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ENERGY PRICES REMAIN FAR TOO HIGH FOR CUSTOMERS

TD for Dublin South West Seán Crowe has said energy prices are still far too high for most people and must be cut to affordable levels.

Commenting on news that Bord Gáis Energy will cut gas and electricity prices from February 29th, Teachta Crowe said "Energy companies have announced price cuts recently, but they do not go far enough and prices remain much too high for most people. Families need a break from these unaffordable costs and need to see urgent action to slash prices further.

"While the recent price decreases are welcome, the reality is that customers remain squeezed. Yes prices are falling,

but they are falling from extortionate levels. We cannot ignore the fact that even after the reduction, Bord Gáis Energy's electricity prices will remain around 90% above where they were in 2020, and gas prices are around double previous levels. "Ordinary workers and families continue to struggle under the weight of these sky-high costs. The level of arrears continues to grow and energy poverty remains high. Heating homes will remain exorbitantly expensive this winter, particularly as the reduction will not come into effect until it is over.

"The stark reality is that the price of gas and electricity here remains sky high for local customers. In fact, Irish energy

prices are some of the highest in the EU.

The reasons for this cannot be attributed to external shocks alone. There are systemic problems in our energy system and successive governments have failed to address them. They have failed to manage our energy system properly. People cannot be expected to pay the price for government failures to get to grips with the cost of living crisis.

"Sinn Féin has set out a suite of proposals to maximise State and community-owned renewables, reduce energy bills and to reform planning and energy regulation here. The government needs to act and to get to grips with this situation once and for all.

Vote Yes Yes Launch for March 8th Referenda

Local TD for Dublin Mid West and Fine Gael Equality Spokesperson Emer Higgins attended the launch of the Vote Yes + Yes campaign by the National Women Council of Ireland on January 25th in the historic Mansion House. The upcoming referenda will take place on March 8th, International Women's Day, and seeks to amend the meaning of Family in the Constitution and to provide recognition for care provided by family members to each other.



(L-R) Mayor Alan Edge, Emer Higgins TD, Orla O'Connor Chairperson of NWC, Senator Pauline O'Reilly, Paul McCauliffe TD, Ivana Bacik, TD Labour Party Leader.

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COUNCILLORS VISIT DELAYED LUCAN POOL

Councillors representing the Lucan/Palmerstown/North Clondalkin area were invited to a site visit of the delayed Lucan swimming pool.

The visit included a walk around the building and the overall site. The project has been marred by delays caused by a number of issues, including supply chain problems, connection to utilities and labour shortages. The project began construction in 2019 and has been highly anticipated by the local community who have been campaigning for decades for a public swimming pool in Lucan.

People Before Profit councillor Madeleine

Johansson, who attended the site visit, said: "It was great to get the opportunity to go in and see what the building will look like. The quality and standards seem to be very high and the pool will be an incredible amenity for the community once it's finished.

"However, it really shouldn't have taken this long to get here, and we still don't have a date for the opening of the pool. This is deeply frustrating for local residents who have been waiting so long for this. The delay in connections to utilities like electricity and water is causing problems on other projects such as social housing. Utility connections

should be prioritised for public projects."

Mark Kerins, long time

Lucan resident and People Before Profit representative, commented: "I've lived in Lucan all my life and we

have needed this pool for decades. The delays to the pool shows why we need a state owned construction

company that could deliver both housing and facilities like this in a timely manner with full accountability."



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ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SUPPORTS IN IRISH PRISONS ARE VITAL

Mark Ward TD recently called on the Minister for Justice to improve access to mental health and addiction support in the Irish Prison Services following information he received from the Department of Justice. As of January of 2024, 1,804 people are waiting for appointments with the Irish Prison Service

Psychology Service and 894 people are waiting on addiction services. Deputy Ward raised this with the Minister for Justice directly on the Oireachtas Committee for Justice. Speaking afterwards, Teachta Ward said "It is clear that from the information that I received from the Department of Justice that prisoners are not getting the vital mental health support that they need.

"As of January, 1,804 people are waiting for appointments with the Irish Prison Service Psychology Service and 894 people are waiting on addiction services. With the latest figures that I have, this represents 65% of the prison population waiting on mental health supports. "Psychologists in prisons treat a range of mental health issues including mood and anxiety disorders, neurotic and stress related disorders, disorders of personality and behaviour, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) including

complex PTSD, self-harm and suicidal behaviour, substance use, eating disorders, psychosis and schizophrenia, addiction, dementias, cognitive decline traumatic brain injuries, impulse disorders, and disorders of sexual preference.

"As you can see from the list of mental health issues that they are quite varied and complex. "The failure in getting timely mental health supports is in turn having a negative impact

on the rates of reoffending. "If a serious mental health difficulty such as acute psychosis is the root cause of an offence, then what hope is there for rehabilitation if the prisoner cannot access basic mental health services? "The end result often leads to reoffending upon release, which also leads to an increase in victims. We know that about 6 in 10 people reoffend within 3 years of their release. It is a vicious cycle which is being perpetuated by

successive governments' lack of investment and resource planning in both the Irish Prison Service and the mental health services in the wider community.

"For too long, the Irish justice system has been the gatekeeper for those experiencing mental health and or addiction difficulties. "If this Government is serious about helping prisoners and bringing down rates of re-offending then they must resource out prisons."

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CHARLIE O'TOOLE BRIDGE 45TH ANNIVERSARY

Local Tallaght Rep Cllr. Charlie O' Connor recently asked the CEO of South Dublin County Council (SDCC) to advise on arrangements to provide a nameplate or stone at the Charlie O' Toole Bridge in Tallaght.

The question was as follows "To ask the CEO that given the approaching 45th anniversary of the official opening of the first bridge across the Tallaght by-pass at Tallaght Village/St Dominics and noting that the original namestone of the bridge commemorating Charlie O'Toole, the co-

founder in 1969 with Fr. Paul Hynes OP of Tallaght Welfare Society, went missing; will he now make arrangements to provide a suitable nameplate/stone at the Charlie O'Toole bridge; will he confirm the position and make a statement?"

