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CHILDREN WITH SCOLIOSIS CANNOT TAKE ANY MORE BROKEN PROMISES

TD for Dublin South West Seán Crowe has said that allowing waiting lists to get as long as they have is not only hurting children with scoliosis, but also their families. Teachta Crowe said that the Government failed to meet the promise it made in 2017 that no child would be waiting longer than four months for surgery, saying that waiting times are actually longer now.

Teachta Crowe said "In my opinion, leaving a child diagnosed with scoliosis to languish without the medical and surgical intervention they require borders on the cruel. We know that early

intervention and treatment for children with scoliosis is paramount for preventing severe complications. If left untreated, scoliosis can lead to debilitating spinal deformities, respiratory issues and chronic pain.

"Allowing waiting lists to get as long as they have is not only hurting children but also their families. Parents look on helplessly as their children slowly become more and more impacted, first by the unnatural posture and then the agony, torment and chronic pain that no child or adult should have to endure. They even have trouble catching their breath. All too often, they

are left with no option but a wheelchair, with the very real prospect of never walking unaided again.

"Timely interventions like bracing or surgery can halt or correct the progression of the curvature of the spine, thereby ensuring normal spinal development and preventing long-term disabilities. The key word here is 'timely'. "Long waiting lists are not some political football. Behind those numbers are very real individuals whose quality of life is slowly eroded week by week, month by month. Children and their families deserve better.

"The Government has

failed to meet the promise it made in 2017 that no child would be waiting longer than four months for surgery. It is beyond a failure. Waiting times are getting worse, as the Minister knows. "The Minister has a choice in that he can end the waiting lists and we can collectively agree to end this scandal and address the real challenges facing these families.

We have it in our collective power in this House to stop the pain these families are facing. There is no reason we cannot support these families and bring about supports for these young people."

MARY KENNEDY OPENS STATE-OF-THE-ART MEDRAY GROUP HQ

RTE star Mary Kennedy performed the official opening of new state-of-the-art offices for Medray Group. The new offices are in South West Business Park in Cheeverstown. The company employs 30+ people at these offices with most employees coming from Clondalkin, Tallaght and Lucan and surrounding areas. The company employs a total of 120+ people across its operations in Ireland and the UK.



Pictured RTE's Mary Kennedy with Siobhan Crowley CEO of Medray Group

Cllr. Shane Moynihan

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SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL MINI WOODLANDS

South Dublin County Council in conjunction with The Stepping Stone Forest Group, Dodder Action Group, Cairde Pháirc Thigh Motháin - Friends of Tymon Park and Clondalkin Tidy Towns, will plant in excess of 16,000 native mini woodland trees and ground cover plants as part of our Mini Woodland projects across South Dublin County in Tymon Park, Dodder Valley Park and Corkagh Park.

Mini Woodlands are a small, dense, rapid-growing plantations of entirely native species in an urban setting. They are sometimes referred to as 'Stepping-Stone-Forests' as they assist wildlife in moving from one

area to another, encouraging genetic diversity as well as providing a natural refuge in urban areas. It is based on the high-density planting method developed by international award-winning botanist Prof. Akira Miyawaki, who started planting mini woodlands in the 1970s. Using native species mini woodlands are designed to mimic a natural habitat with a canopy tree layer, a sub-tree layer, a shrub layer, and a ground layer. This is a two-step project; the first step is to add cardboard and mulch to the ground to suppress weeds.

The second is the planting of small trees in early spring

of each year. SDCC supplies the land, mulch, and trees, while the community groups contribute their labour.

The first mini woodland trial was planted in November 2021 in Sean Walsh Park in Tallaght by members of the local litter-picking group Tallaght Litter Mugs where 900 native trees were planted. Since then there have been 20,000 mini woodland trees planted across the County in 36 locations (public and private lands) with 1,500 volunteers being involved. The volunteers that have been involved to date range from schools, corporate companies, colleges, sports clubs, elected members, government TDs, local volunteer groups, residents, park users and community environmental groups.

Mini woodlands offer a range of benefits: they provide shelter and food for wildlife, including nesting birds, pollinators, and other insects. Additionally, these woodlands connect wildlife corridors, facilitating safe passage for various flora

and fauna vegetation. Furthermore, the woodlands play a crucial role in mitigating biodiversity loss by creating diverse habitats that support genetic diversity and aid in the movement of species. They also contribute to climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration and

help mitigate flooding and soil erosion through water retention, absorption, and root growth.

