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REFRESHER COURSES AND REGULAR MEDICALS FOR DRIVERS OVER 70 AN UNNECESSARY BURDEN AND NOT NEEDED

MEP for Dublin, Barry Andrews, has voiced his strong opposition to the proposed changes to the Driving Licence Directive (2006/126/EC) that would require drivers over the age of 70 to undergo regular medical checks to renew their driving licences. The European Commission's proposal, aimed at enhancing road safety, has been met with scepticism by Andrews, who argues that it would place an undue burden on both older drivers and the healthcare system.

Addressing the issue, MEP Andrews remarked, "Requiring regular medical examinations for drivers over 70 would not only be a costly endeavour for those renewing their licences but would also burden our already

stretched healthcare services." MEP Andrews continued: "The current practices across European countries vary concerning licensing procedures for older drivers, with some nations implementing age-based renewal requirements and medical examinations. Research, including a comparison of Finnish and Swedish licensing practices, suggests that age-based mandatory assessments may not necessarily enhance safety and could even have counterproductive outcomes."

"The European Commission's push for drivers over the age of 70 to renew their license every five years, through medical testing, is seen by many as age discrimination. There's a lack of

evidence showing that drivers in this age group are more prone to accidents," Andrews stated, emphasising the need for measures that consider medical conditions rather than age as a determining factor.

Acknowledging the need for road safety measures, Andrews stipulated, "Age discrimination is a serious concern, and any changes in licensing procedures should be based on solid evidence, ensuring the continued safety of our roads without imposing unnecessary burdens on older drivers." Andrews plans to collaborate with colleagues in the European Parliament to oppose the proposed changes to the Driving License Directive that would involve age discrimination of the elderly.

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC PLAN



Pictured in the Maldron Hotel, Tallaght, at the launch by the Mayor of the South Dublin County Partnership Strategic Plan 2024-2028 were (L to R) Larry O'Neill CEO, Councillor Mick Duff, Mayor Alan Edge and Councillor Charlie O'Connor.

FINE GAEL ★

Have a Query? get in touch with my office

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ROUND TOWER DESIGN AND CRAFT SHOP OPENS

South Dublin County Council is delighted to announce that the Round Tower Design and Craft Shop has officially opened. The shop will showcase locally sourced design, craft, food and beverage products in the beautiful surroundings of the Round Tower Visitor Centre.

Products from both up and coming and established local businesses will be available to purchase in time for some unique Christmas shopping. The Round Tower Design and Craft Shop will offer customers a special retail and hospitality experience; Have some lunch or a coffee in the wonderful Monk's Kitchen Café, spend some time taking in the atmosphere of the beautifully landscaped

gardens, and head home with some delightful artisan gifts for all the family.

The Local Enterprise Office clients will supply the shop. Tom Rooney, Head of Enterprise for South Dublin County Council says, "LEO South Dublin is particularly pleased to have this opportunity to collaborate with the team at the Round Tower Design and Craft Shop to showcase the variety and depth of creative and design talent that exists in the county. All of these businesses are supported by LEO and are already selling their products nationally and for many internationally and are now available for our local visitors to purchase. We are strong supporters

of a 'Shop Local' policy and this collaboration is another important step to strengthening these initiatives".

Mayor of South Dublin County Council, Cllr Alan Edge said "It is fantastic to be able to provide such a brilliant opportunity for local business owners in the County, with the launch of the Round Tower Design and Craft Shop. South Dublin County Council are extremely passionate about promoting local businesses and developing our strong local economy. The shop will provide locals and visitors alike with a beautiful space to visit and support local economic development".

Local products available at the Round Tower Design and Craft Shop include award-winning BiaBelle Beauty, the luxury cosmetics and tan brand that makes contemporary glamour and beauty available to everyone. Founded by Irish sisters Aoibhinn and Bláthnaid and their mom Susan Murphy in December 2017, BiaBelle Beauty has quickly become a favourite with some of the

world's biggest influencers and beauty bloggers. Also stocked are the handmade Born Again Bites, delicious snacks made from brewer's spent grain, breaking the cycle of food waste whilst promoting the circular food economy.

Other locally produced

products stocked at the new Round Tower Design and Craft Shop in the heart of Clondalkin include a selection of homemade jams and seasonal products from Firhouse's Teegan's Treats, 100% raw, local Irish honey from Olly's Farm in the Dublin mountains, and wonderfully localised art by Clondalkin

born, Lucan resident, artist Jo Lawless who captures the essence of Dublin villages in a skyline format, mixing a selection of past and present buildings unique to each village location.

The Round Tower Design and Craft Shop will open Monday-Sunday from 9am-4pm.



Pictured: South Dublin County Council Mayor Alan Edge and Local Suppliers



Published by: NewsGroup, Unit 3 Floor 2 St. Dominics Shopping Centre, St. Dominics Road, Tallaght, Dublin, D24 HK49.

