

ISSUE 44
DEC 2023

Little Village

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the December edition of Little Village. We wish all our readers a Happy Christmas. This edition has a Christmas theme.

We welcome new contributions this edition from the Hartstown Community College Writers Group. We are delighted to showcase the literary skills of these young people.

As always, we welcome contributions from individuals and organisations in the D15 area. Send them to littlevillagenewsdesk@gmail.com.

On behalf of the team at Little Village we wish all our readers a very Happy Christmas and a great 2024.

Kind Regards
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Ronan Bright
Director / Head of Sales
brightronan83@gmail.com
085 199 8321



Patrick Browne
Graphic Design
hello@patrickbrowndesign.com
086 831 9322

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SF COUNCILLOR TO MOVE IN FOUR-SEATER INITIATIVE

Councillor Natalie Treacy (SF) is to stand in the Cabra/Glasnevin for the next local elections



Councillor Treacy previously served the Castleknock LEA but is to stand for the Cabra/Glasnevin electoral area in a big initiative for the party in Dublin. Having served as a councillor for Castleknock since 2014, she will bring a wealth of experience to a four-candidate ticket in Cabra/Glasnevin.

Councillor Treacy said "It has been a great honour and privilege to serve the people of Castleknock as a member of Fingal County Council for nearly a decade.

"Sinn Féin, locally and nationally, have made great strides forward in that time, and we are very well positioned to gain additional seats next year. Castleknock is in safe hands, and we are very positioned to take two seats there.

"The scale of our ambition is evident in the number of SF candidates we are standing across Dublin, particularly here in Cabra/Glasnevin, where we are aiming for four seats.

"I am very excited to get to work for the Navan Road area, and to continue representing the people of Castleknock until next year's local elections. The two areas are neighbouring communities, so there is already a big overlap in terms of local issues and my current workload. I am ready to hit the ground running to give the Navan Road the representation it needs in City Hall."

Fellow SF Cllr (Swords LEA) Ann Graves stated: "Fingal's loss will be DCC's gain, while Natalie will continue to represent the people of Castleknock until the local elections, she will leave a big gap. It's been a pleasure to work with her during this council term. But I know this is a great opportunity for her to work as part of Mary Lou's team as we look forward to a future of change."



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The Festive Lights Show also returns at Shackleton Garden from Monday, 20th November, until Sunday, 10th December, from 4.00 pm until 8.00 pm every night. Walk through our enchanted garden with dazzling lights — don't miss out!

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RODERIC O'GORMAN TD

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roderic.ogorman@oir.ie



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Constituency clinic times: Fridays 10am-12 noon

A Milestone for Workplace Support: Ireland Introduces Domestic Violence Leave

On Monday, 27th November, Ireland became one of the first countries in Europe to implement a right to paid leave for employees affected by domestic violence.



The leave was part of the Work Life Balance Act, which I brought through the Oireachtas earlier this year. It means that any employee experiencing or at risk of domestic violence may now take up to five days of fully paid leave annually.

This leave is not exclusive to the victim alone; it extends to those supporting a spouse, partner, or child who is a victim of domestic violence. This holistic approach recognises the broader impact of these very difficult situations.

Domestic violence leave will help to ensure that no one experiencing domestic violence would have to risk poverty or unemployment in order to seek support.

Recognising that this is a new form of leave, and can entail difficult conversations for both employers and employees, my Department commissioned Women's Aid to develop draft policy templates for employers.

I encourage employers to help create a supportive environment and make use of the resources developed by Women's Aid. This includes a dedicated website, www.DVatWork.ie, and a series of webinars aimed at providing advice and information on implementing

domestic violence policies.

The collaboration with Women's Aid ensures that employers have the necessary tools to navigate and integrate this new leave effectively.

The commencement of domestic violence leaves marks a significant milestone in Ireland's commitment to a supportive and compassionate work environment.

Our current Programme for Government recognises that "There is an epidemic of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence" Why? Because for Ireland to tackle domestic violence effectively, we needed an all of government approach.

That is why I have implemented paid leave for those at risk of domestic violence, why my colleague Minister Helen McEntee has passed tougher sentences for domestic violence, and it is why we now have a national strategy centred on zero tolerance of domestic, sexual and gender based violence in our communities.

My hope is that through the provision of practical measures, like domestic violence leave and increased refuge spaces, we will ensure that anyone at risk gets the support they need, while making progress towards that aim of zero tolerance.

Councillor

John Walsh

Phone: 087 6486228 Email: john.walsh@cllrs.fingal.ie  @JohnWalshDWest

Dear Resident

I am circulating some brief updates on issues that I am currently working on. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

I would like to wish you a very happy Christmas break and very best wishes for the new year.

All the best,

John



CRISIS IN SCHOOL PLACES

I have received many queries from parents across Dublin 15 who have not received any offer of a post primary school place for their children or face long waiting lists in the coming months to secure a school place. This is an incredibly stressful and anxious experience for children and parents. The Department of Education has to find a better way of planning for increased enrolment and population in our area. For far too long, rapid development of housing has occurred without proper social and community infrastructure, especially primary and secondary school places.