Upcoming events will take place where 16,000 mini woodland trees will be planted on 8th & 9th of March 4,000 mini woodland trees will be planted in

Corkagh Park by community volunteers led by Clondalkin Tidy Towns. And on 15th & 16th of March 8,000 mini woodland trees in Tymon Park by community volunteers led by Cairde Pháirc Thigh Motháin - Friends of Tymon Park, this will be the largest mini woodland planted to date on one site.



Pic: Ben Ryan

NEWS GROUP

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DUAL DIAGNOSIS: NO WRONG DOOR BILL PASSES SECOND STAGE

Mark Ward TD has said his legislation can plug gaps between mental health and addiction services. Deputy Ward was speaking following his legislation the Dual Diagnosis: No Wrong Door Bill 2021, passed Second Stage in the Dáil recently. Dual Diagnosis refers to people who present for treatment who

have substance misuse and mental health conditions. Teachta Ward said "The Dual Diagnosis: No Wrong Door Bill is an important piece of legislation that aims to plug the gaps in services that exist between mental health and addiction.

to be developed to make sure people get the care they need, when they need it and where they need it.

"This legislation was debated 1 year ago and the Government opted to kick it down the road until recently, to see the results of the citizen's assembly on drugs, the publishing of the model of care on dual diagnosis and the reform of the Mental Health Act 2001.

"The Citizens Assembly on Drugs has recommended a strategy that focuses on dual diagnosis, and that is

welcome. "I have spoken to dual diagnosis services on the ground and they are not encouraged by the implementation of the model of care. "We are still waiting for the Reform of the Mental Health Act 2001, with no publishing date in sight. "I've contacted the health committee and asked that this Bill is considered for pre-legislative scrutiny as soon as possible" "There can be no more delays by Government on dual diagnosis.

"There can be No Wrong Door for dual diagnosis treatment."

LAW TO TACKLE ILLEGAL DUMPING IN DUBLIN MID WEST

The recent signing into law of the 'Circular Economy Act' represents a big step in tackling illegal dumping and littering, a local TD has said. All local authorities, including South Dublin County Council can now use CCTV and drones to spot and stop illegal dumping in problem areas. Local TD for Dublin Mid West Emer Higgins supports this new legislation, saying "it's a big moment for our communities, giving us tools to deal with illegal dumping in Dublin Mid West. Advocating for this law in 2022, my aim was to tackle the prevalent issues of illegal dumping and fly-tipping, especially in the more rural areas of South Dublin".

represents an average increase of 3,459 tonnes compared to previous data and reinforces the importance of the Circular Economy Act in offering needed solutions.

Local Councillor Shirley O'Hara also welcomes the new legislation. She's been working to fight against illegal dumping and littering throughout Dublin Mid West and sees this new legislation as a major step in the right direction "I'm delighted to see the introduction of this legislation, it's been a long time coming and is going to significantly impact our communities, making them cleaner and more environmentally friendly."

"The Circular Economy Act encourages everyone - residents, businesses, local authorities - to work together for better waste management. By utilising modern technology and enforcing tougher regulations, this new law should help to ensure that the areas hardest hit by illegal dumping see real change, creating cleaner, safer, and more enjoyable spaces for everyone".

Reports of calls to the National Environment Complaints Line reveal that South Dublin is one of the worst areas to be hit by illegal dumping, with an increase on incidents happening each year. This law aims to change that by allowing better targeted monitoring and action. The litter management data from South Dublin County Council indicates a pressing challenge, with an annual collection of approximately 11,609 tonnes of waste, including illegal dumping. This

"People who have a Dual Diagnosis often fall between these gaps. Addiction and mental health often go hand in hand. "An addiction may lead to the onset of mental health issues or a mental health issue can lead to people using substances as a coping mechanism. "Because of the inadequacies in the state's mental health system, people can turn to drink and drugs to give calm to an anxious inner world.

"This is where problems can occur. The mental health problems remain, but are added to by addiction problems. "This Bill will mean that no matter what door the person knocks on for help for addiction and mental health problems, that they are treated with dignity. "A joint care plan between addiction and mental health services needs

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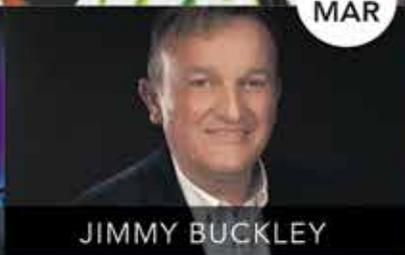
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WASTE OPERATOR 'TRANSACTION FEES' – A CAUSE OF CONCERN

Some concerned customers of domestic waste operator Greyhound have reported having surcharges applied, for choosing to pay their domestic waste bin charges by credit or debit card. According to one local county councillor representing residents in Lucan and Palmerstown-Fonthill, Greyhound customers have contacted him about the recent introduction of a surcharge, described on account holder's bills as a 'transaction fee'.

