

ISSUE 13

FEB 2024

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RECIPE P04

THE HISTORY OF VALENTINE'S DAY
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EDITORIAL

Happy New Year to all of our readers.

This issue of Little Village reflects on the historical value and interest that the Strawberry Beds area holds both for our Dublin and Kildare readers.

We also have a look at some of the famous celebrities that we lost in 2023. Indeed, they will be missed.

This time of year brings us Valentine's day so we have a brief article on the history of Valentine's day and a delicious recipe for the more adventurous of you to try.

We hope you find our other news articles of interest too.

Regards. From The Little Village Team

Kind Regards, Little Village



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VALENTINES DAY – RECIPE IDEA

Chocolate-dipped strawberries



Indulge in chocolate-dipped strawberries for dessert or as part of a romantic picnic. Drizzle over milk and white chocolate for the wow factor

Ingredients

100g dark chocolate, roughly chopped
400g strawberries
30g white and milk chocolate, roughly chopped (optional)

Method

STEP 1

Cut a strip of baking parchment and leave to one side. To melt the dark chocolate, fill a small pan with 2cm water and bring to a simmer. Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl and rest it on top of the pan, ensuring the bowl isn't touching the water. Stir the chocolate to gradually melt it. Or, melt the chocolate in 20 second blasts in the microwave, stirring after each blast until melted. Put the melted chocolate in a small deep bowl.

STEP 2

Gently hold the strawberries by the leafy top and dip into the chocolate. Tap off any excess chocolate and put on the parchment to set. If you have any leftover chocolate, pour it onto another strip of parchment and leave it to set, it can be used again.

STEP 3

If you'd like to decorate the strawberries, melt the white and milk chocolate and drizzle lightly over the fruit.

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Search to Find 2024 Texaco Children's Art Competition Winners launched



Pictured above – 2023 winner of Texaco Children's art competition

The search to find the young artists who will excel in this year's Texaco Children's Art Competition has begun. Last year an eight-year old Kildare student artist, Brody Radburn, from Scoil Mhuire Junior, Newbridge, won one of the top prizes.

Brody won a Special Merit Award for his artwork entitled 'Disgusted Nanny', which Final Adjudicator, Professor Gary Granville said 'was

imaginative and displayed high levels of skill and creativity'.

The competition is now in its 70th year and widely acknowledged as the longest running arts sponsorship in Ireland.

The closing date for entries is Wednesday, 28th February. Judging will take place in March with winners to be announced in April.

Details are available at www.texacochildrensart.com or at Texaco service stations throughout the county

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PROGRESS TO RETROFIT OLDER COUNCIL HOMES WELCOMED

Sinn Féin councillor Derren Ó Brádaigh has said that whilst progress is somewhat slow and overall numbers are low, he is encouraged by the headway being made to retrofit the Council's own housing stock.



The Dublin Mid-West councillor represents Lucan and Palmerstown-Fonthill and was commenting in relation to queries he has made recently.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh said.

“Deep retrofits of the Council’s housing stock are not only an essential requirement as set out by the Local Authority Retrofit Programme, that requires our Council to upgrade their housing stock to a B2 standard, but also represents a crucial investment toward driving carbon emissions down and keeping families and particularly older residents warm in their homes. “Our Council have 9,787 dwellings in their ownership and have identified 449 homes as needing retrofitting works since they began carrying out deep energy retrofits in 2021. This figure in itself represents less than 5% in need of such upgrades, and I am informed that 248 have been completed to date. Clearly it is important that any homes already approved for window and door replacements are

completed in tandem.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh added.

“In relation to the remainder of homes, I have received data that says 185 homes are listed for completion in the ‘immediate period’. The timeframe to complete surveys once a list of properties has been issued to an obligated party to survey is between 1-3 months.

Cllr Ó Brádaigh also said.

“Energy efficiency works in Council buildings are progressing and this is to be welcomed.

This includes upgrading office lighting to LED. Last October I paid a visit to the District Heating Centre in Tallaght to be given a tour of a truly remarkable project with immense potential. The installation of solar panels on all new buildings must become a reality. It is imperative that we are applying well thought-out construction, in delivering both housing and office premises to importantly meet Climate Care obligations.”

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

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



The representatives made the comments following a meeting with the NTA to discuss a number of issues with bus services in the Lucan area. They were informed that the NTA are currently waiting for a proposal from Dublin Bus regarding the C1 and C2 routes. Both representatives reported having been contacted by residents about issues with capacity on the C1 and C2, particularly at peak times.

Gino Kenny commented: "I welcome the review of the C1 and C2 routes. It's clear to me that we need more buses on these routes, particularly at peak times and in the early mornings. We have also asked the NTA to look at providing additional services on the P29 route in the morning time. There is a growing population in the wider Lucan area and people want to use public transport instead of private cars, but this is very difficult when you can't get on a bus or when buses don't show up.

"We also raised the need for an additional train in

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

Cllr Madeleine Johansson added: "People are contacting us all the time because of problems with the buses. The buses from Lucan to the city centre are full to capacity, particularly at peak times and on Saturdays.

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

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



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KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL ISSUES URGENT ROAD SAFETY APPEAL

18th January 2024: Kildare County Council has issued an urgent appeal to road users to practice good road safety and take personal responsibility for travelling safe on our roads.



Last year saw a sharp increase in road fatalities. A total of 184 people lost their lives on Ireland's roads, three of these deaths occurred in County Kildare.

Already this year, a high number of road fatalities have occurred across Ireland, including three road deaths in County Kildare.

As part of the road safety appeal, Kildare County Council has issued advice for road users including drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, passengers and motorcyclists, to encourage collective responsibility and good road safety practice on our roads.

Speaking about the road safety appeal, Declan Keogh, Road Safety Officer, Kildare County Council said; "I wish to take this opportunity to express my condolences to the families and friends of those who have been killed on our roads. It is heartbreaking to hear news of any fatality on the roads."

"The trend of rising road deaths in such a short period is very worrying, and we hope it doesn't continue. As we continue through January, I would ask people to make a new resolution, to themselves

and to their loved ones, to make road safety a priority and to make every journey a safe one."

Kildare County Council has issued the following advice to road users:

PEDESTRIANS:

As a pedestrian, you are one of the most vulnerable road users. So, it's important that you practice good road safety and take personal responsibility in keeping yourself and others safe on our roads.

