

spokeout

Lifestyle magazine for people with limited mobility published by the Irish Wheelchair Association

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Autumn 2008



TRIUMPH IN Beijing

PARALYMPIC
HEROES BRING
FIVE MEDALS
HOME



Making the most of your home



Juggling
politics and
family life



Getting behind the wheel

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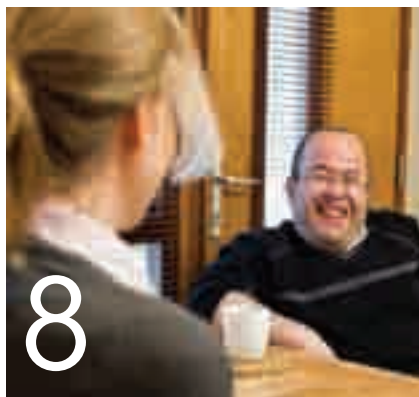
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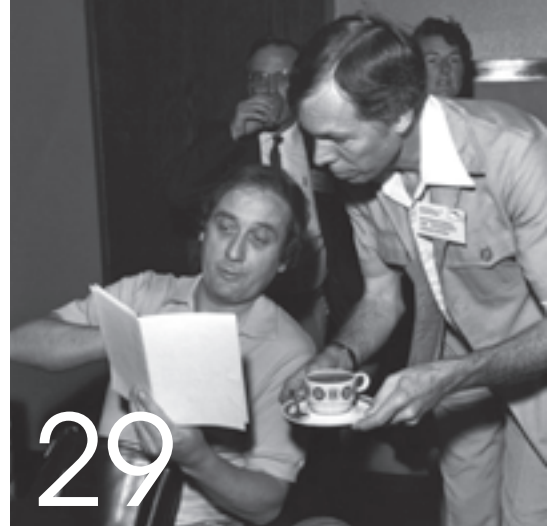
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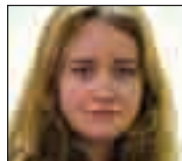
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introduction

The 2008 Paralympic Games are now behind us, but the outstanding success of the Irish athletes has left a legacy that will inspire others for years to come. We reflect on the achievements and bring you some of the most memorable images of the Games.



With winter approaching, we look at how to make the most of our homes through good design and energy efficiency. We also talk to member Gerard Larkin who, after years on the housing list, recently moved into his own accessible bungalow, only to be flooded less than a month later!

Anyone looking for ideas on how to create an accessible living space should be inspired by the accessible apartment complex developed by The Ratoath Independent Living Initiative. You can't help but be impressed by the practicality, resourcefulness and attention to detail of the developers.

We also interview Kerryman Terry O'Brien and find out how he manages to juggle a career in politics, a day-job in IWA, and taking care of his young twins.

Hope you enjoy the issue!

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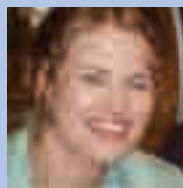
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Spokeout is distributed quarterly by post to 19,500 IWA members and to Government bodies and other disability interest groups.

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MEET SOME OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS...



Kiara Lynch

Kiara Lynch is our editorial assistant. As both a wheelchair user and a keen traveller, Kiara finds out how recent legislation has affected travellers with disabilities using Dublin Airport. She also talks to Councillor and former Mayor of Tralee, Terry O'Brien. Kiara's interests include cinema, taking on corporate bodies, and she can't put down the book *We Need to Talk About Kevin*.



Johnny Connaughton

Johnny Connaughton, our cartoonist, is a designer and art director. Having worked in advertising and design in London and South East Asia for many years, he now lives and works in Dublin. He tries to show, through the medium of cartoons, the various absurd situations wheelchair users have to put up with in this world full of inequalities!



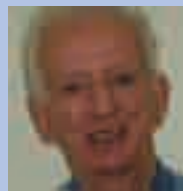
Gary Allen

Gary Allen lives in Galway with his wife, four cats (Max, Fred, Tetley and Lily) and dog (George the Pug). He works as a software engineer and in his spare time enjoys travelling, eating out, reading, writing and sailing. This issue, he tells us about a recent trip to New York.



Robbie Cousins

Robbie Cousins is a freelance journalist and editor. His interests include politics, football, travel, and vegetarian cooking. This issue, he explores the simple ways in which you can save energy at home, and also talks to IWA driving instructor, Colm Caren, about the challenges involved in learning to drive.



Phelim O'Reilly

Phelim O'Reilly lives in Clontarf, Dublin. For almost 35 years, he was a member of the National Executive/Board of Directors of IWA. In this issue, Phelim celebrates the life of leading activist Liam Maguire.

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Michael McKillop celebrates winning gold in the Men's 800m T37 in a world record time of 1:59.39. Michael has cerebral palsy

TRIUMPH IN BEIJING

Irish athletes enjoyed their most successful Paralympic Games ever in Beijing, winning five medals, setting five world records and achieving 25 personal bests



incredible crowds. Inspirational performances. The 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing will not easily be forgotten by the athletes who participated or by those who watched their efforts.

Irish athletes brought home five medals – three gold, one silver and one bronze. As well as these medals, twenty-five Irish athletes gave performances that represented their personal bests.

Gabriel Shelly, who is originally from Carlow but lives in Kilkenny, and has cerebral palsy, took bronze in boccia class BC1. Gabriel is pictured on our cover, celebrating his victory with his sports assistant Patrick ‘Rocky’ Judge.

Darragh McDonald (aged 14), a triple amputee from Gorey in Co Wexford, wowed spectators by winning silver in the 400m freestyle swimming event. And, grabbing headlines by achieving gold, were track athletes Jason Smyth (21) and Michael McKillop (18) who both smashed their own world records at the games. Between them, they set five new world records.

Jason Smyth, a visually impaired Derryman, secured two golds in the 100 and 200 metre sprint events, matching Olympic star Usain Bolt with a 100m-200m double in the T13 category.

Reflecting on the achievements of the Games, IWA CEO Katheen McLoughlin said, “I felt an incredible sense of pride to see all our athletes perform on a world stage. It was a very emotional experience. We had such a large team, each of whom gave of their best. It was also brilliant that we won five medals; the team are truly an inspiration to young athletes out there. I’d like to congratulate every one of them on their amazing achievement.”

Chef de Mission Jimmy Byrne, who has been involved in the Paralympics since 1976, said, “I think one of the things that will stick in my mind about the Beijing games is the incredible crowds. They were such a support to all the athletes. Never before had they performed in a stadium equivalent to the Bird’s Nest, with a capacity of 91,000, which was full most of the time. The atmosphere was electric. It proved that the Paralympic Games can be as captivating as the Olympics for the spectators.

