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JESTERS CASINOS

NITROUS OXIDE USE CANNOT BE IGNORED ANY LONGER

TD for Dublin South West Seán Crowe has criticised Minister Roderic O’Gorman and his government for failing to take the use of nitrous oxide by young people seriously and said that he would persist with the passage of his own legislation on the issue in spite of the Minister’s lack of support.

Teachta Crowe said “I had written to Minister Roderic O’Gorman in April last year about a piece of legislation I was bringing forward to ban the sale of nitrous oxide to under-18s in an effort to combat the widespread and dangerous use of the gas by young people as a narcotic.

I received a response just before Christmas to tell me that, in his view, the current legislation is working fine and that my Bill was somehow unnecessary.

“This naïve, head in the sand approach completely flies in the face of what I am hearing from gardaí that the current legislation is ambiguous and that they do not always know where they stand in relation to seizing canisters of gas from young people when they suspect they will be used to get high.

“We will all have seen the canisters littering our public spaces after they are

discarded. The use of this gas has led to death and serious long-term harm to people who have used it to achieve a quick high. It is predominantly young people who use it as it is cheap and easily accessible. My Bill would seek to put an end to that.

“I will be pressing ahead with my Bill in spite of the Minister’s support as there needs to be a full debate on the use and availability of nitrous oxide and the risks it poses. The use of nitrous oxide in greater quantities is on the rise and the Minister and his government cannot continue to ignore the issue.”

Whitestown Stream Sod Turning



Pictured at the Whitestown Stream Sod Turning with Mayor Alan Edge were Cllrs Louise Dunne, Cathal King, Charlie O’Connor and Area Rep Adam Smyth.


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AMAZON DUBLIN SUPPORTS WOMEN'S CHARITY

A team of employees from Amazon's fulfilment centre in Dublin volunteered for the day at a local women's charity, helping to improve the grounds. Saoirse Domestic Violence Services (SDVS) empowers women and children on their personal journey to safety and recovery from a past of domestic violence.

The charity also provides accommodation to women and children facing domestic violence, as well as court accompaniment services for victims pursuing legal action. The team from Amazon's fulfilment centre in Dublin volunteered at SDVS's refuge centre. The team set about gardening, assembling new

railings for the playground and carpark.

Seamus Byrne, one of the employees from Amazon in Dublin who volunteered at SDVS, said "Amazon engages in many volunteering opportunities and I was honoured to be part of such a great project at SDVS. It's very fulfilling to help out a charity that does so much for women and children across Dublin. This is only a small way we can thank the team at SDVS for their work and support."

Darragh Kelly, General Manager at Amazon in Dublin, said "At Amazon, we take pride in supporting the local community through

volunteering. Our team did a fantastic job refurbishing the refuge centre at SDVS, spending time with the charity's staff and hearing more about their work. It was our pleasure to be involved."

Sarah Moynihan, Assistant Refugee Manager from SDVS, added "Thank you to Seamus and the rest of the team from Amazon for taking the time

out of their days to brighten up our refuge centre. The children have loved the new and improved soft play area, as well as parents appreciating the safety around the playground. The support from Amazon has been greatly appreciated by everyone at SDVS."

The donation to Saoirse Domestic Violence Services was made as part of Amazon's

programme to support the communities in and around its operating locations in Ireland. Since opening its doors one year ago, the Dublin fulfilment centre has supported many community organisations locally, with donations totalling €46,000.

Charities supported by the team at the fulfilment centre include Cliona's Foundation, Jigsaw and LauraLynn

Children's Hospice. The Amazon fulfilment centre in Dublin, the first of its kind in Ireland, opened in August 2022 providing more than 500 new permanent jobs.

The 630,000 square foot centre at Baldonnell Business Park in Dublin holds millions of items that are picked, packed and shipped to customers across Ireland and the rest of Europe.



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ONE YEAR ON: URGING STRONGER STAKEHOLDER ACTION TO TACKLE GRAFFITI IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Lynn Tierney, local election candidate and Chairperson of the Saggart Village Residents Association, has expressed deep concern over the ongoing issue of graffiti that has plagued villages in South County Dublin for a full year since a widespread targeting of the

areas in January 2023. The graffiti which was sprayed on numerous light poles, supply boxes, walls, buildings and other structures throughout Saggart and neighbouring villages of Rathcoole and Newcastle, remains a persistent eyesore today into the New Year of 2024, despite multiple reports made to South Dublin County Council (SDCC) throughout the year.

Ms Tierney states, "I have reported the matter directly to SDCC and local councillors, prompting some removal efforts by the council. I am also aware this is an ongoing request by residents, Tidy Towns and other community groups throughout the county. However, a significant portion of the graffiti still affects the community's landscape, particularly on properties covered by memorandums of understanding with SDCC for removal, including the ESB."

Despite having also directly communicated with the ESB

and receiving confirmation from ESB that they do own some of the affected poles, Ms Tierney notes that, months later, the removal process has yet to be initiated from ESB property or that of other suppliers. "This delay not only affects the visual appeal of the villages but also reflects a failure in the collaborative efforts between local authorities and external entities responsible for property maintenance in the public realm."

"I am calling for a renewed commitment from all relevant stakeholders, including SDCC and ESB, to promptly address and eradicate the graffiti blight that continues to impact the villages of Saggart, Rathcoole, Newcastle and the wider Dublin area."

In highlighting this issue, Ms Tierney also urges residents to continue to take an active role in reporting instances of graffiti directly to South Dublin County Council by

emailing info@sdbublincoco.ie. Additionally, Gardaí recommend reporting active cases of graffiti taking place in the moment, noting that if a person is caught targeting an area, they can be linked to their graffiti tags in other areas.

"By continuing to focus on this issue and calling for stronger stakeholder responses while involving the

community in the reporting process, I hope to expedite the removal of graffiti and enhance the overall cleanliness and aesthetic appeal of the villages."

Lynn Tierney is a local election candidate for the Social Democrats in the Clondalkin Local Electoral Area which includes Saggart Rathcoole Newcastle and Brittas.

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RATHCOOLE ETNS SCHOOL CAMPUS PLANS FINALLY PUBLISHED

Rathcoole Educate Together National School has welcomed the news the Department of Education has finally published details of the design for their permanent school campus in Rathcoole Village. The Department have now submitted a planning application to the county council for a 20-classroom primary school in Rathcoole Village. The school board and parents' representatives has called for all local councillors and TDs to give their full support to the school and ensure there are no further delays to this school building project.