- Stop, Look, Listen!
- If there is a footpath, you must use it
- If there is no footpath, you must walk as near as possible to the right-hand side of the road, facing oncoming traffic
- Avoid crossing the road between parked vehicles
- Only cross a road when it is safe to do so, looking left and right as you cross
- Use a Zebra, Pedestrian or Pelican crossing for example, where provided
- Wear bright clothing during the day and reflective clothing at night to increase your visibility

CYCLISTS:

As a cyclist you are a road user, and you must obey the rules of the road.

- Stop as required at traffic lights.
- By law, a cyclist must have a bell on their bike and a working light, front and rear.
- Signal in plenty of time to allow other road users to react to your movements.
- When cycling, always make sure you give other road users the best chance of seeing you.
- In order to be more visible to other road users, wear high visibility clothing and keep your bicycle lights in good working order.

DRIVERS:

Speeding, impaired driving, and the use of a mobile phone while driving are some of the killer behaviours on our roads. Having due care and consideration for other road users goes a long way towards a safe journey.

- Always ensure your vehicle is roadworthy and safe to drive
- Always wear a seatbelt and ensure all your passengers are wearing theirs
- Always drive within the speed limit and with consideration for the road, weather and traffic conditions
- In poor weather conditions, always leave a bigger gap between you and the vehicle ahead
- Always look out for pedestrians and cyclists who share the road
- Always allow a safe passing distance when overtaking a cyclist
- Never drive under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Never use a hand-held mobile phone or smart device while driving
- Never drive when over-tired

PASSENGERS:

- Always wear your seatbelt when travelling in a vehicle
- Only travel in a vehicle where you have your own seat and seatbelt
- Never share a seatbelt with another passenger
- Never travel in a vehicle that is overcrowded

MOTORCYCLISTS:

- Be vigilant. Look into the far, middle and near distance, using your mirrors and checking over your shoulders before changing position or turning
- Keep your distance. In poor weather conditions, always leave a bigger gap between you and the vehicle ahead

- Be seen. Make sure your position is correct, use dipped headlights and wear high visibility clothing
- Read the road and ride your motorcycle to current road, weather and traffic conditions
- Never ride your motorcycle after consuming alcohol or drugs
- Maintain your motorcycle properly and to a roadworthy standard

SCHOOL WARDEN CROSSINGS:

School Wardens operate under Section 96 of the Road Traffic Act 1961 and are empowered by law to stop traffic to assist primary school children across a road safely.

- Slow Down when approaching a School Crossing
- Drivers must stop for a School Warden when signaled to do so
- Drivers must remain stopped on the road until the warden clears the road
- A motorist can receive an initial fine of €160 and 2 Penalty Points for failing to stop for a School Warden
- A cyclist can receive an initial fine of €40 for failing to stop for a School Warden



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Beyond the Pale – Westport, Co. Mayo



The expression ‘beyond the pale’ was first used in Ireland way back in the 13th century, to describe people who lived outside the parts of Ireland controlled by the British.

Called the Pale, it originally consisted of parts of counties Meath, Louth, Kildare and Dublin in the east of Ireland. Once you passed “the Pale,” you were outside the authority and safety of English law, and subject to all the savageries of rural Ireland. “Beyond the pale” then became a colloquial phrase meaning “outside the limits of acceptable behavior or judgment.”

Dubliners are renowned for not venturing ‘beyond the pale’ so perhaps the word that the rest of Ireland is no longer a place of danger has not reached everyone yet! In coming editions we will highlight some of the places in Ireland you should visit, if you have not already done so. We start with Westport in Co Mayo.

Westport, located in County Mayo on the west coast of Ireland, is a charming town known for its picturesque surroundings, vibrant atmosphere, and a plethora of activities for visitors to enjoy. Whether you’re a nature enthusiast, a history buff, or someone seeking a relaxing getaway, Westport has something to offer. Here are some suggestions for things to do in Westport:

Climb Croagh Patrick:

Embark on a pilgrimage or simply enjoy the stunning views by climbing Croagh Patrick, the holy mountain located just outside Westport. The hike is challenging but rewarding, and the panoramic views from the summit are breathtaking.

Explore Westport House and Gardens:

Discover the rich history of Westport House, a stately home with beautiful gardens. The house offers guided tours, and the grounds provide a peaceful setting for a leisurely stroll.

Take a Bike Ride along the Great Western Greenway:

Rent a bike and explore the Great Western Greenway, a scenic cycling route that stretches from Westport to Achill Island. This off-road trail takes you through picturesque landscapes, offering a unique way to experience the beauty of County Mayo.

Experience Westport’s Nightlife:

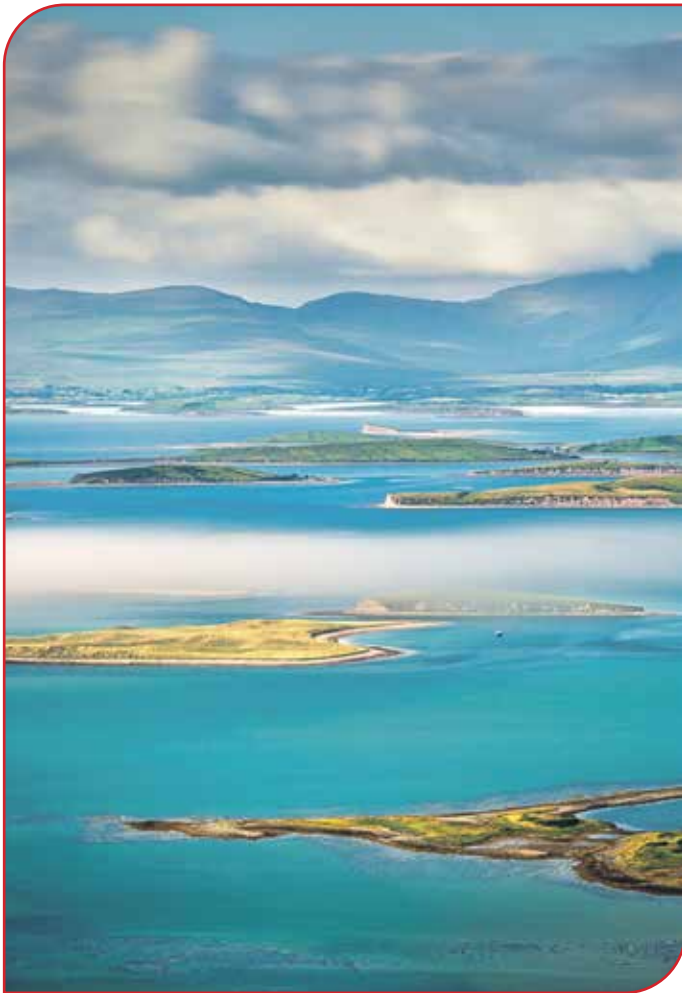
Westport has a lively nightlife scene with traditional Irish pubs, live music, and a friendly atmosphere. Matt Molloy’s, a renowned pub in the heart of the town, is particularly famous for its traditional Irish music sessions.