Titles: Tallaght News, Clondalkin News, Lucan News and Rathcoole & Saggart News

Distributed by: Local Post Co. Printed by: Meath Chronicle

Contact Details: Website www.newsgroup.ie Email: info@newsgroup.ie

Founder: John Russell
Advertising: Anthony Russell anthony@newsgroup.ie
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CHRISTMAS WANDERLIGHTS EXPERIENCE IN PALMERSTOWN OPENS TO THE PUBLIC

This Christmas, Stewarts Care invites you to enjoy the magic of the season at "Christmas Wanderlights". The Stewarts Care campus in Palmerstown has been transformed into a winter Wonderland with a stunning display of lights for the whole community to enjoy.

Stewarts Care invites everyone to immerse themselves in this wanderland of lights, completely free of charge. From 5pm to 8pm daily, visitors can experience the joy of wandering through this festive display, capturing cherished moments with loved ones among the shimmering holiday lights. After your wander, why not warm up in the newly refurbished Coach House with some seasonal treats and drinks.

Christmas Wanderlights is proudly sponsored by Palmerstown Credit Union Ltd. Stacy McGrath, CEO

of Palmerstown Credit Union Ltd., expressed their excitement at this community experience, stating, "This partnership exemplifies our commitment to fostering a sense of togetherness and support within our local and broader communities. As a free event for all, it embodies the spirit of inclusivity and community engagement that we hold dear. We recognise the profound support Stewarts Care provides to so many people and we welcome this opportunity to support the work that they do."

Brendan O'Connor, Chief Executive of Stewarts Care, echoed the sentiment, remarking, "We are delighted to welcome our local community and those further afield to come and enjoy Wanderlights. Stewarts Care has been a proud member of the Palmerstown and wider community for many years and we want to give everyone the opportunity to come and

experience a moment of joy as you wander among the lights".

The lights were turned on by Stewarts Care Resident, Dylan Rooney, "For the past 23 years, I have lived here on campus. Turning on these beautiful lights is such an honour and quite significant in a sense. Within the next few weeks myself and my housemates will be moving off campus to a newly refurbished bungalow in Maynooth. Bright things are coming my way and I'm excited to start this new chapter of my life".

This heartwarming initiative not only spreads joy by lighting up the community, but also supports the work of Stewarts Care. Those who enjoy the experience have the opportunity to make a Christmas donation to Stewarts Care.

All funds raised will directly support the expansion of the Stewarts Care Equine

Therapy Centre, providing a world class accessible therapy facility to children and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities.



Pictured Brendan O'Connor, CEO Stewarts Care, Paul Mullen and Stacy McGrath, CEO Palmerstown CU

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COMMUNITY INCENSED AT VANDALISM OF NEWLY OPENED LUCAN PARKS

Sinn Féin Councillor Derren Ó Brádaigh has expressed his condemnation of sheer wanton vandalism of two newly opened parks in Lucan. Tandy's Lane Park opened last year and has seen some anti-social behaviour, with the newly opened Airlie Park seeing activity areas daubed in graffiti within 24 hours of opening to the public.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh said "This is completely unacceptable. Airlie Park was not even open a day before descended upon the much-needed new

local community amenity, was vandalised with graffiti. This new park opening has been long and eagerly awaited, with numerous members of the local surrounding community contacting me over recent months in excitement, and with queries regarding the excellent facilities the park has to offer. Indeed, so many clubs have been in contact, all interested in using the park and its all-weather pitch facilities on offer. "The new park was due to open in early summer; however, this

was delayed due to some initial seeding problems, followed by some drainage issues. So, when word finally came that the park would see a 'soft' opening ahead of an actual official opening date yet to be announced, this news was warmly received and welcomed by all.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh said "Increasingly, we are witnessing some of our parks

being overtaken by a minority bent on destruction and anti-social behaviour. Graffiti 'tagging' is also becoming a huge issue throughout our neighbourhoods, costing our local authority important financial resources needed elsewhere. Some of our parks are being used after dark for drug abuse, illegal fires, and general nuisance behaviour. We cannot allow a situation whereby our park facilities

are overrun by certain individuals that have nothing to offer the community, and somehow feel their assaults on our communities will go unpunished.

"Following this recent spate of graffiti daubing within both Airlie Park and on seating and benches in Tandy's Lane Park, I have raised this matter with An Garda Síochana and have written

to Lucan Garda Station. They have passed this onto their community policing section and are committed to increasing Garda visibility in the vicinity now. As a member of the Joint Policing Committee, I will also be raising the matter. This type of senseless activity needs to be confronted and we must stand together in support of our communities and each other!"



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NEW ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCH AT SEAN WALSH PARK

On the 21st of November 2023, the Deputy Mayor of South Dublin County Council, Cllr. Yvonne Collins officially opened the new Artificial Grass Pitch at Sean Walsh Park. The Mayor was joined by local Councillors, South

Dublin County Council's Chief Executive Mr. Colm Ward, Ms. Teresa Walsh, Director of Services, staff of South Dublin County Council, Students from Old Bawn Community College, Transition Students from Shamrock Rovers Academy,

the contractor JNC Premier Pitches, and guests to celebrate this event.