Austin O'Sullivan, Chair of the Rathcoole ETNS Board of Management said "Rathcoole ETNS has been open since September 2020. We have 100 pupils and as a new school we are continuing to grow year on year. Our present temporary accommodation will be unable to accommodate the school from autumn 2025 and hence the urgency of our need to relocate the school to the permanent site in Rathcoole Village. Rathcoole ETNS uniquely among local

schools provide 2 autism classes, which are the only classes that cater for autistic primary school children in Rathcoole Village. The new school campus will allow us to increase this to 4 autism classes. The planning application by the Department of Education is not a moment too soon. The Board of Management look forward to working with all stakeholders to provide this much needed school for the children of Rathcoole".

Mariana Rovenco, parent of a second-class pupil said "Our children are already playing an active role in Rathcoole Village life with our litter picking, biodiversity and sustainability projects. The permanent school campus is ideally located adjacent to the Rathcoole Woodlands. Recently we held our Halloween Treasure Hunt in Rathcoole Park and Woodlands to bring awareness to the children of the natural beauty of the area.

In fact, the children are at present caring for the trees, soil and plant pots donated by Rathcoole Tidy Towns and the school has completed

an application for our first green flag.

We have been teaching Rathcoole children the importance of 'thinking globally and acting locally' with our biodiversity and tidy towns projects. The need for our pupils to commute from Rathcoole to Citywest every morning flies in the face of this. The moving of the school campus to its permanent site in Rathcoole Village not only benefits the school community with a modern up to date campus, but also eases local traffic congestion ending the crazy situation of Rathcoole families commuting to Citywest by car to attend a Rathcoole school."

The permanent primary school complex will be located on an undeveloped site owned by the Department of Education in Rathcoole Village for 40 years. The permanent school campus will include 20 classrooms, 4 autism classes, PE Hall, basketball courts and vegetable gardens.

Brian Hennigan, parent of a junior infants pupil said "We

have waited a long time for the Department of Education to produce these plans for our permanent school campus. It is now essential that as representatives of the local community our politicians get behind this project to ensure there are no further delays, so our children can have the school accommodation they deserve. Let the politicians be on notice that if they come knocking on our door for votes, young families in Rathcoole expect them to support the facilities we urgently need."

Rathcoole ETNS Principal Gemma Maher said "The school has already been through a long and winding process to get to this point. As members of the community in Rathcoole, our parents will be asking all our politicians, residents and community groups to support our school project. This school is not only for the current generation of pupils attending Rathcoole ETNS but will be an important amenity and facility for all the community in Rathcoole for decades to come". As part of Rathcoole ETNS' community

engagement, the school will be hosting an information evening for parents, local representatives and community organisations in the school's existing

temporary accommodation in Citywest on the evening of Wednesday January 17th at 6pm. Further information on Rathcoole ETNS is available at rathcooleetns.ie



"Rathcoole ETNS pupils Finn Maher (Second Class) and Cuán Maher (Senior Infants) next to the site for the new Rathcoole Primary School Campus. Finn was the first pupil in Rathcoole ETNS and hopes that his school will move to its new home before he finishes primary school'.

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NINE MEDALS FOR TEAM IRELAND KICKBOXING ATHLETES



Kickboxing Ireland have just finished a very successful week at Senior WAKO World Championship in Portugal. The athletes took home nine medals, four gold, one silver and four bronze! Seven of the medals were taken home by one club, local club Tallaght Martial Arts (T.M.A.). Gold for Jodie Browne from T.M.A. and retains her World Title and also holds the European title as well as world Combat Games Title and recently won bronze at European Olympic Games, the only person in history to hold all these simultaneously. Gold for Conor McGlinchey from T.M.A. who is a Quercus holder in UCC and European Olympic Games Silver medal winner. Stephen Jones from T.M.A. who is also a coach won gold. And Adam Condon took home gold in full contact and is also from T.M.A. Robbie Cuffe took home silver. Zak Riddell, Keri Browne (T.M.A.), Gar Ryan (T.M.A.) and Ann Marie O’Grady first time at the Worlds (T.M.A.) all won bronze respectively. An amazing achievement for Ireland and our small team!

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLISHES 2023 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT

South Dublin County Council has recently published its second Gender Pay Gap Report, highlighting the percentage difference between what men and women are paid on average in the organisation, irrespective of roles or levels. The 2023 report reveals a negative Gender Pay Gap of -9.92%, showing that the average earnings of all females in South Dublin County Council is 9.92% higher than the average earnings of all males in the organisation.

Employers with more than 250 employees in Ireland are required to publish their gender pay gap data before the end of 2023 and within six months of their reference date. South Dublin County Council and all local authorities in the country chose 30th June 2023 as the reference date.

Commenting following the publication of the report,

Colm Ward, the Chief Executive said “Publishing our gender pay gap data helps to reinforce our focus on supporting an open and inclusive workplace at South Dublin County Council.

It is evidence of an organisation where all employees have the same opportunities for recognition, career development and are treated fairly and equitably at work. We continue to be committed to addressing workplace barriers to equality and creating an open and inclusive workforce because of the clear benefits this brings to an organisation in terms of innovation and engagement in work.”

Also commenting on the report, Lorna Maxwell, Director of Corporate Performance and Change Management said “Improving gender balance at all levels of the organisation is vital to South Dublin County Council being an employer of choice

where equality, diversity and inclusion are part of our culture. Our Gender Pay Gap Report outlines how we do that and how we will continue to bring diversity of opportunity and thought to everything we do.”

Working in local government gives people the opportunity to play a key role in the positive development of the county and in local communities. As an employer, South Dublin County Council is committed to providing a positive and supportive environment for employees. The Council offer flexible and family friendly arrangements, blended working, and great career progression and education opportunities.

South Dublin County Council is encouraging anyone looking for a job to visit the website www.sdcc.ie and go to the Careers section to find out more about working there.

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AVERAGE HOUSE PRICES TO RISE BY 3PC IN 2024

Three-bed semi prices will rise by 3pc in 2024, estate agents nationally are predicting. A record shortage of supply has driven a 1.5pc rise in the last three months in the capital, but only in houses under a certain price, the Q4 REA Average House Price Index found.

House prices in Dublin and the other cities outpaced Ireland's large towns and commuter counties as

mortgage approved buyers chase properties within their price ceiling. The REA Average House Price Index concentrates on the actual sale price of Ireland's typical stock home, the three-bed semi, giving an accurate picture of the second-hand property market in towns and cities countrywide.

The actual selling price of a three-bed, semi-detached house across the

country rose by 1pc in the final quarter of 2023 to €304,259 - representing an annual increase of 4.3pc. Time taken to reach sale agreed nationally is steady at five weeks as low supply continues to drive sales in an increasing interest rate environment.