Participate in Water Activities:

Take advantage of Westport’s coastal location by engaging in water activities. Kayaking, sailing, and paddleboarding are popular options, allowing you to experience the beauty of Clew Bay up close.

Discover the Pirate Adventure Park:

If you’re traveling with family, the Pirate Adventure Park at Westport House offers a fun-filled day for children with rides, slides, and themed attractions.



Visit Clew Bay:

Explore the stunning Clew Bay, known for its numerous islands. You can take a boat tour to experience the bay from the water, or enjoy a leisurely drive along the coastal roads for picturesque views.

Visit the National Famine Memorial:

A short drive from Westport, the National Famine Memorial in Murrisk pays tribute to those who suffered during the Irish Famine. The poignant sculpture overlooks Clew Bay and provides a somber but important historical perspective.

Sample Local Cuisine:

Westport boasts a variety of restaurants and cafes offering delicious Irish cuisine. Try fresh seafood, traditional Irish stews, and other locally sourced dishes to get a taste of the region.

Attend Festivals and Events:

Check the local events calendar, as Westport hosts various festivals and events throughout the year. From music and arts festivals to food and cultural celebrations, there's often something exciting happening in town.

Westport's diverse offerings make it an ideal destination for a well-rounded and enjoyable vacation, catering to a wide range of interests and preferences.

Wordsearch

(Answers on Next Page)

- saxophone
- guitar
- drum
- harmonica
- violin
- banjo
- accordion
- trumpet
- piano
- mandolin
- flute
- harp

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REVERSE VENDING MACHINES ARE HERE

SuperValu and Centra are investing €28 million in reverse vending machines ahead of the launch of a new national recycling scheme from February 2024.



SuperValu and Centra have installed reverse vending machines (RVMs) in 540 stores across the 26 counties in Ireland, ahead of the launch of the new DRS Scheme on February 1st.

A total of 667 reverse vending machines are available to customers in 219 SuperValu and 321 Centra stores nationwide.

Trials in stores began in early 2023 with one key result being that customers will see two machines present in higher footfall locations to increase efficiency and convenience in returning containers.

Ian Allen, managing director of SuperValu and Centra, said: “As part of our strategy to build more sustainable communities and play our part in protecting the planet, we are delighted to roll out the DRS scheme across our 540 SuperValu and Centra stores.

“Investments in DRS complement other environmental initiatives undertaken by retailers, such as installation of solar panels, the implementation of fridge doors for energy conservation, LED lighting, and efforts to reduce packaging. These collective actions show the commitment to reducing our overall climate impact and growing sustainably every day. We and our retailers understand the important role we play in supporting communities and ensuring that we make the implementation of the DRS scheme as easy and convenient as possible for our customers.”

SuperValu and Centra estimate that 90 per cent of

recyclable PET bottles and AUL cans sold in store will be returned and more than 320 million containers are projected to be collected annually with the rollout of reverse vending machines across the store network.



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Lucan (Dublin West) - Laraghcon, Rokeby, Westmanstown

New Polling Station for Lucan and Westmanstown

In 2019 I made an electoral pledge to establish a dedicated polling station for the electoral area of Lucan North, which includes Laraghcon, Rokeby, Mount Joseph and Westmanstown north of the River Liffey. Previously residents travelled to St Mochta's National School in Clonsilla to vote, up to 6km away, which led to lower-than-average constituency turnout.

I am delighted to say that having worked directly with relevant parties, a new polling station will now be located at Westmanstown Conference Centre. The opening of this polling station comes at a crucial time too as voters will go to the polls in March for at least two referenda and again in June for the local and European elections.



St Catherine's Park - Clarity on new 60 acres bought by Council

As you know I was recently successful in a campaign for the Council to buy 60 acres of land beside St Catherine's Park. I am glad to say Fingal County Council recognised the strategic importance of these lands and I have since secured assurances from them on its future use. In an email dated 23 January 2024 the Council said:



"The lands themselves will be developed as multifunctional Green Infrastructure for a wide range of passive and active recreational uses as well as significant biodiversity/urban woodland improvement as the lands adjoin the last remaining remnant of the most ancient woodland in County Dublin. The lands will be complimentary and make a very significant addition to St Catherine's Regional Park and in particular allow the replacement of the very unsatisfactory vehicular access to the Park from the Lucan Road, with a purpose-built road allowing the reuse of the current narrow tree-lined avenue (Black Ave) as a dedicated walking/cycling accessway to the Park."

"These lands offer the option of a direct cycling and walking link between the Royal Canal (which

is to be developed as a Greenway) and St Catherine's Park with the possibility of further links to an extensive active travel network. An onward cycling/walking link from the Canal can be provided via the eastern edge of these lands to the housing development at Laraghcon opening up the possibility of a convenient link from this development to Confey Rail Station."

Lucan House / Italian Embassy Sale

The sale of Lucan House from the Italian Embassy to South Dublin County Council has now been formally agreed with ownership to transfer by the middle of 2024, pending sign off by officials in Rome. The Council has allocated €12 Million to develop this 30-acre site and a masterplan will be put out for public consultation.

THE FINE GAEL
Westmanstown,
Laraghcon & Rokeby TEAM
FINE GAEL ★



Senator Emer CURRIE

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD

Frances Fitzgerald MEP

Cllr Ted Leddy

Cllr Siobhan Shovlin

SECURING YOUR HOME



The winter months, with reduced daylight hours, are when more burglaries are carried out in Dublin. Here is advice reproduced from An Garda Síochána to reduce the risk.