Cllr Derren Ó Brádaigh said "I was first contacted by a Greyhound customer living in Lucan before Christmas and complaining of being charged .85ct for every transaction that they made by bank card. When they raised this with the company, they were quickly reimbursed €1.70 for the two prior occasions charged. Shortly afterwards, I received another call from a customer in Palmerstown

concerned at the legality of being charged for every time they paid by card. I contacted the company by email asking that they set out their policy in this regard but only received an automated response, with no further correspondence. That same afternoon, I was contacted by the same Palmerstown resident to say the charge was now being 'waived' after raising the issue earlier in the day.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh also said "I spoke with party colleagues and asked for a Parliamentary Question be submitted to the Minister. At the end of January, we submitted this through my colleague Mark Ward TD's office, asking for clarification and comment on any reported practice of such in the industry. In response it was stated that the practice of service providers charging consumers a surcharge for making payments with credit or debit cards is prohibited

under Regulations 86(6) of S.I. No.6 of 2028. The response went on further to state that the issue has now been brought to the attention of the Central Bank of Ireland and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission.

Ó Brádaigh added "Initially I submitted this as a concern for the attention of South Dublin County Council, but as I expected, they do not have any role in this regard, because as we unfortunately are all too aware, domestic waste collection services were taken out of the hands of our local authorities. Therefore, I felt compelled to contact the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, which I did in early January. The response when received this month stated that whilst the Commission does not hold an ombudsman role and they can't intervene in individual disputes, they

advise any customer that has experienced a surcharge applied to their transaction to query the exact reason for it with the business and seek a refund where it relates to the use of a card to make a payment. On a follow up call with the agency, they did confirm that they had received a several complaints and that this had been referred to their Consumer Enforcement Protection Team to further investigate the matter.

Cllr Ó Bradaigh further added "In the meantime, I did contact Greyhound earlier this month to again ask for an update on behalf of the constituents I represent and requesting clarification from the waste services operator. I asked whether they would confirm this new charge, when it was introduced and if customers had been notified. The response was not forthcoming, and I have received no reply to a subsequent email almost 2 weeks ago now. I also called Greyhound this week and spoke with a representative regarding charges for new customers. When I asked the specific question about incurring any additional charges for choosing to pay



by card, it was confirmed to me that a 2 month upfront payment was required and a 'transaction fee' of 0.85ct would apply on every transaction made by card. When I queried this practice, I was put on hold to see if 'anything could be done'. I was then quickly informed that this could be waived, but only if I signed up today!"

The Councillor concluded by saying "In a time of increased cost of living difficulties

being felt by so many families in my constituency and beyond, and when people all too often are simply being squeezed for every penny, I would appeal to all businesses to engage transparently, fairly and apply an equal payment policy for goods and services for every customer. I welcome the referral of this matter to the appropriate bodies and look forward to any decision affording fair outcome to all concerned."

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CALL FOR URGENCY IN THE REFURBISHMENT OF LUCAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Parents Association of Lucan Community College recently met public representatives to highlight the ongoing issue of the lack of progress for the proposed extension at the college.

The process has been ongoing for the past sixteen years. At present there are over 800 pupils attending the school and there is a waiting list for new entrants. The new refurbishment to the college would be extensive and would include additional classrooms and educational spaces to cater for a better learning environment. The school was built over 40 years ago.

Deputy Gino Kenny who attended the meeting with the Parents Association said, "I completely agree with the Parents Association frustration with the lack of progress on the refurbishment of Lucan Community College.

They acknowledge that the building process is at

Stage 3 and the tendering process is underway. The lack of transparency and urgency is affecting pupils, teachers, and parents. I have written to the Minister

for Education requesting that the Department give a clear timeline on when the works will begin. It's imperative that this happens immediately."

Cllr. Charlie O'Connor PC *Living in Tallaght ... Working for Tallaght*

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GARDA RESERVE RECRUITMENT WELCOME BUT GOVERNMENT MUST IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY SAFETY PROPOSALS

TD Mark Ward has welcomed confirmation from the Minister for Justice that a Garda Reserve recruitment campaign will commence soon. This was a key proposal by Sinn Féin. However, he

warned that this must only be a first step and that government must act on other measures Sinn Féin has called for as well. The information was supplied to party spokesperson on

Justice Pa Daly TD in reply to a Parliamentary Question about the Garda Reserve regulations.