In the short-term, I am campaigning for:

- A permanent Extension for Castleknock Community College which was promised in 2021 when CCC took an additional class to meet a crisis in school places in the Castleknock-Carpenterstown area. This commitment has not been honoured by the Department of Education. The Minister has to give a clear plan and timeline for a permanent Extension as promised to allow CCC to meet the educational needs of all students while expanding to a 1500 pupil school and introduce special classes for children with additional educational needs.
- Second-level schools currently in temporary accommodation, such as Eriu Community College, should be given certainty about their permanent site and a timeframe for their new buildings.
- Regular liaison and consultation between the Department of Education Building Unit and primary and secondary school principals to evaluate increased enrolment accurately.

OLD SCHOOL HOUSE CLONSILLA

Following a motion which I submitted to the local Area Committee along with my colleague Cllr Mary McCamley, the Property Services section of Fingal Council is seeking to acquire the Old School House and has now submitted a bid for the building and property. The process has been delayed by disagreements over the ownership of the Old School House. I will continue to campaign for the Council to purchase the Old School House so that it can be conserved, protected and brought into use appropriately for the community.

ST. BRIGID'S DAY CELEBRATIONS

Following a motion which I presented at the local Area Committee, Fingal Council is organising an expanded series of events in Blanchardstown to mark St. Brigid's Day. This reflects the cultural association of many schools and placenames in Dublin 15 with St Brigid's day.

The Events team are planning a concert showcasing the work of female artists and groups in St Brigid's Church, Blanchardstown on the bank holiday Monday. Fingal Council is partnering with Blanchardstown Tidy Towns to offer this event.

A range of community activities and workshops will also be held over the weekend, with the location to be confirmed. I will update everyone once the final details of the programme are available.



NEW PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BILL

I recently hosted a public meeting on the new Planning and Development Bill, with Dr Lorcan Sirr (Senior Lecturer, Technological University Dublin). The legislation has the effect of restricting the ability of residents' associations or voluntary community groups to challenge controversial planning decisions.

Among the concerns raised at the meeting were that:

- the constant building of housing without adequate social and community infrastructure fails to provide sustainable communities.
- build for rent apartments are usually unaffordable for people on average incomes.
- developer led planning is very damaging to local communities.
- the level of public participation in the planning process is already lower in Ireland than in most developed countries and the Bill is likely to exacerbate this.

*Working with Cllr Mary McCamley
and Cllr Declan Meenagh*



WHAT CAN GO IN MY RECYCLING BIN?

Please place all items in your recycling bin **CLEAN, DRY & LOOSE**



TINS, CANS & FOIL

- Drink Cans
- Food Cans
- Pet Food Cans & Trays
- Soup / Sauce / Fruit Tins
- Gift / Biscuit / Toiletry Tins
- Sweet / Chocolate Tins
- Aluminium (Tin) Foil
- Aluminium Trays
- Beer Bottle Lids
- Metal Jar & Bottle Lids



PAPER & CARDBOARD

- Newspapers
- Books / Phone Books
- Magazines / Catalogues
- Diaries / Calendars
- Letters / Junk Mail
- Egg Boxes
- Sugar Bags / Potato Bags

- Empty Juice / Milk Cartons
- Packaging Boxes
- Food Boxes
- Gravy / Salt Tubs
- Gift Cards / Wrap
- Paper / Envelopes
- Pizza Boxes
- Washing Powder Boxes
- Tissue Boxes
- Toilet / Kitchen Roll Tubes



ALL PLASTICS

- Bread wrappers
- Fruit / veg and salad wraps and bags
- Kitchen / toilet roll outer wrap
- Breakfast cereal bags
- Plastic shopping / carrier bags
- Dried fruit / seed and nut bags
- Frozen food bags
- Pasta / rice / noodle bags
- Cheese packs outer wrap
- Baked goods / Confectionary outer wrappers
- Crisp / cracker wrappers
- Bubble wrap
- Electrical item/white goods / appliances bags/wrap
- Mattress / pillow wrap
- Wet wipes outer wrap
- Detergent/dishwasher bags
- Garden compost / bark bags
- All pots, tubs and trays
- Water / juice Bottles
- Milk / cream Bottles
- Sauce / dressing Bottles
- Meat / veg / bread trays
- Butter/margarine / ice-cream tubs
- Yogurt pots
- Salad / fruit bowls
- Chocolate / biscuit trays
- Bottle / jar lids
- Take-away plastic containers
- Shampoo / liquid soap and gel bottles
- Make-up / toiletry tubs and mouth wash bottles
- Detergent / household cleaning bottles
- Plastic plant pots



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Christmas Wordsearch

Wordsearch

(Answers on Next Page)

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CRACKERS
MISTLETOE
DECORATIONS
TURKEY
CAROLS
REINDEER
PUDDING
TREE

R	E	R	C	D	C	R	P	L	R	D	D	P	C
E	O	T	T	U	R	T	U	T	P	C	E	E	P
S	T	S	A	N	T	A	D	O	R	T	C	T	T
O	E	R	T	E	N	S	D	R	E	E	O	U	E
N	L	T	I	C	S	K	I	E	S	E	R	R	A
R	T	T	T	R	R	N	N	T	E	M	A	K	S
I	S	P	A	R	T	E	G	T	N	C	T	E	D
C	I	D	T	R	E	I	T	I	T	S	I	Y	T
S	M	S	S	E	C	E	D	E	S	L	O	G	I
E	S	U	S	P	R	O	U	T	S	O	N	N	C
D	S	S	R	E	I	N	D	E	E	R	S	R	U
G	R	C	R	A	C	K	E	R	S	A	A	T	E
O	R	P	K	E	R	R	E	E	Y	C	R	R	O
S	T	C	R	S	P	C	I	S	E	R	R	T	A

Hartstown Community School

Writers Group

See Pages 40 & 42

Little Village is pleased to feature the Hartstown Community School Writers Group.