The reply from SDCC entailed "The Charlie O'Toole bridge is due for a parapet upgrade and this is co-ordinated by the TII who have charge for this bridge. Once the parapet design is complete SDCC will request the inclusion of a plaque with the TII as part of these works."

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CLLR GILLIGAN WELCOMES TAY LANE RATHCOOLE FOOTBRIDGE REFURB

Local Councillor Trevor Gilligan recently welcomed news on the Tay Lane footbridge refurbishment works, he said "Local residents have waited a long time for this upgrade and I look forward to the works being completed in a timely manner. I am happy to assist residents, should they have enquiries regarding these works. Required works are as follows: Sandblasting, replacing areas of corrosion, re-waterproofing the structure, painting"

"I'll be responsible for this bridge and have identified the need to carry out a significant refurbishment of this bridge as a result of significant corrosion of the structure. It is proposed to remove the ramps to the footbridge around late March '24. As such there will only be pedestrian access over the footbridge via the stairs. A diversion route for cyclists will be put in place via Rathcoole Overbridge. On the 1st July '24 the stairs, main span and pylon will be removed off site for refurbishment. The intention is to have the main span and ramps back in place in early September. The closure of the footbridge from the 1st July will require a statutory notice and this process will be carried out in May. It will also be necessary to advise residents near Tay Lane of the upcoming works. A flyer will be circulated in the area in Mid March.

Approximate Timeline includes Late March: Remove ramps. April - June: Refurbishment of ramps. Late June: Remove main beam and stairs. July- August: Refurbishment of main beam. Early September: Transport ramps and main beam to site and re-erect. September-October: Refurbishment of stairs. And Early November: Transport stairs to site and re-erect.

GREATER FOCUS TO TENANT-IN-SITU DELAYS NEEDED

Less bureaucracy and greater expediency are necessary to support local authorities to secure more homes through the Tenant-in-Situ Scheme according to one South Dublin County councillor. Cllr. Derren Ó Brádaigh was speaking in view of recent figures that he received to an official question, that sought a detailed breakdown on the situation in relation to the scheme to date.

The councillor for Lucan and Palmerstown-Fonthill said "Whilst I welcome all purchases made to date and by my own local authority in South Dublin, I believe that Government needs to address some of the issues associated with the delays in progressing the end numbers to sale agreed more rapidly.

Ó Brádaigh said "At the end of December 2023, 514 expressions of interest had been received for potential acquisitions with 158 properties at varying stages of conveyance toward sale agreed. And whilst this

represents very welcome progress and good work by the Council housing section, 142 properties will not proceed for various reasons. 62 of these are from within my own constituency in areas such as Lucan, Palmerstown and Clondalkin, all with large numbers of families on the housing list. Of course, it is essential that all houses being considered are fit for purpose and undergo due diligence and pre-purchase checks, however the fact remains that even after you remove the numbers that won't be progressed, there are still 57% going through different and lengthy stages of scrutiny.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh also stated "It really is a shame that the Minister for Housing, Darragh Ó Brien only came to see the urgency for the scheme amid much pressure before putting the scheme in place from April of last year. This came after repeated calls by Sinn Féin and only after the Government lifted the temporary ban on evictions

that had been in place, and in the face of spiralling numbers into homelessness. Unfortunately, and due to the wider failures by Government to address the crisis in housing, there is now a staggering 13,318 people experiencing homelessness, with 4,000 of these being children.

Ó Bradaigh concluded by saying "Government needs to provide more support and work to greater effect with all Councils to examine the Tenant-in-Situ Scheme

in seeking to make it both more efficient and effective. Government failure to control the cost of purchasing a new home anywhere in the country is making it difficult for Councils to compete with the market. I also believe that we need more personnel dedicated to housing procurement to assist in processing the applications. Ultimately, we need delivery of large numbers of social and affordable homes and until this happens, I think we will continue to tinker around the edges."

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BARRY ANDREWS SELECTED AS DUBLIN CANDIDATE FOR EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

Fianna Fáil has selected Barry Andrews to represent the Party in the Dublin constituency for the upcoming European elections. The current MEP was selected at a convention in Dublin recently.

With a strong commitment to representing Ireland's

interests on the European stage, Barry Andrews brings a wealth of experience and a vision for a more connected and prosperous Europe. Following his selection, he said, "It has been an honour to represent Dublin in the European Parliament for the past four and a half years and it is a privilege to

be selected again as Fianna Fáil's candidate in Dublin. I look forward to campaigning across Dublin over the next four months, engaging with voters and hearing about the issues that are important to them.

"As an open trading economy at a time of increasing protectionism, it is important that Ireland makes the case for trade and competitiveness. Ireland's membership of the EU means we enjoy the benefits of both the Single Market and Free Trade Agreements, supporting more opportunities for sustainable development. "It is clear to me that migration is a key issue in Dublin, and across the country, and people are keen to know what part the European Union has to play in this. There needs to be a clear and open discussion about what our obligations are as a Member State while also ensuring that the systems that Ireland has in place are adequate to meet these obligations.

"Sustainability and the Green Deal are high on the agenda for me as I know they are for many people. I

have worked extremely hard in this area - particularly on sustainability around fashion and the emergence of 'fast fashion' and the harmful impact that is having and there is still a long way to go to tackle this issue.

"2024 is one of the most pivotal years for global democracy ever. More than 40 elections across the world are going to shape our future for many years to come. At home in Ireland we have to play our part to ensure we elect MEPs who are not going to pander to far right ideologies, who are not going to support Russia in their war against Ukraine and MEPs who are going to support a ceasefire in Gaza unconditionally. I have been on the right side of these issues in the European Parliament and if re-elected will continue to be the right side on behalf of the people of Dublin."

