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AUGUST 2026

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EDITORIAL

Where has the summer gone I hear you say? We have spent most of July opening windows, closing curtains and searching the shops for electric fans and in the midst of all of that there are people planning for Christmas.....yes, you heard meChristmas!!!!!! Admit it.....you know who you are!!!!!! Have a look at our funny article on "Christmas in July" and I bet you can relate to it.

Influencers!!! Who are they? Who decided we need them and their advice? Apparently, we ourselves have made that decision. We all listen and are influenced by them because they have managed to turn their opinions into a very lucrative career for themselves. Enjoy our piece on the topic and then give your own opinion.

Finally, a lovely humorous submission we received from a committed reader of Little Village about everyone's favourite pet hate.....Ironing.....and no ordinary boring household stuff... but the ironing of bedsheets.

Until next time, enjoy the remainder of our wonderful summer.

The Little Village Team

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Will North Kildare Finally Get Its Swimming Pool?

For generations of children growing up in Leixlip, Celbridge and Maynooth, learning to swim has often begun with learning how to get to a swimming pool.

Parents have become accustomed to packing towels, goggles, armbands and snacks before driving considerable distances for a lesson lasting perhaps 30 minutes. By the time everyone returns home, swimming has become less of a healthy activity and more of a minor military operation.

North Kildare has grown rapidly, but one important community amenity has consistently failed to keep pace: a permanent public swimming pool.

There is now renewed hope that this may finally change.

In May 2026, Kildare County Council announced that it was commissioning a detailed feasibility study into a possible swimming pool on council-owned land in the Leixlip Demesne townland. The proposed location is close to both Leixlip and Celbridge, potentially allowing the facility to serve communities across a much wider North Kildare area.

It is an encouraging development, although residents who have followed the campaign over many years may wisely keep the champagne—or perhaps the inflatable flamingo—on hold.

A feasibility study is an important step, but it is not planning permission, construction funding or the sight of a mechanical digger arriving on site. The council has made clear that the project will still depend on planning approval and sufficient funding.

One significant boost has come from Intel, which has committed €1 million towards the project, subject to planning approval. The company acknowledged that a swimming pool has been a long-held ambition for people living in the Leixlip and Celbridge area.

Swim Ireland has also expressed support for the development of permanent swimming facilities.

The case for a pool is not difficult to make.

Swimming is unusual among sports because it can be enjoyed by almost everyone. Children can learn a potentially life-saving skill, teenagers can train and compete, adults can exercise without placing heavy pressure on their joints, and older people can remain active in a safe environment.

A properly designed public facility could

Continues P.6

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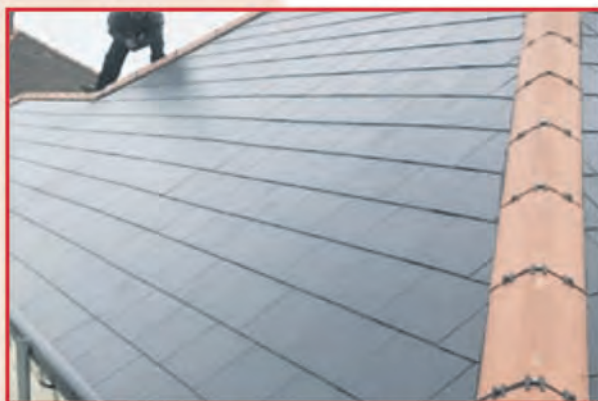


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provide swimming lessons, school programmes, aqua aerobics, rehabilitation sessions, autism-friendly classes and opportunities for people with disabilities. It would not be aimed solely at serious swimmers wearing goggles and checking lap times. It could serve people from their first nervous paddle to their retirement years.

North Kildare has already been given a small demonstration of what is possible. In 2023, Swim Ireland and Kildare County Council brought a temporary pop-up pool to Leixlip GAA Club. The heated pool measured 12 metres by 3.4 metres and hosted school lessons, adult classes, aqua fitness and community programmes. Demand and participation data gathered during that initiative have helped strengthen the argument for a permanent facility.

The temporary pool also proved something local families already knew: people will use a swimming facility when one is available and affordable.

The next question is what sort of pool should be built. A modest community pool may be easier to fund and operate, but residents will understandably want a facility capable of meeting the area's needs for decades. Decisions will be required on the size

of the main pool, provision for young children, changing facilities, accessibility, parking, public transport and whether other leisure amenities should be included.

Running costs will be as important as construction costs. Swimming pools are expensive buildings to heat, staff and maintain. A beautiful new facility is of little value if admission charges put it beyond the reach of many families. The eventual business plan must therefore focus on affordability as well as financial sustainability.

There will undoubtedly be studies, reports, consultations and planning procedures before anyone dives into the first lane. That is the nature of major public projects. Yet the announcement feels more substantial than many previous expressions of support. Council-owned land has been identified, a detailed site study is being commissioned, Swim Ireland is involved and €1 million has been pledged by a major local employer.

For now, North Kildare does not have its long-awaited public swimming pool. What it has is a credible route towards one.

After years of treading water, that at least feels like progress.



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Traffic Management and Roadworks Update

Update on concerns residents raised with me and the over €1 million of investment for Lucan roads and footpaths in 2026

Traffic, parking and road safety remain among the most common issues residents contact me about. Through the Traffic Management Meeting (TMM) process, I continue bringing these concerns directly to Council engineers for review and action.

Meadowview Grove. I continue to raise the issues arising from the volume of traffic on Meadowview. Following the rejection of proposed traffic calming measure by residents, residents requested that the council explore a No Right Turn off the Dodsboro Road. The Council did not recommend the introduction of a restriction. The review did however result in several traffic calming improvements: a digital Driver Feedback Sign was installed at the Dodsboro Road entrance to Meadowview Grove to encourage lower vehicle speeds, the Council installed a road sign with associated road markings at the t-junction from Meadowview Grove onto Hillcrest Walk / Hillcrest Heights to improve safety and junction control, and a 3.5 tonne HGV weight restriction applies. These measures represent practical improvements secured following concerns raised through the TMM process.

The Paddocks and Dodsboro Cottages. Residents reported that at peak times traffic regularly block

access at both estates. When I raised this issue initially the Council could not progress the request because the road had not yet been taken in charge. However, following the taking-in-charge process, I raised the issue again at the May TMM. The Council subsequently confirmed that a full yellow box junction will be installed, subject to programme, funding and resources.