Speaking at the event Deputy Mayor Cllr Yvonne Collins said "This project is in line with South Dublin County Councils aim to support and promote the health and wellbeing of the people of South Dublin County. Provision of artificial

grass pitches allows for intensive sports use, to help accommodate some of the active recreational needs of our growing county and I acknowledge the support of the Government of Ireland via Project 2040, and the National Planning Framework."

The Deputy Mayor went on

to say "It is lovely to see the Pitch so well used and I wish the clubs, community groups and individuals using the pitch, many years of enjoyment into the future."

This project was match funded by SDCC's Astro Pitch programme, which was initiated following the identification of the

need for Artificial Grass Pitches across the county to support our sports clubs and communities and augment SDCC's provision of grass pitches in the county in SDCC's Sports Pitch Strategy. It has been a welcome addition to the park and have added to the activity and amenity in this beautiful bustling park.

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GRADUATES EMPOWER THEMSELVES THROUGH AN COSÁN'S ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The mission of An Cosán, Ireland's largest community education provider, which is based in Jobstown, Tallaght, is to empower through education. But it is not An Cosán that empowers learners; they empower themselves.

That was the message delivered by An Cosán's Deputy CEO, Anne Genockey, at An Cosán's Further Education Awards Ceremony in The Russell Centre, Tallaght recently, when 15 adult learners graduated from QQI Level 5 and 6 programmes. These included Community Development, Community Care, Business Administration with Digital Skills, and Early Childhood Care and Education. The graduates were joined for the celebration by their proud tutors and families as well as Deirdre Mortell, CEO of Rethink Ireland.

Addressing the graduates, Ms Genockey said, "Today is a celebration of both your journey and your achievements because you

stuck with it in spite of all of the challenges. You should be really proud of yourselves." Ms Genockey continued, "The team at An Cosán are passionate about community education and really understand what it takes to support learners to empower themselves.

We exist to meet the needs of our learners. Those needs vary from learner to learner, but we do our best to provide the most important and essential wraparound supports that each of our learners may need. That might mean providing early years' care to little ones while their parents learn, or learning support to those struggling with assignments, or perhaps, counselling, coaching, and mentoring for both life assignments and programme assignments."

Expressing gratitude to Dublin Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board and Rethink Ireland for continuing to support community education programmes at An Cosán,

Ms Genockey said, "Their partnerships have helped us provide the supports required to run these programmes successfully. Thanks to their input, we have learned and developed our skills alongside our graduates."

Korina Koler, who graduated from An Cosán's Business Administration with Digital Skills programme and now holds the prestigious job of PA to Rethink Ireland CEO Deirdre Mortell, delivered a speech during the ceremony. She highlighted the transformative power of education to shape a better society and better tomorrow. "An Cosán stands as a beacon of empowerment as it welcomes and employs remarkable women and like-minded men who are all dedicated to making a difference," she said. "The impact of their work extends beyond just you and me.

Their work ripples through communities and that work creates a more equitable and just society." Addressing

the graduates, Korina said, "You are not just recipients of academic knowledge; you are all now agents of change. Please remember the responsibility that comes with this. Be active citizens, and pay forward the opportunities that you have received, and contribute to the creation of a society where everyone can flourish and prosper. Each one of you is a significant part of this transformative process, and together we can build a

future not just for us, but for others too."

Virginia Kinsella, who graduated with a Level 6 Award in Early Childhood Care and Education, spoke during the ceremony about how An Cosán had impacted not only her life, but that of her siblings and of her mother, Lily Ward, who was one of An Cosán's first learners over 30 years ago and is now Senior Administrator in the organisation. Virginia,

who has secured a job as a Special Needs Assistant since completing her course, said, "I am so thankful to An Cosán for giving me this opportunity, which has given me back my identity, my confidence in myself and in what I can achieve, if I work hard for it. I love being able to contribute to the family finances again and this has changed so much for our family. I really got so much out of the course, but so did my family."



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LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES WELCOME REVIEW OF LUCAN BUSES BUT SAY MORE IS NEEDED

People Before Profit TD for Dublin Midwest Gino Kenny and Councillor Madeleine Johansson have welcomed a review of the C1 and C2 bus services in Lucan. The representatives made the comments following a

meeting with the NTA to discuss a number of issues with bus services in the Lucan area. They were informed that the NTA are currently waiting for a proposal from Dublin Bus regarding the C1 and C2

routes. Both representatives reported having been contacted by residents about issues with capacity on the C1 and C2, particularly at peak times.