An Tánaiste and Úachtarán Fhianna Fáil, Micheál Martin said, "We in Fianna Fáil believe that the European Union is a fundamental foundation for progress in our country. Ireland must stand with Europe and must



stand against the corrosive euroscepticism and anti-democratic regimes which seek to undermine the Union. "I am proud that in Barry Andrews Fianna Fáil has a candidate who is known for his hard work on behalf of the people of Ireland. In Barry Andrews, we have a candidate who not only aligns with Fianna Fáil's core values but also possesses the necessary skills to navigate the complex landscape of European politics.

"Since his election to the European Parliament in 2019, he has demonstrated exceptional leadership and a deep understanding of the issues facing Ireland and the Union. We believe his representation will continue to serve the best interests

of Ireland on the European stage, shape policies that positively impact our country and contribute to the development of a more united Europe."

Fianna Fáil Director of Elections, Minister Darragh O'Brien T.D. said, "Barry Andrews is a forceful, pro-European candidate. The values he holds are in step with the vast majority of the Irish population which is overwhelmingly pro-EU. His is a voice of reason and fairness in what is an increasingly fragmented political landscape. I look forward to campaigning with Barry over the coming months and to seeing him return to the EU Parliament as Fianna Fáil's Dublin representative."

Cllr. Charlie O'Connor PC

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The Fianna Fáil Team is Barry Andrews M.E.P, John Lahart TD, Cllrs Yvonne Collins, Teresa Costello, Lilian Gueret, Emma Murphy & Charlie O'Connor. Local area Reps Lynda Prendergast and Adam Smyth



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AN COSÁN'S BA GRADUATES ALL SET TO LEAD THE WAY IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Twenty-six adult learners from An Cosán community education centre in Tallaght are all set to step up to community leadership roles following their graduation at South East Technological University Carlow's recent lifelong learning conferring ceremony. The graduates, who were joined in Carlow by their proud families and members of An Cosán staff, are already involved in their local communities and, with their new qualifications under their belts, are well placed to continue to make a positive impact.

Twenty graduated with a BA in Applied Addiction Studies and Community Development and six with a BA in Leadership and Community Development. Both degree programmes, which are delivered by An Cosán and accredited by South East Technological University (SETU) Carlow, aim to equip graduates with the necessary knowledge, competencies and skills for them to make a professional contribution to communities, groups and organisations in a local community context. With 14 of the graduates coming from Tallaght and other parts of Dublin, and the remainder representing 12 other counties - from Cork to Donegal, and Wicklow to Galway - communities across Ireland are set to benefit from the graduates' community leadership skills.

Suzanne Leech from Jobstown, Tallaght, who graduated with a BA in Leadership and Community Development, said her experience of higher education with An Cosán was one of the most fulfilling educational experiences she had ever had. "Returning to education, especially for a woman, can be a daunting experience as there are so many situational barriers involved that may not be present for other learners,"

she said. "An Cosán's ethos of promoting inclusivity and equal access to education was paramount to my learning. They allowed blended learning and afforded me the ability to study from home while working and raising a family. "An Cosán, as an establishment, has stood the test of time as my own mother, Elizabeth, was one of the first members of The Shanty, which was the original name of An Cosán, and many years later they are still welcoming and educating the community of Tallaght."

Suzanne, who is actively involved in a voluntary capacity in her local community, hopes to secure work in the area of community engagement, especially supporting those who face barriers to accessing education. "I feel that this is an area I could excel in and bring my expertise to," she said. "As a community leader, I understand that leadership can have a huge effect on social change, and I look forward to bringing the skills and knowledge I have attained to make social change in my community in areas such as the economy, education and our environment."

An Cosán Chief Executive Officer, Heydi Foster, expressed her gratitude to SETU Carlow for their ongoing support of An Cosán and their dedication towards adult learners. "This dream that has been realised for our 26 graduates today would not have been possible without our collaborative partnership with South East Technological University dating back to 2008," she said. "SETU's commitment to make higher education available right across Ireland to communities who might not otherwise have access to it aligns with our own vision. Our learners, who come from some of the most

marginalised communities in Ireland, include early school leavers, lone parents, adults returning to education, people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, Travellers and International Protection Applicants."

Congratulating the graduates, Ms Foster said, "The achievements we're celebrating today cannot be taken lightly. The challenges and obstacles you have overcome to get here are unprecedented. Not only have you had to navigate your way through your course work, assignments and assessments while juggling your home lives and involvement in your local communities, but you have also navigated your way through a global pandemic, and all that that entailed. We are incredibly proud of you and we know each of you will continue to have a tremendously positive impact on your families and your communities."

Ms Foster said An Cosán looked forward to continuing its valuable linked partnership with SETU, which received recognition last year by the Higher Education Authority with the awarding of a Performance Fund grant. "We will continue to reach the furthest behind first through our progressive pathways to higher education," she said, "And we look forward to expanding our successful community-based higher education programmes so that more adult learners from marginalised communities across Ireland can achieve empowerment through education."

SETU Carlow's Director of Lifelong Learning, Rosemary Flynn, said: "SETU Carlow is proud to validate the work of An Cosán because together we share a set of values that enables us to build a society which is, at its core,

both ethical and inclusive. An Cosán continues to help many people to find their way out of the darkness of educational disadvantage and into a future bright with hope and possibility. Congratulations and well done to the 26 wonderful graduates who we know will

continue to craft a society defined by inclusion and justice."

An Cosán, Ireland's largest community education provider, seeks to empower through education, with its focus primarily on early school leavers. Its

unique, holistic approach sees it providing a range of wraparound supports to learners, including flexible timetables, financial support, IT support, parenting support, and one-to-one mentoring and counselling. To find out more, see www.ancosan.ie



Pictured Suzanne Leech, Abosede Ogunsanya, Marie Moylan, Karen Ferris, Kevin Brown, Pamela Cullotty & Leanne Duffy.