Teachta Ward said "Communities deserve to feel safe and protected. However, we know here in Dublin Mid-West that the reality is that many communities feel badly let down. They want to see more Gardaí on the streets and to know that when they need help Gardaí will be there to protect them. "Last year I highlighted the reduction in Gardaí in the Dublin Metropolitan Region by nearly 10% since 2011, all the while the population of Dublin Mid-West has increased. This means a dramatic decrease in Garda numbers relative to the local population.

"The Minister has finally confirmed to Sinn Féin Justice spokesperson Pa Daly TD that she will bring Garda Reserve regulations to cabinet for approval within the coming weeks. This is a key issue that Sinn

Féin have been demanding action on for months. "This is welcome and long-overdue news. I welcome that the Minister has finally heeded these calls, as communities in Dublin Mid-West have been desperately seeking support for some time now. "Although Reserve members cannot replace full time, highly trained and sworn Gardaí, they can offer a capacity to cover events and other duties which would otherwise occupy full time Gardaí.

"With news that the removal of the upper age limit, something Sinn Féin also called for, has seen an increase in applications to the latest Garda recruitment drive, progress in this area needs to be seen soon. "Communities deserve to feel safe and protected. But the reality is that communities feel badly let down by Fine Gael's soft-touch approach to crime. People in Dublin feel abandoned by this out of touch government and they need to see urgent change.

"Sinn Féin will continue to hold the government to account, with recruitment targets needing to be met and exceeded to restore service levels by An Garda Síochána to what is required to ensure public safety. A Sinn Féin government will ensure communities can feel safe and protected in Dublin Mid-West and across the state. "I will continue to

push for the implementation of all Sinn Féin's other proposals on getting to grips with policing; including delivering a public transport police unit and a recruitment and retention taskforce.

A Sinn Féin government would stand up for communities in Dublin Mid-West to ensure they can feel safe and protected."



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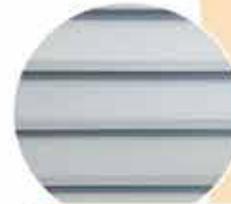
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MORE INFORMATION NEEDED ON 'RIGHTSIZING' OPTIONS

More information needs to be more readily available and in the public domain advertising potential home move options available to both local authority tenants and homeowners wishing to 'Rightsize' according to one South Dublin County Councillor.

Sinn Féin Councillor Derren Ó Brádaigh said "Rightsizing and allocation of age-friendly accommodation came before us at my very first Council meeting in December 2020. This is a policy that I fully support and that seeks to address both the independent needs of our older population, whilst making the very best use of existing homes already in our communities.

"I understand that 205 applications were made to the Council's housing section in 2023. Of these 112 were from existing Council tenants, with 93 expressions of interest for the Private Financial Contribution Scheme from homeowners.

Ó Brádaigh, a councillor

representing Lucan and Palmerstown-Fonthill added "Whilst 29 Council tenants have successfully transferred to new age-friendly accommodation from the figure mentioned, progress from the private home applicant end of things appears to be much slower. Only 2 are near completion stage, 12 have been referred to the Housing Procurement Section for valuation and inspection checks, with the vast remaining majority experiencing delays with requested documentation.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh also said "A previous Council occupancy study revealed that there were approximately 700 homes with single occupancy and a further 500 homes with two people residing, all over the age of 55. Approximately 20% of households on the Council's housing list have a need for three or four-bedroom homes.

"Providing choice to people that wish to transition to alternative and more tailored living, where there is perhaps only two persons

or even a single person living alone in a three or four-bedroom home, thus freeing up potential homes for larger families on the housing list has much merit. However, it is crucial that all planned or prospective supply of age-friendly housing is designed to be age appropriate and must help to support independent living as well as being within easy reach of transport, healthcare and other key services and supports for older persons within existing communities.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh concluded "In response to an official question I just received, the Council will shortly launch a new dedicated webpage on www.sdcc.ie providing information on Right Sizing options for tenants and private homeowners in the County with details of how to apply, images and locations of upcoming age friendly housing opportunities in the County. This is something I very much welcome and I hope that any identified paperwork obstacles will be addressed to help in moving the process along."

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LUCAN STUDENTS AWARDED FIRST CONSTRUCTION QUALIFICATIONS

Transition year and senior cycle students from Griffeen Community College, Lucan recently completed their Safe Pass training with the Construction Industry Federation and SOLAS. They were pictured receiving their first professional qualification after successfully undertaking the training course. Safe Pass is the national mandatory safety training for the construction industry and students from Griffeen Community College undertook the training as part of their curriculum for this year.

Dermot Carey, Director, Safety & Training at CIF congratulated the students and expressed his gratitude to staff at the school. "Congratulations to Griffeen Community College students on completing their Safe Pass training. Mr Maloney and the school must be commended for giving their students every opportunity to develop their skills and their career options."