The HCS Writers Group is for anyone who loves writing.

Members bring their lunch to weekly lunchtime sessions where they respond in writing to various prompts and other stimuli to the imagination. They are always entirely free to choose between sharing their writing or keeping it to themselves.

There are occasional guests and excursions, and sometimes the group works together on submissions for writing competitions. The group has always been a place where writers of all ages – from 1st Yr. to 6th Yr. – and different personalities – from the

loud and self-confident to those who prefer to stay quiet – feel secure in their involvement and know that their ideas and efforts will be respected by everyone.

The sessions are relaxed and informal, the supervising teacher is more participant than teacher, and there is much laughter and a prevailing culture of mutual support and encouragement.

In this edition our first two submissions from the group:

A poem by ALANNAH CAWLEY entitled 'Roots to leaves'.(P42)

A Short story by LUKE LEEPER entitled 'The Magical Pen'.(P40)

We look forward to further work from the group.

We hope you enjoy.



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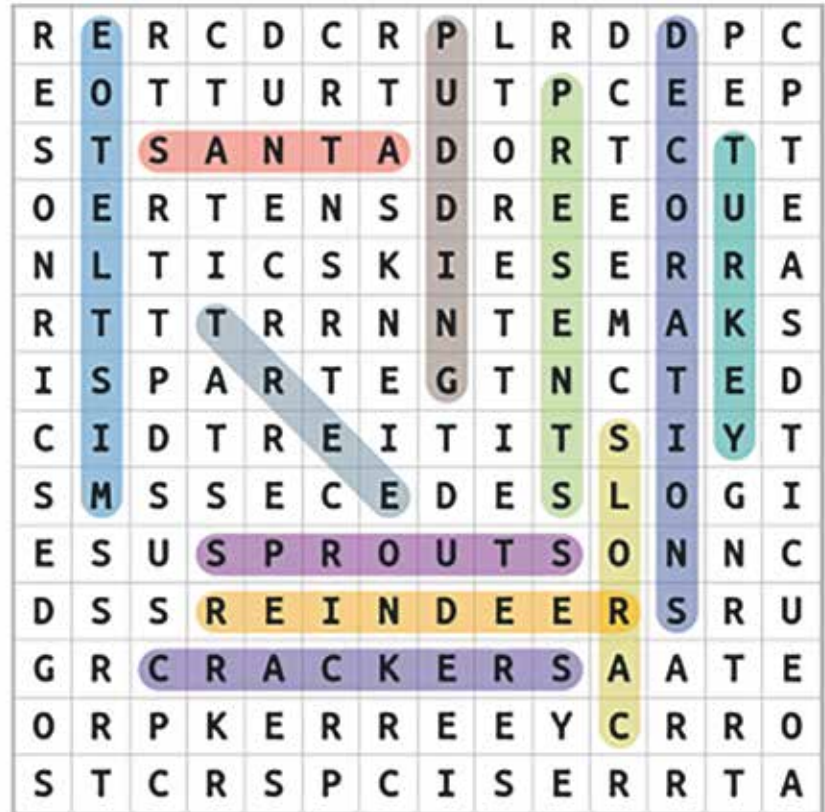
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Most of us are still putting waste into wrong bin, says EPA

The majority of households and businesses in Ireland are putting their waste into the wrong bin, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.



It has called on local authorities to enforce the roll-out of the three-bin system - compost, recycling, general waste - and educate people on the importance of segregating waste.

David Pollard, Programme Manager of the EPA's Office of Environmental Enforcement has said two thirds of the waste that goes into the general waste bin should not go into it, but should be put into the recycling or organic bins.

He said around two million tonnes of municipal waste is produced every year and two thirds of that "doesn't need to be there".

"The critical issue with waste is the segregation of our waste because if we don't segregate our waste, we fail to recycle. If we don't recycle, more of our waste goes into landfill and incinerators. So, it's absolutely critical that people segregate their waste," he said.

Mr Pollard said the role of local authorities in protecting the environment is "absolutely crucial".

These are the people on the ground, who are closest to what is happening, he said.

These cover waste, water, air and noise pollution, and governance processes.

The EPA said that while combatting illegal waste activities was carried out well by local authorities, household and commercial waste management was the poorest performing area overall.

The EPA wants a greater focus from local authorities on the roll-out of brown bins for organic waste, farm inspections to protect water quality, and a greater clampdown on the sale of smoky fuels.


How can we help? It is difficult to know sometimes which bin to use. Hopefully the REPAK poster published with this article giving a list of what can be recycled will be helpful.

An advertisement for Community Credit Union. The background is blue. At the top, the Community Credit Union logo is shown, featuring a globe icon and the text "Community CREDIT UNION". Below the logo, the text "Bank with your Credit Union..." is displayed in white. To the right of this text is a QR code. Below the QR code, the text "Current Account, provided by Community Credit Union, gives you a real choice for your day-to-day financial needs." is written. At the bottom, there is an image of a Community Credit Union debit card. The card is white with a colorful abstract design and features the text "current account", "debit", "5412 7500 0000 0000", "02/23", and "SINEAD KAVANAGH COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION". At the bottom right of the advertisement, there are logos for "current account" and "Guaranteed Irish All together better".