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2023 DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY ALUMNI AWARDS

Dublin City University recently presented 2023 Alumni Awards to outstanding alumni, including General Secretary of Housing Europe Sorcha Edwards.

The University also presented 2023 Alumni Awards to outstanding alumni Lucy Nugent (CEO Tallaght University Hospital) and Kevin Shortall (Principal of St. Aidan's Community School in Tallaght). The DCU Alumni Awards honour alumni who, through their exceptional ability and leadership, have achieved excellence in their chosen fields of endeavour.

Sorcha Edwards, a Lucan native is General Secretary of Housing Europe, the European Federation of Public, Cooperative and Social Housing providers since 2014. After graduating with a degree in Languages from DCU Sorcha, continued her studies with postgraduate qualifications in Business and in European Studies at the University of Ulster and at the University of Leuven. Housing Europe's

members manage 25 million homes and deliver over 200,000 new homes and renovations annually. Under Sorcha's leadership Housing Europe has become a point of reference for sustainable housing systems in Europe. It's work coordinates the network for maximum impact in better regulation, better knowledge and better finance for housing in EU and International policy-making.

Lucy Nugent graduated from her Nursing Studies at DCU in 2003 and over the following decade she worked in a number of roles as a registered general and children's nurse in the Children's University Hospital Temple Street progressing to the role of Clinical & Patient Services Manager. She was made Chief Operations Officer at Tallaght University Hospital in 2014 before being appointed Deputy CEO in 2016 and then acceding to her current role in January 2019.

Kevin Shortall is principal of St. Aidan's Community School, Tallaght and an

innovator and pioneer in education. An early school leaver, he never believed then he would go to college or become a teacher. Four years later Kevin returned to do his leaving cert. and then completed what is now the B. Ed. and M. Ed. in DCU. In 2022 he became one of the founding developers of the SPOTLITE programme - Student Perspectives on Teaching and Learning in the Educational Space - a unique and groundbreaking model of student participation with the potential to transform education.

The 2023 Alumni Award recipients represent all five faculties of study at DCU (Business School, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Institute of Education, Faculty of Science and Health and Faculty of Engineering and Computing. The achievements of these eight exceptional graduates were celebrated at a special ceremony in The Helix on DCU's Glasnevin campus. DCU President Prof Dáire Keogh said I am delighted to present these awards



Pic credit: Kyran O'Brien / DCU Communications

to a special group of DCU alumni who have done exceptional things in diverse fields including Healthcare, Tech, Diversity, Housing, Business and Sport." Our alumni are changemakers who consistently deliver on our University's mission to 'transform lives and societies'. In celebrating

these great individuals we celebrate the impact of DCU's more than 100,000 alumni worldwide."

Ross Munnely, Director of Alumni Relations at DCU, said "Our alumni continue to represent the strong values and high expectations of the university. Each

awardee through their own contribution helps to make the world and society a better place for us all.

We have seen this through their achievements to date, they are proven leaders and who continue to inspire the next generation of graduates at DCU."

SOUTH DUBLIN LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE



Pictured at the Local Enterprise office in County Hall, Tallaght, were (L to R) Cllr. Charlie O'Connor, Cllr. Lilian Gueret, Minister Neale Richmond TD, Mayor Alan Edge and Cllr. Lynn McCrane

END OF GARDAÍ SURGE FUNDING IN DUBLIN 'OUTRAGEOUS'

TD for Dublin Mid-West, Mark Ward, has criticised the government's decision to end surge policing funding in Dublin as 'outrageous'. The €10 million temporary funding unveiled by Minister Helen McEntee last year has now been spent and not renewed.

Speaking recently, Teachta Ward said "It has been clear for some time now that many of those who live, work and socialise in our capital city simply do not feel safe. Gardaí have seen their funding and numbers slashed in real terms compared to Dublin's rising population. "Dublin Mid-West is an incredible place that the people I represent are proud to call home. However, many people locally in Dublin have been expressing concerns that a lack of visible policing means they and their families don't feel safe and protected.

"The latest figures show that there are just 705 Gardaí in

Dublin Metropolitan Region Western. This is a decrease of nearly 10% since 2011. This also comes at a time when the local population in Dublin Mid-West is increasing, so in real terms this represents a drastic decrease. "Sinn Féin have brought forward proposals to properly fund and resource the Gardaí here in Dublin Mid-West. This would make a real difference for communities here and ensure they can feel safe.

"However, instead of acting on our plan and delivering meaningful, long-term change, the government announced this short-term funding as a sticking plaster. Now, this funding has run out and has not been replaced. This is outrageous. "Minister McEntee continues to be out of touch and fails to grasp the severity of the fears communities in Dublin have.

People in Dublin Mid-West need to see change now, without any more delays or PR gimmicks that amount

to nothing. "Fine Gael have been responsible for the Justice Department for more than a decade.

In this time, they have totally failed An Garda Síochána by closing Garda stations, enforcing real term cuts to police numbers and leaving the city feeling unsafe and exposed. "A Sinn Féin government would stand up

for communities in Dublin Mid-West and our Gardaí by ensuring they have the resources and supports they need to do their jobs properly and keep communities safe. Communities continue to feel badly let down and abandoned by Minister McEntee and Fine Gael's soft-touch approach to crime. People in Dublin Mid-West deserve change."

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BIG TURNOUT FOR RATHCOOLE EDUCATE TOGETHER NS OPEN EVENING

Recently Rathcoole Educate Together National School open evening had a fantastic turn out. The information evening was held in the school's temporary accommodation in Citywest.

Principal Gemma Maher said "We want to thank everyone

who called to the open evening. Rathcoole Educate Together is in its fourth year and it is heartening to see so many Rathcoole families wanting to send their children to our school. We also had many local people come up to meet the school and see first-hand the

role we already play in the community in Rathcoole and our ambitions for the future.