“Another positive factor was the media coverage in the press and on TV, which highlighted the athletic performance of our Paralympians,” added Jimmy.

Athlete Gabriel Shelly, who has participated in four Games, echoed this sentiment: “Beijing was brilliant. The crowd in the boccia hall and also in the Bird’s Nest stadium were absolutely ‘wow’! I mean a big WOW! I was so pleased to win my second Paralympic medal. I know it’s a bronze but at that level now, it’s very, very hard to get a gold.”

The Paralympic athletes returned from Beijing to an ecstatic welcome from friends, families, and many supporters at Dublin Airport on Friday 19th September. Despite the exertion of the previous week and their long journey home, many of the team still managed to appear on *The Late Late Show* that evening.

The Irish Paralympic team was supported by the Paralympic Council of Ireland and the Sports Council.

Comprehensive coverage and results from the Paralympics is available on the Paralympic Council of Ireland’s website www.pcireland.ie



Jason Smyth celebrates with members of his family and the Paralympic support team



Parice Dockery, official flag bearer, practises for the opening ceremony

GET INVOLVED

If witnessing the talent and tenacity of the Irish athletes has inspired you, why not get involved with sport yourself?

The Paralympic Council of Ireland has created the ParaLions Programme to encourage young people with a physical disability or visual impairment to become involved in Paralympic sport.

The idea behind ParaLions is to try and make people aware of all the Paralympic sports on offer across the country, and that getting involved can offer incalculable benefits, as well as the dream scenario; the opportunity to represent Ireland at the Paralympic Games.

To find out more, visit the Paralympic Council's website where you can fill out the ParaLions questionnaire. Based on your details, the Paralympic Council will suggest sports that might be suited to your disability profile and preferences, as well as issuing you with a resource pack which includes a t-shirt, bag, keyring, and information booklet.

ParaLions is a collaborative effort by all eight sporting bodies involved in Paralympic sport, including IWA, and is made possible with support from the Irish Sports Council, the International Paralympic Committee and O'Neills Irish International Sportswear Co. Ltd.

Many members of the Irish team who competed in the Paralympics in Beijing were not involved in Paralympic sport at the time of the last Games in Athens, so the hope

is that ParaLions will be able to unearth some young Irish athletes for London 2012. At the very least, this programme may be the starting point for a lifelong involvement in sport at the level of your choosing.

For further details on the ParaLions Programme, call the PCI office on 01 625 1175, email info@pcireland.ie or visit www.pcireland.ie. You can also contact the IWA sports development officers:

◆ Mark Barry: Tel: 087 984 2384. Email: mark.barry@iwa.ie

◆ Orla Dempsey: Tel: 087 279 1811.

Email: orla.dempsey@iwa.ie

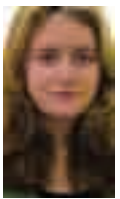
◆ Jean Daly: Tel: 087 137 1333 Email: jean.daly@iwa.ie



Darragh McDonald proudly displays his silver medal

ON HOME GROUND

Gerard with his girlfriend Louise in front of his new home



Gerard Larkin moved into his new accessible bungalow in June. Two months later, heavy rains flooded his home completely. Not one to dwell on negatives, Gerard says he considers the flood a minor setback and is delighted to have a home of his own.

Joanna Marsden reports

Thirty-three-year-old Gerard Larkin's first taste of independent living came about eight years ago, when he moved into an IWA independent living unit in Clontarf for 18 months. "I suppose I felt at the time that I wanted room to discover myself as well as experience the practical pros and cons of living on my own."

After his positive experience in the independent living unit, Gerard decided to sign on to Dublin City Council's housing list. Having been born and raised in Finglas, Dublin, and educated at the Central Remedial Clinic in Clontarf, Gerard wanted to stay in the area, close to family and friends.

It was to be a slow process. "Unfortunately there was a lack of suitable accommodation in the area where I wanted to live. For years, I would ring Dublin City Council every couple of weeks to check on my application – I think they call that knowing what you want and being assertive!"

"It was frustrating because I had friends who had only

been on the housing list for a year and they were already getting calls. Any places that came up were either too far away, too small or not fully wheelchair accessible. At one stage, I got offered a great place in Raheny, but then the planning permission for the whole development fell through."

Eventually, late one Friday afternoon at the start of a bank holiday weekend, Gerard got a call. "Dublin City Council had taken over a wasteground in Finglas West and they were going to give it to a builder to develop. They said they were planning to include five or six wheelchair accessible bungalows and wanted to know whether I would be interested."

Gerard jumped at the opportunity. "Soon after, I went down to meet the builder and a representative from Dublin City Council to discuss how the bungalow would be laid out. They showed me floor plans and, with the support of my OT, I made a few small changes and advised them on

things such as the height of light switches.”

Looking back, Gerard feels he should have put more time into evaluating the plans at this early stage. “I found it hard to visualise the scale of the rooms and later on, as the build was nearing completion, I ended up having to make further changes. In order to make more circulation and turning space, we had to knock a wall from the kitchen to the living room and remove some kitchen units. These changes held the build up, but were absolutely essential.”

Gerard advises others in the same situation to be assertive: “You have to be prepared to tell them exactly what you want because, at the end of the day, you are going to be living there, and everyone else involved just walks away.”

Gerard also found the positioning of the standard cooker was unsuitable as he needed to be able to pull up close under the hob to cook. “I had to get the cooker taken out, leaving just a hob and a microwave. Better planning would have allowed us to position a cooker elsewhere in the kitchen but at this stage, there isn’t space, so I’m just making the best of it.”

Elsewhere in the house, Gerard is very happy with the level of accessibility. “The bathroom has hand rails around the toilet and a roll-in shower with a glass surround that folds neatly back against the wall. I don’t require a hoist, so in the bedroom, it was just a case of putting a low rail in the wardrobe.”

“The floor was tiled throughout the bungalow which is very convenient, although I was disappointed that they didn’t consult me about which tiles they used. I think it helps make a place more homely if you are involved in those type of decisions.”

“I’m very organised. I don’t have a PA and I do all the washing, ironing and cleaning myself. I learnt the hard way but I manage fine now”

Gerard finally moved in to the bungalow in mid-June. “For the first few nights, I was a little bit nervous about being on my own. One evening, I got off the bus and started the push home. It was getting dark and behind me, I heard a ‘clink, clink, clink’, getting closer and closer. Let’s just say I managed to make what is normally a five-minute push home in about a minute. When I arrived, I realised there had been a horse walking along behind me!”

“Actually,” says Gerard, “I got to know a few four-legged creatures in my first week here. Over the back wall of the garden, you can see the horses from the Dunsink halting site roaming freely.”