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What have Nutcracker dolls got to do with Christmas?

Nutcracker dolls have become strongly associated with Christmas due to their prominent role in the ballet “The Nutcracker.”



As a result, nutcracker dolls have become popular decorative items during Christmas time, symbolizing the magical and joyful spirit of the season. People often display nutcracker dolls as part of their holiday decorations, adding a touch of whimsy and nostalgia to their homes.

Nutcracker dolls have become a beloved symbol of Christmas for several reasons.

- Their origins: Nutcracker dolls were originally functional tools used to crack nuts, and they were often given as gifts during the Christmas season. This association with Christmas gifting helped to cement their connection to the holiday. The design of these dolls was inspired by the shape of traditional nutcrackers, which typically consisted of a lever and a hinged mouth that could be opened and closed with the help of a lever. By placing a nut in the mouth of the nutcracker and applying pressure on the lever, one could crack open the shell to access the edible nut inside.

- The Nutcracker ballet: The popularity of the ballet “The Nutcracker” further solidified the nutcracker doll’s association with Christmas. Based on E.T.A. Hoffmann’s

story “The Nutcracker and the Mouse King,” the ballet premiered in 1892 and has since become a Christmas tradition for many families. This ballet, composed by Tchaikovsky, tells the story of a young girl named Clara who receives a nutcracker doll as a Christmas gift. The doll magically comes to life, leading Clara on a journey through a magical land of sweets and adventures.

- Their festive appearance: Nutcracker dolls are typically dressed in elaborate, military-style uniforms, which adds to their festive appeal. Their traditional red and gold colours also align with the Christmas colour scheme. Today, nutcracker dolls are primarily associated with their decorative and symbolic value rather than their original functional purpose.

- Their symbolic meaning: In German folklore, nutcracker dolls are believed to bring good luck and protect homes from evil spirits. This symbolic meaning has further endeared them to Christmas celebrants.

As a result of these factors, nutcracker dolls have become a ubiquitous symbol of Christmas. They are often displayed as decorations in homes and businesses, and they are also popular gifts during the holiday season.

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The renewed credit scheme was announced in the 2023 Budget and will go directly to 2.2 million households over the winter.

Payments will be applied to bills on December 1st, 2023, January 1st, 2024, and March 1st, 2024.

For some households it may take longer to see the credit on their bill because of the nature of the two-monthly billing cycle for electricity, it has been warned. However, the credits will be applied automatically. Households do not need to apply for them..

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ATHLETES INVITE DUBLIN SCHOOLS TO JOIN 'FITTEST SCHOOL' SEARCH

A search to find Ireland's fittest school in which schools in Dublin are invited to participate has been launched by three of Ireland's best-known athletes, World Para Rowing champion, Katie O'Brien and Olympians, sprinters Phil Healy and David Gillick.



Working in cooperation with banana distributors Fyffes, their aim is to find a school whose focus on fitness will replicate the success of previous 'Ireland's Fittest School' winners – Scoil Na Croise Naofa, Dunfanaghy (2022) and Gilson National School, Oldcastle (2023).

Launched alongside the resumption of this year's Fyffes 'Fit Squad' programme – in which an expected 10,000 young pupils from primary

schools, north and south, will partake in live in-school fitness visits – all three athletes have recorded a series of workouts for viewing online which they hope schools will adopt as part of their PE course.

Running from January to March, the top four schools will then progress to a live 'grand final' hosted by patrons O'Brien, Healy and Gillick at which the prize package will include €8,000 worth of sports equipment. Registration is now open and further details can be found online at www.fyffesfitsquad.ie



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Community Grit Boxes by Councillor Pamela Conroy

Following a motion I brought to an Area Committee Meeting at the start of this year, Fingal County Council are putting in place a scheme to enable residents to apply for community grit boxes.



I grew up in County Antrim where it is the norm for grit boxes, which contained salt or grit, to be supplied to housing estates so that residents can grit their local area during cold snaps.

Since moving to Dublin 15 years ago, there have been several cold snaps, such as the big freeze in 2010 and the Beast from the East, when I've thought that it would have been handy to have access to a community grit box to salt the footpath in front of my house and driveway as well as those of my elderly or vulnerable neighbours.

Last December we had another bad cold snap which resulted in lots of people having to go to hospital to have breaks and sprains treated. At this time, former Chief Executive of Dublin City Council, Owen Keegan, said that vulnerable people should stay at home during cold snaps. It's easy for someone to say that the increased risk of accidents makes staying at home the sensible option for vulnerable people, but vulnerable people need to go to the pharmacy, they need to go to the doctors, they need to go to the shop. If we have a cold snap that lasts longer than a day or two, simply staying at home is not practical so we need to look for other solutions. I felt that community grit boxes, like those I grew up with, could be a part of the solution.

I submitted a motion asking Fingal County Council to consider supplying community grit boxes to residents' associations and other groups that request them so that they can grit their local areas as needed, making it safer for people to get in and out of their homes. The Council indicated that they would look at the feasibility of a community grit box scheme. As we are moving closer to winter, I asked for an update at our recent ACM meeting.