The school's permanent building project was an item of discussion and there was great interest in this in view of the recent planning application by the

Department of Education for a new school campus". Before Christmas the Department of Education applied for planning permission for a 20-classroom primary school campus including 4 autism classes, PE Hall, basketball courts and vegetable gardens in Rathcoole Village.

principal. Austin O'Sullivan, Chair of the Rathcoole ETNS Board of Management said "We are grateful for the support and engagement we received from local public representatives.

Entirely separate from the Department's planning application for the school campus, we discussed with residents the need for better road infrastructure and how politicians and the community can work together to deliver this.

We explained to the politicians our temporary accommodation is only available until summer 2025 and it is essential, we move to a location in Rathcoole Village by then. The census figures demonstrate what we all know anecdotally. There

was a 38% increase in the total number of 5-9 year olds living in Rathcoole between census 2011 to 2016. Census 2022 saw the 2011 total of 5-9 year olds increase by 142%! We are playing catch up in terms of school building provision. There is no time to delay.

We want to thank everyone who came to the information evening, whether they are parents, neighbours, or local politicians. We are really excited about finally being in a new home at the heart of Rathcoole Village and are looking forward to working together to deliver what's best for the children and community".

Further information on Rathcoole ETNS is available at rathcooleetns.ie



APPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN THE REGIONS OPEN UNDER NEW STUDENT ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Senator Seery Kearney has welcomed the publication of the long-term student accommodation plan by Minister Simon Harris. The plan commits funding for universities to build student accommodation, repurpose vacant buildings for housing and the continued promotion of digs for homeowners and students.

Crucially, the plan confirms applications for student accommodation projects from the five Technological Universities are now open. Senator Seery Kearney: "Housing is our greatest challenge and Fine Gael is determined to deliver housing for all. "This new policy confirms the Government will invest in the building of student accommodation across the country. "This plan commits to building student accommodation in the regions, in towns across this country.

"Fine Gael has led the Technological University agenda, placing universities in towns across the country. "Now we take it to the next phase ensuring they have student housing on site. This will encourage more people to stay in their regions and could attract students across the country

to come study in towns like Dublin." Each Technological University will now be written to and asked for plans by the end of March.

Under this new student accommodation policy; The Government will fund the construction of purpose built student accommodation; Technological Universities to be enabled to build student accommodation in regions across the country; Funding will be provided to repurpose vacant properties into housing for students; Funding will be provided on basis a portion of beds will be ringfenced for students with a household income of €100,000. And continued support of the digs scheme with local authority and medical card changes to come into effect.

Speaking recently, Minister Harris said: "I am delighted to confirm Government has agreed a long-term policy on student accommodation. "This policy will help increase the supply of student housing in campuses across the country but will also help prevent students competing with families for private rental accommodation. "This vision and policy will inform a new Student Accommodation Policy, which will be published later this year."

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JOELS RAISES €2000 FOR BUMBLEANCE

One of Dublin's most iconic family restaurants has raised an impressive €2,000 through the sale of a Calendar Colouring Book! The donation will go to BUMBLEance - the Children's Ambulance Service. In October 2023, the restaurant held a colouring competition, inviting children to colour in their favourite pictures from Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer! They then picked a host of entries that made it into the calendar. As well as the winning entries, Joels included a new coloring page for each month of 2024 as well as all the key dates and more for the year ahead! All in all, making it a great gift

idea throughout the month of December! The Colouring Calendars, priced at only €5, were well received by customers with some even purchasing multiples to give out to grandchildren, nieces and nephews as stocking fillers!

Commenting on the idea behind the Calendar, Niamh Fitzgerald, Director of the Louis Fitzgerald Family, said, 'The idea of creating the Joels Colouring Calendar Book was twofold; We wanted to raise funds for a great organisation in BUMBLEance and also give our customers a really fun and useful gift idea for the family.

BUMBLEance provides an incredible service to families throughout Ireland and of course, Joels is ultimately a family restaurant at heart. We felt this made us great partners and we look forward to supporting them again in the future".

Joels Restaurant, located on the Naas Road is part of the four-star Louis Fitzgerald Hotel complex. A favourite amongst locals and visitors to Dublin, the restaurant has been at the heart of thousands of dining occasions and memories for over 30 years! Renowned for its delicious dishes to suit the whole family, beautiful

cocktails and of course, Joels famous desserts! As well as supporting BUMBLEance, In 2023, Joels supported a host of local organisations including Dublin Lions Basketball and St. Francis Football Club as part of their #supportlocal campaign.

BUMBLEance is the Children's Ambulance Service of Ireland. Operating nearly 2,000 trips per year across our 14 ambulances, they provide safe and comfortable transportation for Ireland's youngest patients as they travel between their homes and hospitals, hospices, treatment centres and respite centres nationwide. The BUMBLEance service is the first of its kind in the world. It has all the amenities of a regular ambulance, but includes the all-important extras to make a sick child's journey as safe, comfortable and entertaining as possible. Their aim is to distract, comfort and entertain Ireland's youngest patients as they travel to and from hospitals and paediatric treatment centres nationwide.



PRIORY YOUTHREACH TALLAGHT AWARDED NATIONAL HEALTH QUALITY MARK

Priory Youthreach Tallaght was awarded a Silver Standard Health Quality Mark (HQM) by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) in recognition of their work on health promotion for young people. Presenting the award at a special event held in Priory Youthreach, Greenhills Rd on the 29th of January, Bríd Collins from the NYCI National Youth Health Programme said "This award is a testament to the dedication and hard work of all at the Priory Youthreach who are committed to the highest quality standards in health promotion and there is a key priority here to ensure a healthy and safe place for young people and staff."

Youthreach, especially to Sandra as coordinator of the Health Promotion Team and those who have guided the organisation through the HQM process to ensure that their work is in line with national and international best practices in the area of youth health promotion.