Prices in Dublin city rose by 1.5pc in the last three months, meaning that the average three-bed semi in the capital is now selling at

€511,667 - an increase of 3pc in the last year.

"Dublin is becoming a two-tier market, with the average house price proving to be an affordability ceiling," said REA spokesperson, Barry McDonald. "While our agents predict an average 1% increase across 2024, this varies according to prices in their immediate area. "Agents on the west side of Dublin recorded notable increases in Q4, with Lucan prices rising by €20,000 to €435,000 (4.8pc) and Tallaght increasing by 3.5pc to €290,000. "In areas such as Rathcoole (€335,000, 1.4%) the market is chasing affordability, and a scarce supply of properties has been selling at a faster pace.

"However, while these agents are predicting rises of 3-5pc in 2024, areas where prices are above the average Dublin price showed little to no growth in Q4 and are forecasting price falls in the next 12 months".



Pictured Barry McDonald

LOCAL YOUNG ACTIVIST SELECTED TO RUN FOR TALLAGHT SOUTH

Adam Smyth, who was raised and lives in Tallaght South has been selected by Fianna Fáil to contest the next Local Elections for Tallaght South. "I'm delighted to have been officially selected to contest the local elections as a candidate for Fettercairn, Citywest, Jobstown and Killinarden" said Adam Smyth. "As a young person who has grown up, and still lives in Tallaght, I want to see our area be the best in the County."

"Community and volunteering has always been a priority for me, and giving back to the place where I have lived in and an area I love. I now want to take this to the next level and really put my experience to better the residents and communities of Fettercairn, Citywest, Jobstown and Killinarden." said Adam. "Housing is a big issue in our area, and we all know that there are vacant houses that really need to be reallocated to those on the housing list, but without the months and months of waiting that we currently experience." "We have good parks and green spaces, but these need to be protected and developed. We need the amenities in Tallaght South that other areas of Tallaght enjoy."

"From a young age I have always shown an interest and involvement in politics, but making the decision to run wouldn't have been possible without the support and advice from family and friends." continued Adam. "I look forward to the campaign over the next 6 months running alongside Lynda Prendergast on the Fianna Fáil ticket in Tallaght South." "A massive thank you to the Fianna Fáil membership, the team in headquarters, Deputy John Lahart TD, the FF council team in SDCC especially Cllr Charlie O'Connor and everyone who has supported me, but most importantly my family. "

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TEXACO SUPPORT FOR SPORT FUNDING

Applications from sports clubs are now invited under the fourth Texaco Support for Sport initiative in which a fund of €130,000 will be divided in €5,000 amounts and distributed to successful applicants in each of the twenty-six counties. Over the past three years, a gross figure of €385,000 has been divided amongst 77 sports clubs across Ireland, of which €5,000 each went to three successful Co. Dublin clubs: Cliffhangers Youth Climbing Club, Finglas

(2021), Glasnevin's St. Vincent's Basketball Club (2022) and Astra Handball Club, Ballinteer (2023).

Open to all sports clubs irrespective of sporting discipline, size, membership, age, cultural appeal or gender (including clubs that may have been unsuccessful in their application previously), the initiative is one that 'recognises and supports the valuable contribution that sports clubs make to

communities and throughout Irish society'.

Launching the 2024 initiative, James Twohig, Director of Ireland Operations, Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited - the company that markets fuel in Ireland under the Texaco brand - described the programme as one that "provides a route to vital funding for those clubs and communities that need it most." Following lines similar to that which proved successful over the past

three years, clubs wishing to apply should first register their interest on www.TexacoSupportforSport.com, followed, before closing date, by a completed application that should include details of their sporting activity, the importance of the club in their local community, the purpose for which the funding is sought, and the use to which the funds will be put. A sole

qualifying requirement is that clubs must be properly constituted and supply confirmation of a valid Games & Sports Exemption number (GS number) issued by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

Closing date for applications is 31st January 2024 with adjudication taking place thereafter. Leading the process once again is Texaco Support for Sport

ambassador, broadcaster and former Irish rugby international, Donncha O'Callaghan. Clubs that received funding to date span the spectrum of Irish sporting activity - archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, bowls, boxing, camogie, climbing, cricket, diving, Gaelic football, golf, gymnastics, handball, hockey, hurling, kayaking, rowing, rugby, soccer and tennis amongst them.



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CUSTOMERS DENIED ENERGY CREDITS FOR LOW USAGE

Sarah Holland, Sinn Féin candidate for Firhouse-Bohernabreena, has highlighted that some people aren't receiving energy credits due to "low usage". Vulnerable people have been rationing use in order to avoid huge bills, but have then been denied access to the Government emergency benefit scheme.

Ms Holland has called on consumers to appeal this directly with their suppliers, saying "Some people are staying cold as long as they can stand it in order to avoid huge bills. The last thing we want to see is people missing out on these energy credits because they have tried to ration use."

The Government energy credits were announced in Budget 2024, with the

payments supposed to have been credited to accounts from December onwards. However, some won't receive these credits until the New Year, and some won't receive them at all due to low usage.

Ms Holland has urged consumers to check their bills, get in touch with their suppliers if they have been denied the credits and complain to the Commission for Utilities Regulation if they have no joy with suppliers.

Ms Holland said "Suppliers have a responsibility to think twice before denying the credits for low usage. They should be aware that vulnerable, low income consumers could be trying to ration their energy use by staying cold and not

using appliances. "Shopping centres and community centres are full of people, particularly the elderly, trying to stay warm and avoid using their electricity at home. "Those people should be protected and supported where possible, and the credits added to their accounts."



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NEW COMEDY ENTANGLED COMES TO TALLAGHT

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other people or even know yourself. Join Michelle, Aidan, Patrick, and Kathleen as they detangle a web of lies and learn how to dunk digestives.

The Moogles Theatre Company brings you their new comedy, Entangled. Full of love and lies, we find out how you never really know

Entangled is the latest play from Cavan-based playwright Alice Lynch who is originally from Tallaght. Alice studied Drama and Theatre at Maynooth University and

graduated from UCD with a Masters Degree in Theatre and Performance in 2011.

Alice has won several awards for writing and has had her plays produced nationally and internationally. She has acted in many productions, is a drama facilitator, and is one of the founders of The Moogles Theatre Company.

The Moogles Theatre Company was set up in 2013 to promote new writing by women. They have produced a number of plays and the founders have written many plays produced by other theatre groups.

