was speaking following the launch of the system, TrakCare, in the National Forensic Mental Health Service recently and called for a further rollout across other mental health services.

Teachta Ward said "It is really welcome that TrakCare has been launched in the National Forensic Mental Health Service in Portrane. "This will allow for patient care plans to be delivered electronically and patient records to be maintained in a clear fashion. "This will allow a better standard of care to be delivered and for easier cooperation between multidisciplinary teams. "It is a long time coming that we move away from the archaic system of paper files, something that has been highlighted as causing issues within a number of HSE reviews, including the Maskey Review and the Mental Health Commission's review into CAMHS.

"I have written to the Minister for Health to ask if they will consider a wider rollout of this system into other mental health services, so that a linkup between primary care and specialist services can ensure that we have better integration of services. "We need a mental health service that is suitable for the 21st century and we need to ensure that IT systems are rolled out across the state to improve service delivery and the delivery of care."

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TALLAGHT FAMILY HOMELESS FOR CHRISTMAS

A single parent from Tallaght has spoken out about how she and her 3 year old are facing another Christmas without a home. Faith O'Brien is a healthcare worker who has been sleeping on couches and living out of her car, as she cannot afford a house given record high rents. Her situation has been highlighted by Paul Murphy, People Before Profit TD for Dublin South West, who claims it is an example of how

“the government’s housing policy has completely failed.

O'Brien said: “I have been couch surfing and living out of my car for almost 3 years now. My car has become my home, I have spent countless nights sleeping in it with my 3 year old son. I’m a single mother and a healthcare worker and still my income would never be enough for rent. I never know where we will be next week. I just

want to give my son a home. I’m tired of struggling, it’s starting to affect my mental health and it’s worse now with winter as my son suffers from asthma. How am I supposed to keep him warm when we don’t even have a home to heat?”

Paul Murphy TD highlighted how figures from the Department of Housing show that 9,188 adults and 3,911 children were in emergency accommodation in October, with many more homeless but not recorded

in the official numbers. The housing campaigner said “It is shameful for the Minister for Housing that more than three years into his term, the number of people living in emergency accommodation has grown by 52%. The number of children growing up without a home has shockingly increased by 50%. According to Depaul 8 babies were born into their homeless services this year.

There are kids growing up in Ireland now who have never known what it is like to have

a secure roof over their heads.

The socialist TD highlighted that homelessness is particularly high among one parent families: “Of the 1,939 who accessed emergency accommodation last month, 1,107 were single parent families. That’s 57% of those accessing emergency accommodation. It is clear that this crisis is disproportionately affecting single parent families.

“There will be thousands of

families facing Christmas with no home, the government could help ease these numbers by reviving the thousands of vacant and derelict buildings as public housing and reinstating the no fault eviction ban with immediate effect. We also need to see a date announced for a referendum on a right to housing, a commitment that they made in the Programme for Government - but with their time nearing an end this government has still not announced a date for this vote.”

CONTINUOUS CRASHES ON N7 AND BOOT ROAD JUNCTION ADD TO RESIDENTS' WOES

“Recently, local residents put up Christmas tree lights around the local green. A car then crashed into another car, which then hit a barrier between the junction and the green. This is just the most recent incident amongst a spate of similar crashes. Cars speed down the N7, turn left at the junction and hit the barrier. At one point, a car ended up on the green.” said Cllr Trevor Gilligan.

“Luckily, no one was injured. What makes it more frustrating is the numerous times I have contacted TII who put a traffic management plan in place, which was simply a few orange plastic barriers and some signage - not good enough, as witnessed on a Sunday recently. Residents are distraught. I’ve lost track of the times I’ve contacted the TII about this. At this point, anyone near this junction is taking their lives into their own hands, that goes for both pedestrians and motorists. Continuous car accidents at this location add to residents’ fear and anxiety. TII need a proactive approach here, rather than a reactive approach.”



Pictured: Car incident at the N7 and Boot Road junction on Sunday 10th December.