The Priory Youthreach is a credit to those working there and it is clear that health promotion has been included in all aspects of the Youthreach. "The great work carried out here supports the national Healthy Ireland campaign, which is about increasing our focus on prevention, health promotion, and supporting young people to improve their health and wellbeing."

Ms Collins added "Congratulations are in order to the staff and learners of

[More information on youth.ie/health](http://www.youth.ie/health)



Pictured: Yvonne Delaney and Sandra Bagnall, members of the health promotion team from Priory Youthreach Tallaght were awarded a Silver Standard Health Quality Mark (HQM) by The National Youth Health Programme Health promotion Officer Bríd Collins on behalf of the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) in recognition of their work on health promotion for young people at a special event held in Priory Youthreach.

FIRHOUSE SCHOOL HOSTS FITNESS VISIT



Fitness and healthy eating should start at a young age. That's the message pupils at Scoil Carmel Junior National School, Firhouse heard when they recently hosted the popular children's fitness initiative 'Fit Squad'. Supported by Fyffes and delivered by Irish fitness expert Sharon Flanagan the visit saw over 100 pupils participate in an active age-appropriate workout designed to improve their general fitness during which advice on the importance of healthy eating was given. Running until March, the current series will see some 10,000 pupils participate from schools throughout Ireland, north and south, increasing to almost 40,000 the number that will have taken part in the programme since it was introduced in 2018. Schools interested in receiving a similar visit can find details at www.fyffesfitsquad.ie

GRIFFITH COLLEGE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS AS A LEADING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Griffith College, Ireland's largest independent higher education institution, celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2024. To mark this important milestone, the College will host a GC50 Business Breakfast at its South Circular Road, Dublin campus on Thursday, 1st February.

Simon Harris, T.D., Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science will give the keynote speech. The event will be attended

by representatives from the business, education and arts sectors, members of the local Dublin 8 community, along with current and former staff of the college.

Congratulating the College on its achievements over the past fifty years, Minister Simon Harris, T.D., said: "Over the past five decades Griffith College has been at the forefront of innovative education provision, remaining relevant and responsive as society and the economy have evolved and

changed in unexpected ways. It's inspiring to see how the college is always working to deliver programmes in a way that works for the learners, most recently by launching national apprenticeships in bar management and healthcare."

Professor Diarmuid Hegarty, President of Griffith College, said: "Griffith College has achieved much over the past half century. This has been founded on three key pillars - a clear focus on our learners, an agility in responding

to their needs and the needs of industry, and the dedication and commitment of the College's staff. These strengths will stand to us as we embrace the challenges and opportunities of the next fifty years."

Founded in 1974 by Professor Diarmuid Hegarty, Griffith College enjoys a national and a growing international

reputation for student success. Many alumni have gone on to distinguished careers in fields as diverse as accountancy, business, computing, design, engineering, law, politics and media.

Griffith College offers internationally recognised postgraduate and undergraduate degree

programmes, complemented by a wide range of professional, short term and corporate training educational solutions. Today, over 7,000 students are studying in the College, which is a designated educational institution of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). The College has campuses in Dublin, Cork and Limerick.





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MOTORING LIFE WITH

AUDI Q8 E-TRON – ELECTRIFICATION VISUALISED

By Breda Corrigan

The new Audi Q8 e-tron is essentially a mid-life update of the mighty e-tron SUV that was first launched in 2019, and its new name is part of Audi's latest naming strategy which categorises their models in terms of their size and status. In this mid-cycle upgrade, the Q8 e-tron has received a dynamic new front design that incorporates a new grille with an illuminated strip that sits above it, along with a substantial range boost thanks to larger batteries and more power.

Generous Space.

In terms of size, the Q8 e-tron is longer and wider than the Audi Q5 mid-size SUV but smaller than the seven-seat Q7 SUV. There are two rows of seats, with very generous rear legroom for three fully-grown adults. Foot space is excellent courtesy of a flat floor that does without the traditional central tunnel in the floor of internal combustion engine (ICE) cars. The closest luxurious electric SUV rivals to the Q8 e-tron include the

Jaguar I-Pace, Tesla Model X, BMW iX and the Mercedes-Benz EQC and EQS. The Q8 e-tron is available with a choice of two body styles - a traditional SUV (as tested) or a sleek Sportback version - both of which are offered with the same trim levels and powertrains.

Battery Capacity & Range.

The Q8 e-tron model line-up starts with the Q8 50 e-tron which gets a pair of electric motors for quattro all-wheel driveability, and a 89kWh usable battery. The mid-range Q8 55 e-tron benefits from a power boost and an even bigger battery with a usable capacity of 106kWh. Finally, serving as a replacement for the e-tron S is the SQ8 e-tron, which uses three electric motors to produce 496hp and a massive 973Nm of torque, powered by the same 106kWh battery as the Q8 55 e-tron. Official WLTP driving range figures for the 50 e-tron, 55 e-tron and SQ8 are 452km, 531km and 436km respectively. The Q8 e-tron's peak 170kW charge rate system makes good use of clever software management during charging

that ensures it accepts electricity swiftly. A suitable fast charger will top up the battery from 10-80% in just 28 minutes, with a full (0-100%) charge at a domestic wall-box charger taking around nine and a half hours to complete.

Three Trim Levels.

Three trim levels are available for the Q8 e-tron - Advance, Sport and S Line - all of which come in 50 e-tron and 55 e-tron variants. The upmarket interior of the Q8 e-tron is packed full of Audi flavour, with a suite of advanced safety and infotainment tech as standard, along with a high-quality cabin that is adorned with premium materials throughout. The whole design follows the modern EV formula of being minimalistic in order to make the cabin feel as airy and spacious as possible. Infotainment is taken care of by way of Audi's dual-screen MMI system with MMI touch functionality. The 10.2-inch upper screen provides access to the likes of vehicle settings, satellite navigation and telephone connectivity,



while the 8.6-inch lower screen is tasked with displaying features that a driver will interact with most often. The Audi Drive Select menu is accessed through the larger MMI screen, and drivers can select from offroad, all-road, comfort, auto, dynamic or individual drive modes to suit their individual driving style or road conditions.