Aftermath' came third in the All Ireland Amateur Drama One Act Finals, produced by

The Corn Mill Theatre. For more information please see [https://ticketstop.](https://ticketstop.ie/event/4708/moogles-theatre-company-tallaght-theatre)

ie/event/4708/moogles-theatre-company-tallaght-theatre



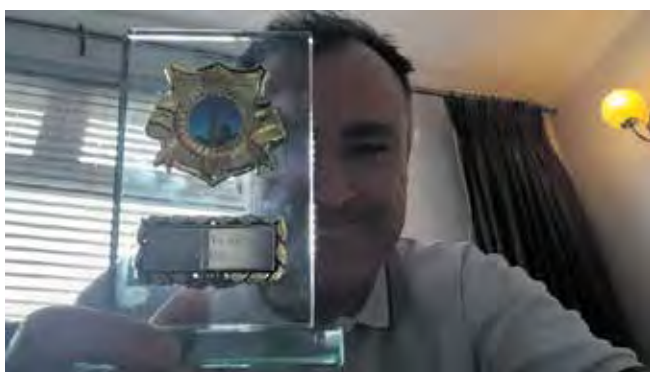
Pictured: Peter Cooney (Patrick) Evelyn Briody (Kathleen) Alice Lynch (Michelle) Louise Callan (Light and sound), Taragh Donohoe (Director) and John McKenna (Aiden)

In 2019 Alice Lynch's play 'The

CLLR GILLIGAN LAUNCHES CLONDALKIN HERO AWARD

"The aim of this award is to thank & acknowledge local heroes in the community. A local hero can be a friend, family member, carer, community activist, youth worker or environmentalist. I'm also looking for local groups who deserve recognition, such as local residents associations, or sports groups. Having lived here all my life, I see how much work goes on behind the scenes in the community. Countless unsung heroes dedicate voluntary time and effort behind the scenes on a daily basis. This work must not go unnoticed."

"Email submissions to hero@4u.ie with your nomination name as well as a short description as to why you think they should win. Where possible, include any links or relevant articles." - Stated Cllr Trevor Gilligan.



Pictured Cllr Gilligan with the local person award to recognise volunteers in the community.

Cllr. Charlie O'Connor PC

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- Christmas Eve 9.30am - 3.00pm
- Christmas Day **Closed**
- St. Stephen's Day **Closed**
- Wed 27th - 29th Dec 9am - 5pm
- Sat 30th Dec 9am - 5.30pm
- New Years Eve 9am - 3pm
- New Years Day **Closed**
- Tue 2nd - Sat 6th Jan 9am - 5pm

BASKETBALL IRELAND REVEAL PLANS FOR €35M REDEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL BASKETBALL ARENA

Basketball Ireland has announced plans for a €35m redevelopment of the National Basketball Arena, with planning permission submitted on the 19th of December. It would see the new multi-sport and multi-use arena double its capacity to 3,300. The proposed works would get underway in the summer of 2025 and are expected to take 18 months, completed in time for the start of the 2026/27 season.

The 8000 square metre facility will have space for four basketball courts, it will be a fully accessible and

inclusive facility for all sports participants. It will also house a gym and café, along with corporate facilities and office space for Basketball Ireland staff. The project has the support of Badminton Ireland, Irish Squash and Volleyball Ireland, who have all expressed an interest in using the new state-of-the-art amenity.

Basketball Ireland CEO, John Feehan, said: "The new Arena will provide a best-in-class indoor sports facility, which will cater for multiple sports, along with it being a premium indoor event space.

"It will be the home of Irish basketball and illustrates the passion and drive within the organisation to continue the growth of the game. Sport plays such a vital role in Irish society and this will be a wonderful resource, not just for the local community, but for the country as a whole."

Funding to build the new National Basketball Arena would be sought through government support, via the Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF), with applications due to open early in 2024. Basketball Ireland will also look to raise



funds via a naming rights partner for the new Arena, along with a philanthropic programme, general fundraising, commercial sources and prudent lending, where required.

Basketball Ireland chairperson, Professor Seamas Donnelly, added: "The current National Basketball Arena was built in 1993 and while it has served us well, it's in need of an upgrade to future-proof the venue and help continue the progress of the sport. The National Basketball Arena caters for every level of basketball - from schools, colleges, wheelchair, Masters and Socia-Ball, to elite level of our National League and National Cup, along with being the venue for Irish international teams competing in FIBA EuroBasket and FIBA World Cup qualifiers. "This new multi-sport Arena will be

a huge asset to the Irish sporting landscape in Ireland and it's wonderful to have the support of other indoor sports - Badminton Ireland, Irish Squash and Volleyball Ireland - for the project."

Environmental considerations have also been factored in, with 55 EV charge points and solar panels to ensure the building will be constructed to the highest energy efficient standards. The new Arena will have an air to water heating system for heating and PV electric generation. There will be rainwater collection and reuse, a green roof for sustainable drainage and augmentation of wildlife habitat, while much of the landscaping would feature native wildflowers. In addition, extensive bicycle storage will be available for those traveling to the Arena.

The new Arena has been

designed by NBK Architects, one of the architects, Mark Whelan, explained its design. "We wanted to bring a visually impressive look to the home of Irish basketball, while its function was at the forefront of our minds in design, ensuring it is a multi-sport and multi-use Arena, with the ability to house trade shows, conferences and functions."

"The aesthetic is intentionally simple and refined and designed to present a building that is in context with its city edge location, taking cues from buildings that line the M50. The Arena building is principally clad in aluminium cladding to the walls, with a large trussed roof. The colour scheme is primarily dark tones, to work with the verdant surroundings, with elements in orange as a nod to the sport that the facility is dedicated to."



Pictured is (L-R) Harry Scully, Ireland U18 international, CEO Basketball Ireland, John Feehan, Ciara Bracken, Irish senior international, Professor Seamus Donnelly, Basketball Ireland chairperson and Sean Jenkins, Griffith College Éanna, InsureMyVan.ie Super League player. Pic Credit INPHO/James Crombie

COUNCIL HOUSING & HOMELESS FIGURES CONTINUE TO RISE

Sinn Féin councillor Derren Ó Brádaigh has once again expressed utter dismay at the sheer number of households and individuals on South Dublin County Council's housing waiting list. The Dublin Mid-West councillor has criticised Government for failing to deliver upon the number of homes needed, when speaking to the latest figures he received on housing and homelessness figures.