“This particular area has a reputation as being a bit ‘lively’, not to put too fine a point on it”, laughs Gerard. “The weekends can be lively, but during the week, it’s grand. It’s actually very tranquil. I love it here.”

Gerard is more concerned by a couple of accessibility issues in the area. “There is no footpath outside my complex – you have to cross the road to get to a pavement. They really need to make provision for a footpath for wheelchair users and elderly people. I’ve mentioned it to Dublin City Council and I have to follow up on it now. It’s for the greater good of everyone in the complex and area.”

Gerard would also like to see improvements in his local bus service. “The 104 and 40b, c and d go by my house, but only the 104, which goes to Clontarf, is an accessible route. It would be great to have low floor buses on the 40b, c and d, which go into the city centre. I rang Dublin Bus and they said they would have prioritised making that route accessible if they had known there was going to be a development of accessible houses – but they didn’t know





anything about it until I rang. It's such a pity – it all comes down to lack of communication between DCC and Dublin Bus.”

Since moving in, Gerard has also had to contend with what he jokingly describes as “the downside of level access.” On 9th August, his entire home was flooded as a result of heavy rain and inadequate drainage. “I was having a quiet afternoon in front of the TV. I was aware that it was raining pretty heavily outside but I didn't think much of it till I heard a ‘whoosh’ and suddenly saw brownish water coming in under the back door. I panicked and tried opening the door to get out but the current was too strong and more water came flooding in. I managed to close it again. I then pulled my panic cord but there was no response for twenty-five minutes! So I rang a neighbour and asked them to come and help.”

Gerard's neighbours came out with mops and buckets to help clear the water from his house and three other flooded bungalows. “Compared to the other bungalows, the damage to mine was relatively minor. Some furniture had to be thrown out and the tiles are lifting in places, but after it was industrially cleaned and disinfected, I was able to move back in.”

Gerard has applied to Dublin City Council for emergency relief grant to cover some of his losses. The council has also confirmed that work will soon be carried out to improve the drainage around the bungalows. Meanwhile, Gerard says he is hoping it doesn't rain too much.

Gerard is philosophical about the incident: “If you didn't

laugh, you'd end up crying and it's just not worth it.

Though, I'm still a bit miffed that my brand new state-of-the-art Hoover, which I had never even used, was written off! But I can nearly see the funny side at this stage.”

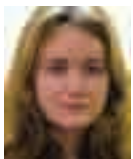
“Life is too short to worry and I'm happy with how everything is going – I have a nice home and an active social life. Also, in July, after years of being on CE schemes, I got my first ‘real’ job working in reception in IWA Clontarf. It felt so great when they said they had been very happy with my work on the CE scheme and offered me a contract. If I need any assistance, the other staff are always helpful, and they have made me feel so at home.”

“At the weekends, I go out to my local, The Willows (not totally accessible but I make the most of it), or over to meet my girlfriend, Louise. Unusually for a bloke, I also enjoy a bit of clothes shopping! I think it's important to dress smartly and project a positive image.”

With Gerard's penchant for sharp dressing, he has an extensive shirt collection. Despite this, he does all his own ironing. “I'm very organised. I don't have a PA and I do all the washing, ironing and cleaning myself. I learnt the hard way, but I manage fine now.”

“I'd encourage anyone out there thinking about getting a place, to get on the housing list and go for it. It can take a long time, but be patient. Be prepared to work with an OT and builder. It can be stressful, but you'll suffer if you over-stress. Sometimes it's hard to get over the fear factor. You think ‘will I manage on my own?’ But you will. Be brave – it's all worth it in the end.”

EASY ACCESS



A new apartment complex built by the Ratoath Independent Living Initiative makes accessible design look so simple that you leave wondering how so many developers get it wrong.

Joanna Marsden reports

When you drive up to the apartments at Steeplechase in Ratoath, Co Meath, there is nothing to suggest that this is a housing development aimed specifically at people with disabilities. The apartment block is contemporary in design, with large wrap-around glass balconies, and is located at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac in the immaculately maintained Steeplechase estate.

“The basic criteria behind the build was to ‘de-institutionalise’ the look and feel of the development while adhering to the principles of universal design”, says John Scott, who project managed the construction of the development on behalf of Ratoath Independent Living Initiative. “Too often accessible housing takes on an insti-

tutional look, inside and out.”

The original idea behind the Ratoath Independent Living Initiative came from local councillor and former chief executive of the Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Nick Killian. In 2005 Killian formed a committee of local people, including Chairman Feargal Quinn, a Consultant at Crumlin Hospital, together with a solicitor, nurse, occupational therapists and several local people with disabilities, who were all prepared to volunteer their time to the project.

The committee approached McGarrell Reilly, the developer of the Steeplechase development, who agreed to partner the committee in the development. Steeplechase was in an ideal location, 300 metres from the centre of Ratoath, and the dished pavements

would make it easy for wheelchair users to access local shops.

With John Scott appointed as project manager, the committee set about raising funds for the development. “The primary source of funding was Part 5 funding for social housing which comes from the Department of Environment via the local authority, in our case Meath County Council,” says John. “We were also lucky to get an additional grant from the Dormant Accounts Disbursements Board.”

The committee also began to refine its vision for the development, by meeting with relevant organisations and visiting other accessible housing initiatives. John recalls: “One of the most important meetings was with Cheshire Home. When we saw the level of support they offered residents,

we knew what we were not. Our role was simply to provide apartments for people with disabilities who wanted to live independently. It was based on the 'health in the community model – we would provide accommodation and residents could utilise the support services provided by other agencies, if required."

This increasing clarity about the project's objectives led the team to make some changes to the plans. "Originally, we had ten apartments, a community room and a caretaker's apartment. Once we established that our role was to supply property, not services, we decided the community room and caretaker's apartment were unnecessary, and replaced them with two additional apartments."

Each apartment provides accessibility basics such as wide doors and corridors, and a large bathroom with roll-in shower, together with more advanced features such as a video-intercom system accessed from the hall and bedroom, flashing internal fire alarms, safety radiators with low surface heat, and automatic curtains.

The kitchens were fitted by McNally Kitchens in partnership with Enable Ireland and include motorised, height-adjustable work surfaces and cupboard units. "Even the two-bowl sink unit is height-adjustable," says John, "It was the first time McNally had done this, but really it's quite straightforward – you just need to use flexible hoses for the plumbing."

John Scott admits that even with all the effort they put in, they made the odd mistake, such as not wiring for extractor fan controls at a lower level. They did however manage to remedy the situation by retro-fitting the extractor fan with a remote-control plug, which enables wheelchair users to turn the fan on and off with a remote control.