Home Security

- Whether at home or going out, turn on some lights, use timer switches.
- Lock all doors and windows, almost 1 in 4 Summertime burglaries involve entry through an unsecured access point.
- Use your house alarm.
- Store keys safely; away from windows and letterboxes.
- Record details of valuables and don't keep large cash amounts at home.

Vacant Houses

If your home is going to be vacant for a period.

- Ask a trusted neighbour or family member to conduct frequent checks of the property at different times of the day to note any signs of trespassing or interference.
- Ensure the house alarm is set.
- Check all doors and windows are secure. (Use deadbolt locks if property is to be vacant for long periods).
- Install timers on internal lights and motion detectors on external lights to make the house appear occupied and offer natural surveillance of the property.
- Ensure that the building doesn't look neglected. Cut the grass, trim hedges etc.
- Ask a neighbour to collect post or if you are going to be away for longer periods arrange a 'mail minder' service with An Post to retain post for collection and place a 'No Junk Mail' sign on letterbox.
- Inform the local Garda station about the premises being

vacant to afford passing attention on patrols.

Social Media

If you are going on holiday and your home is going to be vacant, be mindful of what you post on social media. Even if you have enabled strict privacy settings, your holiday plans could be shared with unscrupulous people.

- Don't post status updates about your holidays while you're still away.
- Don't post pictures while you're away.
- Respect other people's privacy, don't tag others while you and they are on holidays.
- Avoid posting upcoming travel plans.
- Consider turning off the location sharing setting of your phone's camera app.
- Garden/ Landscaping
- Don't help the burglar; safely store away ladders, tools etc.
- Use quality locks on Garden sheds, chain valuable property, tools, bikes, etc. within.
- Property mark and photograph valuable possessions.
- Tidy up gardens and shrubbery, this improves visibility and creates the illusion of an occupied home.
- Consider defensive planting, e.g. thorny plants around the perimeter, for extra security.
- A barrier of prickly hedge along your boundary or underneath a window will help deter thieves. Hedges and shrubs in the front garden should be kept to a height

of no more than 3 feet in order to avoid giving a burglar a screen behind which he can conceal himself.

Home security and Burglary Prevention Advice

Check out the Garda's popular 'Lock Up Light Up' anti-burglary campaign here. It encourages homeowners to protect their property during winter, when residential burglaries traditionally rise.

Signs of vacancy

The majority of burglaries take place in unoccupied homes. The following are some of the things a burglar looks for:

- No lights on at night, or just 'dead' lights on (porch, hall)
- Lights on constantly during the day
- Blinds pulled down, or curtains across during the day
- A build-up of papers and/or flyers in the letter box
- A build-up of letters in the hall or porch visible from outside
- A build-up of milk on the doorstep
- Front gates closed and no car in the driveway
- Notes left for delivery men or callers
- Uncut lawn and untidy garden
- Most burglars are opportunists and will select the easiest target that they can find. Don't offer them assistance by:
- Leaving any window open. Some people do this for ventilation forgetting that burglars will take advantage of the smallest opening
- Leaving external doors unlocked
- Leaving a key on a string, under a doormat, or in some other 'good hiding place' outside
- Failing to secure side doors, allowing entry to the back of the premises, which is more vulnerable to attack
- Failing to keep garages and sheds locked. Not only do they contain valuable property, but also tools which may help the burglar gain access to your home.

Doors

Burglars prefer to enter homes through a door because, if disturbed the open door provides the quickest escape route.

Whether an intruder will gain access to your home through your external doors may depend on:

- the strength of the construction material
- the quality of the locks
- proper fitting and installation

If you are replacing your doors, you should consider doors that have already passed stringent security tests, such as PAS 24 2016, or for higher levels of security, doors meeting Irish & EU Burglar Resistant Security Standard IS EN 1627:2011.

Additional locks and limiters may be added for extra security. Remember to lock your doors. One in five burglars will enter a home via an unlocked door or window.

Windows

More than a third of burglars will enter your property through a window. A window's individual vulnerability will depend on three main factors:

- The accessibility of the window
- The quality of the fabrication, strength and installation of the window
- The visibility of the window to neighbours or passers-by
- We can reduce their attraction as an entry point for the burglar by trying to minimize these risk features.
- Windows manufactured to comply with the European standard I.S. EN 1627:2011 or the British security standard for doors & windows PAS 24-2016 or equivalent are recommended as these will have been subjected to specific security and burglar resistance tests.
- Additional locks and limiters may be added for extra security. Remember to lock your windows. One in five burglars will enter a home via an unlocked door or window.

Lighting

It is widely accepted that appropriate lighting can help to reduce crime and act as an effective deterrent to burglars. Appropriate lighting will help to make your home more visible to neighbours and passers-by; thereby increasing the likelihood of discovering unwanted intruders and trespassers. Lighting also helps to reduce the fear of crime.

- When installing security lighting, please consider each of the following:
- Avoid the creation of shadows and dark areas
- Position the light fitting out of reach
- Aim for a uniform light level
- Direct the light beam appropriately
- Consider your neighbours
- Avoid light pollution