The response was very positive. Having examined how such a scheme has worked in other counties including Meath, Monaghan, Cavan and Kildare, Fingal County Council have decided to set up a county wide scheme instead of introducing a pilot scheme to a limited area. The Council are creating an application form for residents' associations, community groups, churches, clubs and schools to apply for a grit box. Groups will have to provide a pin drop on a map indicating where they intend to put the box.

I will continue to follow up with the Council on this matter and will post information on my social media accounts as it becomes available. If you are interested in a community grit box please get in touch with me via email pamela.conroy@cllr.fingal.ie.



CLlr. PAMELA CONROY

My priorities are:

- ➔ Improving accessibility and inclusion in the built environment and public spaces.
- ➔ Improving the provision and safety of local active travel infrastructure so that leaving your car at home is a viable option.
- ➔ Helping to bring communities together and assisting them with improving where they live.
- ➔ Providing clean and safe streets and public spaces.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas & New Year



0868462891



pamela.conroy@cllr.fingal.ie



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ARE AIR FRYERS ANY GOOD?

If you don't already have one an air fryer might well be on your Christmas list. What are the benefits of an air fryer?

Air fryers are a popular kitchen appliance that uses hot air to cook food. They are often touted as a healthier alternative to deep frying, as they use less oil. Additionally, air fryers are said to cook food more quickly and evenly than traditional ovens.

Pros of Air Fryers:

- Healthier cooking: Air fryers use less oil than deep fryers, which can reduce your intake of unhealthy fats.
- Faster cooking: Air fryers cook food more quickly than traditional ovens.
- Even cooking: Air fryers cook food evenly, resulting in crispy and evenly cooked food.
- Versatility: Air fryers can be used to cook a variety of foods, including chicken, fish, vegetables, and even desserts.
- Easy to use: Air fryers are relatively easy to use, making them a great option for busy cooks.

Cons of Air Fryers:

- Cost: Air fryers can be more expensive than traditional ovens.
- Size: Air fryers can be bulky and take up countertop space.
- Capacity: Air fryers have a smaller capacity than traditional ovens, so they may not be suitable for cooking large families.
- Cleaning: Air fryers can be difficult to clean.

Overall, air fryers are a versatile and convenient kitchen appliance that can be a healthy alternative to deep frying. However, they are not without their drawbacks, such as their cost, size, and capacity. If you are considering buying an air fryer, it is important to weigh the pros and cons to decide if it is right for you.

If you have an air fryer, or acquire one before Christmas, try our Air-fryer brussels sprouts menu featured in this edition. You might even get the kids to like them!





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AIR FRYER BRUSSEL SPROUTS RECIPE

Cook sprouts in an air fryer for a super-easy cooking method, then add flavourings of your choice, such as chilli or chopped crispy bacon.



Ingredients

- 350g fresh brussels sprouts, or 250g frozen
- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- chopped cooked bacon, chilli flakes or chopped roasted hazelnuts, to serve (optional)

Method

• STEP 1

Heat the air fryer to 180C. If using fresh sprouts, trim them, then tip in a bowl. Add the bacon and chilli

flakes Drizzle over the oil, season well and toss to coat. Arrange the sprouts in the air-fryer basket in a single layer and cook for 10-15, tossing halfway through.

• STEP 2

If cooking from frozen, tip the frozen sprouts into the air-fryer basket and cook for 10-15 mins, depending on how golden you like them. Remove, then tip onto a serving plate and scatter with any of the suggested toppings, if you like.

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- Increased access to GP services
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Have you had calls from someone saying they missed your call, and you never phoned them? Your phone number may have been 'spoofed'.

Mobile Phone Spoofing: Understanding the Threat and Protecting Yourself



Introduction:

In today's digital age, mobile phones have become an integral part of our lives. They not only serve as a means of communication but also store a treasure trove of personal and sensitive information. Unfortunately, the rise of mobile phone spoofing poses a significant threat to our privacy and security. This article aims to shed light on the concept of mobile phone spoofing, its implications, and how you can protect yourself from falling victim to such scams.

What is Mobile Phone Spoofing?

Mobile phone spoofing refers to the act of manipulating the caller ID information displayed on a recipient's phone. In simpler terms, it allows scammers to disguise their phone numbers and make it appear as if they are calling from a legitimate and trustworthy source. This technique is commonly used by fraudsters to deceive individuals into providing sensitive information or engaging in fraudulent activities.

Implications and Risks:

The repercussions of falling victim to mobile phone spoofing can be severe. Scammers often impersonate banks, government agencies, or well-known companies to trick individuals into sharing their personal details, such as Social Security numbers, banking information, or login credentials. This information can then be used for identity theft, financial fraud, or unauthorized access to online accounts.

Protecting Yourself from Mobile Phone Spoofing:

While it may seem daunting, there are several steps you can take to safeguard yourself against mobile phone spoofing:

1. Be vigilant:

Always be sceptical of unsolicited calls, especially those asking for personal information or financial details. Do not provide sensitive information over the phone unless you initiated the call and are certain about the legitimacy of the recipient.

2. Verify the caller:

If you receive a call from someone claiming to be from a bank, government agency, or any other organization, hang up and independently verify their identity. Use official contact numbers obtained from trusted sources to reach

out and confirm the legitimacy of the call.