John says they have allowed for a level of further customisation to meet the needs of individual tenants. For example, they will be able to fit grab rails in the bathroom at the locations that suit each tenant. "To ensure the walls have the strength to support

rails at any point, we put extra battens in place and covered them in plywood rather than plaster."

The same attention to detail is evident in the communal areas of the complex. As you arrive, a fob system opens the main doors in the lobby, which has a 24-hour video surveillance system for security. All internal fire doors within the corridors and shared areas are held open using clever magnetic locks. This system makes it much easier for people to get around the building, and the doors still meet building regulations as they automatically release in the event of a fire.

John says that when he was managing the build, he constantly had to imagine how every space would work if he was a wheelchair user. He continues to apply this approach to the management of the complex, paying attention to even the smallest details that might impact on accessibility. For example, in the spacious bin shed, he has pinned back all the lids of the council bins, making it easier for wheelchair users to throw rubbish in.

John is conscious that the very idea of an apartment block built specifically for people with disabilities is not something everybody would agree with. "A couple of people have commented that it isn't the ideal arrangement, and I can certainly see their point of view. However, I have to point out that we wouldn't have been able to achieve this level of accessibility at an affordable cost if we were incorporating a couple of accessible units into a standard apartment block. The spacious floor plans of the apartments are the same on every floor, and we are providing the same features in each apartment. For example, for €6,000, we were able to wire every door in every apartment with a spur so that it can be easily automated in the future. We were also purchasing items like the height-adjustable kitchen presses and automated curtains in large volumes so we could negotiate discounts."

The dedicated focus of the development also enabled the developers to

SPECIAL FEATURES IN THE APARTMENTS



Height-adjustable sink unit



Height-adjustable work areas



Height-adjustable cupboards



Pull-out wardrobe rail



Intercom beside bed



John has the impression that there is a good sense of camaraderie among the tenants. “We seem to have a lot of sporty people, including two former Paralympians, and there have already been a few social gatherings.”

Ten of the twelve apartments are now occupied, but John encourages anyone interested to apply so they can be placed on a waiting list. The apartments are rented at approximately half the commercial rate. As the initiative is non-profit making, all revenue goes into the upkeep of the building.

John says that it has been a fascinating project to be involved in. “The developer and the subcontractors deserve fantastic praise; they all went that bit further to make sure everything was right. And it seems to have paid off. The feedback from the tenants has been incredibly positive – one person commented that they used to burn everything they cooked and now they have the right environment to cook in, that’s all stopped.”

“We also had Duncan Stewart and RTE’s *About the House* show out to cover the project. They brought three people with disabilities who are used to assessing properties and their comment was that, from the moment you entered the building, the place just felt ‘normal’. It was phenomenally rewarding to hear that.”

provide appropriate communal facilities “We were conscious that, because of the necessity of leaving space under counters in kitchens for tenants who are wheelchair users, it can be difficult to find enough space for all the ‘white’ goods you might want. To give tenants added flexibility, we provided a communal laundry room with domestic and industrial washers and dryers.” John also added a touch of luxury with a spa room which features a V-Mac toilet and a specially designed tilting Jacuzzi bath.

TIP: A DIY REMOTE CONTROL EXTRACTOR FAN

Remote control plugs can be purchased in larger hardware stores and are a simple way of improving accessibility of appliances such as extractor fans and out-of-the-way lamps. All you need to know is how to re-wire a plug. You simply replace the plug of the appliance with the new plug, which contains a sensor linked to the remote control. The remote control will now enable you to turn the appliance off and on at the mains without having to touch the plug or the controls.



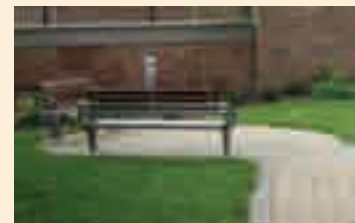
SPECIAL FEATURES IN COMMON AREAS



Low level post boxes



Laundry room



Communal gardens



Spa room



Magnetic door locks that release in the event of fire

EVERYDAY gadgets

Sick of wrestling with jam jars or spilling water when you make tea? **Kiara Lynch** identifies some simple gadgets that could make life easier



DYCEM JAR OPENER

No more dry toast! At last something to help open those annoyingly over-tightened jam lids – without having to annoy your neighbour!

This device fits over and grips most twist-off jar lids so the user can remove them with minimal effort. The jar opener is made of moulded Dycem, a non-slip material that provides a good grip, to make opening and closing lids easier. This jar opener is cone-shaped and fits snugly into the palm of the hand. It may be helpful for individuals with arthritis, weak wrists or limited grasping ability. There is also a smaller Dycem grip available for opening twist-off bottle tops.

Available from equipment suppliers including Beechfield Healthcare, Home Health Care Ltd, MED Surgical Ltd, Murray's Medical Equipment, National Council for the Blind in Ireland, OPM Ltd, Orthocare Ltd.



JUG KETTLE TIPPER

Finally, a safe, simple way to pour boiling water – minus the burn!

This wire-frame tilting stand allows the user to pour safely from a kettle without having to lift it. It holds most standard jug kettles. The pivoting frame acts as a cradle for the kettle holding it in place. This allows the water to be poured by tipping the kettle with one hand. The kettle is secured using a Velcro fastener.

Available from equipment suppliers including: Advance Electrical Mobility, DPMS, MED Surgical Ltd, OPM Ltd.



YALE KNOB TURNER

At last, you can turn your door lock on the first try!

This soft, plastic moulding is designed to help users open Yale lock knobs. The device fits over the Yale knob and extends sideways to provide the user with added leverage and grip to turn the knob and open the door. This device can be left permanently on the knob.

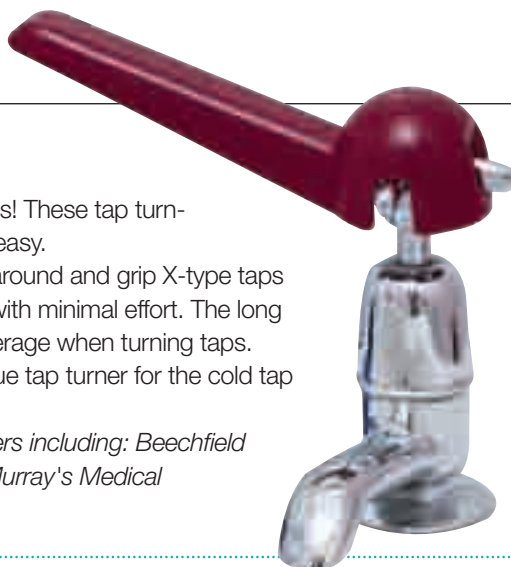
Available from equipment suppliers including: Beechfield Healthcare and Murray's Medical Equipment.