Speaking about the training Sean Maloney, a teacher at Griffeen Community College

felt the training was a positive experience for the students, "It was a huge success. I hope this is a gateway to a career in the construction industry for our students."

Students from across Dublin and Ireland are undertaking Safe Pass training with the Construction Industry Federation as part of Transition Year, Leaving Cert and Leaving Cert Applied courses in schools this year. The initiative is part of the CIF's Careers Campaign to support students interested in a career in the construction industry.

"Safe Pass is a key qualification we all have in the construction sector. From architects, site managers to work experience labourers, Donegal to Dingle, everyone working in the sector starts with a SafePass. I hope this qualification is the first of many for students at Griffeen Community College and leads some to a rewarding career in our industry," said Dermot Carey, Construction Industry Federation.



Pictured Transition year and senior cycle students from Griffeen Community College, Lucan pictured taking part in the Construction Industry Federation's Safe Pass training, recently.

COUNCILLOR EXPRESSES JOY THAT DERELICT HOMES WILL BE PURCHASED BY COUNCIL

People Before Profit Councillor Madeleine Johansson has expressed joy at the news that South Dublin County Council has begun the process to Compulsory Purchase two derelict homes in Palmerstown.

The information was released as part of a response to a motion submitted by Cllr Johansson. The motion was calling on the council to Compulsory Purchase the two houses that have been vacant for almost a decade.

Cllr Madeleine Johansson said: "I'm delighted that the

council has decided to begin the Compulsory Purchase of two derelict properties in Palmerstown. "It's a disgrace that these houses have been left vacant for so long in the middle of a housing crisis. I hope that these houses will be refurbished and used to provide homes for families on the social housing waiting list. "These houses are an eyesore in the area and attract illegal dumping and rats so the Compulsory Purchase is very welcome for the local community."

Gino Kenny TD added, "Fair play to Cllr Madeleine

Johansson who put this motion forward, this is a great win for the community." "There are 166,000 vacant properties in Ireland, with over 48,000 vacant for six years or more.

We need to keep pressure on the government and make sure that as many of these properties as possible are taken back into public ownership and used to house the tens of thousands of people in this country who are homeless, languishing on the housing list and in unsafe and insecure accommodations."

GARDAÍ NOW HAVE POWERS TO SEIZE SCRAMBLER BIKES

TD for Dublin South West Seán Crowe has welcomed confirmation that local gardaí finally feel empowered to stop and seize after the recent passage of the Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023. Teachta Crowe said that there has been too many accidents and close calls involving scrambler bikes tearing through our parks and screaming down our streets with no thought to the safety and wellbeing of others.

Teachta Crowe said "I was glad to hear from local garda representatives at last week's Joint Policing Committee meeting that the gardaí now feel empowered to seize scrambler bikes being used dangerously in public areas. For too long, they felt their hands were tied, particularly when dealing with minors riding the bikes. "We have seen too many accidents and close calls

involving scrambler bikes tearing through our parks and screaming down our streets with no thought to the safety and wellbeing of others. Only in recent weeks, an elderly woman was struck down and hospitalised after being mowed down by a hit and run scrambler in Killinarden.

"The instances of these events have only grown since Christmas. These bikes are not toys and now the gardaí will be seizing and destroying any that are used dangerously or in other criminal behaviour. "Local gardaí informed me that there will be an increased garda presence, both uniformed and plain clothes, in our public spaces and parks to stem the dangerous use of these vehicles which have no place on playing fields or next to playgrounds, no more than any car or motorbike would."



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MOTORING LIFE WITH**NEW KONA ELECTRIC MOVES UP MARKET****By Breda Corrigan**

The original Hyundai KONA Electric was a tremendous success for the Korean brand in Ireland, and the all-new model is set to build on this success. For the second-generation of the KONA, Hyundai developed the electric version first and the petrol and hybrid versions afterwards. The outgoing KONA Electric accounted for 40% of European KONA sales, and that is expected to rise to around 60% for the new model, thereby making it an incredibly-important car for Hyundai. Having already been hugely impressed by the new KONA Hybrid a few months ago, I had great expectations for the pure-electric version, and I certainly wasn't disappointed.

Bigger & More Dynamic.