Cllr. Charlie O'Connor PC

Living in Tallaght ...Working for Tallaght

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New Year



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SIMON COMMUNITY GROUP NATIONALLY RECOGNISED AS PART OF 'INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY'

At an event marking International Volunteer Day in Dublin, members of Dublin Simon Community were recognised and showcased as part of a special film screening highlighting voluntary work over the last year. The 'Seen and Heard' event was organised by national organisation Léargas, who manage exchange programmes and projects across Europe in education, youth and community work, sport, as well as vocational education and training.

Celine Martin, Léargas Head of Youth, Sport & ESC Development said "We are so thrilled to celebrate the work, commitment and incredible talent of volunteers in Dublin Simon Community alongside organisations across Ireland, who engage in projects tackling issues including poverty, exclusion, homelessness, social

injustice, and climate change. "You can't underestimate the value of giving your time to working with and for others on a voluntary basis - learning about issues as well as taking what you have learned and sharing that best practice with other voluntary groups here in Ireland and across Europe."

The European Solidarity Corps funds and supports young people aged between 18 and 30 from EU member states, to volunteer or self-organise projects that benefit communities and young people can volunteer at home or abroad. Renowned activist, actor and screenwriter Emmet Kirwan addressed the 'Seen and Heard' event, which included over forty volunteers of all ages from across Ireland, and featured a film reel from nationwide projects, panel discussions and workshops.



Pictured: (L-R) Claudia Capasso López from Madrid, Spain, Nils Griepentrog from Münster, Germany, Amirtha Sri from TamilNadu, India, and Amy McNamee, TY student from Dublin. Photo: Marc O'Sullivan

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HERD OF RAMS CELEBRATE LAST DAY OF ACTIVITY OF 2023

The Retired Active Men's Social celebrated their last activity day of 2023, with a super bumper raffle, and some very special treats for members. With 35 members attending the morning social activity, the raffle was a highlight of the morning. RAMS were so grateful to those who donated gifts and items for the raffle. Many thanks to Mc Loughlins Butchers Mill Centre Clondalkin, Brady's Butchers Newcastle, Mc Cabe Chemist Newcastle, Lloyds Chemist Mill Centre Clondalkin, Spar Supermarket Newcastle, A&G Hairdressers Newcastle, Betsy's cakes Clondalkin, Avoca Rathcoole, Lucan Garden Centre and Supervalu Newcastle.

The RAMS very own Secretary, Matt Dowling made his special recipe Christmas Puddings, which always goes down a treat with the members. The members were served a festive plate of mince pies, sherry trifle and more plum pudding with Chantilly cream. Acting Chairman, Mr Jim Nolan, wished all the members A very Happy Christmas, and reflected on the year past, with our educational outings, pool competitions, and looking forward to our now annually Christmas function. Jim also remembered deceased members, and those who had passed away in 2023.

With the return of members

since Covid-19, it was time to have a photo shoot, for their own remembrance, and with 34 members in attendance, they were so pleased to have Evan Lee Dowling to do the honours. Smiles all round, and a great rendition of "Let it Snow" from Musical Director, Liam O'Donnell. The RAMS in Rhythm were also complimented on the tremendous amount of money donated to various charities, during 2023. Liam O'Donnell, reiterated that in excess of €60,000 will be donated to various charities by the end of the year. Although the RAMS will be in recess until 2024, the RAMS in Rhythm have many more engagements up until the 23rd December. The RAMS also attended their annual Christmas function in the Springfield Hotel Leixlip, to another wonderful evening of food, beverages, and a sing along by all members. Not indulging in too much beverages, as the RAMS in Rhythm were singing and fundraising at the GPO O'Connell Street, Dublin city, the next day. What a wonderful reception the RAMS received in the city centre, and to the joy of all the shoppers, visitors, and day trippers.

Another turn out by the RAMS singers, and fundraising for the Capuchin Day Centre annual Christmas appeal. Carol singing for the residents and staff of Peamount Healthcare will

take place on Friday 22nd December from 11 am.