Spar on Dodsboro Road. Residents reported cars driving on the footpath on the Tesco side of the Spar and the council installed bollards at this location to improve safety for pedestrians.

Abbeydale Crescent. Residents raised concerns about difficulties exiting onto Castle Road. Following my request for a review, the Council confirmed that a yellow box removed during resurfacing works would be reinstated. Residents also raised concerns regarding visibility at the pedestrian crossing on Castle Road near Earlsfort. Council engineers agreed to realign the public lighting at the crossing to improve visibility.

Other issues I've raised and will continue to follow up include pedestrian and traffic safety concerns around Lucan East Educate Together National School, footpath parking concerns on key school routes, an accessible parking space on the Lucan Road opposite the shops and adjacent to the

Sarsfield Park Health Centre, traffic calming in Airlie Heights, and ongoing congestion concerns around Pennyhill and Euro Spar.

Alongside raising individual traffic issues at the Traffic Management Meeting, there is substantial investment in the area via the 2026 Roadworks Programme. For the Lucan Electoral Area, funding of €1.075 million is allocated, which includes €410,000 for road resurfacing, €595,000 for footpath repairs and €70,000 for cycle track maintenance.

Road resurfacing included in the 2026 Budget:

- Adamstown Road
- Lucan Bridge
- Esker Lawns
- R148 Leixlip Road
- Lucan Newlands Road

Footpath improvement works included in the 2026 Budget:

- Arthur Griffith
- Weston Estate
- Castlegate

- Canonbrook Avenue and Court
 - St Finian's
 - Lucan Heights
- Cycle maintenance works included in the 2026 budget:
- Outer Ring Road
 - Griffeen Avenue
- In addition to residents seeing good progress on the above list of works, Roads Maintenance crews will continue carrying out pothole repairs, drainage works, road marking renewal, signage repairs and other routine maintenance works throughout the year.

Speed Limit Review

Residents should also be aware that the countywide Speed Limit Review is expected to go to public consultation the first week in August. This review will examine speed limits across South Dublin County, with councillors expected to consider the proposed bye-laws later in the year. Check for the Public Consultation online at www.Consult.SDublinCoCo.ie.

SEPTEMBER

Meeting	Date	Contact me by
County Council Meeting	14 September	31 August
Local Community Safety Partnership	18 September	31 August
Traffic Management Meeting	22 September	28 August
Lucan, Palmerstown & North Clondalkin Area Committee Meeting	22 September	28 September

OCTOBER

Meeting	Date	Contact me by
County Council Meeting	12 October	28 September
Lucan, Palmerstown & North Clondalkin Area Committee Meeting	28 October	14 October
Audit Committee Meeting	29 October	Ongoing



CHRISTMAS IN JULY

A fictional heartwarming story

I know we have just had July, and the heat was beyond the endurance of the Irish people. We are opening windows, closing curtains, searching for electric fans and wondering how anyone survives in Spain.

And yet, even now, there are people planning Christmas.

You know the type. They began in January, moving quietly through the sales, buying discounted candles, novelty socks and presents for people they might not even be speaking to by December.

"I'm nearly finished," they will announce in July.

Finished what? Christmas is five months away.

From now on, they will begin the countdown. One hundred and fifty days to Christmas. One hundred days. Ten Fridays. They know these figures without consulting a calendar. They probably have an app.

After Halloween, they will no longer try to hide it. The pumpkins will barely have gone soft before the first Christmas cushion appears on the sofa. Then comes the festive mug, the scented candle and the tea towel showing a robin wearing a scarf.

There must also be a new decoration every year.

No old decoration is ever thrown out. This would be unthinkable. Every bauble purchased since 1987 is still in active service, including several made by children in primary school from cardboard, glue and something that may once have been pasta.

The Christmas tree, therefore, becomes less a tree and more an overloaded shelving system. Every branch carries six baubles, three angels, two

wooden reindeer and a snowman whose hat has been missing since 2004.

Once, the Christmas tree went up on Christmas Eve. It was part of the excitement. Now, many trees appear on the first of December, while the more committed Christmas enthusiasts begin in November.

Some would put the tree up after the August Bank Holiday if they thought the neighbours would tolerate it.

Then there are the outdoor lights.

This began in America, where entire houses are illuminated strongly enough to be seen from space. It has now reached Ireland. By late November, perfectly respectable housing estates are filled with flashing reindeer, inflatable snowmen and illuminated sleighs apparently landing on semi-detached roofs.

There is always one house that goes too far.

You know the one. It has lights around every window, lights along the guttering, lights on the hedge and a glowing Santa halfway up the chimney. Passing aircraft are probably advised to alter course.

The electricity bill must arrive in January with a covering letter from the power company asking if they have recently opened a small factory.

I suppose all this brightness is our way of fighting the winter. December is dark, wet and cold, so we fill it with lights, food, drink and songs we have been hearing since October.

For a few weeks, we convince ourselves that



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winter is magical.

Then January arrives.

The decorations come down. The tree is dragged through the hall, shedding needles and dignity. The outdoor lights are switched off, leaving the house looking strangely abandoned.

There are no festive songs for January. Nobody has written, "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like the Third Week of Rain."

The fridge contains half a jar of cranberry sauce and several cheeses nobody wants. The credit card bill arrives. Outside, it is dark at four o'clock, and the weather forecast offers rain followed by heavier rain.

This is when thoughts turn to a winter holiday in the sun.

We look online at photographs of Tenerife, where happy people sit beside swimming pools under blue skies. We check the prices, quietly close the website and decide that Donegal is lovely at this time of year.

Then we begin counting the days to spring.

And somewhere, one of those organised Christmas people is already in the January sales, buying another illuminated reindeer.



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Are Lucan and Leixlip Becoming Better Places for Children?



There was a time when providing for children meant putting a slide and two swings on a patch of grass and declaring the job done. Teenagers were expected to disappear until adulthood, preferably without gathering anywhere that could be seen from a kitchen window.

Thankfully, expectations have changed. A good place for children now needs safe walking routes, parks, sports facilities, libraries, inclusive playgrounds and somewhere for teenagers to meet without being treated as a public-order problem.

By that measure, Lucan and Leixlip are making progress.