Ó Brádaigh represents families and communities within Lucan, North Clondalkin, Palmerstown

and Balgaddy, but says that he regularly takes calls from outside his own constituency too. He says that both he and his party colleagues continue to take calls from worrying numbers of people, simply feeling abandoned, 'fobbed off' and left with little or no immediate support, or actual solutions to offer them.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh said "The despair by so many people coming to me is upsetting. I really do worry about the impact upon so many people's own mental well-being. In some cases, I have had people crying on the

telephone and I often feel a sense of hopelessness personally, at not being able to offer the answer they so desperately want to hear.

"I looked at the numbers recently on the South Dublin County Council housing list. It now stands at 6,173 households at the end of November. This is an additional 285 more since I last asked the same question in May. All the while, the so called affordable housing scheme in our jurisdiction is simply just not that, with the vast majority of people unable to meet the criteria,

even if they are lucky enough to get to the point of being considered. For those that do qualify for the paltry numbers of homes delivered to date, they face a future financially challenging mountain for many years to come.

Ó Brádaigh also said "Alongside the housing waiting list numbers, we are witnessing increased numbers forced to register as homeless with the Council and seek emergency accommodation. There are now 1,452 people on this list. This does not include

so many others that are not presenting, sleeping rough and 'sofa surfing'. The figures I believe are actually much higher. Of this number, 653 are children and 799 adults. As a percentage, the number of children has increased from 43% to 45%. I simply don't believe that there is sufficient political

will, determination, or ambition by those charged with tackling both the immediate and long-term housing need of our people.

We need a radical and fundamental approach to housing delivery, and we need it now. In other words, we need change!"

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HOUSING MINISTER MEETS TALLAGHT RESIDENTS IN THEIR NEW FOREVER HOMES

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD, recently met the new residents of the recently completed Clann social housing developments in Tallaght, as he officially opened the homes at Fernwood Green and Maplewood Heights. The residents who greeted the Minister had previously been on South Dublin County Council's housing list, or had 'right-sized' from larger, unsuitable homes, and had gotten their keys in time to spend Christmas in their new safe, secure and permanent homes. The neighbouring schemes, run by Clann - the age-friendly offering of Clúid Housing - are composed of 40 one- and two-bed bungalows. Maplewood Heights also has a community space where residents can socialise.

The Housing Minister, the Mayor of South Dublin, Cllr. Alan Edge, and Chief Executive of South Dublin County Council, Colm Ward, joined Clúid's Chief Executive Officer, Brian O'Gorman, in welcoming the residents and launching the developments. Brian O'Gorman, CEO of Clúid Housing said "These A-rated age-friendly homes have been delivered at the heart of an established community in Tallaght. These 40 homes in Fernwood Green and Maplewood Heights are close to local amenities and public transport links. The excellent location, combined with the Universal Design principles used in the design and layout of the homes, will allow the new residents to stay living in their homes and community for as long as possible.

We've partnered with South Dublin County Council to bring more much-needed age-friendly homes to the area. These homes, along with the 85 new homes in Sallymills, Clondalkin, which just completed, and 81 in The Weir, Tallaght, which

are due to be completed soon, will bring the number of age-friendly homes Clúid has developed with South Dublin County Council to a total of 206."

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD said: "It's wonderful to be here today to meet some of Clúid's newest residents. Getting the keys to your new 'forever home' is wonderful at any time of the year, but there is something particularly special about hearing how these residents are preparing to spend their first Christmas in their new homes. "Housing for All, the Government's housing plan, identified the need for greater housing options as an area for priority and I must again commend Clúid and South Dublin County Council on their collaboration to deliver these beautiful homes, which were designed to meet the needs of older people and to allow them to continue to live in, and contribute to, their local community.

"2023 was a strong year for housing delivery and we continue to support Clúid and other not-for-profit Approved Housing Bodies to deliver on the Government's housing targets by contributing to the 33,000 housing completions we're targeting in 2024."

Chief Executive of South Dublin County Council, Colm Ward stated "We were delighted to collaborate with Clúid Housing, their dedicated age-friendly housing service, Clann Housing, and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to realise the Council's vision for this development. Under both our Rightsizing Policy and our Housing Delivery Action Plan, we developed the initial plans and provided the land for this project, as well as

participating in research on rightsizing with Age Friendly Ireland and others to support the delivery of age friendly housing within local communities. It is great to see that vision realised in the heart of a local community in Tallaght, close to well-established amenities, services and supports where new residents will enjoy high-quality, energy efficient homes designed for their needs along with a community facility to provide a place for connecting and I would particularly like to acknowledge the support of local Councillors who made this project possible."

Mayor of South Dublin, Cllr. Alan Edge commented at the launch, "I'm delighted to officially welcome Minister Darragh O'Brien and our other distinguished guests to Tallaght and South Dublin for such a positive event which sees new residents moving into fantastic new age-friendly homes in a wonderful community in Springfield. A key objective of the South Dublin Age Friendly County Strategy is to provide appropriate housing options for our ageing population using best practice in location, design, management and supports, and to assist older people to live independently for longer within their communities. These developments have very successfully delivered on that for older people who are rightsizing from existing private and social homes locally as well as housing applicants, and I wish all the new residents of both Maplewood and Fernwood many happy and successful times in their new homes."

Eibhlin O'Connor, Chief Commercial Officer of Clúid Housing added "We're extremely grateful to all our partners who helped us deliver these fabulous new homes. The homes were designed by Van Dijk Architects in line with Clann's design guide which incorporates Universal Design principles, and Cleary Doyle contractors got the build over the line. The project also benefited from support from Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Housing Finance Agency, the Housing Agency and South Dublin

County Council."

Dominic Ritchie, resident of Maplewood Heights said

"It's great to be in my new home. Having my own space gives me so much more independence and freedom.

I'm looking forward to being able to have my family over, and for my grandchildren to be able to stay."

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6'9" x 6'6"	€1350	+ €175	+ €175
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8' x 6'6"	€1450	+ €300	+ €250
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News**group** Education & Training Feature

ARTS COUNCIL ANNOUNCES 141 NEW SCHOOLS WILL JOIN ITS CREATIVE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

The Arts Council announced recently that offers have been made to 141 schools and centres across Ireland who applied to be part of the Creative Schools initiative. The Creative Schools initiative gives opportunities for children and young people to build their artistic and creative skills. Each of the 141 schools taking part will receive a grant and work with a professional Creative Associate who will support them to develop and implement their own bespoke Creative School Plan over a two-year period.

The 141 new Creative Schools comprise 97 primary schools, 25 post-primary schools, 4 special schools and 10 Youthreach centres. Joining the programme this year are five schools in Alternative Settings who cater for young people with severe emotional and behavioral challenges. Catherine Martin TD, Minister for Tourism,

Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media said "I am thrilled to see the continued success of the Creative Schools initiative and warmly welcome the 141 new schools and centres.