RAMS in Rhythm received a very special request for the Simon Community, for the singers to carol sing in Liffey Valley Shopping Centre, for their Christmas Appeal. The RAMS in Rhythm give of their time so generously fundraising for any needy cause, and they are so pleased to Carol sing on the 23rd December in the Liffey Valley shopping Centre from 12 noon to 2 pm.



Recycle more this Christmas

Déan níos mó a athchúrsáil an Nollaig seo

Wrapping paper, Christmas cards, Glass, Cans, Plastic, Christmas trees, Batteries and WEEE can all be recycled, so this Christmas South Dublin County Council is encouraging everyone to recycle. Please visit www.sdcc.ie for Christmas Tree recycling locations.

For more information on how these items & more can be recycled go to www.sdcc.ie

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Ballymount Civic Amenity, Christmas and New Years Opening Hours 2023/2024

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ● Mon 18th - Fri 22nd Dec 9am - 5pm | ● Wed 27th - 29th Dec 9am - 5pm |
| ● Sat 23rd Dec 9am - 5.30pm | ● Sat 30th Dec 9am - 5.30pm |
| ● Christmas Eve 9.30am - 3.00pm | ● New Years Eve 9am - 3pm |
| ● Christmas Day Closed | ● New Years Day Closed |
| ● St. Stephen's Day Closed | ● Tue 2nd - Sat 6th Jan 9am - 5pm |



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN-LED SPACE PROJECT SECURES OVER €7.9 MILLION IN FUNDING

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Simon Coveney TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD and the Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation, Dara Calleary TD, recently announced a total of €58.8 million in funding for 12 new projects under Call 6 of the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF).

A University College Dublin (UCD)-led space project entitled National Space Subsystems and Payloads Initiative (NSSPI) has secured just over €7.9 million in funding, the largest single amount awarded to a project by the Government in this latest DTIF funding round. The project will support the development of an economically sustainable and expanding space industry in three initial clusters, optical communications for space, autonomous smart satellites and spacecraft and payload

modelling, simulation, assembly, integration and test research support.

The NSSPI project is led by Dr David McKeown, a lecturer in Applied Dynamics at the UCD School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering, and the theme lead for Spacecraft Structures, Dynamics and Control at the UCD Centre for Space Research. Dr McKeown is also the Engineering Manager of EIRSAT-1 (Educational Irish Research Satellite-1), Ireland's first-ever satellite. Other UCD researchers who will be involved in this project are; Professor Lorraine Hanlon, and Professor Sheila McBreen, UCD School of Physics along with Associate Professor Brian Mac Namee and Dr Nima Afraz, UCD School of Computer Science.

In addition to UCD the other NSSPI project consortium members are; Realtime Technologies Ltd; Ubotica Technologies Ltd; Mbryonics Ltd; Intel; ÉireComposites

Teoranta and Equal1 Laboratories Ireland Ltd. Equal1, a UCD spin-out, is a pioneering silicon quantum computing company and is headquartered at NexusUCD in Dublin, with facilities in Silicon Valley, California; Romania and Canada.

Dr David McKeown, UCD School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering and NSSPI project-lead said, "The project is a fantastic example of how university led research can naturally support the development of disruptive technologies by Irish space companies. It is a clear backing of the importance of space technology research to Ireland and comes at a very exciting time at UCD."

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Simon Coveney TD said, "I am delighted to announce this significant new funding of almost €60m from the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund which underlines our commitment

to advancing pioneering technology development in Ireland. The projects are diverse and some are potentially life-changing, such as providing a new minimally invasive and targeted treatment for metastatic lung cancer or using AI to detect abnormal brain activity in infants at birth.

"These disruptive projects will also ensure that Ireland's research and innovation ecosystem is well placed to capitalise on emerging growth sectors while delivering on net zero commitments, decarbonisation and digital transformation, in line with the objectives of the White Paper for Enterprise."