One of the clearest examples is the new playground at Station Road in Leixlip. Officially opened in December 2025, the €1.08 million development was designed for children of different ages and abilities. It includes accessible equipment and sensory features intended to support physical, imaginative and social play. The previous equipment was not discarded but refurbished and moved to the Wonderful Barn, creating a second improved play area.

That word inclusive matters. A playground may look impressive in photographs, but it has failed if a child with limited mobility can only watch from the edge. The Station Road project attempts to make accessibility part of the original design rather than something added later

Continues P.12

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Lucan also has a growing range of outdoor facilities. Griffeen Valley Park extends through several parts of the area and includes a large playground, skate park and dedicated teenspace. The teenspace is particularly welcome because children do not stop needing recreation when they become too tall for the swings.

Teenagers need somewhere to sit, talk and be active. They may occasionally make noise and wear clothing that appears unsuitable for the weather, but these are not yet criminal offences. Providing sports areas, seating, skate facilities and informal meeting places gives young people a legitimate claim on their community.

Lucan families have also gained the long-awaited swimming pool at Lucan Leisure Centre. The new facility, which includes a 25-metre pool, finally opened in May 2026 after years of delays. Demand was immediate, demonstrating that the appetite for local swimming facilities had certainly not disappeared while construction dragged on.

Across the county boundary, Leixlip families are still waiting for a permanent public pool of their own. A feasibility study is examining a possible North Kildare facility, but for now many parents must continue driving elsewhere for lessons. The familiar routine involves packing towels, goggles and several snacks before travelling half an hour for a child to spend 30 minutes in the water.

Libraries have quietly become another important part of family life. Lucan and Leixlip libraries offer children's activities, workshops and reading events rather than simply lending books. Kildare's Summer Stars programme runs from June until the end of August, encouraging children up to the age of 12 to set reading goals and take part in free story times, workshops and book clubs. South Dublin Libraries also maintains a regular programme of events through its Lucan branch.

For parents facing the long summer holidays, the word free is almost as attractive as the word educational. A library visit does not require advance financing, special clothing or the purchase of a family meal afterwards. It is also one of the few places where children can spend time indoors without anyone expecting them to buy something.

Sports clubs remain central to childhood in both towns. GAA, soccer, rugby, athletics, gymnastics, martial arts and dance provide exercise, friendships and a valuable outlet for energy. They also rely heavily on volunteers who give up evenings and weekends to coach other people's children while their own dinner goes cold at home.

However, a town cannot call itself child-friendly simply because organised clubs are available. Membership fees, equipment, transport and waiting lists can exclude families. Informal recreation is equally important. Children need spaces where they can kick a ball, ride a bicycle or meet friends without every hour being supervised and scheduled.

This brings us to the most difficult test: can children

move around safely?

A child-friendly town should allow an older child to walk to school, cycle to a friend's house or visit the library without requiring a parent to operate a permanent taxi service. Yet busy roads, difficult junctions and school-gate traffic still limit that independence.

South Dublin County Council's Active Travel Schools programme aims to make it safer for children to walk, cycle and scoot to school while reducing congestion outside school gates. Leixlip also has active-travel plans under development, although progress on some projects has been delayed by drainage and design issues.

These schemes can provoke arguments. Motorists worry about lost parking and longer queues, while cyclists and pedestrians point out that they are often given whatever space remains after the needs of cars have been satisfied.

The debate misses an important point. Many parents drive short distances because they do not believe the alternative is safe. Make walking and cycling genuinely practical, and some cars will disappear from the school gate without anyone having to declare war on motorists.

There are other gaps. Facilities do not always keep pace with new housing. Popular activities develop waiting lists. Playgrounds require maintenance after the opening photographs have been taken. Teenagers still need more indoor spaces, particularly during an Irish winter when a park bench offers limited appeal.

Affordability must also remain part of the conversation. A magnificent leisure centre is of little value to a family that cannot afford regular admission. Community facilities work best when pay-as-you-go access, subsidised programmes and support for local clubs ensure that participation is not determined entirely by household income.

So, are Lucan and Leixlip becoming better places for children?

The evidence suggests that they are. Leixlip has gained a genuinely inclusive playground, while Lucan has added a major swimming facility and continues to develop its parks and spaces for teenagers. Libraries, sports clubs and community groups provide activities that would have been unimaginable a generation ago.

But the work is not finished. The real measure of success is not the number of facilities listed in a council report. It is whether children of different ages, incomes and abilities can actually use them.

A good town for children is also a good town for everyone. Safer crossings help older residents. Parks give adults somewhere to walk. Libraries reduce isolation. Swimming pools support rehabilitation as well as lessons. Better public spaces create communities rather than collections of houses.

Lucan and Leixlip are moving in the right direction. The next challenge is to ensure that every child—not merely the sporty, confident or well-off—gets to enjoy the journey.

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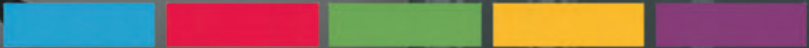
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The Monday Leftover Meal

Suddenly, Monday is no longer the grim day of leftovers.



We generally eat well at the weekend. Saturday might involve a steak, Sunday could produce a roast with gravy, and by Sunday evening we have eaten as though Monday may never come.

But Monday always comes.

It is written somewhere, possibly in an old household ledger, that Monday must be a day of restraint. Steak on a Monday is regarded as reckless extravagance. A roast chicken would suggest you have won the Lotto and are trying to keep it quiet. Monday is not a day for fresh ingredients. Monday is the day when the fridge door is opened and an inventory is taken.

Half a bowl of mashed potato.

Three carrots.

A spoonful of peas.

Two pieces of broccoli that have lost the will to live.

And something in a covered dish that nobody can immediately identify.

At this point, some readers will be confused. "Leftover mashed potato?" they will say. "What is that?"

These are people who live with growing teenagers, hungry sons, or family members who continue eating until the serving dish has been scraped clean. Other readers belong to households where uneaten food is casually tipped into the bin without a moment's reflection.

These people have clearly never lived with a product of the "waste not, want not" generation.

In our house, leftovers are carefully collected, covered, and stored. Nothing is discarded until it has either been eaten or has developed its own Eircode.

And this brings me to one of the great Monday dishes: bubble and squeak.

Yes, it is English.

I realise I may have lost a few readers there. Some will already be closing the page and muttering something about colonialism. But stay with me. Bubble and squeak is too useful to be dismissed merely because of where it came from.

It has no fixed recipe, which is ideal because neither does the contents of your fridge.