TAPTURNTURNERS

No more hassle with slippery taps! These tap turners make turning your sink taps easy.

These portable tap turners fit around and grip X-type taps allowing the user to open them with minimal effort. The long plastic handles provide extra leverage when turning taps. They come in packs of two, a blue tap turner for the cold tap and a red turner for the hot tap.

Available from equipment suppliers including: Beechfield Healthcare, MED Surgical Ltd, Murray's Medical Equipment.



LAPWRAP WHEELCHAIR AND COMFORT BLANKET

An end to blankets getting caught around wheels or dragging along the ground.

This Lapwrap blanket wraps securely around legs, excluding draughts, and is warm but not heavy. The blanket is made of 100% polyester fleece which is durable and hardwearing, breathable and machine washable. The Velcro straps allow for ease of putting on and taking off the blanket and they ensure that there are no loose blanket corners to get caught in or under the wheelchair wheels.

Available from equipment suppliers Flannovations Ireland.



STAY TRAY WITH BEAN BAG

The perfect solution if you know what it is like to find yourself helplessly watching while your tea slides off your tray.

This rectangular tray comes with a beanbag attached to its base. The beanbag helps to position the tray comfortably and securely on the user's lap, whether they are in bed or sitting down. The detachable beanbag has a washable cover and it is held in place with Velcro. The tray has integral carrying handles and raised edges, which prevents items from slipping off the sides.

Available from equipment suppliers including: Beechfield Healthcare and Murray's Medical Equipment

These are just ideas! Spokeout does not recommend any specific products or suppliers. We advise readers to shop around and, if appropriate, check with an OT to ensure a product is suitable for their needs.

SOURCES

Background information and images, except the Lapwrap blanket, were provided by Assist Ireland. For further information on products and suppliers, visit www.assistireland.ie

Beechfield Healthcare

69 Heather Road, Sandyford Industrial Estate, Dublin 18.
Tel: 01 291 5800
Email: info@beechfieldhealthcare.com
Web: www.beechfieldhealthcare.com

Home Health Care Ltd

Ballykeeran, Athlone, Co Westmeath.
Tel: 0906 474854
Email: homehealthcare@eircom.net

MED Surgical Ltd

Howth Junction Business Centre, Dublin 5. Tel: 01 839 1511
Email: sales@med.ie
Web: www.medsurgical.ie

Murray's Medical Equipment

20-21 Talbot Street, Dublin 1.
Shop/Retail Outlet: 01 855 5733 or 087 2318671
Email: info@murraysmedical.ie
Web: www.homecraft-rolyan.com

National Council for the Blind in Ireland

Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel: 01 830 7033 or 1850 334 353
Email: info@ncbi.ie
Web: www.ncbi.ie

OPM Ltd

21 Cookstown Enterprise Park, Cookstown, Dublin 24.
Tel: 01 463 0090
Email: info@opm.ie
Web: www.opm.ie

Orthocare Ltd

Unit 5, Cedar Estate, Killarney Road, Bray, Co Wicklow. Tel: 01 276 2770
Email: orthocare@eircom.net

Advance Electrical Mobility

No.4 Crumlin Village, Dublin 12.
Tel: 01 455 3168
Email: info@aemobility.com
Web: www.aemobility.com

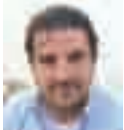
DPMS

56A Hebron Industrial Estate, Kilkenny. Tel: 056 770 2759
Email: dpmstony@msn.com
Web: www.dpmsireland.ie

Flannovations Ireland

54 Bloomfield Drive, Athlone, Co Westmeath. Tel: 090 647 9162
Mobile: 087 309 0811
Email: orders@flannovations.com
Web: www.flannovations.com

ENERGY EFFICIENT HOMES MADE EASY



Robbie Cousins suggests some simple measures to make your home more energy efficient without breaking the bank

If you are considering renovating your home to make it more energy efficient, the slowdown in residential construction could not have come at a better time. With many tradesmen migrating from the new build market to renovations and refurbishments, the resulting competition has meant prices for home improvements have also fallen to more realistic levels.

In a new drive to make our housing stock more energy efficient, the Government has introduced a number of measures aimed at ensuring that both new and older houses will be more energy efficient and emit less CO² gas. But making your home more energy efficient should not be a daunting task and, even if you can't get funding to undertake structural work, some simple behavioural changes can make a lot of difference to your annual energy bills.

BASIC STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS

Insulating your attic

Insulating the walls and floors of an existing property will require some form of professional intervention, however insulating your roof space is generally more straight-forward. About 30 percent of heat in a house is lost through the roof space if it is not insulated properly. The key to effective roofing insulation is that when the insulation is rolled out, it must have a tight fit between and above the rafters, avoiding any gaps. While it is important to have an airtight envelope around living space, the overall structure of the house also needs to be able to breathe. This means allowing air into the attic for ventilation, so don't block vent access through the eaves.

Insulating a 50 sq m (540 sq ft) attic space in a typical house should cost about €600, if you have a friend with a degree of DIY to install the insulation. This could save you more than €200 a year, with a pay-back period of about three years. As you reduce heat loss into your attic, you must also ensure you insulate the cold-water tank and pipes, located in the attic space, to prevent them freezing up in winter.



Draught proof windows and doors

Draught proof your doors, letterbox, windows and attic hatch with draught excluders. If triple-glazed windows and airtight insulated doors are not in your budget, draught excluders, available from your local DIY store, are very effective at retaining heat in a room, and in the entire house. However, it is important to leave adequate ventilation for fresh air, particularly in rooms where there is a fuel burning appliance.

Insulate your hot water cylinder

Your hot water cylinder should always be lagged to minimise heat loss and keep the water hot for as long as possible. If you are buying a new cylinder, it is better that it has factory-applied insulation. If your hot water is being heated by the central heating boiler, you should fit a thermostat to the cylinder to control the temperature. A reduction of one degree Celsius on your thermostat can reduce annual space heating costs.

FUNDING IMPROVEMENTS TO YOUR HOME

If you are considering carrying out structural work to make your home more energy efficient, you may qualify for funding under one of the following Government programmes.

Home Energy Saving pilot scheme

Earlier in 2008, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Eamonn Ryan TD introduced the 'Home Energy Saving' Pilot Scheme. This scheme, which was first introduced in North Tipperary, Limerick/Clare and Dundalk, has now moved to a second phase where neighbours in clusters of five or more houses can come together and have their houses' energy efficiency assessed for a reduced rate of €100. The occupants could then qualify for grants of up to €2,000 to carry out retrofitting works such as insulation installation and new heating controls. A nationwide rollout for the scheme is planned for 2009.

Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) grant aid

SEI oversees a number of programmes that are aimed at helping people make their homes more energy efficient. The Greener Homes Scheme pro-

vides grants for renewable heating systems in homes that have been occupied for more than 12 months. The Warmer Homes Scheme is a community-based programme that provides grants for low-income earners in private homes to improve the comfort of these homes. Items covered in the package include attic insulation, draught proofing, lagging jackets, energy efficient lighting, cavity wall insulation and energy advice. By contacting SEI or visiting their website, you can access an array of publications with details on how to improve the energy efficiency of your home.

The Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme

The Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme replaced the Special Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and the Essential Repairs Grant Scheme. The aim of this local authority scheme is to assist older people living in poor housing conditions to have essential repairs or improvements carried out. The maximum grant will be €10,500 and may cover 100 percent of the approved cost of the works for applicants with an annual household income of less than €30,000 tapering to 30 percent for those with annual household incomes of between €54,001 to €65,000. While not focused on energy efficiency, this grant covers related works such as structural repairs, replacement of doors and windows, and other repair or improvement works which are considered essential.

SIMPLE ENERGY SAVING TIPS

Many of the above schemes are designed to fund decisive interventions, which as well as being expensive can result in considerable disruption to your home life. However, a more energy efficient home can also be achieved by making some simple behavioural changes as well as carrying out some minor interventions.

If you conduct most of your activities in one single room, this is the best starting point to make amendments.

A good example of how behavioural change can save



energy can be found in The Power of One Street programme. This programme, introduced by the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources in 2007, initially involved eight families changing their behaviours to make their homes more energy efficient. This year a further five families, two business and a school have taken up the challenge. Each month they are set a list of targets to reduce their energy consumption and each participant works with a mentor to ensure results are being achieved. The findings on the programme are very interesting. Many of the participants were flabbergasted by the savings they made and indeed the amount of needless energy they were previously expending. For instance, by not leaving electrical devices on standby, significant cost savings were made on energy bills across the year. Without going into any great detail about the individual families involved and the effects of the behavioural changes they made, cost savings amounting to several hundred euros across the year were achieved by all who took part.

Ultimately, great savings can be made without having to resort to drastic measures. You should be delighted with what a few small behavioural changes can achieve when you receive your next gas or electricity bill.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Sustainable Energy Ireland:

Tel: 1850 376 666/01 836 9080. Web: www.sei.ie

Warmer Homes Scheme: Tel: 01 808 2048

Web: www.sei.ie

Power of One Street:

Web: www.powerofonestreet.ie

ENFO. Tel: 01 888 2001 or 1890 200 191

Web: www.enfo.ie

Department of Communications, Energy and

Natural Resources: Tel: 01 678 2000 or

1890-44-99-00. Web: www.dcenr.gov.ie

Department of the Environment and Local

Government: Tel: 01 888 2000. or 1890 20 20 21.

Web: www.environ.ie

TIPS FOR A ENERGY EFFICIENT HOME

- ◆ Unplug your phone charger and television/DVD player – equipment on stand-by uses up to 20 per cent of the energy it would use when fully on.
- ◆ Turn your heating down to a comfortable 20°C – lowering your thermostat by 1°C will knock 10 per cent off your heating bill.
- ◆ Buy 'A' rated kitchen appliances as they cost less to run.
- ◆ Use compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) instead of traditional bulbs – they use 20 per cent of the energy and last up to 15 times as long.
- ◆ Wait for the dishwasher to be full before you switch it on – a half load uses the same energy.
- ◆ Switch off lights when you leave a room.
- ◆ Don't fill your kettle – only boil what you need.
- ◆ Avoid unnecessary electricity use between 5pm and 7pm.

NEW HOUSING ADAPTATION GRANT SCHEMES



At the end of 2007, two new grant schemes were introduced to support people with disabilities in adapting their homes. Dolores Murphy, IWA Housing Officer, explains how the new schemes work



Many people find that they need to adapt their homes in order to make them more accessible. Until recently, local authorities supported these adaptations through the Disabled Persons' Grant scheme, but in November 2007 the system was overhauled. The Disabled Persons' Grant was replaced by two new grants – the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, and the Mobility Aids Grant.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE NEW GRANTS?

Both grants are available where changes need to be made to a home to make it suitable for a person with a physical, sensory or intellectual disability or mental health difficulty. The Housing Adaptation Grant is designed to help you to make substantial adaptations, such as adding an extension or ground floor bathroom. The maximum amount available is €30,000. The Mobility Aids Grant of up to €6,000 is designed to support smaller adaptations to the home, such as ramps to create level access, grab rails and stairlifts.

HOW IS THE NEW SYSTEM DIFFERENT?

Unlike the Disabled Persons' Grant, both the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability and the Mobility Aids Grants scheme are 'means-tested'. This means that the total income of the householder is assessed to find out if they qualify for the grant and then to determine the amount payable. Payment and assessment procedures have been standardised across local authorities and both grants are indexed, meaning they increase with inflation.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR THE GRANTS?

The grant can be paid to people with disabilities living in:

- ◆ Owner-occupied housing
- ◆ Houses being purchased from a local authority under the tenant purchase scheme
- ◆ Private rented accommodation (though the duration of your tenancy can affect grant approval)
- ◆ Accommodation provided under the voluntary housing Capital Assistance and Rental Subsidy schemes
- ◆ Accommodation occupied by persons living in communal residences

HOW MUCH SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

Under the Housing Adaptation Grant scheme, if your household income is less than €30,000, you may qualify for 95 percent of the cost of the works (up to the maximum of €30,000). The proportion of the costs to be grant-aided will be tapered, in line with your income, from 95 percent to 30 percent. If you are a local authority tenant, the local authority will meet the entire cost of works and also arrange the work. Under the Mobility Aids Grant, you can apply for 100 percent of the cost of work, providing it does not exceed €6,000.

WHEN CAN I START WORK?

You must not start work until the grant is approved, but it is expected that work will start within six months of approval.

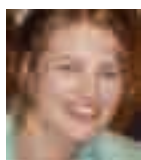
For further information, contact your local authority's Housing Department.

FEEDBACK ON THE NEW SCHEME

IWA has concerns regarding the means test and feels the maximum of €30,000 fails to meet the realistic cost of work. Readers with experience of the schemes should contact us – comments will be passed on to the Department of the Environment, which has agreed to independently evaluate these schemes. Contact: Dolores Murphy, IWA Housing Support, Blackheath Drive, Clontarf, Dublin 3. Tel: 01 818 6400. Email: dolores.murphy@iwa.ie



The Kerryman AND HIS KINGDOM



Terry O'Brien is a Kerry County and Tralee Town councillor, an IWA Service Co-ordinator and new board member, and also a family man with young twins. Kiara Lynch finds out how he manages to fit it all in!