DTIF projects are utilising industrial research and experimental development to create products and services that have the potential to alter markets and the way that businesses operate. The strong industry-academia



Pictured: Dr David McKeown, UCD School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering and NSSPI project-lead

collaboration which is required under DTIF is key to ensuring that Government investment through this fund is impactful for both the economy and society. The Research Performing Organisations awarded funding in DTIF Calls to

date ensures the expertise, training and knowledge necessary to help make the projects a success. This latest funding announcement means €364 million has to date been awarded to 103 projects across the six DTIF Calls.

EXPANSION OF HOT SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAMME TO 12 LOCAL SCHOOLS

Emer Higgins, TD for Dublin Mid West is proud to welcome a significant development in the Hot School Meals Programme. Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys TD, has confirmed the extension of the programme to 900 additional primary schools nationwide, starting April 2024. This expansion will notably impact Dublin Mid West, with several local schools set to benefit from this initiative.

Higgins stated, "This is a great step towards ensuring every young student in our constituency has access to nutritious hot meals. The expansion from 30 to over 1,400 schools in the Hot School Meals Programme under Minister Humphreys' tenure is commendable. It's a game-changer for our children's health and education."

"All DEIS schools in our region are now participating in the Hot School Meals Programme, with additional schools also receiving approval. I am particularly pleased to see the inclusion of the following Dublin Mid West schools in the Hot School Meals Programme: Adamstown Castle Educate Together National School, Gaelscoil Chluain Dolcain, Gaelscoil Lir, Gaelscoil Na Camoige, Griffeen Valley Educate Together National School, Holy Family National School, Scoil Mhuire Girls' National School, St Mary's Boys National School Lucan, Lucan Community National School, Rathcoole Educate Together National School, Sacred Heart National School, St Thomas Junior National School".

With this expansion, an additional 150,000 children across Ireland will enjoy hot, nutritious meals, aiding their learning and development. Minister Humphreys said "When I was appointed Minister for Social Protection in June 2020, there were 30 schools receiving Hot Meals. This week's announcement means that from April next year there will be over 1,400 primary schools benefiting from Hot School Meals."

"As Minister, I am absolutely determined to continue to expand the Hot School Meals Programme to every Primary School in Ireland. My ambition is that a child born in Ireland today will be guaranteed access to a Hot Meal by the time they start school".

LUCAN EAST EDUCATE TOGETHER NATIONAL SCHOOL HOSTS 'FIT SQUAD'



Fitness and healthy eating should start at a young age. That's the message pupils at Lucan East Educate Together National School heard when they recently hosted the popular children's fitness initiative 'Fit Squad'. Supported by Fyffes and delivered by Irish fitness expert Sharon Flanagan the visit saw over 110 pupils participate in an active age-appropriate workout designed to improve their general fitness during which advice on the importance of healthy eating was given. Running until next March, the current series will see some 10,000 pupils participate from schools throughout Ireland, north and south, increasing to almost 40,000 the number that will have taken part in the programme since it was introduced in 2018. Schools interested in receiving a similar visit can find details at www.fyffesfitsquad.ie



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MOTORING LIFE WITH

MINI ELECTRIC: MORE FEEL-GOOD JOY THAN EVER

By Breda Corrigan

Back in 1959, the Mini name actually began as a model name for two different brands, the Austin Mini and the Morris Mini. These brands were both owned by British Leyland at the time, but in 1969 Mini became a brand in its own right. German car manufacturing giant BMW bought the Mini brand in 2000, and the all-new Mini was launched in 2001 as a modern and desirable car with a retro design language. Undoubtedly, the legendary Mini designer Sir Alec Issigonis, would never have envisaged when he first designed the Mini in 1959 that his iconic British city car would be a silent-running, fully-electric car all these years later.

Retro-Modern Styling.