The base is leftover mashed potato. If the mash does not already contain cheese, add a generous handful of grated mature cheddar. This immediately lifts the dish from "using things up" to "carefully planned comfort food."

Then inspect the vegetables. Chop everything small and mix it into the mash. Peas, carrots, cabbage, broccoli, turnip - anything that can still be recognised as food.

Add some finely chopped onion. In fact, add onion whether you have leftover onion or not. Onion gives the impression that you knew what you were doing from the start.

Then wash your hands and get stuck in.

Squeeze the whole mixture together until the various components have stopped arguing and become one. Shape it into burger-sized patties, coat them lightly in flour, and set them aside.

Heat a little oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Add the patties and cook them gently for a few minutes on each side. Do not rush them. If you try to turn them too soon, they will collapse into a vegetable landslide.

Towards the end, add a knob of butter to help them develop a lovely golden crust. This also removes any final suspicion that Monday is meant to be healthy.

The finished bubble and squeak can be served with eggs for breakfast, salad for lunch, or sausages and beans for dinner. It can accompany bacon, chicken, fish, or whatever else you happen to find.

Suddenly, Monday is no longer the grim day of leftovers.

It is Bubble and Squeak Night.

The remains of Sunday's dinner have been transformed into something crisp, cheesy, and deeply satisfying. The sad vegetables have been given a second chance. The mashed potato has found a purpose.

And best of all, everyone eats it without realising they are being served the contents of yesterday's fridge.



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Could You Leave the Car at Home for a Week?

For many households in Lucan and Leixlip, the car is not simply a form of transport. It is a family member.

It lives outside the house, consumes a significant portion of the household income and becomes temperamental when neglected. We use it for work, school, shopping, football training and journeys so short that previous generations would have completed them on foot without first checking the weather forecast.

But could an ordinary local family leave the car at home for an entire week?

Not sell it, you understand. That would be reckless. Just lock it, hide the keys and attempt to survive for seven days using buses, trains, bicycles and our increasingly underused legs.

Monday: The journey to work

Leixlip begins the challenge with a considerable advantage: it has two railway stations.

Both Confey and Louisa Bridge are on the Dublin–Maynooth commuter line, providing direct services towards Connolly Station. Louisa Bridge also offers sheltered bicycle parking, making it possible—at least in theory—to cycle to the station, take the train and complete the final part of the journey on foot or public transport.

Lucan does not have a station in the village, although Adamstown station serves the expanding southern side of the area. For many Lucan residents, the bus remains the principal alternative to driving.

The C-Spine connects Lucan and Leixlip with Dublin city centre. The C3 travels from Maynooth through Leixlip and along the Lucan Road, while the C1 serves Adamstown and Lucan. Several express and local routes connect residential areas with the city, Liffey Valley, Blanchardstown, the Red Cow Luas and Hazelhatch.

So far, so good. The car remains outside, looking slightly offended.

The real test is reliability. A bus that arrives when expected is public transport. A bus that disappears from the app and then arrives in a convoy with two others is a philosophical experience.

Even so, commuting without the car may be possible for far more people than currently attempt it. The difficulty is often not the main bus or train journey but getting from

home to the stop or station and from the final stop to the workplace.

That last kilometre can decide everything.

Tuesday: The school run

The school run is where car-free idealism encounters reality.

The morning begins with somebody unable to find a shoe, another child remembering a project that requires a large cardboard model of the solar system, and rain arriving horizontally.

Walking to school sounds wholesome when discussed at a council meeting. It feels less wholesome when you are dragging two children, three bags and a papier-mâché Jupiter through a downpour.

Yet school-gate congestion has become one of the strongest arguments for reducing short car journeys. Many parents drive because they believe the walking or cycling route is unsafe. The result is more traffic, which makes the route feel even less safe.

The solution cannot simply be to tell parents to behave better. Safe crossings, continuous footpaths, protected cycle lanes and lower traffic speeds are needed before families can be expected to change their habits.

Lucan's newly opened section of the Grand Canal to Lucan Urban Greenway offers a glimpse of what better local travel could look like. Phase 1a, officially opened on 8 May 2026, improved paths through Griffeen Valley Park and added or upgraded crossings at Griffeen Avenue and Old Esker Lane.

The full project is intended to create approximately six kilometres of walking and cycling facilities between the Grand Canal and Lucan village. However, the section from the N4 towards Lucan remains on hold, demonstrating the familiar problem with active travel: a route is only as useful as its missing piece.

A beautiful cycle path that ends at a difficult junction is rather like a bridge that stops three-quarters of the way across a river.

Wednesday: The weekly shop

By Wednesday, the car-free household has run out of

Continues P.24



20  05

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A small local shop is manageable on foot. A major supermarket expedition is another matter. Families have become accustomed to buying a week's groceries in one operation, filling the boot with enough food to survive a moderate siege.

Without a car, shopping habits have to change. Smaller purchases become more frequent. Heavy items require careful planning. Nobody wishes to discover halfway home that the bargain box of washing powder weighs roughly the same as a small child.

Online grocery delivery offers an obvious solution, although it does not entirely remove vehicles from the equation. It merely arranges for somebody else to drive the shopping to your door.

A cargo bicycle might work for enthusiastic cyclists, but it is unlikely that every household in Lucan and Leixlip will soon be transporting twelve toilet rolls and a watermelon by pedal power.

The more realistic answer is choice. Local shops within walking distance, convenient bus connections and safe cycling routes can reduce the number of shopping journeys made by car, even if the large weekly shop remains motorised.

Thursday: Children's activities

Thursday brings football training at one location, swimming at another and music lessons somewhere else entirely.

Modern family life has been organised around the assumption that an adult with a car will be available to transport children between scheduled activities. Clubs may draw members from several neighbourhoods, training can finish after dark and public transport rarely runs conveniently between two suburban sports grounds.

This is the point at which many participants in our experiment would retrieve the car keys.

Walking and cycling can work for older children where routes are safe, but parents are understandably reluctant to send a child onto a busy road after dark. Better lighting, secure bicycle parking and connected routes could make a considerable difference.

Leixlip has several active-travel projects in development, including the Green Lane scheme, proposals for Captain's Hill and a planned M4 active-travel bridge. These projects indicate the direction of travel, but planned infrastructure cannot yet carry a schoolbag or bring a teenager home from training.

Friday: A night out

Leaving the car at home becomes considerably more attractive on Friday evening.