The new KONA is bigger in every area than its predecessor, so it now fits comfortably into the Medium SUV market segment, and is pitched against talented EV rivals such as the Kia Niro, Mercedes-Benz EQA, Mazda MX-30 and new Honda e:Ny1. The new KONA is 145mm longer than its predecessor, and this results in greater legroom for all occupants. In fact, it is so spacious in the back now that knee and headroom dimensions are almost at the same level as in Hyundai's larger Tucson family SUV. The Tucson was also the inspiration for the new KONA in terms of styling, with parametric pixel lights at the front and a slim, full-width light bar. A full-width light bar also features at the rear and it provides the car with a distinctive and ultra-modern look. In a similar fashion

to the Tucson, the new KONA features the same kind of sharp lines and solid surfaces in its side profile, and the overall design is truly impressive from every view-point. Boot space in the new KONA is equally impressive, with 466-litres on offer behind the rear seats, and up to 1,300-litres available when the seats are folded flat.

Trim & Battery Options.

Trim levels in the new KONA Electric consist of Elegance and Platinum variants, both of which are extremely well-equipped in terms of standard comfort, convenience, safety and infotainment systems. The KONA Elegance is available with the option of a 48.4kWh battery with a front-mounted 154bhp motor and a range of up to 377kms or a 65.4kWh battery with a 215bhp motor on the front axle that can provide up to 514kms of range from a fully-charged battery, while the range-topping Platinum version is only available with the larger battery. Both versions of the KONA Electric can charge at rates of up to 120kW, which enables a 10-80% charge to be completed in as little as 41 minutes. Alternatively, a 11kW domestic wallbox charger can complete a 0-100% charge in around 6.5 hours.

Road Test Report.

My test car was a new KONA Electric Platinum 65kWh which was finished in stylish Ecotronic Grey metallic paintwork. As with the petrol

and hybrid versions of the new KONA, the spacious cabin in the Electric version is very well constructed and cleverly laid-out. The essential controls are conveniently grouped together for ease of use and the paddles behind the steering wheel adjust the level of brake regeneration on offer - leading to one-pedal drivability (i-Pedal) at the driver's discretion.

The cabin takes inspiration from its IONIQ 5 sibling, and it looks all the better for it. A 12.3" digital driver's display sits beside a 12.3" touchscreen infotainment system, both of which look great and are user-friendly too. Many drivers will be happy to hear that Hyundai engineers have retained physical buttons beneath the touchscreen for infotainment shortcuts along with a separate climate control system. Hyundai has made the most of the extra room by moving the drive selector from the centre console to a stalk behind the steering wheel, thereby freeing up more storage space in the centre console. A simple twist of the gear selector to the 'D' position is all that is needed to set off in total silence, and a choice of 4 driving modes allows you to choose between Eco, Normal, Sport and Snow settings. The KONA Electric is very easy to drive and there is very little body lean when cornering. The handling is reassuringly safe and the steering provides good levels of feedback to the driver, while overall ride comfort is impressive - even when driving over speed humps and pitted road surfaces. Thanks to

255Nm of instant torque, the KONA Electric is thrillingly quick off the line and it can sprint from 0-100km/h in just 7.8-seconds, on its way to a top speed of 172km/h (where permitted). Engineering-wise, the new KONA Electric is stronger, lighter and bigger than ever before, and it now comes with a comprehensive suite of driver assist and crash protection safety equipment for total peace-of-mind motoring.

Verdict, Price & Warranty.

The all-new KONA Electric has grown in length, width and wheelbase, resulting in more space, room for a larger battery, and a smoother ride quality. It provides owners with a significantly better driving experience than its predecessor, and it is a highly commendable pure-electric medium SUV in every respect. With its fast and flexible charging options, spacious cabin and boot, and its best-in-class range, along with its impressive list of standard equipment, the KONA Electric will be hard for EV buyers to overlook.

Pricing starts at €36,995 for the Elegance 48kWh model, with my test car specification priced at €43,995 (ex-delivery, but inclusive of current Government EV incentives, where appropriate). Annual road tax is just €120. A five-year, unlimited mileage warranty comes as standard, along with the benefit of Roadside Assistance for five years, and a free vehicle health check for five years too.

ROTARY CLUB DUBLIN RAISES €35,000 FOR SALVATION ARMY HOMELESS CENTRE

Rotary Club Dublin has raised a staggering €35,000 to help the most vulnerable homeless people in the capital. The organisation donated the proceeds from

its annual President's Dinner at Dublin Castle on Saturday (Feb 24) to The Salvation Army.

The Christian church and charity will use the funds to renovate and provide specially adapted accommodation for people with disabilities living at its Granby Lifehouse on Granby Row. More than 150 guests attended the gala event to support the charity - one of the biggest providers of homeless services in Dublin. Colonel Neil Webb, Divisional Commander of The Salvation Army in Ireland, praised Rotary's 'incredible generosity' at the event.