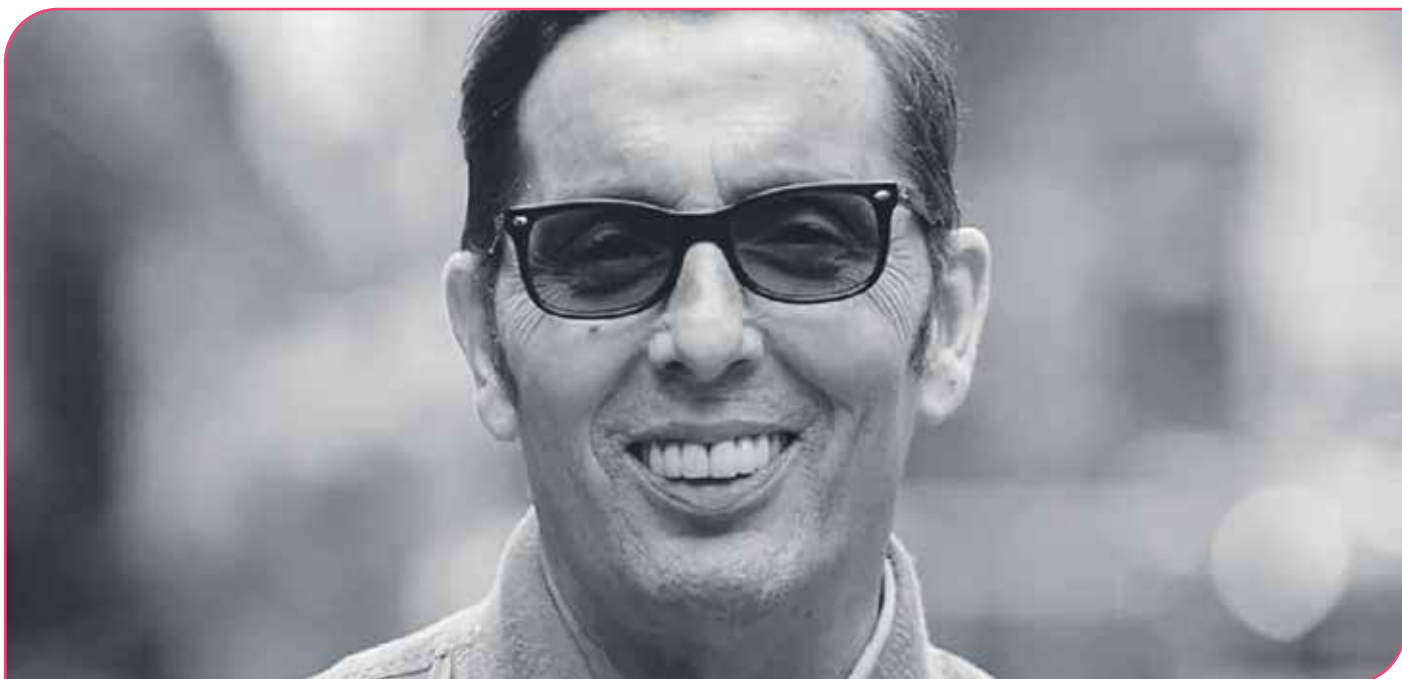
Alarms

It is widely accepted that intruder alarms are an effective deterrent against burglars, thereby helping to reduce the likelihood of your home being targeted. However, it is important to understand that an intruder alarm is not a replacement for good physical security. It should, rather, be regarded as a back-up to good physical and other security measures and precautions employed to protect your home.

All installed alarms should comply with the European Standard EN 50131. All alarm installers and installation companies must now be licensed by the Private Security Authority. A list of all licensed installers is available on their website. It is important to understand how your alarm system operates. Your installer should explain the operation of the system to you and all other members of your family. Insist on a training session to demonstrate its features. Do not write alarm codes etc. on the instruction manual or on walls or doors near the control unit or keypad.

Gone but not forgotten - The stars we lost in 2023

Sadly, 2023 saw the loss of many well-known celebrities. Here we remember some of them.



Michael Gambon

The Irish-English acclaimed actor died 27 September following a bout of pneumonia. Gambon was born in Cabra, Dublin on 19 October 1940.

He is most known for playing Albus Dumbledore in six Harry Potter films starting with Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban released in 2004.

Shane MacGowan

Shane MacGowan died at the age of 65 on November 30. He was best known for being the frontman of 'The Pogues.'

After being removed from the band in the early 1990s, he founded 'Shane MacGowan and The Popes'.

His funeral in Tipperary on December 7 was attended by the likes of Johnny Depp and Bono.

Sinéad O'Connor

The iconic singer attended Newtown Secondary School in Waterford during the 1980's.

The singer who is most known for her song "Nothing Compares 2 U" died on 26 July.

Ray Stevenson

One of the most versatile and revered actors of his generation, Ray Stevenson was born in Lisburn in County Antrim, in the North on 25 May 1964.

Fans will know always remember his performances

in the Marvel movies Punisher: War Zone as the title character, Thor: The Dark World and Thor: Ragnarök as Volstagg.

Mark Sheehan

Sheehan was born in Dublin and was a member of the boy band Mytown, and in 2001, he co-founded and played guitar for alternative rock band the Script.

Frank Twomey

The Cork born TV presenter died December 11, 2023.

The actor was best known as a presenter on the Irish children's afternoon show Bosco in the 1980s.

Christy Dignam

The singer died on 13 June 2023 at the age of 63.

He is best known as the lead singer of the popular Irish rock band Aslan.

Aslan formed in 1982 and became one of the most popular bands on the Irish music scene throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Craig Breen

The Irish race car driver was one of the most active and popular drivers in the world. The Waterford native had 9 podium finishes in races.

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SAVING MONEY

A recent survey suggested that two thirds of us will have not had enough money to last to the end of January.



It's a common problem after the Christmas excesses. Now is the time to get back on track and here are four simple ideas to help.

Spend wisely

Here's four spending tips to make your money go further.

Track your spending

The more aware you are of what you are spending the less likely you are to overspend. Using a digital bank like Revolut can help you set spending goals and reveal flashpoints or bad habits.* There are lots of free budgeting apps for Android or Apple phones if you're not ready to open another current account.

Prioritise purchases

It's so tempting to splash the cash in the sales, or if you have a little windfall, but before you whip

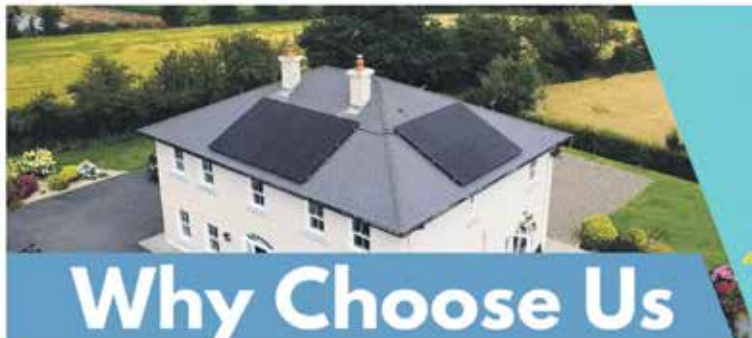
out that card, it's best to pay your bills or other essentials first. Remember to check your refund rights so you're never left out of pocket if you have second thoughts about a splurge.

Spread spending costs

If you've made a large purchase or your cash flow is taking a hit, consider a 0% purchase card to spread the cost interest-free. Remember, whether you're making a big-ticket purchase or a small treat, always shop around, price match and take time to ferret out the best deal.