Gino Kenny commented: "I

welcome the review of the C1 and C2 routes. It's clear to me that we need more buses on these routes, particularly at peak times and in the early mornings. We have also asked the NTA to look at providing additional

services on the P29 route in the morning time. There is a growing population in the wider Lucan area and people want to use public transport instead of private cars but this is very difficult when you can't get on a bus or when buses don't show up.

because of problems with the buses. The buses from Lucan to the city centre are full to capacity, particularly at peak times and on Saturdays. "The problem of 'ghost buses' has also been reported numerous times, that is when buses that are scheduled don't show up at all. Sometimes people have been left waiting an hour for the next bus. We raised this with the NTA and they said that they are aware of this still happening but hoping that the situation will improve with increased recruitment of drivers.

"We also raised the need for an additional train in the morning from Adamstown to Dublin City Centre but we were informed that not enough funding had been allocated to provide this. I will be contacting the Minister for Transport about this to request additional funding for an extra train."

Cllr Madeleine Johansson added: "People are contacting us all the time

"I welcome that the C1 and C2 routes are being reviewed and I hope that they will be able to put on extra buses as soon as possible."



Recycle more this Christmas

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| ● St. Stephen's Day Closed | ● Tue 2nd - Sat 6th Jan 9am - 5pm |

LORD MAYOR OF DUBLIN LAUNCHES LIVE ANIMAL CRIB AT THE MANSION HOUSE

The Lord Mayor of Dublin Daithí de Róiste and the President of the Irish Farmers Association Tim Cullinan officially launched the Live Animal Crib at the Mansion House for Christmas.

The crib was blessed by Rev. Paul Arbuthnot, St. Anne's Church, Dawson Street and Fr. Enda Cunningham, St. Andrew's Church, Westland Row. The Lord Mayor said, "Tradition is such an important aspect of Christmas and for many Dubliners, including myself, the Mansion House live animal crib was always a huge part of that. So I am delighted it's back again this year. I know that the farmers always take great care of the animals and that this year will be no different."

The 'Little Angels' from St. Josephs Nursery, Morning Star Road in Dublin 8 and the Lucan Gospel Choir performed on the steps of the Mansion House.

The crib will be open to the public until Saturday 23rd December from 11am to 5pm daily and on Christmas Eve from 11am to 1pm.

IFA President Tim Cullinan said, "The Live Animal Crib has been a wonderful tradition in the run-in to Christmas for the people of Dublin, and visitors to the capital. It's a gift from the farmers of Ireland that creates a traditional nativity scene on the forecourt of the Mansion House."

The Live Animal Crib is a joint initiative between Dublin City Council and the Irish Farmers Association and is supported by the DSPCA.



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BASIC CLUB FACILITIES AT RISK OF REMOVAL

A Dublin Mid-West Sinn Féin councillor has expressed concern at the Council's disapproval and indication to remove some basic essential facilities being provided at a busy playing field in Lucan. Councillor Derren Ó Brádaigh is calling on South Dublin County Council officials to permit a storage container and portaloos provided by, and at the expense of the club kept in place.

Clr Ó Brádaigh said "This is a local club, providing an invaluable local service to lots of young and aspiring local football players for many years. For far too

long the club organisers have been pleading with the Council to recognise the growing requirement for an essential dedicated storage space area and toilet facility in proximity to one of their busiest playing pitches. This is especially important to the increasing numbers of much younger kids using this pitch located furthest from the pavilion on the Newcastle Road on cold, dark and wet evenings.

"Whilst the club accept that the Council are no longer providing the older metal forty foot style storage containers, they have been

asking for an interim solution that will address the needs for privacy and safety of all their members and team players at all times. This is a call that I and others have supported through previously tabled motions and raising with Council officials.

Clr Ó Brádaigh added "The club have initiated an online petition seeking support from the local community and the wider public in their appeal to the Council to allow the facilities to remain in place. Within a matter of a few days, there have been almost 1,000 signatures adding their names to the

campaign to retain the existing facilities put in place by the club organisers, but also for the Council to offer an improved solution that meets the actual needs of club members better during match games and training sessions.

"The irony of the situation is that up until recently the club had the portaloos in situ for some considerable time and at their own cost. This was being used between games and training to store football equipment - surely, we can do better for our local clubs. The new storage facility that has been introduced recently into the park is neatly housed within the Council's own sectioned off compound space already in place.

Clr Ó Brádaigh concluded "The club are at pains to point out the necessity of the storage facility, that now provides a safe place for important club equipment including a defibrillator. I am now urging Council officials to recognise the situation, permit the interim facilities, but more importantly talk to

the club organisers and find a better long-term solution that ultimately meets the need of the club members highlighting what they feel to be a specific oversight."

CONTRACT SIGNED FOR IMPROVEMENT WORKS AT KILLINARDEN PARK



Pic Credit: Lafayette

Recently, the Chief Executive of South Dublin County Council, Colm Ward officially signed the contract for the works on the Killinarden Park Regeneration Project. The plans for the park were developed by the council in tandem with the local community, and were passed as a Part 8 (planning process) by the council. The works have now commenced on site and will include upgrade to entrances, provision of signage and information, upgrade of the existing grass pitches, new facilities and new walking and cycling routes. These works are funded by South Dublin County Council, the National Transport Authority and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.