Nobody has to nominate a driver. There is no search for parking and no anxious calculation about whether one glass of wine has somehow become two and a half.

The C-Spine provides night-time services through the C5 and C6 routes, following corridors similar to the C3 and C4. This has improved late-night connections between Dublin and western suburbs, although the final journey from the

bus stop to home may still involve a long walk or a taxi.

A successful public-transport system must work after office hours. People travel for dinner, entertainment, hospital visits, shift work and social occasions. A town is not truly connected if the final practical bus leaves while everyone is still ordering dessert.

Saturday: Staying local

By Saturday, something unexpected may have happened: the family has begun to spend more time locally.

Instead of driving to a distant shopping centre, they walk into Lucan or Leixlip village. They visit a café, library or park. They notice buildings previously passed at 40 kilometres per hour and meet people without arranging the encounter through a WhatsApp group.

Walking changes the scale of a place. A street is no longer simply a route between two destinations. It becomes part of the day.

Leixlip has its heritage trail, riverside walks and connections towards the Royal Canal. Lucan has Griffeen Valley Park, the village centre, the Liffey and the newly accessible grounds of Lucan House. These are not substitutes for transport infrastructure, but they show what is gained when public spaces are designed for people rather than merely for moving vehicles through them.

Sunday: The verdict

Could you leave the car at home for a week?

The answer depends greatly on where you live, where you work and who depends on you.

A healthy adult living close to a bus route or railway station might manage surprisingly well. A household caring for an older person, someone with limited mobility or several children attending activities across the area would find it much harder.

The purpose of the experiment should not be to portray motorists as selfish or environmentally irresponsible. For many people, the car is essential because the alternatives are incomplete.

The better question is whether every journey needs it.

Could one commute each week be made by bus or train? Could children walk to school on dry mornings? Could a short visit to the village be made on foot? Could a household manage with one car rather than two?

Removing even a small number of journeys would reduce traffic, parking pressure and household fuel costs. It might also leave the car available for the occasions when it is genuinely needed.

Lucan and Leixlip are slowly becoming easier places to navigate without driving. Bus connections are extensive, Leixlip has two railway stations and new walking and cycling projects are appearing. But the network remains fragmented, and dangerous junctions or missing links can undermine an otherwise useful route.

People will not abandon their cars because they are lectured. They will use alternatives when those alternatives are safe, dependable and convenient.

A car-free week might still be an ambitious challenge. A car-free day, however, could be a reasonable place to begin.



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There are few things in the house as nasty as the bathroom scales. They sit there on the floor saying nothing, pretending to be useful, when really, they are just waiting to ruin your morning.

You never stand on them at night. Nobody in their right mind does that. At night you are carrying the full weight of the day. Dinner, cups of tea, maybe a biscuit or two, and all the little things you ate while standing at the fridge pretending you were only looking.

No, the scales are for the morning. First thing. Before breakfast. Before tea. Ideally before your body has realised it is awake.

You step on gently, because there is a foolish part of you that thinks a gentle approach might produce a kinder result. You hold your breath, because air must weigh something. Then you look down.

Same as yesterday.

Not an ounce gone.

This is hard to accept, especially when the day before you had behaved like a saint. You had eaten only twice, and one of those meals was more of a rumour than a meal. You had walked until your smartwatch congratulated you, which is always annoying. It lights up as if you have climbed Everest, when in fact you have walked round the block a few times trying not to look in people's windows.

"Goal achieved," it says.

What goal? Not dying on the footpath?

Still, you go to bed pleased with yourself. You imagine the fat quietly leaving during the night, perhaps by some process known only to slim people and personal trainers.

But no. The scales don't care. Same weight.

So the next day you get serious. Eggs. That's the answer. Eggs and no carbohydrates. Bread is gone. Potatoes are gone. Pasta is gone. Basically, everything that makes life bearable is gone.

You eat boiled eggs. Scrambled eggs. Eggs with the sad look of food that knows it is not toast.

By evening, you are not so much hungry as offended. You watch other people eating normal food and begin to resent them. Even the dog looks like he has a better diet.

Still, you hold firm. No biscuits. No crisps. No slice of bread "just to settle the stomach," which is a phrase that has excused many crimes in Irish kitchens.

Next morning, back to the scales.

Same weight.

At this stage you start investigating. Maybe the scales are on a bad tile. You move them six inches to the left. Same result. You move them back. Same result. You take the battery out and put it in again, because that is the full extent of modern technical repair.

Same result.

Then comes the lasagna.

It is in the fridge, looking harmless. Not a big family lasagna. Just a modest little thing from the supermarket with "350 calories" written on the front. Three hundred and fifty calories. That is nearly a salad.

You tell yourself you will eat half. Then you remember life is short and half a lasagna is a ridiculous insult to the person who invented lasagna.

So you eat the lot.

And it is beautiful. Pasta, sauce, cheese, comfort, happiness. For ten minutes, you are at peace with the world.

The next morning, you approach the scales with some nervousness, but also with a solid legal argument. It was only 350 calories. It said so on the packet. In print. Surely that has to stand for something.

You step on.

Two pounds up.

Two pounds.

How can a 300-gram lasagna add two pounds to a person overnight? That is not science. That is black magic. Somewhere inside the body there must be a small office where bitter little men in brown cardigans see lasagna arriving and say, “Right lads, emergency storage.”

It makes no sense. You can walk miles, eat eggs, drink water, refuse biscuits, and nothing happens. Then you eat one innocent lasagna and wake up carrying the weight of a small terrier.

So now the scales remain in the bathroom, but the trust is gone. They are not a health device. They are a bad-news machine with a digital screen.

And yet tomorrow morning you will stand on them again.

First thing.

Before breakfast.

Holding your breath.

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Almost one in four workers in Ireland would switch jobs for a pet-friendly workplace



- A new survey from Mars Ireland reveals more than a third (36%) of Irish workers prioritize pet-friendly policies over traditional workplace perks and other benefits.

- 85% of employees in Ireland say pets create a more relaxed atmosphere at work.

- 54% of Irish workers believe companies with pet-friendly policies are more supportive of employees transitioning to increased office-based working.

- 34% say a formal, well-managed pets-in-the-office policy signals that a company genuinely cares about employee wellbeing.