Try the 50/30/20 budget

Aim to spend 50% of your pay on basic needs - such as bills, food, housing, and travel to work, then set aside 30% for having fun - eating out, drinking with friends, going to the cinema and days out. Put the final 20% towards savings, investing and your credit balances.



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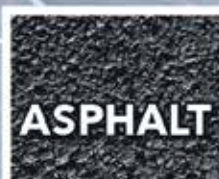
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OPEN CALL FOR CRUINIÚ NA NÓG 2024 COMMISSION AWARDS

Kildare County Council is inviting proposals from artists, creative practitioners, and organisations to commission creative projects for Kildare's 2024 Cruinniú na nÓg celebrations.

Cruinniú na nÓg is the National Day of Creativity for children and young people, which will take place on Saturday 15th June. It aims to celebrate and encourage children and young people's participation in culture and creativity by providing free, accessible, activity-based creative opportunities in their own locality. Commissions awards are available between €1,500 - €5,000 via a competitive process. Full details and application forms are available through the online portal at <https://kildarecocoarts.submit.com/show/280>. In addition, information videos and application guides will be made available via Kildare Arts Service's YouTube and social media channels from Monday 22nd January 2024.



The deadline for receipt of applications is 12pm, Wednesday 28th February 2024. Cruinniú na nÓg is an initiative of the Creative Ireland Programme at the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and is presented in partnership with RTÉ and Local Authorities. For further information, contact Colleen Werle, Creative Communities Engagement Officer by Ph: 045 980640 or Email creative@kildarecoco.ie.



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Search Begins for Ireland's Fittest School

A search to find Ireland's fittest school 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.

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THE ART OF CLEANING IN 2024

Unravelling the Layers Beyond Spotless Homes. By Mike Power



In the pursuit of the 'perfect' home, the cleaning industry has evolved into a massive business, orchestrating multi-million-euro advertising campaigns that tap into our psychological vulnerabilities. Our homes, now reflections of our identities, are subject to the ever-changing trends propagated by influencers on platforms like

Instagram and Facebook. Celebrities, with their flawlessly organized spaces, endorse products that promise perfection, inadvertently reinforcing stereotypes and insensitivity toward the real heroes behind household maintenance – predominantly women.

Times have changed, challenging traditional

gender roles, and redistributing household responsibilities. Househusbands, foregoing their careers for domestic pursuits, have become increasingly common. However, despite societal progress, certain stereotypes persist. Men, as surveys indicate, are more inclined toward using mechanical cleaning devices, while women are often left managing the repetitive daily chores and child-related tasks that demand patience and skill.

Guilt plays a pivotal role in the cleaning industry's marketing strategies, capitalizing on societal expectations that have been slow to evolve. Women, historically burdened with household responsibilities, are the primary targets of guilt-inducing ads, reinforcing the idea that they are responsible for maintaining a flawless home.

The allure of cleaning products goes beyond their practical use. It taps into deep-seated psychological motivations and vulnerabilities, as a spotless home is often equated with personal virtue. The emotional conditioning exploited by advertisers thrives on the societal pressure to be perceived as the epitome of a responsible and clean individual.

Looking back at the history of cleaning,

humankind has waged a ceaseless battle against dirt, contamination, and disease. While soap and water have been the go-to cleaning tools since ancient times, the invention of the washing machine in the 1940s significantly reduced women's household chores. The evolution of materials like plastic, vinyl, stainless steel, and ceramics brought about a revolution in cleaning, making it easier for housekeepers to maintain cleanliness.

Even our homes' hidden worlds, revealed through the contents of vacuum cleaner bags, tell stories of our daily lives – skin flakes, shoe dirt, air pollutants, carpet fibres, and more. The idea of cleaning extends beyond the physical removal of dirt; it is an emotional and psychological pursuit, influenced by societal expectations and individual insecurities.

So, the next time you embark on a cleaning spree, consider the layers beyond the surface cleanliness. Our homes, reflections of ourselves, are more than just visually appealing spaces. They encapsulate the evolving dynamics of our society, the persistent stereotypes we challenge, and the emotional conditioning we navigate in the pursuit of the elusive spotless home in 2024.



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HIGHWAY ROBBERY – LITERALLY

‘More taxes on people who ‘get up early’



The introduction of price hikes on the M50 has been described as ‘Highway Robbery’ by a local public representative for Castleknock.

Aontu’s Ellen Troy has rounded on the Government for the latest cost increases calling them “An insidious way of taking more money out of people’s pockets.”

Ellen says.

“I am absolutely furious about this as it is impacting a whole swathe of people, 160,000 thousand hard pressed commuters are being forced to pay for these punitive tolls, notably those who get up early to go to work and who are already paying through the nose for everything”.

“Car journeys are increasing by 20 Cents per trip with heavy goods vehicles jumping by 30 to 50 cents. A fiver a day for car users is a very considerable charge for people who are already grappling with spiralling costs and it’s one they simply can’t avoid as they have to use the M50 to get to and from work”.

“In my LEA of Castleknock, proximity to the M50 is used as a selling point by Estate Agents as it’s a main arterial route and the busiest one in the country”.

“I use it myself to get to and back from work; If I had to leave Castleknock to go to Sandyford where I work without using the M50 it would take me hours. Using it takes me twenty minutes and this is what angers me the most on behalf of the people in my area; the government knows people have to use it, they are sitting ducks for these price increases”.

“The Government can’t use the excuse of these increases as being ‘uncontrollable costs’.

“The M50 is a state-owned infrastructure, and the commuting public has already paid for their use of it. Well paid for it at this stage. It is absolutely mind bending how the Government is continuing to extract money from the commuting public for the ‘privilege’ of using it.”

“The commuting public are cash cows for this Government.

They jacked up excise on petrol and diesel just 7 months ago, they hiked up the tolls just 6 months ago and three months ago they increased the cost of carbon tax. They took in 2.3 billion in fuel tax in 2022”.

“These are impositions that the Government is directly in charge of. We are living through an horrendous cost of living crisis and while the Government is using weasel words of fake sympathy for people, its actions are directly in contravention of this.”

“We are going to fight this tooth and nail, enough is enough.”