Terry O'Brien had a diving accident in New York when he was 20 years old, leaving him paralysed. He had gone to New York in June 1989 to work, and had his accident in August of that year. He stayed in New York to complete his rehabilitation. The facilities at that time were far better in America and more accessible than those available in Ireland. However, Tralee was Terry's home and he wanted to go back. So in 1991, Terry returned to Tralee, to an entirely new life. His family had converted a disused shed behind his home to cater for his needs. This gave Terry a lot more independence than most people with disabilities at that time. Yet Terry's life had undeniably changed, and none of his relationships would ever be the same.

When Terry came home, he wasn't sure what to do as a person with his level of disability did not have too many options open to them in the employment sector. As a result, Terry decided to go to college in Tralee IT where he studied computers and social studies. Reminiscing, in his Kerry accent, Terry told me, "I enjoyed college, although it seems so long ago now!" It was here Terry met the love of his life, Teresa. Teresa, from Bantry, managed to tame Terry to the docile man he is today, and they were married in 2001. After the honeymoon, the newlyweds moved into the home they had built on the outskirts of Tralee, and in 2007, had two beautiful children, Millie and Mark.

The twins are now 20 months old, and have brought

Terry and Teresa nothing but love and enjoyment. "It has been a steep learning curve," Terry admits. "The twins have of course completely changed our lives. It's not just access to where I want to go anymore, now I need access to playgrounds, children's restaurants and hundreds of other places I wouldn't have considered before the twins!"

"The twins are incredibly curious about everything. They have endless energy – just when we think we're ready and we've got it sorted, they move onto something new and throw us for a loop!"

Terry has lived in Tralee all his life, and is currently a Councillor on Kerry County Council and on Tralee Town Council. When Terry spoke about his political life, the charming Kerryman gave it to me straight: "Like everyone, when I got involved in politics, I was idealistic and wanted to make a difference. While I still want that, I don't think the country is going to change overnight. That's why I want to continue in political life. It's not just about access for people with disabilities, it's about making things better for everyone."

Terry was first elected to Tralee Town Council in 1999 and served two terms as Mayor of Tralee. As Mayor, Terry didn't want to focus only on disability issues, "I wanted to represent everyone, and I'd like to think I achieved that. Of course, I did my best on access issues. A lot of the time, an access issue merely needed someone with experience of the problem to sit in on the meetings and help provide solutions."

Terry works as a Service Co-ordinator in IWA's centres in Tralee, Listowel and Killarney. "The job involves a bit of everything really. I drive, so that's a huge help, although finding accessible parking can be 'challenging' at times! I have a lot of interaction with IWA staff, our clients and volunteers, coming up with new ways to develop existing services, and meeting our clients' needs with new services. I would like to think that I've developed good relationships with local authorities and other community groups highlighting access issues, etc."

Terry has found his political profile can make his job both easier and harder at times. "Because of my political profile, at times, people seem to think that I can work miracles when it comes to access problems. On the other hand, being in politics has undoubtedly made it easier because having developed relationships with local authorities, I know who to talk to in order to get problems solved."

Not satisfied with just representing his constituents, Terry recently joined the IWA Board as a staff representative.

Terry seems to have limitless talents and is

heavily involved in many educational and sporting institutes in his local community, including being part of the governing body of IT Tralee, and being on the Board of Management of Tralee Community College, Kerry Education Service, and Tralee Sports Centre.

Terry says he has an overall passion for making his local community a better place: "I'm not saying mine is the only opinion that counts, but we all need to get involved if we want to make things better, and if I can contribute to that in any way, I should."

While Terry was quick to acknowledge that we have much further to go as a country, he believes the improvement in access between 1991 and 2008 has been enormous. "There wasn't even a question of a pub having wheelchair access then, and now it's an

expected standard. One of Terry's favourite gripes is about Dubliners who moan about public transport. "I'm always fascinated by people in large urban areas expressing their frustrations at problems with public transport. In most rural areas trains aren't available and to have a bus is a bonus, let alone trying to find an accessible one."

Terry is a devoted GAA supporter. He had always been involved in GAA growing up and told me that he loves going to support and cheer on his beloved Kerry. Terry tries to get to as many games as he can and he of course intends that the twins will be avid Kerry GAA supporters. Some of Terry's other interests include reading, listening to music and spending time with his family, but Terry seems at his best just chatting with people and laying on his Kerry charm!

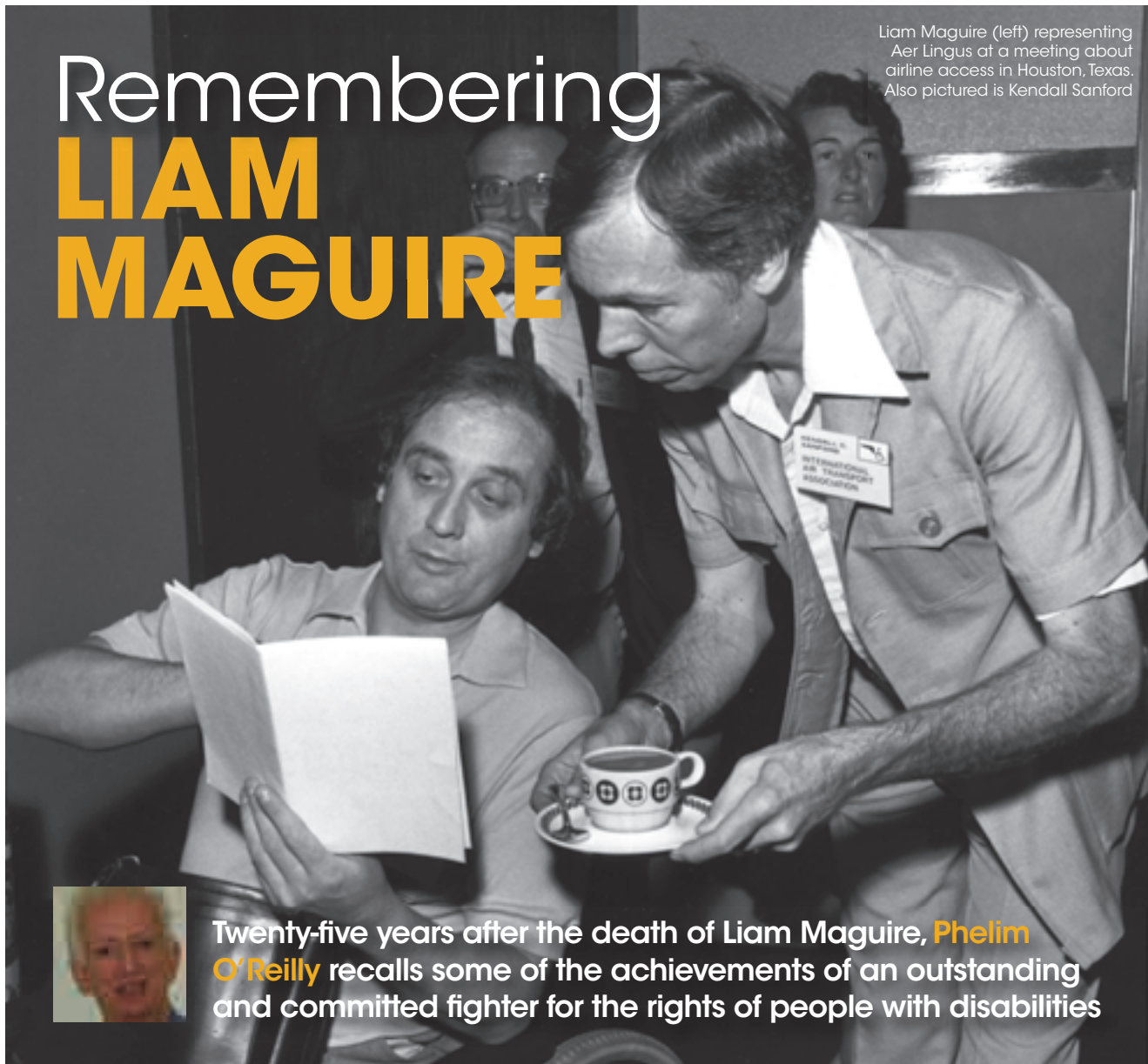
"There wasn't even a question of a pub having wheelchair access then, and now it's an expected standard"