As companies around the world celebrate Bring Your Dog to Work Day 2026, a new study by Mars Ireland has revealed that pet-friendly workplaces are no longer a “nice-to-have” with 23% of workers in Ireland highlighting that they would consider switching jobs for a pet-friendly workplace, while 56% said their employment decisions would be influenced by whether pets were allowed in the workplace – this figure raises to 60% among those aged 25-34.

The Pet-Friendly Advantage (PFA) Report, commissioned by Mars Incorporated, global leader in pet care and creator of beloved brands including PEDIGREE® and WHISKAS®, surveyed more than 1,000 employees across Ireland, revealing pet-friendly policies as a powerful tool for improving workplace wellbeing, culture, and employee retention.

Forget free snacks and employee discounts – Irish employees want pet-friendly offices

With 85% of employees in Ireland saying that pets create a more relaxed atmosphere at work, it is no surprise that pet-friendly offices are becoming a significant factor in employment decisions, often outweighing traditional office perks such as cycle to work schemes, free snacks and social events.

A clear generational shift is emerging in Ireland, with Gen Z and Millennials demonstrating a change in attitudes towards workplace perks. The PFA report reveals that:

- 34% of 18-24-year-olds actively look for pet-friendly policies when job hunting, compared with just 9% of workers aged 55 and above.

- 42% of Ireland’s younger generation prioritize these policies over enhanced personal benefits, such as parental leave or personal healthcare, compared to just 13% of those over the age of 55.

As this generational shift in attitudes continues, it’s now evident that pet-friendly policies are becoming a must-have benefit for companies to secure and keep talent.

Pet policies show that a company cares and influence employment decisions.

Over one third (34%) of respondents agree that having a pet office policy shows that a company genuinely cares about employee wellbeing, and that it suggests a more modern, forward-thinking work culture. Over a fifth of respondents agreed that such a policy would make them feel more loyal to their company or make a company more attractive when searching for a new job.

In terms of employee benefits, the inclusion of pet insurance offered as part of the employee benefits package for pet owners would influence 62% of male employees, rising to 72% among women in their employment choice

Other office pet policies that would influence employment decisions include:

- Flexible or hybrid working policy to accommodate pet care (67%)

- Paid leave for new pet parents or to care for sick pets (61%)

- Financial support for pet care while travelling for work (63%)

- An in-office pet care service such as a dog walker or a pet care zone (64%)

“Bring Your Dog to Work Day is a fantastic celebration, and at Mars we’ve long understood the positive impact pets can have in the workplace,” said Paolo Rigamonti, Regional President, Mars Pet Nutrition Europe. “New data from our Pet Friendly Advantage report makes the case even clearer: pet-friendly workplaces support wellbeing, strengthen culture and are increasingly important for attracting and retaining talent. Every day should be Bring Your Dog to Work Day.”

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Influencers and Their Mystique

Influencers. Who are they? Where did they come from? And more importantly, who decided we needed their advice?

Years ago, if you wanted to know something, you asked someone who had actually done it. If the car was making a noise, you asked a mechanic. If the roof was leaking, you asked a builder. If you wanted advice on your health, you asked a doctor, or at least someone in the family who had once watched a medical programme and now considered themselves qualified.

Now we have influencers.

They appear on your phone from nowhere, standing in spotless kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms and hotel balconies, telling you how to live your life. They know about skincare, diets, mental health, exercise, fashion, relationships, air fryers, protein powder, holidays, pensions, parenting and, somehow, gut health. There is no subject too large or too complicated for a person in a tracksuit holding an iced coffee.

They all start the same way.

“A lot of you have been asking me...”

Have they? Have they really? Who are these people asking? I have never met one. I have never heard anyone in a shop say, “I must ask that young woman on Instagram what shampoo she uses.” Yet apparently thousands are desperate to know.

Their homes are suspicious too. Every influencer seems to live in a house with white walls, beige furniture, a candle burning, and a bowl of lemons sitting on the kitchen island. Nobody owns that many lemons. In a normal house, the kitchen island has bills, keys, a packet of biscuits, reading glasses, and something that needs to go upstairs but has been sitting there for three weeks.

Influencer kitchens are different. No clutter. No crumbs. No tea towel hanging from the oven door. No one has ever shouted, “Where’s the good scissors?” in that house.

Then there are the food influencers. They tell you they have a “quick and easy midweek meal” for busy families. It has twenty-three ingredients, three pans, a blender, fresh herbs, toasted seeds and something called miso paste. That is not a quick meal. That is a cry for help.

They say things like, “Just add some fresh coriander.”

There is no “just” about fresh coriander. You either don’t

have it, or you bought it last week and it has turned into green soup at the back of the fridge.

Fitness influencers are another crowd altogether. They are up at five in the morning, smiling, stretching, drinking green liquid and telling us there are no excuses.

I have excuses. Plenty of them. Age. Knees. Weather. A deep personal commitment to sitting down. Also, I do not trust anyone who is cheerful before seven o’clock in the morning.

Fashion influencers are perhaps the most mysterious. They put on a plain jumper and tell you it is a “timeless piece.” It costs €180 and looks exactly like something your

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uncle wore while painting a gate in 1982. But apparently it is “elevated.” That is another influencer word. Everything is elevated now. Coats are elevated. Sandwiches are elevated. Beige trousers are elevated. In my day, if your trousers were elevated, you had pulled them up too far.

Travel influencers are always “discovering hidden gems.” The hidden gem usually has a queue outside it, a gift shop, and 14,000 reviews online. They walk along the beach in slow motion wearing linen, while the rest of us arrive sweating, carrying a plastic bag with sun cream, water, plasters, the wrong adapter and a sandwich wrapped in tinfoil.

They say, “You need to go before everyone finds out about it.”

Well, you’ve just told half the internet, so I think that ship has sailed.

The thing that gets me is the confidence. Influencers never seem unsure. They can talk about moisturiser in the morning, investments at lunchtime, and emotional healing by dinner. One week they are telling you to cut out bread. The next week they are launching a wellness journal. Then they are suddenly experts on property, sleep, hormones, and how to become your best self.

Do they know what they are talking about? Some might. To be fair, there are probably a few decent ones out there who try products honestly and give sensible advice. But sensible advice is not very exciting. “This is grand, but don’t be paying full price for it” is useful, but it does not sound

very glamorous.

Everything now has to be life-changing. A moisturiser is life-changing. A water bottle is life-changing. A drawer organiser is life-changing. I have reached an age where I can say with some confidence that very few things are life-changing. Marriage, children, illness, retirement, moving house, and finding out the biscuit tin is empty — those are life-changing. A bamboo toothbrush is not.