In 2020 Mini introduced its first fully electric car which was a huge sales success. Now in 2023, this new generation of the Mini is much bigger than its miniscule ancestor, and comes in an assortment of trim levels in order to provide buyers with scope for personalisation. Presently, trim options consist of Level 2, Level 3 and range-topping Resolute trim. Its retro-modern styling still turns heads, and its sporty chassis tuning provides drivers with a sense of fun on every journey. By electric car standards the Mini electric is reasonably priced but it runs on a relatively-small 28.9kWh (usable) battery with an official range of 235-270km to a full charge. However, as is the norm with fully-electric vehicles, the achievable range will be determined by driving style, weather conditions and other external factors.

Test Car Details.

My test car was the Mini Electric in special-edition Resolute trim, and it looked stunning in its Rebel Green paintwork, black roof and black door mirrors, along with exclusive 17" Resolute alloy wheels. The addition

of bronze-coloured exterior accents and bronze bonnet stripes add hugely to the exclusivity of this special edition. The classic Mini qualities are evident inside the cabin too, and what comes as standard equipment depends on the trim level chosen, but all trims come with a 5.5-inch colour digital dashboard display which sits snugly on top of the steering column. There is also an 8.8-inch circular central touch screen display within an illuminated circle panel that connects easily with either Apple CarPlay or Android Auto. Visibility is extremely good, even when looking back over your shoulder, due to fairly slim pillars, and the Mini's compact shape, along with standard-fit parking sensors and a reversing camera make it an easy car to park. Mini's are famed for their go-kart-like handling, and the Mini Electric is no different. It is a very enjoyable car to drive, with impressive body control and quick steering adding greatly to the overall driving dynamics. Drivers have a choice of four driving modes: Sport, Mid, Green and Green Plus. Sport sharpens up the accelerator response and gives you more of that instantly responsive electric-car feel. The default Mid mode is programmed to provide a good balance between responsiveness and energy use for normal traffic applications. Green requires you to push the accelerator pedal much harder for a good burst of acceleration, encouraging you to drive more efficiently, while the Green Plus mode aims to provide as many kilometres per charge as possible by switching off the air-conditioning and other non-vital functions which use battery power and decreasing the responsiveness of the accelerator. Thanks to the electric motors hefty 270Nm of torque and 184PS (182bhp) power output, the car accelerates with great urgency when you put your foot down. The 0-100km/h sprint can be completed in 7.3 seconds, on its way to



an electronically-limited 150km/h (where permitted). Rolling acceleration is similarly strong, and the Mini Electric overtakes effortlessly from any speed. Range is effectively maximised by a two-setting regenerative braking function. Select "high energy recovery" and the electric motor generates serious retardation (and charge) when you lift your right foot.

The brakes grip strongly in this mode, but once you get used to it you rarely need to use the brake pedal at all. When it comes to charging the MINI Electric, the fastest 50 kW DC charger will do a 0-80% charge in 36 minutes and a 7.4 kW AC home charger will do a full charge in as little as 3 hours and 12 minutes. Mini's of all eras have never been renowned for their minimal rear leg

room, and the electric model is no different. It is just about ok for adults on short journeys, but children will find the space more acceptable. Potential Mini buyers are unlikely to have rear seat space or boot space at the top of their priority list, but the car's standard 211-litre boot capacity can be expanded to 731-litres when the rear seats are folded.

Verdict & Pricing.

The Mini Electric is charming, desirable and likeable, and its stylish, high-quality interior makes it a very pleasant car for all occupants.

It is fun to drive, and it brings with it cheap running costs too. Pricing starts at €39,985. Visit www.mini.ie for further information.



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O most beautiful Flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this my necessity. O Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein that you are my Mother. O Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart, to succor me in this my necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. O show me herein that you are my Mother. O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us that have recourse to thee. (Repeat three times) Sweet Mother, I place this cause in your hands. (Repeat three times) Amen. I.O.B

O most beautiful Flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate

Virgin, assist me in this my necessity. O Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein that you are my Mother. O Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart, to succor me in this my necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. O show me herein that you are my Mother. O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us that have recourse to thee. (Repeat three times) Sweet Mother, I place this cause in your hands. (Repeat three times) Amen. P.M

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