Since 2018, Creative Schools has been a testament to the pivotal role creativity plays for children and young people across Ireland; in their education and for their school communities. I hope that the Creative School initiative continues to flourish and empower our young people as these new schools and centres embark on the programme." Norma Foley TD, Minister for Education said "I am pleased to see that 141 new schools and centres are now joining the Creative Schools Programme. Creative Schools puts the arts and creativity at the heart of children's and young people's lives.

Over 970 schools and Youthreach centres have

been invited to participate since it was set up in 2018. We are increasingly embedding the arts into the education system, which includes the development of a new subject - Drama, Film and Theatre Studies- which will commence in schools in 2025." Maureen Kennelly, Director of the Arts

Council, said "We extend a warm welcome to the 141 new schools joining Creative Schools.

The demand nationwide is a testament to the programme's impact, and we're excited even more schools in Ireland are now part of this creative journey.

Collaborating with our partners in the Department of Education, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media, as well as Creative Ireland, we anticipate another school year filled with creativity, consultation, and exploration." Participation empowers children and

young people to develop, implement and evaluate arts and creative activity throughout their schools and centres. Creativity stimulates additional ways of working and has a positive impact on children and young people's learning, development and well-being.

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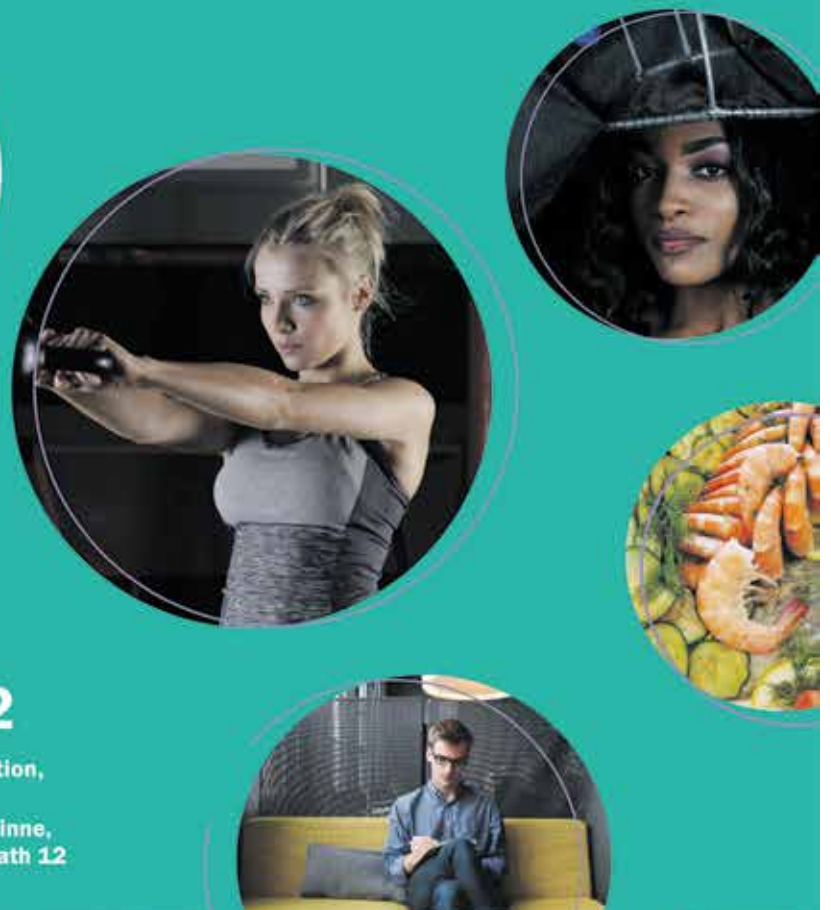
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about myself and what I am capable of. The programme built my confidence to speak and to present in public, to pursue my ideas and learn from my failures. To people considering doing this course I would say do it, gift yourself this time at the Innovation Academy."

Find out more www.innovationacademy.ie Deadline February 12th. 100% funding available.



Pictured Sharon Keegan, Peachy Lean Founder and UCD Graduate Certificate in Creativity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alum pictured with UCD Innovation Academy Facilitator and mentor Eileen Diskin

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Sharon Keegan - Peachy Lean Founder

OFFICE SUPPLIER CODEX PARTNERS WITH DCU TO CREATE 'QUIET SPACE' FOR STUDENTS

Codex, Ireland's leading provider of workplace products and solutions, has unveiled a groundbreaking 'quiet space' in the Henry Grattan Building at Dublin City University (DCU). The space was designed as part of a wider project within DCU to provide additional support for neurodivergent students who might occasionally struggle with stress or sensory overload, giving them access to a quiet zone within the

busy campus. Codex has delivered the quiet space as part of DCU's Autism Friendly Project, which accommodates students who might be experiencing stress or other mental health issues. Codex works extensively with schools, universities, and other educational institutions, as well as organisations in tech, finance and other sectors, to provide specialist neurodivergent-friendly facilities for students and

employees.

The new quiet space is located in the Henry Grattan Building, a vibrant and busy hub of university activity, which can present challenges for students struggling with stress or sensory overload. Led by Kate Nelligan, Codex's Category Manager of Furniture and Interiors, the Codex team fitted-out a fully enclosed quiet unit that allows students to disconnect from the noise

and bustle outside while remaining fully engaged with their studies - an important requirement. The free-standing quiet unit features individual pods for complete isolation, a study space, and comfortable beanbags. Codex paid particular attention to the materials, incorporating fabrics are soft to the touch with no rough or harsh materials and no sharp edges that could cause distress. Acoustically, the unit offers top-tier sound

control, ensuring users are disconnected from external noise.

The colour palette, featuring gentle, muted tones of blue, grey, and white, aims to soothe, while charging points eliminate 'range anxiety.' Importantly, students can access the unit without prior booking, providing additional reassurance of a safe space.

"Thanks to our partners Codex, we are delighted to open this essential space for our students," said Fiona Earley, DCU's Autism Friendly University Coordinator. "It's vital that we can provide a quiet space where anyone who is struggling or feeling overwhelmed can feel safe and secure while remaining engaged with their studies. It's a welcome addition to campus and we're very grateful to Codex for the design and direction they have provided."

In addition to delivering DCU's new quiet space, Codex has been a sponsor of the university's 'Access to the Workplace' programme since its launch in 2019. This provides gifted students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds with the opportunity to pursue a third-level education that might not otherwise be attainable for them.