Test Car.

My Audi Q8 e-tron 50 quattro test car came in top-spec S Line trim, and was finished in Daytona Grey Pearl Effect paintwork with upgraded 21" 5-arm Aero design wheels in black metallic in lieu of the standard-fit 21" turbine design wheels. Other key standard S Line equipment includes S Line bumpers in full paint finish, anti-theft wheel bolts, ambient lighting package, Matrix LED headlights with dynamic indicators, automatically dimming rear-view mirror, central locking with 'Keyless Go', rear privacy glass, heated front seats with 4-way lumbar support, Valcona leather upholstery, inlays in matte brushed aluminium,

leather multi-function sports steering wheel, Audi Virtual Cockpit, navigation system, Audi Sound System, USB ports in rear, Audi Phone Box light, Audi pre-sense (front), camera-based traffic sign recognition, cruise control with speed limiter, lane departure warning, and a reversing camera. The steering wheel-mounted paddles allow drivers to control the level of brake regeneration, but it is also possible to just leave the car to work out what is best. The Q8 e-tron is supremely comfortable, refined and - given its overall size - surprisingly easy to drive. With quattro all-wheel drive as standard, the car feels very stable, whether it is cruising on a motorway or travelling along imperfect road surfaces in urban settings. The well-weighted steering communicates well with the driver, and the car can turn into a corner with terrific precision. With 340hp and 664Nm of instant torque on offer from the twin electric motors, the Q8 e-tron 50 can sprint from 0-100km/h in six seconds flat, on its way to a top speed of 200km/h (where permitted).

Energy consumption as low as 20.3kWh/100km on a WLTP combined driving cycle equates to low running costs, while annual road tax is just €120. Families are sure to be impressed by the practical boot space in the Q8 e-tron, as it can be expanded from its 569-litre capacity behind the rear seats to a cavernous 1,637-litres when the rear seats are folded down.

Verdict & Pricing.

The new Audi Q8 e-tron is impressively refined, comfortable and beautifully built, and it is laden with cutting-edge tech. It is practical too, with lots of space in the luxurious cabin for up to 5 fully-grown adults, and ample boot space for their luggage. With its athletic and muscular profile, along with its terrific driving dynamics, the new Q8 e-tron is one of the best large premium SUVs on the market.

Pricing starts at €87,885 for the Q8 e-tron Advance 50 quattro, with my Q8 e-tron S Line 50 quattro test car specification priced from €97,390.



GOVERNMENT HAS ABANDONED PATIENTS AND WORKERS TO EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT CHAOS

TD for Dublin Mid-West Mark Ward has expressed serious concern that Tallaght Hospital is not equipped to deliver safe and timely care. He said that the opportunity to build up bed capacity to tackle overcrowding had been squandered over the last four years by government. The comments follow remarks made by Prof Conor Deasy, President of the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine, who warned of a "massive capacity issue" in hospitals across the state.

Teachta Ward said "The situation in hospital emergency departments across the state including Tallaght Hospital is chaotic. Workers are trying their hardest, doing long exhausting shifts and taking care of patients the best they can and I commend them. "However, the Government abandoned patients and workers when they made a deliberate decision to underfund the health service in the Budget and failed to make investments in capacity over the last three Budgets. Hospitals simply don't have the infrastructure that they need.

"It seems that Government has become immune to the unsafe, degrading, and

undignified experience many patients face in overcrowded hospitals. I agree entirely with Prof Conor Deasy, President of the Irish Association of Emergency Medicine. People deserve help in the right places when they need it. Patients who need emergency or urgent care should not put off attending hospital due to long waits, but the long waits need to be addressed. "Healthcare workers in Tallaght Hospital are trying their best but are working with one hand tied behind their back because they lack the bed, diagnostic, and theatre capacity that they need.

"The opportunity to build up capacity over the last four years has been squandered. We know there is a 1,000-bed deficit across the state, and that is reflected in the trolley figures on a daily basis and in tens of thousands of cancelled appointments every month. New figures show 26 people are waiting on trolleys and 10 people are waiting in wards for beds to become available. "The Government must urgently revise their budget for the health service in 2024 to target severe deficits - they must fund the promised 1500 hospital beds and deliver the statutory home care

scheme. Local government TD for this constituency Emer Higgins must explain why they backed this

appalling budget, despite the terrible consequences for the health service in Dublin Mid-West. "Patients

and workers in Tallaght Hospital deserve better. A Sinn Féin government would get to grips with the crisis in

our healthcare service and ensure patients get the high-quality, timely care they need."

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION AMENDMENTS ESTABLISH CLEAR GUIDELINES FOR SURROGACY

The AHR legislation published recently provides a definite legal framework for future surrogacies - here in Ireland and abroad, according to a Dublin Senator. Senator Mary Seery-Kearney, who is the Seanad Spokesperson on Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth said: "I welcome the amendments which will provide a clear process by which the parents of children born via surrogacy can ensure they will have life-long legal certainty in their relationship with their children. "As it stands, children born via surrogacy only have a right to a life-long legal relationship with their biological father. This means that when they turn 18, their mother or in the case of same sex male couples, their second father becomes a stranger to them in the eyes of the law.

"These amendments come as a relief to families who

have faced this kind of legal uncertainty as they grow their families. Now, they can be reassured that in a very short time their family relationships will be normalised legally. "This framework reflects the exceptional work of the Joint Oireachtas International Surrogacy Committee whose recommendations gave needed protections to women willing to become surrogates, the needs of children born via surrogacy and legal certainty to intending parents.