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Exploring the Rich History of The Strawberry Beds in Dublin



Introduction:

Nestled along the banks of the River Liffey in Dublin, The Strawberry Beds is a picturesque stretch of land with a history as vibrant and varied as the lush landscapes that define it. This idyllic area, known for its scenic beauty, has witnessed centuries of change, development, and cultural evolution. Let's take a journey through time to unravel the fascinating history of The Strawberry Beds in Dublin.

Early Settlements:

The Strawberry Beds region has a history dating back to ancient times. Archaeological evidence suggests that the area was inhabited as early as the Neolithic period, with various artifacts and remnants indicating the presence of early settlers. Over the centuries, different communities have left their mark on the landscape, contributing to the rich tapestry of The Strawberry Beds' history.

Agricultural Heritage:

The name “Strawberry Beds” itself has agricultural origins, harking back to the cultivation of strawberries in the area. The fertile soil along the riverbanks made it an ideal location for farming, and strawberries became a prominent crop. The practice of cultivating strawberries persisted for many years, shaping the local economy and lending a unique character to the landscape.

19th Century Transformation:

During the 19th century, The Strawberry Beds underwent significant transformations, reflecting the broader changes occurring in Ireland. The expansion of transportation networks, particularly the construction of the Royal Canal, brought increased accessibility to the region. This accessibility, coupled with the agricultural productivity of the area, attracted new residents and fostered economic growth.

The Strawberry Beds became a popular destination for Dubliners seeking a rural escape from the bustling city life. Country houses and estates dotted the landscape, serving as retreats for the wealthy elite. The juxtaposition of the rural and the urban in The Strawberry Beds made it a unique and sought-after locale.

The Troubles and Changing Dynamics:

The 20th century brought its own set of challenges to The Strawberry Beds, as Ireland experienced the turbulent period known as “The Troubles.” The region, like many others, felt the impact of political and social unrest. However, despite the challenges, the resilience of the local community shone through, and The Strawberry Beds remained a community with a strong sense of identity.

Modern Revival:

In recent decades, The Strawberry Beds has experienced a revival as interest in preserving historical landscapes and promoting sustainable living has grown. Efforts to protect the natural beauty of the area, coupled with initiatives to celebrate its heritage, have contributed to a renewed appreciation for The Strawberry Beds.

Conclusion:

The Strawberry Beds in Dublin stands as a testament to the enduring nature of history,



where ancient settlements, agricultural traditions, and modern developments converge. Its evolution reflects the dynamic story of Ireland itself, with each chapter leaving its imprint on the landscape. As The Strawberry Beds continues to be cherished by locals and visitors alike, its history remains an integral part of Dublin’s cultural tapestry, weaving together the past and present in a picturesque panorama along the River Liffey.

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St Brigid's Day and the Women of Ireland

St Brigid's Day is now passed for another year, but it is a good time to reflect on the role of women in Ireland's past.



Image – Women Trinity College graduates

“If a female had once passed the gate it would be practically impossible to watch what buildings or chambers she had entered or how long she might remain there.”

In 1895, the Board of Trinity College Dublin identified this as one of a number of dangers associated with admitting female students to the College.

Less than 10 years later and in the same month as the death of Provost George Salmon, who had famously proclaimed “over my dead body” will women enter the college, the first three female students were admitted to Trinity in January 1904.

In ancient Ireland things were different. The roles and status of women were influenced by the complex social, political, and cultural structures of Celtic society. While it’s important to note that information about ancient Ireland can be somewhat limited and interpretations may vary, some general aspects of the role of women in ancient Irish society include:

Legal Status:

Women in ancient Ireland had certain legal rights, including the right to inherit property and the right to seek legal redress in cases of injury or injustice. The Brehon Laws, a legal system in ancient Ireland, recognized the rights of women in various matters, although the extent of these rights could vary.

Marriage and Family:

Marriage was an important institution, and women played crucial roles in the family structure. In some cases, women had the right to choose their husbands, and marriage was often accompanied by dowries. The household was a significant unit in ancient Irish society, and women played key roles in managing the household and raising children.

Economic Contributions:

Women were actively involved in economic activities, both within and outside the household. They participated in agricultural work, textile production, and other tasks essential to the family’s livelihood. In some cases, women held positions of economic power, particularly if they inherited land or wealth.

Religious Roles:

In ancient Celtic and pre-Christian Irish society, some women held positions of religious significance. There were female druids and priestesses who played roles in spiritual and ritual practices. With the arrival of Christianity, the roles of women in religious

contexts underwent changes, and convents and monastic life became options for some women.

Warrior Women:

There are historical references and mythological tales of women warriors, such as the legendary figure Queen Medb (Maeve) in the Ulster Cycle of Irish mythology. While the extent to which women participated in warfare is debated among historians, these stories suggest a recognition of women as capable and powerful figures.

Cultural and Artistic Contributions:

Women in ancient Ireland contributed to the cultural and artistic life of their communities. They were involved in storytelling, music, and other forms of artistic expression. Women poets, called banfilí, were known for their skills in composing and reciting poetry.

There have been many powerful and influential women in Ireland’s history. A power lost in more recent times, but a new generation of women are changing all that.

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The History of St. Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is a time to celebrate romance and love and kissy-face fealty. But the origins of this festival of candy and cupids are dark, bloody — and a bit muddled.



Though no one has pinpointed the exact origin of the holiday, one place to start is ancient Rome. The Romans' celebrations were violent. The Romans executed two men by that name on Feb. 14 of different years in the third century.

From Feb. 13 to 15, the Romans celebrated the feast of Lupercalia. The men sacrificed a goat and a dog, then whipped women with the hides of the animals they had just slain. The Roman romantics "were drunk. They were naked," Noel Lenski, now a religious studies professor at Yale University, told NPR in 2011. Young women would line up for the men to hit them, Lenski said. They believed this would make them fertile.

VALENTINE'S DAY

The brutal fete included a matchmaking lottery in which young men drew the names of women from a jar. The couple would then be, um, coupled up for the duration of the festival — or longer, if the match was right.

The ancient Romans may also be responsible for the name of our modern day of love. Emperor Claudius II executed two men — both named Valentine — on Feb. 14 of different years in the third century. Their martyrdom was honoured by the Catholic Church with the celebration of St. Valentine's Day.

As the holiday spread, it evolved!!!!!!!

William Shakespeare helped romanticize Valentine's Day in his work, and it gained popularity

throughout Britain and the rest of Europe.