"Over the past 30 years, we have witnessed a new phenomenon in Ireland with growing numbers of families presenting as homeless," he said. "Increased rents and a dire shortage of housing supply has forced many families into homelessness. "There are currently over 13,500 people, including 4,000 children, in emergency accommodation. That's an increase of 15% year on year."

Colonel Webb told the function that the past two decades of housing policy has led to a severe lack of appropriate housing and major systemic change is needed to confront this. The Granby Centre opened in 1994 and every night, provides a specialised service for almost 100 men and women who have a mix of long-term supported housing and supported accommodation needs.

"Many of them actually stay with us for a considerable time - partly due to the lack of available independent living accommodation that they can move to, so a large proportion of them become like family members," said

Colonel Webb.

"In the last two years we have improved our medical provision within the centre, to try to mitigate some of those circumstances and make the time staying at the Granby a time of healing and restoration."

Rotary Club Dublin President, Dr Delma Sweeney, said that as homelessness is one of the

most significant community problems facing Ireland, helping the Salvation Army in the renovation of accommodation for those who have a disability and are homeless "fits entirely with our club's values and focus". "When we live in comfort, with plenty, imagining what it is like to live as a homeless person can be difficult," she said. "Yet your response to this fundraiser shows that

this charitable cause has touched many hearts. Thank you."

During the gala dinner, an auction of items was also held to boost the fundraising drive - and members were able to make one-off donations.

The event also included a three-course meal, raffle and entertainment by lyric soprano Jade Phoenix.



Rotary Club Dublin President, Dr Delma Sweeney, left, and Colonel Neil Webb, Divisional Commander, The Salvation Army Ireland, at the Rotary Club's President's dinner at Dublin Castle, in aid of the Salvation Army's Granby Lifehouse. Picture credit: Gareth Chaney.



The Salvation Army brass band at the Dublin Castle fundraiser in aid of its Granby Lifehouse. Picture credit: Gareth Chaney.





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24-HOUR PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM LONG OVERDUE FOR DUBLIN

Dublin needs an around the clock public transport service and the expansion of rail services is essential to making this happen, a local TD has said. Deputy Emer Higgins said "It's time to

address the gap in late-night transportation options and remove the over-reliance on taxis. "At present, only a restricted number of Dublin Bus routes operate 24 hours, leaving some

commuters with no late-night alternatives.

"Unfortunately, the Luas, DART and trains do not provide services during these critical hours. This poses

great difficulties for workers who may be unable to accept roles which necessitate late night or early morning shift work due to a lack of transport, as well as people who wish to socialise in the city late at night.

be the only option. "Many of our city's transport solutions will be provided for in the National Transport Authority's plan by 2042, but we cannot wait that long to be able to travel efficiently and cheaply to and from our city throughout the day and night. "I will be pursuing this with Iarnród Éireann and

Transdev to assess if a pilot expansion of rail services can be given consideration. Fine Gael is committed to creating safer streets and stronger communities and having a capital city where people can travel safely and seamlessly at any hour is central to that objective," concluded Deputy Higgins.

CALL FOR DANGEROUS JUNCTION TO BE ADDRESSED

Cllr William Carey has called for TII and SDCC to form a working group to address the existing dangers at the junction of Naas Rd and Boot Road, Clondalkin. At the local area committee meeting for Clondalkin, Newcastle, Rathcoole, Saggart & Brittas Cllr Carey again raised the issue through a motion calling for action. According to Cllr Carey the most recent serious incident took place here on December 10th last when a two-car collision resulted in some serious injuries but luckily there were no fatalities.

The Clondalkin Councillor also pointed out that in the day in question, local residents were on the adjacent green at the top of Boot Rd busily decorating trees with Christmas lights when the crash occurred. Debris was sent flying across the green narrowly missing the adults and children and this could have been a catastrophe. As it was the drivers and passengers suffered some serious injuries and had to be cut out of the vehicles by emergency services with gardai and Dublin Fire Brigade in attendance. Cllr Carey said that he had raised his concerns about this junction back in October at an SDCC local area

committee meeting where he had sought a meeting with TII. Unfortunately, this meeting was rejected by TII in a response dated 30th November 2023.

In response Cllr Carey replied to TII outlining his concerns on 8th of January this year. Cllr Carey stated that what was major concern was the apparent lack of record by TII of any incidents at this junction. According to Cllr Carey, Garda records show a slew of incidents here but are recorded under heading of Boot Rd, Old Naas Rd and Green Isle Road. Cllr Carey said, I find this quite concerning as it seems that the data is not showing up in the proper manner here.