"Codex has been a proud

sponsor of DCU's 'Access to the Workplace' programme since 2019 so we were delighted to take on the project of developing an autism-friendly quiet space here in the Henry Grattan Building," said Kate Nelligan, Codex's Category Manager of Furniture and Interiors. "This will give students access to a quiet space with a calming environment where they can remain fully engaged with their studies, instead of simply having to go home.

"We are seeing more and more demand for neurodivergent-friendly spaces, not only from the education sector but from large organisations in tech, finance and other sectors," she added. "It requires specialist knowledge and very specific furniture, textures and other products to create these spaces but they are so important in any building that strives to be truly inclusive. We hope the students of DCU get great use out of their new quiet space."

Codex is an industry leader in designing, adapting, and fitting out office spaces for organisations with very specific requirements. The company has been an official Great Place to Work® and one of Ireland's Best Workplaces™ since 2017, and was recently named one of Ireland's Best Managed Companies for 2023.



ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED AT MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

Former Holy Family Community School student Clodagh Pouch's significant performance in the Leaving Certificate 2023 has been acknowledged and celebrated by Maynooth University. A first year student in the BSc Psychology degree, Clodagh is one of over 70 Maynooth University Entrance Scholars, each having achieved 575 points or more in their Leaving Certificate examination.

Maynooth University President Professor Eeva Leinonen presented each scholar with a bespoke piece of crystal in recognition of their achievement during the awards ceremony held on the campus on October 25th. Family members and guests were treated to an evening of music and refreshments.

Speaking about the event, Director of

Admissions, Ita McGuigan said 'we are delighted to celebrate with Scholarship recipients, their family and schools, their outstanding achievement in the Leaving Certificate. Tonight, we had over 70 Scholars from more than 60 schools from all over Ireland in attendance, who chose to study at Maynooth University'.

The €1,000 Entrance Scholarship is awarded to incoming first year students, via the CAO, who have obtained 575 points or more in their Leaving Certificate.

Academic and sport scholarship information features among more than 80 talks planned for each of the Maynooth University Open Days coming in 2024 on April 27th and June 29th. More information is available at www.mu.ie/opensdays.



Holy Family Community School Leaving Certificate 2023 student Clodagh Pouch who received a Maynooth University Entrance Scholarship, pictured with Maynooth University President Professor Eeva Leinonen.

KUMON FIRHOUSE AWARDS CEREMONY

We were honoured to have South Dublin County Council Mayor, Councillor Alan Edge attend the evening to present the awards to our students. Many of our students received academic awards for studying above school grade. It takes a lot of commitment and hard work to achieve what these students have and we are very proud of them. For more information about Kumon maths and English classes or to book a free assessment for your child check out the website www.kumon.ie/firhouse



Pictured Daniel with Alan Edge and Audrey



Pictured Leon with Alan edge



Pictured Cormac with Alan Edge and Audrey



Pictured Sean from senior infants receiving his award for maths with Alan edge and Audrey




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*Research conducted by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCEC) in 2018. Research shows that Kumon students are over a year ahead of the national average in maths at the end of primary school. The research findings are based on a sample of 1000 primary school children across Ireland.

BIFE NOW ENROLLING FOR SEPTEMBER '24

Bray Institute of Further Education's Graduation Ceremony 2023 took place this year on the BIFE campus on Saturday 11th November. Conferring took place over two sittings.

"We were delighted to have so many graduating this year as we celebrate over 30 years of serving the Wicklow, Wexford, Kildare, and Greater Dublin area," said Deputy Principal Gabriel Allen. "having a Level 5/ Level 6 Certificate, Diploma or Higher National Diploma award remains a prerequisite to finding meaningful employment, irrespective of location. These awards are portable and their quality

is recognised internationally which gives the graduate every opportunity of success.

BIFE has been going from strength to strength over the last decade and is now one of the largest colleges of further education in the country. They offer over 80 different courses in many different subject areas. They have signed agreements with all of the IT's and Universities in the South-east region allowing their students to progress seamlessly to higher education on completion of their course in BIFE.

Their graduates also have the opportunity to gain advanced entry onto higher education degree courses

and in some instances complete an honours degree with one extra year of study in Higher Education Institutes.

Work Placement is a vital part of BIFE courses and now all students in the College have the opportunity to complete a 3-week or a 3-month work placement abroad in countries such as Spain, Portugal, Poland, Italy, Finland, France, Malta or Czechia under the Erasmus+ Programme which is sponsored by the European Union. "This is a terrific opportunity for our students" according to Allen, "not only to gain valuable work experience

in a European country, but also to experience a different culture and to broaden their horizons". BIFE is adding several new countries to their Erasmus+ portfolio with partners in

Athens, Istanbul, Berlin & Austria coming on board. Bife are now enrolling for September '24. Full details of all courses are available on their website www.bife.ie. Students can apply online

on the website by clicking on the "Apply Now" button.

There is no application fee. You can also call the Institute during office hours on 01-2829668.



HOLY FAMILY COMMUNITY SCHOOL STUDENTS GRADUATE FROM STEM PASSPORT FOR INCLUSION INITIATIVE

Students from Holy Family Community School in Rathcoole were among those to recently graduate from the STEM Passport for Inclusion Programme, experiencing a notable boost in confidence and a heightened intent to pursue STEM education at third level.

STEM Passport for Inclusion was launched two years ago with an ambition to address inequalities in accessing STEM careers among post-primary students in socially disadvantaged communities. The programme's innovative approach, which combines an educational qualification (Level 6 NFQ), education supports, and mentoring from industry role models, provides a unique pathway for students to progress to third level education and achieve a STEM qualification.

Since the launch of the pilot programme two years ago, 1,250 students have participated leading to a significant increase in the students' confidence and intention to pursue STEM education at third level. In the wake of the recent graduation, Maynooth University, Microsoft Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, and the Department of Education, announced the nationwide expansion of the STEM Passport for Inclusion initiative. This expansion aims to reach an additional 5,000 students, fostering greater engagement in STEM disciplines across the country.

The national expansion of the

programme was announced at the 2023 STEM Passport for Inclusion graduation, which took place at Maynooth University and will see the initiative engage a further 5,000 students. At the recent graduation three hundred female senior cycle students from 17 DEIS schools in Leinster received a certificate for participating in the newly developed Level 6 NFQ certificate in 21st Century STEM Skills.