3. Install call filtering apps:

Consider using call filtering apps that can help identify and block suspected spam or spoofed calls. These apps use databases of known scam numbers to warn you about potential threats.

4. Keep software up to date:

Regularly update your mobile phone's operating system and security patches. These updates often include fixes for vulnerabilities that scammers may exploit.

5. Enable two-factor authentication:

Whenever possible, enable two-factor authentication for your online accounts. This adds an extra layer of security by requiring a second form of verification, such as a code sent to your mobile device, to access your account.

6. Educate yourself:

Stay informed about the latest mobile phone spoofing techniques and scams. Learn how to identify red flags and common tactics used by scammers. Knowledge is power when it comes to protecting yourself.

7. If you believe your phone number has been spoofed your mobile provider can do little to help.

Should you receive several calls from people saying you rang them explain that your phone number has probably been spoofed. This is more common for people whose phone number is publicly available. For example, on a website or social media. The best advice is to not answer calls from unrecognised numbers and let people leave a message. If they don't you have no need to reply.

Conclusion:

Mobile phone spoofing has become a prevalent threat in our increasingly connected world. However, with awareness, caution, and the implementation of preventive measures, you can significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to such scams. Stay vigilant, verify callers, and take advantage of available security tools to protect your personal information and maintain your privacy in the digital landscape.



Vision Ireland, the new name for NCBI, ushers in a change in sight after a century of service provision



At an event at 58 South William Street, Dublin 2, which was the organisation's first official office in the 1930s, NCBI, the national sight loss agency, changes its name to Vision Ireland, as the true size of the community of people who are blind or vision impaired is revealed.

The name change is designed to be more inclusive, ensuring that everyone knows Vision Ireland supports people with a wide range of visual impairments.

According to census data, published recently, there are more than 296,000 people in Ireland who are blind or have a vision impairment. The name change for the 92-year-old national sight loss agency is designed to reach even more of the 6% of the population, or one in 17 people who are blind or have a vision impairment. The data show that blindness or vision impairment affects 27% of all people experiencing at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty

to any extent.

At a special ceremony in Dublin to mark the launch, Chris White, Vision Ireland CEO, said: "Many people with sight issues are missing the opportunity to avail of our services because they are unaware that we support people with different levels of visual impairment. Our new name, Vision Ireland, is designed to reflect our broad range of support.

"The Vision Ireland name was developed through extensive consultation with staff, service users and volunteers – and they also like how our new name better represents the forward-looking and dynamic organisation that we are.

"Our mission hasn't changed – we will continue as before



– and continue to promote good eye health and continue to champion an inclusive society where physical and digital spaces are more accessible for all, regardless of abilities.”

Speaking at the launch today, Paul Kelly, Chair of Vision Ireland, said: “As someone with a vision impairment that did not access the great services of the NCBI as my family, my doctors and myself all thought it was not for me as I was not fully blind, I am particularly proud to be associated with the great staff and volunteers of Vision Ireland today as we embark on the next phase of the journey to empower even more blind and visually impaired people in Ireland.”

Messages of support for Vision Ireland poured in from all over the world from RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) in the UK, Vision Australia, European Blind Union and the World Blind Union among others.

Commenting on the launch of Vision Ireland, Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, outlined how the Government is committed to providing services for people with disabilities so that they can lead independent lives, while acknowledging there is much work to be done.

“With new thinking, new perspectives and pooling ideas, we will do better. And I’m glad that we can call on Vision Ireland’s expertise in developing a barrier free and inclusive society. With the goal of enabling people to live an independent life of their choice, Vision Ireland is making a real difference to the lives of people every day. The dedication of Vision Ireland staff and volunteers is truly commendable,” Mr Varadkar said.

Speaking in support of the launch, Robbie Henshaw, Member of the Board of Trustees of Vision Ireland, said: “I’ve been involved with NCBI for a number of years, and it has been both an honour and a privilege to witness the tremendous impact that it has on people who are blind or have a vision impairment. Their unwavering commitment to providing essential support and resources has been a beacon of hope for so many people in Ireland. Their dedication to improving the lives of all those they support is truly remarkable, and I am proud to be a part of the next chapter for Vision Ireland.”

Neasa Hourigan, TD, speaking at the launch event said: “Being the parent of a child who has a vision impairment, I have firsthand experience of the challenges and uncertainties that can arise. At every stage, NCBI has been a tremendous help, offering invaluable support and resources that have made a significant difference in our lives.

“The dedication and expertise has given us hope, empowerment, and a brighter future. We are immensely grateful for their unwavering assistance and I would encourage every parent and guardian to avail of Vision Ireland’s support and services,” Ms Hourigan added.

Also speaking at the event was Wicklow native Lar Keogh, who was born the same year NCBI was launched, 92 years ago. “I’ve had vision issues for quite a few years, but I didn’t realise I could avail of the services of NCBI. It’s been a revelation for me since I became a service user and I have been welcomed with open arms by everyone at Vision Ireland. Their support has been fantastic, and it’s really made a big difference in my daily life.”

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FINE GAEL 



Coolmine Recycling Centre will be extending its opening hours from 9am to 8pm, Monday to Saturday beginning in 2024 (exact date to be determined). It was announced at the Fingal Budget 2024 meeting that additional staff and funding will be made available to enable this. This is very welcome news and something that I and others have been calling for a long time



During a recent tour today of the Snuborough Road Interchange we got to see the progress being made on this very important piece of infrastructure. This project will be completed in quarter one of 2024 and will significantly improve traffic around the N3 and the Blanchardstown Centre.