Beannachtaí an tSeasúir

Seasons Greetings & Thankyou to all my Constituents & Friends

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ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE LUCAN MARKS A RESOUNDING SUCCESS WITH FINAL PERFORMANCE OF BEAUTY AND THE BEAST



School faculty members Ms. Butler and Ms. Bligh and local TD Emer Higgins expressed congratulations to the students of St Joseph's College Lucan for their exceptional performance of Beauty and the Beast. The Transition Year students of St. Joseph's College showcased their rendition of the classic tale from Thursday, November 30th to Sunday, December 3rd, 2023.

PUBLIC REP EXPRESSES CONCERNS ON CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION

Niamh Whelan, public rep and one of four local election candidates selected to contest the 2024 local elections in the Tallaght Central LEA for Sinn Féin recently spoke of her concerns on the current housing situation.

Whelan commented "I for one am sick to my back teeth of listening to this Government gaslighting the public into thinking they have the answers to the housing crisis. I come from a generation who have been completely locked out of housing and have friends from households with two good incomes who will never own their own homes. Furthermore, This Government offers them no security in the rental market either".

She continued "As public reps

we are inundated with families receiving notice to quits with nowhere to go. After 12 years in Govt for FG, supported by FF for 7, their time is up. The housing crisis is worse than ever, highest ever rents, house prices back at pre recession levels and homelessness at a record high and rising month on month. With 12000 people homeless, 4000 of them children, who will carry the trauma of living in emergency accommodation for years on end with them for the rest of their lives".

The local rep concluded "Only a Sinn Féin led Govt with Eoin O'Broin as Minister for housing will see a real change for the people of Ireland and bring an end to homelessness for the thousands of families across this country."

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TALLAGHT DISTRICT HEATING SCHEME TRIUMPHS AT GLOBAL DISTRICT ENERGY CLIMATE AWARDS

South Dublin County Council is pleased to announce that the Tallaght District Heating Scheme (TDHS) has won the prestigious 'Emerging District Energy Market' award at the Global District Energy Climate Awards in Brussels. The award recognises the successful implementation of a district energy system in a country where district heating is currently being established. The Global District Energy Climate Awards celebrate success and collective attainment in the District Heating and Cooling sector. The ceremony of the 8th edition of the awards was held during the Euroheat & Power Summit on 14-15 November 2023 in Brussels, Belgium.

Euroheat and Power, established in 1954, is the European association promoting sustainable district heating and cooling in Europe and beyond. With over 140 members spread across 30 countries, Euroheat and Power brings together a diverse community of stakeholders from national associations, companies, start-ups, consultancies, and universities. The finalists represented local district energy pioneers showcasing leadership in delivering clean and sustainable energy solutions. The Council is delighted that its company Heat Works has been recognised among such a high standard of entries. The annual Euroheat and

Power Summit in Brussels serves as a dynamic platform for the awards ceremony, attracting over 230 professionals from global organisations, industry leaders, policymakers, and civil society representatives.

Heat Works, Ireland's first not-for-profit energy utility, is fully owned by the South Dublin County Council. The TDHS is the first large-scale district heating network of its kind in Ireland. Launched earlier this year, the scheme represents a significant leap forward in Ireland's efforts to deliver low-carbon heating solutions.

The heart of the innovation lies in the fact that waste heat generated by the nearby Amazon data centre is harnessed to supply heat to the TDHS network. The collaborative effort between South Dublin County Council, Amazon Web Services, Fortum (the Finnish energy-supply company), has resulted in a low-carbon solution, leveraging recyclable heat through bespoke innovative heat-pump technology. The partnership between South Dublin County Council and Codema (City of Dublin Energy-management agency) has been instrumental in the development of this innovative, low-carbon initiative.

The environmental impact is substantial, with the TDHS set to save almost 1,500 tonnes of CO2 annually. This achievement not only establishes Tallaght as a leader in climate change innovation but also contributes significantly to the county's carbon reduction goals. By showcasing the environmental value and potential of district heating in Tallaght, the project aims to inspire similar initiatives across Ireland.

Funded with the support of the European Union's Interreg NWE programme (HeatNet), the Project Ireland 2040 Climate Action Fund, SEAI, and with direct funding from the Council, the Tallaght District Heating Scheme aligns with the ambitious targets set in the Government's Climate Action Plan 2023. The plan envisions Ireland reaching up

to 0.8 TWh of district heating by 2025 and up to 2.7 TWh by 2030, emphasising the commitment to sustainable energy solutions.

Teresa Walsh, Director of Services in SDCC and Secretary to the Board of Heatworks, stated: "This award is a testament to the collaborative efforts and commitment to innovation showcased by the Public and Private stakeholders involved. The Tallaght District Heating Scheme is not only a local success story for a committed and courageous local authority but a working exemplar for the broader transition to low-carbon heating solutions across Ireland."