"Legislative safeguards and standards are crucial to protecting all parties involved. The new pre-conception authorisation process will ensure informed and voluntary participation in surrogacy. Yet, clarification will still need to be sought from the Minister on the confinement of payments to reasonable

expenses to prevent restricting international surrogacy avenues, especially for same-sex couples with limited family-building options.

"I want to thank the members of the Interdepartmental Group from Health, Children and Justice, the respective Ministers and the advocacy groups; Irish Families through Surrogacy and Irish Gay Dads, who worked incredibly hard to bring the recommendations of the Committee to reality and who laid bare their struggles

to illustrate the clear need for these amendments. The AHR Bill is currently at committee stage and will hopefully progress in a timely fashion through both Houses so that this framework can be on a statutory footing before the end of this term.

"As we re-examine the definition of the family in the upcoming referenda, I am reassured that those who might otherwise have fallen outside even a new enhanced definition will have access to the protections of the constitution."

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

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

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M.M.

DAILY PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH FOR EMPLOYMENT Dear St. Joseph, You were yourself once faced with the responsibility

of providing the necessities of life for Jesus and Mary. Look down with Fatherly compassion upon me in my anxiety over my present inability to support my family. Please help me to find gainful employment very soon, so that this heavy burden of concern will be lifted from my heart, and that I am soon able to provide for those whom God has entrusted to my care. Help us to guard against bitterness and discouragement so that we may emerge from this trial spiritually enriched and with even greater blessing from God.
Amen M.M.

NOVENA TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. You who solve all problems, who lights all roads so that I can obtain my goal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and to forget all evil against me and that in all instances of my life, you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things and to confirm that I never want to be separated from you even and in spite of all material illusion. I wish to be with you in

eternal glory. Thank you for your mercy toward me and mine. (mention favours) This prayer must be said for 3 consecutive days and published immediately After 3 days the favor requested will be granted even though it may appear difficult. This prayer must be published immediately and after 3 days the favour will be granted.
M.M.

PRAYER TO ST ANNE TO OBTAIN SOME SPECIAL FAVOUR Glorious St Anne, filled with compassion for those who invoke thee, and with love for those who suffer, heavily laden with the weight of my troubles, I cast myself at thy feet, and humbly beg of thee to take the present affair which I recommend to thee under thy special protection. Vouchsafe to commend it to thy Daughter, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and lay it before the throne of Jesus, so that He may bring it to a happy issue. Cease not to intercede for me until my request is granted. Above all obtain for me the grace of one day beholding my God

face to face, and with thee and Mary and all the saints praising and blessing Him for all eternity. Good St Anne, Mother of her who is our life, our sweetness and our hope, pray to her for us, and obtain our request. (Say three times.)
M.M.

Prayer to Our Lady Mount Carmel O most beautiful Flower of Mount Carmel, Fruitful Vine, Splendour of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me this my necessity. O Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein you are my Mother. O Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart, to succour me in this necessity; there are none that can withstand your power. O, show me herein you are my Mother, O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee. (3 times) Sweet Mother, I place this cause in your hands. (3 times) I.B

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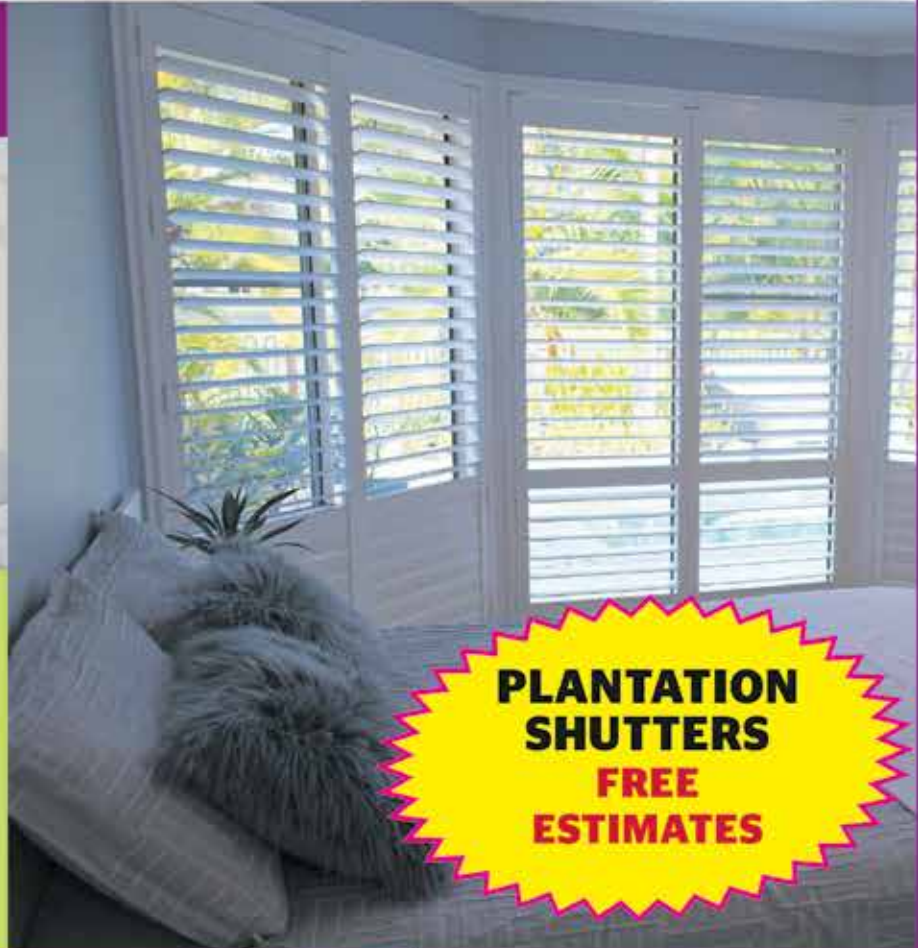
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