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With my Fine Gael colleagues at the recent An Bord Pleanála Oral Hearing into Dart West where I made a detailed submission on traffic diversions and the closure of Level Crossings.

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[Budget 2024]

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ALL FURTHER EDUCATION PLC fees will be abolished

EXTRA €2 MILLION allocated to assist students with disabilities

[Budget 2024]

THE MAGICAL PEN

By: LUKE LEEPER, 2nd Yr. student, HCS Writers Group



It was a snowy Christmas Eve, and somewhere in a quiet village, with twinkling lights and festive cheer, there was a magical pen. It held a remarkable power: whatever it drew became real. But only during the Christmas season.

The pen had been hidden away in a dusty attic for years, waiting patiently for the perfect moment to reveal its mysterious abilities. And now, on this Christmas Eve, it found its way into the hands of a young girl named Lilly. She was up in the attic, searching for a missing ornament, little knowing that her life was about to take an extraordinary turn. A small, shining light caught her attention. She walked towards it, curious. It was the pen. Lilly took it up. It was beautiful, gold-coloured, with golden ink shimmering like starlight. She took it with her, the missing ornament

forgotten.

Once back in her bedroom she tried out the pen, carefully drawing a snow-covered village where families were gathered around a glowing Christmas tree. While she was still drawing, something amazing happened. Sparkles started flying out of the picture, filling her room.

And Lilly lost consciousness.

Sometime later – she had no idea how much or how little – Lilly was woken by chattering and music. She sat up, not understanding what had just happened. But as she looked around and gained her bearings, she gradually realised: this was her drawing. And she was in it! She couldn't believe her eyes – her drawing had become real. Instinctively she looked for the pen. It was in her pocket, still gold.

Lilly ran home – from the scene she had drawn – curious



to explore the pen's magical power. Once back in her room she began drawing other images. With each stroke of the pen a new reality unfolded. She sketched a bright Christmas market, filled with people selling delicious treats and jewellery. And it happened again: her drawing became real.

She drew a cosy fireplace, with families gathered to share stories and heart-felt gifts. And she captured a scene of snowflakes falling gently on a group of carollers, their voices filling the crisp winter air. Every single time she drew something, her picture became real.

But as she continued drawing, she gradually came to realise that if this pen fell into the wrong hands, the world would be in danger. She decided she shouldn't use it anymore. What she didn't know was that it was already too late: the carollers had seen the sparkles flying by, coming from Lilly's window, and they had run to the big Christmas tree and told everyone.

"Lilly is magic!"

Unaware that her secret was out, Lilly finished her drawing, left the pen on her desk, and went outside, dying to see the Christmas market. But news had spread throughout the village. As soon as they saw her, people began flocking to Lilly with requests for their own magic ideas.

With everyone screaming and chanting her name, Lilly ran back home. Her mother was in the kitchen, telling Lilly that she couldn't spend Christmas with her this year because she was being paid nicely to help with the Christmas market – the one that hadn't existed until Lilly drew it. She ran up to her room and cried on her bed, eventually falling asleep. Until morning.

Which was Christmas morning. She walked slowly

downstairs, still upset, not wanting to open her gifts until her mother was home. Then an idea came into her head: what if she drew her mum? At home downstairs? Happy, and didn't have to work? Lilly ran back up the stairs, found the magical pen, pulled out a sheet of paper and started drawing.

She was just finishing when suddenly the golden ink began to leak out, all over her drawing. It was ruined. Once again, she was on her bed, crying, this time in anger, and again falling asleep.

But it didn't seem like very long before she woke. She looked over at her desk and noticed that all the mess was gone. And she saw the time: only 8am. Lilly got up from her bed and went downstairs. She could hear someone in the sitting-room. Mother! Lilly couldn't believe her eyes.

"Hey honey," said mother. "Merry Christmas."

"Why aren't you at the Christmas market helping out?" Lilly asked her, completely confused.

"What do you mean?" Mother answered. "They don't have a Christmas market this year."

"But you told me you were working today," Lilly stuttered.

"No," said mother. "You must have been dreaming I did."

"Yeah, maybe I was dreaming." The two of them laughed together and Lilly opened her gifts. After a while she went back up to her room for the pen. But it wasn't where she'd left it, and she couldn't find it. As she looked around, she came upon a little box wrapped in bright red. She opened it and smiled: inside was the ornament she had been looking for, and on it were the words, "Merry Christmas from Dad." Lilly headed back down the stairs once more to put the ornament on the tree.

And a week later Lilly took out a copy book and began to write the first lines of The Magical Pen.



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ROOTS TO LEAVES

ALANNAH CAWLEY, Transition Year student, HCS Writers Group



In a flash my life passed me by.
Yesterday I was a budding child,
Yet moments later, cleft in twain,
Forced to leave my childhood and roots behind
And taken to another life.

I was stood up and dressed up.
Ornate baubles hid patches they labelled ugly.
But excited faces and singing smiles
Made this warm winter oasis
Feel like home to a pine.

But soon the carols ended,
Crackers broken, Advent candles burnt out.
The wood began to rot inside me.
My needles fell, I lost my smell,
My time was up without a doubt.