Neil Morris, AWS Country Lead said: "Having this project recognised at a European level is testament to work done by so many people in SDCC and across the Tallaght Community. It's a fantastic example of what can be achieved when the private sector, community-based organisations and both local and national government agencies combine their expertise and shared visions for the betterment of the local community and the planet. This project will benefit the people of Tallaght for years to come, as well as delivering for the 2030 national renewable energy target. We at Amazon look forward to being involved in many other projects in the same vein both in Ireland and across the world."

Kari Lahti, Director of Fortum eNext Ireland said: "Warm congratulations on behalf of the whole Fortum project team for this important recognition! We are honored to be part of the solution as we strongly believe that carbon neutrality is best achieved by recycling clean energy from local heat sources as efficiently as possible. In Dublin, we were able to use the expertise gained from our innovative Espoo Clean Heat decarbonization programme in Finland. The programme has proved that carbon-free heat offtake from datacenters is one of the most promising ways to mitigate climate change on a large scale."





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CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN CALLS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Mark Ward TD, has echoed the calls made by the Children's Ombudsman, Dr Niall Muldoon, to improve CAMH services. Deputy Ward was speaking following Dr Muldoon's presentation to Oireachtas staff at Leinster House.

Teachta Ward said "Recently, the Children's Ombudsman gave a presentation in Leinster House on the areas that need to be strengthened within child and youth mental health services. "Dr Muldoon called for changes to legislation, increased and multiannual budgets for mental health, improved standards within CAMHS and to develop counselling supports within schools. "I want to echo Dr Muldoon's comments as the crisis within youth mental health cannot continue, we need action now.

"I was disappointed that the Bill to update the Mental Health Act, 2001, was not prioritised for publication on the Autumn Legislative Programme. "This delay will likely mean that the Bill will be completed

in the lifetime of this Government, given that a general election could be called at any point next year. "Given the urgency of the reports into CAMHS by the Mental Health Commission, I introduced legislation to regulate CAMHS under the Mental Health Act to give statutory powers of oversight to the Commission.

"This will allow them to oversee the implementation of their recommendations and deliver the needed improvements to CAMHS delivery. "This would deliver standard operating procedures across all CAMHS teams and end the postcode care that we have today. "It would also allow for professional misconduct within CAMHS to be investigated, something that has been badly needed since the Maskey Report was published. "Dr Muldoon called for clarity in Budgets for Mental Health, and for these to be delivered on a multiannual basis to provide certainty to those working within the sector. "Counselling supports within schools must also be considered, as it can

play a crucial role in early intervention. "I call on the Government to listen to the experts, listen to those working within our mental health services. "The solutions

are there, they just need the political will behind them. "This Government is lacking that political will and they are out of time. Our young people deserve better."

FOUR DUBLINERS RECEIVE CLIMATE AMBASSADOR AWARD



An Taisce held the Climate Ambassador Awards recently in the Morrison Hotel, recognising the tremendous effort and dedication demonstrated by volunteers throughout the year. Each Climate Ambassador received a certificate and some sustainable gifts, with an additional ten awards presented to secondary school students, PhD students, a podcast duo, farmers market organisers, Tidy Towns volunteers, and employees from PwC, Vyra, and Microsoft.

In 2023, Climate Ambassadors completed 331 climate actions, directly engaging over 710,000 people, creating 2,013

climate communications, reaching an estimated 4.6 million people!

Climate Ambassadors receive training at the start of the year in climate science, solutions and communications which enables them to carry out climate actions. Throughout the year they are asked to undertake four key tasks - two climate communications and two climate actions, though many participants achieve a lot more. Out of 179 citizens, these Dubliners received the Climate Ambassador Award for going above and beyond.

One of which was Luke Fagan from Dublin offered his

fellow Climate Ambassadors the opportunity to complete an online course for Earth Week. He organised high-profile webinars on climate change, plastic and biodiversity with senior guests from the World Bank and KBI Global Investors. He also organised beach cleans, litter picks and carried out a survey on climate at Electric Picnic. He commented "It was great to meet people with the same interest in climate action from across Ireland, each bringing their own experience with climate change. It is easy to feel daunted by such a multi-faceted challenge, but it was very empowering to be part of a group taking such a variety of approaches".

SEVEN UKRAINIAN YOUNG PEOPLE AWARDED GAISCE MEDALS

Ukrainian Teenage Irish dancing Teacher Khristina Bodarenko Receives Bronze Award. The Presidents Award is Ireland's National youth Award and is a self development programme for young people aged 14 - 25. It is a direct challenge from the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins to all young people to dream big and fulfil their potential.