Welcoming the announcement, Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD said "It is important that every student in our schools has equal access to develop the skills and knowledge for success. STEM Passport for Inclusion is an important initiative in broadening access to STEM and fostering a more diverse and inclusive culture. Following the success of the pilot, I am pleased with the expansion of the programme nationwide to support more students from socially disadvantaged communities to consider STEM within school and as they make their journey into the world of work. By working together across Government, industry, and the education sector, we can ensure that everyone, regardless of gender, background, or socioeconomic status, has the opportunity to thrive in our future economy."

Speaking about the plans to extend STEM Passport for Inclusion, Dr Katriona O'Sullivan, Digital Skills Lecturer at Maynooth University said "We're delighted to announce

the expansion of the STEM Passport for Inclusion initiative. The impact to date has been far reaching and it was so nice to be able to make this announcement as we mark the graduation of this group of students from Maynooth University. Some of them will be the first in their family or school to get a university award and many will not have taken any science, technology, or engineering subjects in school. We are delighted for them.

"Since we launched the pilot programme two years ago, 1,250 students have engaged with the initiative, with a significant increase in the students' confidence and intention to study STEM in the future achieved. We are hugely excited to be able to roll the initiative out nationwide across academic years 2023 to 2025 - we currently have 2,000 students from DEIS schools registered in three Universities taking the module. Furthermore, the students will have the opportunity to benefit from mentoring from more than 600 mentors from 40 companies across Ireland.

"We have also just agreed in Maynooth to pilot a DEIS STEM pathway where students who participate on the programme in future years will become eligible to apply for 50 Leaving Cert points towards Engineering and Computer Science degrees in our university. This is real innovation in education; higher education working with each other and with post primary education, and industry, to create STEM pathways

for under-served girls."

Microsoft is the STEM Passport for Inclusion's lead industry partner, having contributed €600,000 in match funding to date. In addition, Microsoft's Dream Space education team co-designed the Level 6-accredited (NFQ) STEM Passport module and has supported the delivery of the STEM Passport curriculum to participating students in Dream Space venues in both Dublin and Belfast. More than 200 of Microsoft's employees are actively supporting the STEM Passport for Inclusion mentoring programme, alongside other educators and representatives from private and public sector organisations.

Speaking about Microsoft's continued role in the initiative, James O'Connor, Microsoft Ireland Site Leader and Vice-President Microsoft Global Operations Service Centre, said: "Microsoft is exceptionally proud of our collaboration with Maynooth University and the active role that we have played to support the delivery of the STEM Passport for Inclusion pilot over the past two years. Microsoft is passionate about ensuring that every person has the opportunity to skill up to play an active role in our digital economy and, in particular, that those living in socially disadvantaged areas are given equal opportunities.

"We are thrilled that the STEM Passport for Inclusion initiative is being rolled out nationwide and that it will continue to address

inequalities in access to STEM careers among post-primary students in socially disadvantaged communities.

We look forward to playing an active part in the continued success of this initiative and the positive impact that it will have on inspiring the next generation of digital leaders in our country." Dr Abigail Ruth Freeman, Director, Science for Society at Science Foundation Ireland, commented: "STEM Passport for Inclusion opens access to STEM skills and careers for students from a diverse range of backgrounds and communities. The pilot programme has been highly successful, with a significant increase in the number of participating students planning on studying STEM at third level. In partnership with Maynooth University, the Department of Education, and Microsoft Ireland and a number of industry partners, we're proud to expand the programme nationwide and support more students across the country who wish to build a career in the sector - an important step in preparing our society and economy with the skills that will be needed for the future."

The national roll-out of the STEM Passport for Inclusion programme (2023-2025), which is funded by Microsoft, Science Foundation Ireland, and the Department of Education, will see participants graduate from partner Universities - Atlantic Technological University, Munster Technological University and Maynooth University.



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- DC Fashion & Textiles
- DK Garden Design
- DJ Furniture Design & Cabinet Making (Advanced)

MUSIC

- MI DJ Techniques & Music Production
- MJ Music Production
- MK Music Performance
- MF Sound Engineering
- MN Traditional Irish and Folk Music Performance

COMPUTING & ENGINEERING

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- NB Computer Science
- NC Computer Networks and Cyber Security
- ND Computer A+ Operating Systems
- NE Digital Arts & Creative Media
- NF 21st Century Skills for Work
- HV Engineering Pre-University

SPORT

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- EC Personal Trainer, Strength & Conditioning
- ED Soccer Coaching & Sports Management
- EF Sports Injury & Massage Therapy / Pre-University Physiotherapy

ANIMAL CARE

- HA Animal Care
- HI Animal Care & Management Pre-University
- HJ Animal Science Industry
- HT Dog Obedience & Training - Start Your Own Business
- HX Equine Studies

SOCIAL STUDIES & CHILDCARE

- OA Special Needs Assistant (Primary & Post-Primary)
- OB SNA & Disability Studies (Level 6)
- HD Early Learning & Care / Childcare
- HF Supervision in Early Learning & Care / Childcare
- HE Social Studies & Community Care

HAIR, BEAUTY & WELLNESS

- HG Holistic & Wellbeing Studies
- FJ Professional Make Up & Hairstyling
- FF Hairdressing - Junior Stylist
- FG Hairdressing - Senior Stylist
- FH Barbering
- FD Nail Technician & Salon Administration
- FC Fashion Theatre and Media Make-Up

SCIENCE

- HS Forensic Science - Pre-University
- HK Science - Pre-University
- HZ Food Science with Dietetics - Pre-University
- JF Pharmacy Assistant
- JJ Pharmacy Technician
- HU Applied Ecology and Biodiversity Studies
- LJ Brewing and Distilling Technology

BUSINESS

- JA Business Management & Administration
- JB E Business
- JC Business Management - Advanced Certificate
- JD Accounting Technician
- LD Business Tourism Advanced Certificate
- SD Legal Administration Pre-University Law
- SF Medical Administration (Mornings Only)
- SE IT & Office Administration (Mornings Only)
- EE Security & Pre-Garda

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- LH Restaurant & Bar Management
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- LE Culinary Arts Advanced
- LG Pastry, Baking & Barista
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- RB Adult Leaving Certificate

HEALTH

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- HP Occupational Therapy Assistant
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- HL Applied Psychology
- HW Applied Psychology (Advanced)

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- MB TV & Film Production - Advanced
- MC Immersive Media Production Degree (Hons)
- ME 3D Game Design
- MG Games Development

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- PB Acting for Stage & Screen Advanced
- PD Dance Technique, Performance and Choreography
- PE Dance Technique, Performance and Choreography - Advanced

ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- AA English Language and Computers for International Students
- AB English Language and Business for International Students
- AC English Language and Healthcare Studies for International Students
- AD English Language and Sport for International Students
- AE English Language for Employment (level 4)

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