Cllr Carey continued by saying that he has since received an indication that TII have agreed to consider some radical changes here as a result of his correspondence and that he will be seeking submissions locally for thoughts on how the dangers can be addressed. Cllr Carey concluded by saying, I am hopeful that I will receive the full support of the local councillors at the recent meeting and finally getting some action here.

"There are portions of the public who avoid going out in the city because they worry about how they will get home. Many loathe to take their car into the city due to traffic and parking restrictions, while the shortage and expense of taxis is also a consideration," she explained.

"The success of 24-hour bus routes shows that there is a demand for public transport at night. Iarnród Éireann and Transdev need to give due consideration to expanding their Luas, DART and suburban rail services to run during the night. "Aspects of the service could be pared back if required, such as making fewer stops - but the provision of a night time rail service would offer another essential option to people who need to travel to and from the city at off peak hours. Taxis cannot

LOCAL ORGANISATION APPEAL FOR EASTER DONATIONS

Local representative Ruth Nolan highlights a local organisation's appeal for Easter donations, she said "The latest Food Insecurity Research launched by children's charity Barnardo's shows some 41% of parents have said they had to skip meals or reduce portion sizes last year so that their children would have enough to eat. This figure is an increase of 12% on the previous year 2022. This research also found that 24% of parents said they borrowed money to feed their children last year, up 8% on the 16% figure in 2022".

"Meanwhile 12% of parents used a food bank last year. These figures are appalling for a first world country like Ireland". "One of these valued centres that assists people in food poverty is the Quarryvale Family Resource Centre in Clondalkin. They are appealing for Easter donations such as Easter eggs, hot cross buns and other goodies. They can be dropped off at the centre until Monday 25th March, or you can donate to their GoFundMe Easter fundraiser"

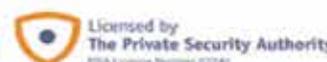
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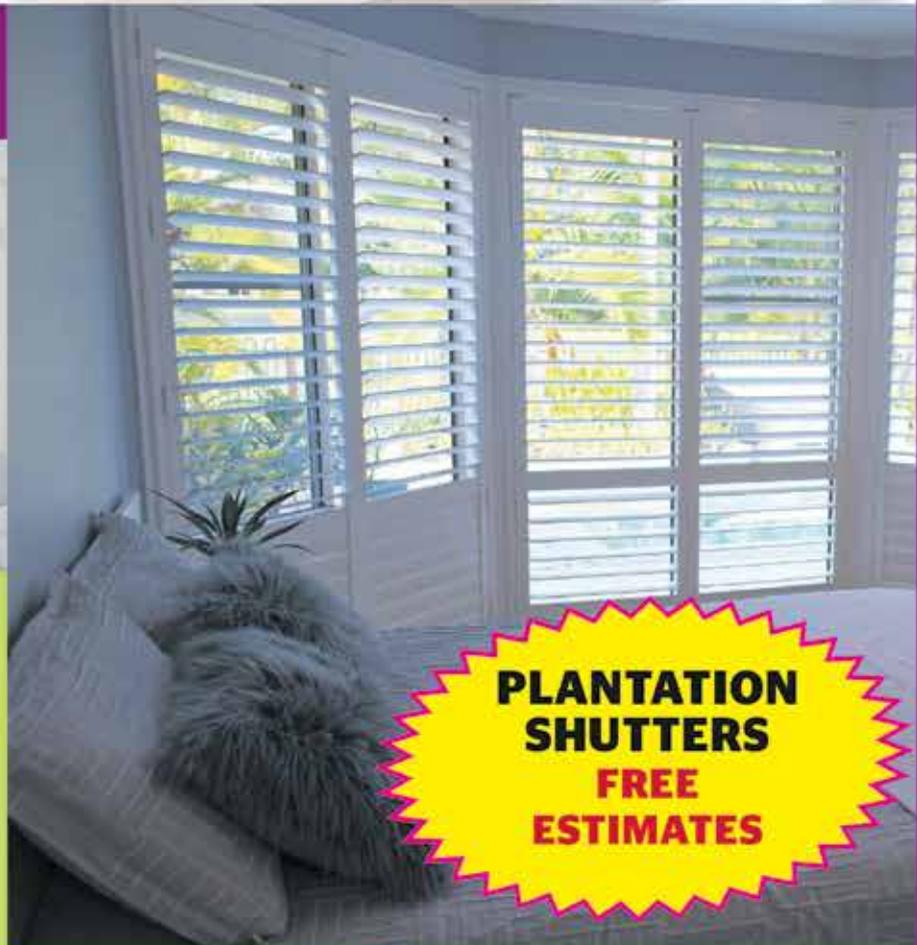
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