The first awardee was Khristina Bondarenko (From Odessa, 17). Bronze Gaisce Award. Kristina has been teaching Irish dancing to Ukrainian children and adults in the Rathmines Ukraine Centre for the last year. (She learnt Irish dancing from Youtube while living in Odessa.) Last summer she received a special visit from two of the cast of the Riverdance Show. Kristina is a sporty young woman, since coming to Ireland, Khristina has played Gaelic football and hurling. She also loves swimming, zumba, running and ice skating. She studies English, Spanish and the ukulele. And she is also a red cross volunteer.

Emma Volkova (From Kiev, age 16). Bronze Gaisce Award. Emma is a young school girl who has been studying Ukrainian and Irish education systems for the past year. Emma created a series of articles for our social media about the differences between the Ukrainian and Irish school system from her own experience as her volunteering project. She also loves swimming and keeping fit.

Oleksandr Sikorsky (From Dnipro, age 17). Bronze Gaisce Award. Oleksandr has been doing aikido and kickboxing, learning German, Ukrainian and coding this year. He has been volunteering as a chess teacher in the Ukrainian Centre, and in Ancosan, St. Thomas Church, Jobstown.

He is also a Red Cross volunteer.

Pavlo Kostyanov (From Kiev, age 18). Bronze Gaisce Award. Pavlo has become such an essential part of the Ukrainian Action activities that he is now part of the management team. Pavlo has been there to help with translation, in the clean-ups, camps and lectures. He was there to participate in the Ukrainian Christmas concert. He has worked part time in Ukraine Centre Rathmines and has volunteered for many hours after work to help other Ukrainians. Pavlo loves to keep fit and he has also learned to play piano.

Damir Mirtalibov (From Kiev, age 16). Bronze Gaisce Award. Damir has been volunteering at the humanitarian centre for Ukrainians "Polyanytsia", and he is a volunteer at the Irish Red Cross.

He has helped with translation at the University

of Maynooth. Damir has attended English language courses in UCD, Dublin. He keeps fit by cycling to school.

Polina Maliuzhonok (From Kiev, age 23). Polina is studying in DCU full time in marketing. She also works part-time as a freelance journalist for The Irish Times. She has been helping the Ukraine Centre for the last year with articles, writing press release and making connections in Irish media. She does yoga every day.

Vlad Dzuba (From Kiev, 25). Silver Gaisce Award. Vlad has been involved in organising events for Ukrainian Action in Ireland over the last year and he has been a huge help to the technical team. He has been involved with walks, picnics, celebrations, concerts, and urban cleanups. He has also assisted in translating for Ukrainian Action and packing humanitarian aid for Ukraine.



Pictured: Elizavetta Karamushke, co-director of Ukrainian Action in Ireland the curator of the group, Vlad Dzuba silver award winner Ukrainian Action in Ireland volunteer, Emma Volkova bronze award winner Ukrainian Action in Ireland volunteer, Oleksandr Sikorsky bronze award winner Irish Red Cross volunteer, Pavlo Kostyanov bronze award winner Irish Red Cross volunteer, Polina Maliuzhonok bronze award winner Ukrainian Action in Ireland volunteer, Veronika Mirtalibova (on behalf of Damir Mirtalibov, bronze award winner, Irish Red Cross volunteer), Khristina Bondarenko bronze award winner Irish Red Cross volunteer, Ger Brady Gaisce Development Officer. Bottom row, left: Samantha Briody, Gaisce Council Member. Bottom row, middle: Avril Ryan, Gaisce CEO. Bottom row, right: Vincent Teo, Gaisce Council Member.



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MOTORING LIFE WITH

New Skoda Octavia Sportline is Undeniably Athletic



By Breda Corrigan

The all-new fourth-generation of the ever-popular Skoda Octavia is bigger and, courtesy of a silhouette that is reminiscent of an elegant coupe, even more emotive and dynamic than ever before. With its perfect proportions and clean surfaces, the Octavia looks distinctively sporty, and the new design also enables excellent aerodynamics. In fact, with a drag coefficient of just 0.24Cd, the all-new Octavia is one of the most aerodynamic cars in its segment. Add in class-leading cabin and boot space, and it is easy to see why Irish drivers love everything the Octavia has to offer. With more than 7 million Octavia's sold during its 3 previous generations, and having picked up more than 50 awards along the way, the Octavia is a hugely-important car for the Skoda brand.

Perfectly Balanced Proportions.

The Octavia has been a consistent sales success for the Skoda brand, so it is understandable that the Czech car manufacturer hasn't tweaked the formula much with the new generation model. As is customary for the Octavia, the exterior design is graceful, handsome, crisp and thoroughly modern too, and buyers can fit their Octavia with up to 19" alloy wheels for added visual drama. The front apron incorporated into the front bumper, and the razor-sharp narrow headlights are a visual delight, and they provide the Octavia with a confident and purposeful look upon approach. The perfectly balanced proportions of the new Octavia conceal an even bigger luggage compartment than its predecessor, with the boot now accommodating from 600-litres

with the rear seats in place to 1,555-litres with the rear seats folded down.

Spacious & Comfortable Cabin.