And yet we watch them. That is the worst of it. We give out about them, but there we are at night, scrolling away, watching someone explain how to fold towels properly. Suddenly you are looking at your own towels with disappointment, even though they have served the family well since 2009.

Maybe influencers are not the problem. Maybe we are. We used to look over the neighbour’s hedge. Now we look into strangers’ kitchens and wonder why our own lives have more crumbs.

In the end, an influencer is just someone who has managed to turn having an opinion into a career. Fair play to them, I suppose. I have had opinions for over seventy years and nobody has ever offered me a discount code.

Although, if anyone wants a slightly doubtful older man from Ireland to stand in a kitchen holding a frying pan and saying, “It’s fine, but I’d wait until it’s on special offer,” I am available.

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The Wonderful Barn Leixlip's Strangest Treasure

Every town needs a landmark.

Paris has the Eiffel Tower, Pisa has its leaning tower and Leixlip has a giant stone corkscrew rising unexpectedly above the houses near the M4.

The Wonderful Barn is one of those buildings that appears to have escaped from a fairy tale. It is tall, conical and wrapped in an external staircase that spirals towards a small viewing platform at the top. Depending on your imagination, it resembles an enormous beehive, a Georgian helter-skelter or something constructed by a wizard with an interest in grain storage.

It is also one of the most remarkable historic buildings in County Kildare.

Built in 1743 on the edge of the Castletown estate, the Wonderful Barn was commissioned by Katherine Conolly, widow of William “Speaker” Conolly. It followed the devastating famine of 1740–41 and is believed to have provided both grain storage and employment for local people. At the same time, it served as an architectural eye-catcher at the end of a long view from Castletown House. Practicality and extravagance were evidently allowed to coexist in the 18th century.

The barn rises approximately 70 feet, with its tapering stone walls encircled by a cantilevered staircase. Beside it stand two smaller conical dovecotes, Barnhall House, old farm buildings, courtyards and a walled garden. Together, they form a rare and wonderfully eccentric collection of Georgian architecture.

For many years, however, the site has been better known locally for its potential than for its public use.

Leixlip residents could see the barn, talk about the barn and occasionally attend an event beside the barn, but much of the historic complex remained closed or underused. Barnhall House suffered serious fire damage, while vegetation, weather and time continued their slow

attack on the surrounding structures.

That may finally be changing.

Kildare County Council has approved an ambitious plan to restore the Wonderful Barn complex and transform approximately 19.8 hectares of surrounding land into a public park, community amenity and visitor destination. The Part 8 proposal was approved by members of the Celbridge–Leixlip Municipal District in October 2024.

The plans involve much more than repairing the famous tower.

The barn itself would be adapted for exhibitions and small events, while Barnhall House would be restored for heritage, tourism and community use. The old stables and farm buildings would provide community rooms and visitor facilities. A café extension is planned overlooking a restored working vegetable garden—a development that should finally allow visitors to admire Georgian architecture while eating a scone.

The existing allotments would be reorganised and improved rather than removed. Facilities are also proposed for local markets, alongside toilets, workshops and storage for allotment users. Historic orchards, hedgerows, formal avenues and the visual connection towards Castletown House would be reinstated.

Walking and cycling routes would cross the park, with the potential to connect Leixlip to wider routes towards Celbridge, Backweston and the Kildare Innovation Campus. Playgrounds and recreational areas are also included, while parking would remain near the main vehicle entrance rather than dominating the historic centre of the site. The project could give Leixlip something it has long deserved: a major public park built around a landmark that is entirely its own.

The Wonderful Barn is unusual enough to attract visitors, but the development should not be judged solely by the number of tour buses or photographs posted online. Its

greatest value may be much more ordinary.

It could become somewhere for local families to walk on a Sunday afternoon, for children to play, for allotment holders to grow vegetables and for community groups to hold events. The walled garden could host markets, workshops and seasonal activities. The restored buildings might accommodate exhibitions, local history displays, performances or school visits.

The site has already demonstrated its potential. It has hosted events connected with the Brigid festival, and refurbished play equipment was installed at the Wonderful Barn during 2025.

There is, however, an important distinction between an approved plan and a completed attraction.

The full redevelopment will be expensive and is expected to proceed in phases as funding becomes available. Emergency conservation works began in 2024, including vegetation removal, structural repairs, repointing, lime rendering and repairs to the barn, dovecotes and walled garden. The council has continued to pursue grants and other funding streams for subsequent stages.

A further €187,871 was allocated to the Wonderful Barn through the Historic Structures Fund in 2026 for repairs to its domed chamber and associated conservation work. It is a significant contribution, although it remains one element of a much larger restoration project.

The challenge will be to preserve the character of the place while giving it a useful future.

Historic buildings cannot survive indefinitely as attractive ruins. They need maintenance, activity and a reason for people to care about them. Yet they must not be overwhelmed by extensions, car parks or commercial attractions that reduce the original monument to a decorative backdrop.

The approved scheme appears to recognise that balance. The café, community facilities and parkland would provide everyday reasons to visit, while the barn would remain the unmistakable centrepiece.

There is also an opportunity to reconnect the Wonderful Barn with the wider heritage of North Kildare. Castletown House, Conolly's Folly, the Liffey, the Royal Canal and Leixlip's historic village are all within a relatively compact area. Better walking and cycling links could turn these separate attractions into a genuine heritage route rather than a collection of places most often reached by car.

For centuries, the Wonderful Barn has stood in the landscape looking faintly improbable. Leixlip grew around it, the motorway arrived beside it and housing estates gradually replaced the open countryside. Yet the strange stone tower remained.

Its next chapter should not be about freezing it in time. It should be about bringing it back into local life.

The Wonderful Barn began as a place that combined practical need with architectural imagination. Nearly three centuries later, that same combination may be what saves it.



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THE BATTLE FOR CAPTAIN'S HILL

Captain's Hill has never been an easy road to ignore.

It is one of Leixlip's main routes, carrying residents between Main Street, nearby housing estates, local schools and Confey railway station. At busy times, it can also feel as though every car in North Kildare has arranged to use it simultaneously.

Now Kildare County Council has proposed a major redesign intended to make the route safer for pedestrians and cyclists. The plan includes segregated cycle tracks, improved footpaths, new pedestrian crossings, upgraded traffic lights and changes to several junctions between Leixlip Main Street and Cope Bridge at Confey station.