Now I'm shred into a thousand pieces,
And strewn across January's ground.
This will be the end for me.
Still, I know there'll be thousands more
Every time Christmas rolls around



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TESTIMONIAL

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Contact Pamela

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✉ pamela.conroy@cllrs.fingal.ie
🌐 www.pamelaconroy.ie

A Chara,

I am delighted to announce that I have been selected as the Green Party Candidate for the 2024 Local Elections for the Castleknock LEA

It has been great to get back to Council meetings in September to raise local concerns and issues. This newsletter provides some updates of the Council, Community and voluntary work I have been doing over the last few months.

As always, if I can help you with any issue, please get in touch.

Best wishes,

Support for Community Clothes Swap Events

In October I helped Laurel Lodge Environmental Group organise its first community clothes swap. The theme for this event was Halloween and Winterwear. As well as saving money, clothes swaps are a great way of participating in the circular economy. The event was really well attended and 292 items were swapped, which is a saving of 1,305kg of carbon dioxide.

While organising the event, I noticed that Dublin City Council provides kits, including rails and hangers, to community groups holding clothes swaps. I brought a motion to the Climate Action, Environment and Biodiversity SPC requesting that the Council support community groups undertaking clothes swaps by providing a kit. Fingal County Council have agreed to look into this.

If you are interested in hosting a clothes swap and would like some assistance please get in touch. Laurel Lodge Environmental Group will be holding more swaps in 2024 - follow their social media for details.



The sub-committee who organised the LLEG Clothes Swap

Clothes Swap in action.

With Lynn from Foróige Sewing Club

RECENT SUCCESSES

- ✓ **Appointment of Fingal County Council Disability Officer**
- ✓ **Fingal Cllrs added to Fingal Council Wellbeing Services**
- ✓ **Fingal Cllrs selected for Liffey Valley SAAO Management Committee**

Fingal Makerspace Events

A host of free events and classes are provided in Fingal Makerspace, which is located in Blanchardstown Library.

In the Summer they hosted a very successful repair cafe, saving many items from landfill. I asked the Council to provide funding for hosting more and there they have since hosted another.

To find out what events are on, and to book a slot, follow them on Eventbrite. For more information go to <https://www.fingal.ie/maker-space-fingal-libraries>.



Making Jesmonite Coasters in Fingal Maker Space

Stepping Stone Ponds

Many schools in Dublin 15 have availed of the opportunity to install a Stepping Stone Forest. Now Stepping Stone Forest have branched out to Stepping Stone Ponds.

The ponds, financed by AWS In Communities, are put in school grounds. As well as increasing the numbers of animals and insects in

in the local area, they will also provide the schools with a unique teaching tool. Teachers will be able to show children things like the life cycle of a frog in real life as well as introducing them to other pond life.

If you are interested in installing a pond or stepping stone forest in your school please get in touch.



Checking out the pond at Scoil Mhuire Senior National School



Using my favourite tool to gather leaves with Laurel Lodge Environmental Group



Visiting Mountview Family Resource Centre with Minister Roderic O'Gorman



At Castleknock Community Centre Bewley's Big Coffee Morning Social for Hospice



Checking out the play equipment at Castleknock Montessori School with Minister Roderic O'Gorman

Community Grit Box Scheme

In my last newsletter I noted that Fingal County Council had committed to looking into the feasibility of implementing a community grit box scheme in Dublin 15.

Community Grit boxes can be installed in housing estates to store salt which can then be used by the community in a cold snap. Grit boxes are the norm where I grew up in the North. After the cold snap last

December I asked the Council to provide them for Community Groups in Fingal.

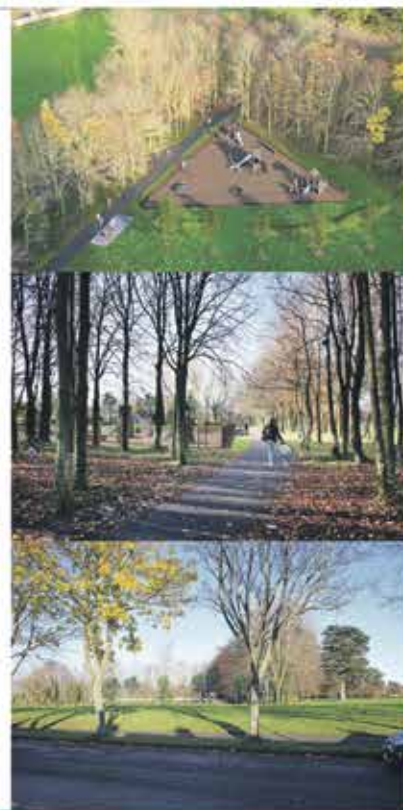
In response, the Council have investigated the feasibility of providing such a scheme. They have informed me that they intend to implement a community grit box scheme across Fingal. They hope to have it ready to roll out this winter. Follow my social media for updates.

Playground for Laurel Lodge

After many years of campaigning by local parents, led by the Laurel Lodge Needs a Playground Group, a playground for Laurel Lodge is now out on public consultation. The pictures shown are indicative images.

The plans include 5 play items, a metal rail fence around the playground, a drinking water fountain, bicycle parking, and landscaping to the southwest of the proposed playground.

For details and to make a submission go to <https://consult.fingal.ie/>. Information can also be found on Laurel Lodge Needs a Playground Facebook and Instagram accounts.



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