The Normans celebrated Galatin's Day. Galatin meant "lover of women." That was likely confused with St. Valentine's Day at some point, in part because they sound alike.

As the years went on, the holiday grew sweeter. Chaucer and Shakespeare romanticized it in their work, and it gained popularity throughout Britain and the rest of Europe. Handmade paper cards became the tokens du jour in the Middle Ages.

Eventually, the tradition made its way to the New World. The Industrial Revolution ushered in factory-made cards in the 19th century. And in 1913, Hallmark Cards of Kansas City, Mo., began mass-producing valentines. February has not been the same since.

How we celebrate now

Today, the holiday is big business. But that commercialization has spoiled the day for many. Helen Fisher, a sociologist at Rutgers University, said we have only ourselves to blame. "This isn't a command performance," she said. "If people didn't want to buy Hallmark cards, they would not be bought, and Hallmark would go out of business."

And so the celebration of Valentine's Day goes on, in varied ways. Many will break the bank buying jewellery and flowers for their beloveds. Some will celebrate in a SAD (that's Singles Awareness Day) way, dining alone and bingeing on self-gifted chocolates — while others will find a way to make peace with singlehood in a society that wants everyone to partner up.

RECORDING BREAKING SUCCESS FOR DUNBOYNE COLLEGE STUDENTS



The continuing popularity of the post leaving certificate further education sector as a route into higher education degrees is clearly evident in figures released by Dunboyne College of Further Education (DCFE), one of the largest providers of post certificate further education and training (FET) courses in the country.

The data also highlights a growing trend where an increasing number of students are now using the FET route to access courses that consistently demand over 500 Leaving Certificate points.

Denis Leonard, Principal of Dunboyne College of Further Education (DCFE), says that over 90% of eligible DCFE students who applied through the CAO in 2023 received offers based on their QQI results rather than their Leaving Certificate points. In 2023 a total of four hundred and eighty two (482) DCFE graduates secured places on Level 8 honours degree courses with two hundred and seventy five (275) receiving Level 7 ordinary degree offers. Many received offers at both levels with a total of four hundred and ninety-eight (498) achieving at least one offer. The figures do not include offers to mature students and students who received offers from Northern Ireland, mainland UK and EU universities.

Mr Leonard has also identified a growing trend of DCFE students securing offers for Level 8 degree courses requiring over 500 points. Offers were made based on QQI results rather than Leaving Certificate points. Among the 2023 offers to DCFE graduates in 2023 were multiple places on both DCU's Athletic Therapy and Training and Sports Science and Health courses, as well as Law and Commerce in UCD.

DCFE students also secured places on Law, BESS and Biological/Biomedical Sciences in Trinity, Sports Science, Health, and Architecture in TUD, as well as both Psychology and Law in Maynooth University, courses which traditionally

demand well over 500 Leaving Certificate points for a Round 1 offer. Students are also using their QQI results to access healthcare degrees availing of free fees at Ulster University in areas such as Physiotherapy, Nursing and Occupational Therapy.

2023 proved to be a particularly strong year for DCFE Pre-Nursing students, with a surge in offers from Irish universities. "The number of places for QQI Pre-Nursing applicants is very low in comparison to other courses but this year we saw some universities offer a significant number of their QQI places to our students. These included 10 QQI places in Trinity College, 10 to DCU and 7 QQI places in UCD. In other universities where there were specialised nursing courses there were multiple offers including TUS Athlone, DKIT, Cork, and Limerick. Over 50% of DCFE Pre-Nursing students secured offers in Irish or Northern Irish colleges.

However, Mr. Leonard expressed concern about the trend of Pre-Nursing students receiving and accepting offers to complete their training in UK universities. He called for an increased focus on retaining students in the country. "We are exporting students to study Nursing when we really should be keeping them here in Ireland. These are students who know what it is like to study Nursing and who have made the commitment to the profession and yet we are denying them a place to continue their studies."

The majority of DCFE graduates tend to apply to and accept offers from universities and colleges within the immediate catchment area of the college with TU Dublin making 267

offers across Level 8 and Level 7 courses to DCFE students and Maynooth University offering 156 places.

Other Dublin based universities attracted applications from Dunboyne with DCU offering 54 places, followed closely by UCD with 36 offers and 20 offers from Trinity College.

While geographical location often influences the majority of offers and acceptances, DCFE's reach extends to universities and colleges across the country, from Carlow to Cork, Letterkenny to Limerick, Sligo to the new South East Technology University in Waterford, and across to Galway.

Standout offer numbers include 39 to Dundalk, 44 to TUS Athlone, 39 to the ATU in Galway 18 to the South East TU, and 6 to the Munster TU. Those interested in continuing their studies in Art and progressed to both IADT and NCAD.

The DCFE Principal says their progression figures clearly support the initiative by Simon Harris TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education to enable students to start their third level experience in further education and complete the remainder in higher education colleges. "The focus on seamless transition aligns with DCFE's success in facilitating progression from Level 5 to Level 8 degrees. We have already been working closely with Irish universities including Maynooth and TU Dublin to enhance and develop these pathways in teaching, nursing, engineering, and other areas to open up opportunities for our students to get to where they want to go. This approach," he contends, "makes economic

sense and supports student welfare by allowing them to explore their interests at the further education level before committing to a full 4-year degree."

The DCFE Principal acknowledges that not every student knows their preferred field of study upon completing secondary school. "Nor should we expect them," he says. "Opting for the further education route allows students to explore their options, and SOLAS data indicates that students with under 300 points have a 50% chance of completing a higher education degree, increasing to 75% for those who complete a further education course. On a FE course they learn referencing, research and self-directed learning and focus on one discipline for study as opposed to 7 or 8 Leaving Certificate subjects. This means they are better placed to complete subsequent level 7 or 8 degree," says Leonard.

While statistics show that overall third-level dropout rates for students who complete a Level 5 QQI course are less than 3%, Mr. Leonard concedes that the progression to UK colleges is not as accurately captured.

He highlights that approximately 50% of DCFE graduates complete Pre-Employment programs, entering the workforce successfully in sectors like childcare, healthcare, animal care, airline/tourism, business/IT, hairdressing, beauty therapy, and professional cookery. Graduates of these courses use their mandatory college work placement to obtain full-time positions. In fact, we cannot meet the employers demand



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