On paper, it sounds straightforward. In practice, few subjects can divide a community as quickly as a cycle lane.

Supporters will argue that Captain's Hill is precisely the sort of road where better facilities are needed. It connects residential areas with schools, bus stops, the town centre and a railway station. Yet many people who might happily walk or cycle for a short journey are discouraged by traffic, narrow sections and difficult crossings.

Parents are particularly likely to welcome safer access around San Carlo Senior School and St Mary's. The proposals include a new signal-controlled crossing at San Carlo, an upgraded crossing nearby and another new crossing south of St Mary's. Raised crossings are also planned on approximately six side roads, giving greater priority to people walking and cycling.

These may sound like small changes, but they can determine whether a parent allows a child to walk to school alone or feels compelled to join the morning traffic in the car.

The scheme would also alter the junction of Captain's Hill and Main Street, with revised lanes,

upgraded traffic signals and improved pedestrian crossings. The staggered junctions at River Forest and Newtown Glendale would be replaced with a signal-controlled arrangement, while a new crossing would be installed at the entrance to Confey station.

For commuters, that final crossing could be particularly valuable. Encouraging people to use rail makes little sense when reaching the station on foot feels like the dangerous stage of an obstacle course.

However, motorists and residents along the route will have questions.

Captain's Hill is already a constrained road. Fitting separate space for cars, buses, bicycles and pedestrians may require compromises. The council proposes realigning parts of the carriageway and using shared pedestrian and cycling facilities where fully segregated routes cannot be provided. On-street parking would also be reorganised, with accessible spaces retained but some informal drop-off areas removed.

That phrase—"removal of informal drop-off areas"—will immediately catch the attention of school-run parents. An informal drop-off area may look untidy on an engineering drawing, but to a parent running eight minutes late on a wet Tuesday morning, it can resemble essential national infrastructure.

Residents will also want to understand what the changes mean for traffic flow. A safer crossing is welcome, but not if poor signal timing creates a queue stretching halfway to Maynooth. Cyclists need protection, but buses must still be able to stop safely. Pedestrians require wider and better surfaces, while homes and businesses must remain accessible.

There is an environmental issue too. Some trees



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and vegetation may have to be removed, although the plans provide for replacement planting. Public lighting, drainage and underground services would also be upgraded as part of the work.

The council's own transport assessment has previously identified Captain's Hill as one of Leixlip's transport pinch points, partly because the Rye Valley, Royal Canal and railway restrict the number of available crossings and routes through the town. That means there is no magical alternative road waiting to absorb displaced traffic. Whatever is built must work for everyone using the existing corridor.

The proposal is also connected to Leixlip's future growth. The wider Captain's Hill upgrade is intended to improve links between the town and the proposed Confey development lands. Kildare County Council announced in June that the project had secured funding approval of less than €10 million under the Housing Infrastructure Investment Fund, with active-travel infrastructure included in the plans.

This makes the debate about more than a few cycle tracks. If thousands of additional residents are eventually to live around Confey, Leixlip cannot simply add thousands of additional cars to roads that are already busy.

The aim should not be to force everyone out of a car. For many older people, those with limited mobility and residents travelling long distances, a car remains essential. The real objective is to ensure that somebody making a short journey has a realistic choice.

A teenager should be able to cycle to Confey station. A child should be able to cross safely near school. An older resident should not have to hurry across a wide junction before the lights change. At the same time, buses, delivery vehicles and local traffic must continue to move.

The public consultation remains open until 5pm on 15 August 2026, with the plans available through Kildare County Council and at Leixlip Library.

The eventual design will not satisfy everyone. No transport scheme ever does. But Captain's Hill is too important to be left unchanged simply because change is difficult.

The real test will be whether the finished road feels safer without becoming less practical. Achieve that, and the battle for Captain's Hill might produce something increasingly unusual in local transport planning: a victory shared by motorists, cyclists and pedestrians alike.



Lucan Gets Its Front Garden Back

A central outdoor space where people might stop rather than simply pass through.

For years, Lucan village has had many of the ingredients of an attractive destination: a river, handsome old buildings, independent cafés, mature trees and enough history to fill several books. What it lacked was a central outdoor space where people might stop rather than simply pass through.

That may now be changing.

The refurbished Village Green and bandstand have opened alongside weekend public access to the grounds of Lucan House. Together, they give the village something increasingly rare in a busy suburb: an inviting place where nobody is required to buy anything. You can sit, meet a friend, watch the children wander about or simply enjoy a few minutes without being asked whether you have downloaded an app.

The Village Green has new seating, planted areas, access towards the Griffeen River and amphitheatre-style steps surrounding the bandstand. It is intended to support performances and community events, but its real success may be measured on ordinary afternoons when nothing in particular is happening. A good public space does not need a festival every weekend. It merely needs people to feel comfortable using it.

The opening of Lucan House demesne adds a more historic dimension. Lucan House itself is an 18th-century Palladian villa, built in 1772 and associated with the Vesey family. The wider estate has links to Patrick Sarsfield, who was born at the earlier castle on the grounds and later became one of the best-known figures in Irish military history.

Public access is initially available at weekends,

including bank holiday Mondays, from 11am until 7pm. Visitors enter from the Leixlip Road. There is no public parking within the grounds, so the intention is that people will park in the village, walk through the improved centre and perhaps visit a café or shop while they are there.

That is the theory, at least.

Anyone familiar with Lucan knows that traffic and parking have long been capable of turning a pleasant outing into a test of character. The challenge will be to attract more visitors without filling every nearby street with cars. Better walking routes, safe crossings and public transport connections will matter just as much as attractive paving and new benches.

There is also the question of what happens next. A bandstand without music is merely an elaborate shelter from the rain. The Village Green will need concerts, markets, school performances and local events to become part of village life. Lucan House and its grounds will need careful management so that increased access does not damage the character that makes the place special.

Still, this is an encouraging beginning. Lucan has grown enormously, but the historic village remains its natural heart. The new green and access to the demesne create an opportunity to reconnect that centre with the wider community.

Perhaps the greatest compliment residents can pay the redevelopment is simply to use it. Bring a coffee, meet a neighbour, attend a summer performance or take a walk through the demesne. A village centre comes alive not when the builders leave, but when the people arrive.



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