The modern cabin in the new Octavia features well-arranged displays that are easy to use, along with masses of space for the driver and front seat passenger, and unrivalled rear seat passenger space too. All of the important driver information and infotainment details are displayed on two 10" displays, and the minimalist lines and ambient lighting provide the finishing touches to the elegant on-board atmosphere.

Trim & Engine Options.

There are four trim grades available in the new Octavia: Ambition, Style, Sportline and RS.

The new Octavia engine line-up consists of petrol (TSI), diesel (TDI) and mild hybrid (mHEV) powerplants, ranging in power from 110hp to 245hp, with the 2.0TSI 245hp and 2.0TDI 200hp (both DSG Automatic) reserved exclusively for the RS trim grade. The entry-level Ambition trim provides buyers with a good level of standard specification, while the Style trim builds on the comprehensive equipment levels of the Ambition with a further emphasis on elegance, technology and sporty design. With sharp, sleek design details both inside and out, the special edition Sportline is distinctive from every angle. Packed with exclusive styling, the Sportline enables every journey to be undertaken in total comfort. The Octavia RS

trim grade benefits from a sporty chassis and exterior design, and it uniquely combines a dynamic driving experience with smart practicality, and a host of RS-exclusive styling elements.

Test Car.

My test car was a new Octavia Sportline 1.5 TSI 150hp in stylish Moon White metallic paint with black/grey fabric upholstery and standard 18" 'Comet' alloy wheels. A six-speed manual transmission was fitted to my test car, but a DSG automatic transmission can also be specified. Key standard Sportline equipment includes a Sportline exterior styling pack (black window frames, black rear spoiler, sport suspension - lowered by 15mm, and rear Sunset privacy glass), power-folding door mirrors, anti-theft alarm, keyless entry/go, a virtual cockpit, heated front seats, wireless charging pad, a 'Bolero' sound system with a 10" touchscreen display, gesture control & touch slider, voice control, Matrix LED headlights with headlight washers, and a Drive Mode select feature, along with an LED interior pack that includes ambient lighting & footwell lights, and a 'Welcome' logo projection. An exclusive Sportline interior styling pack includes a leather-wrapped multi-function 3-spoke sport steering wheel (with Tiptronic for DSG transmission), front sport seats, a black dashboard with grey-stitched black covering, black air vents, Deco inserts in Piano Black, and aluminium sports pedals & door sills. The petrol engine in my test car produces 110hp and 250Nm of torque, providing the car with enough forward motion to sprint from

0-100km/h in just 8.5-seconds, on its way to a top speed of 229km (where permitted). With claimed fuel consumption as low as 5.6l/100km (50.4mpg) on a WLTP combined driving cycle, along with annual road tax of just €200, the Octavia 1.5TSI should prove to be a sound financial proposition for families and business users alike. The Octavia's 1.5 TSI engine is impressively refined, and the slick six-speed manual transmission is a joy to use. The steering is pleasingly light and responds in a precise fashion to driver inputs, and there is a solid and dependable feel to the brake pedal. Skoda has made improvements in sound-deadening, resulting in less noise and vibration being felt through the cabin compared to the previous model.

Verdict, Pricing & Warranty.

The new Octavia is a very likeable, and genuinely appealing family car that offers class-leading levels of cabin & boot space, impressive levels of standard equipment, terrific practicality, and latest-generation infotainment & connectivity tech, along with a sleek & sporty exterior design. For buyers looking for even more practicality than the hatchback has to offer, a Combi (estate) body style is also available across all engine options and trim grades.

The new Skoda Octavia is priced from €30,245 for the Ambition 1.0TSI model, with my test car specification priced from €40,700 (ex-delivery). A 3 Year manufacturer's warranty comes as standard. The first two years have an unlimited mileage warranty, and the third year warranty has a limitation of 150,000km.



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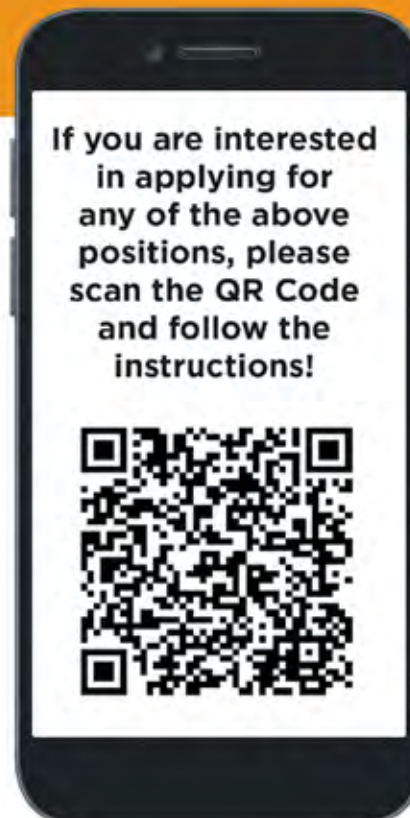
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