Terry with Teresa and the twins, Millie and Mark, with the Sam Maguire

Remembering LIAM MAGUIRE

Liam Maguire (left) representing Aer Lingus at a meeting about airline access in Houston, Texas. Also pictured is Kendall Sanford



Twenty-five years after the death of Liam Maguire, **Phelim O'Reilly** recalls some of the achievements of an outstanding and committed fighter for the rights of people with disabilities

Twenty-five years on, it is fitting that we should remember Liam Maguire, who died on 16th September 1983 at the early age of 40 years. Looking back on his significant achievements, it is difficult to imagine how one man could have accomplished so much in such a brief period of time. Liam had exceptional energy, drive, determination and single-mindedness in pursuing a goal in which he believed. He expressed this goal to an ICTU seminar in May 1981. "Disabled people, internationally, are a risen people who are demanding their right to full participation and equality, and to have their special needs taken into consideration at all stages of social and economic planning."

During his career he became a major influence fighting for the rights of people with disabilities both on national and international stages. This was enabled by his thirst for information and his ability to grasp and use it. He was a

natural strategist and knew how and where to exert pressures. As a trade unionist and a socialist, he had no difficulty in persuading the trade union movement of the justice of his cause, and enlisting its support.

Liam became disabled following an accident on his motorcycle on 26th July 1962. But due to his determination, he was able to return to work in Aer Lingus in September 1963. Within a relatively short time, he was leading a very full social life and began some of his activities to improve life for other people with disabilities. From 1965, he was lobbying politicians, mainly David Andrews, his local TD, to have drivers with disabilities exempted from road tax. On 6th July 1967, Liam was charged at Dun Laoghaire District court with non-payment of road tax. Liam defended the case with the argument that his car was his legs and essential for him to obtain employment since public transport was unavailable. He won Justice Herman Good's sympathies

but the law had to be upheld. A fine of £48.15 was imposed, mitigated to £1 with one month to pay. The pressure continued, and meetings were secured with the Minister for Local Government, Kevin Boland. As a result of his campaigning, drivers with disabilities were exempted from road tax in the 1968 Finance Act.

Liam joined the Irish Wheelchair Association in 1970. When the Dublin Branch was formed in October 1970, he was elected Vice-Chairperson. In 1971 Liam became a member of the governing board – the National Executive – a position he held until his death. During the subsequent decade, he served several terms as Chairperson.

Liam's association with Aer Lingus and IWA facilitated his participation in international affairs and his rapid development as an influential person in this sphere. In 1973, Liam attended his first International Rehabilitation Conference in Sydney. It was here that Liam made contact with Judy Heumann, a major USA disability activist, who became his friend and co-activist for the rest of his life. At this conference, the disabled delegates were unhappy about their small representation and issued a statement to this effect.

At the 1976 conference in Israel, there was a somewhat larger representation of people with disabilities. At the end of this event, Liam was invited to introduce a resolution. He took the opportunity to make a statement: "Unless there is much greater participation by disabled people in matters affecting their own lives, you can have your conference inside, and we'll have ours outside." He complained forcibly that the rostrum and everywhere else were most inaccessible.

By the time of the 1980 conference in Canada, the disabled movement had grown in strength. The Canadian organisation ensured a large worldwide representation of people with disabilities. A resolution was proposed that the International Rehabilitation Council should consist of a majority of disabled people. This was defeated, but it was evident that people with disabilities were on the move and determined to be heard. The four hundred people with disabilities present held their own meetings on two successive days from 6pm to 10pm and from 6pm to 12 midnight. The Canadian leader of their disability organisation, Jim Derksen, described Liam as "someone who made a big impression on us, because he spoke like a proud man, he spoke like a very assertive man, he became angry, and he wasn't afraid to express himself – he spoke as someone who had ties with the labour movement; he used the terminology of labour – 'solidarity' and 'brotherhood of man'". At this time Liam was at the height of his powers. US editor, Jim Laurie of the Rehabilitation Gazette in Missouri referred to him as "holding a large room of disorganised people from all over the world with a combination of charm and strength – creating a magic and excitement that only comes from real leaders such as Kennedy, Roosevelt and Churchill".

At this meeting, the initiative came from the Swedes, the Canadians set the atmosphere, but most agreed that Liam's oratory was the force that made the determination

crystallise. The breakaway conference at Winnipeg decided to form a consumer organisation which subsequently became 'Disabled Peoples International'. A steering committee was elected with two representatives from five different regions. Liam Maguire and Berg Lindquist of Sweden were the two European representatives. The committee wasted no time and organised their first world congress in 1981 in Singapore. Liam provided the constitution for the DPI, basing it on that of the International Labour Organisation. The delegates issued a manifesto that its opening paragraph adverted to the fact that there were 500 million people with disabilities in the world, of whom 100 million were severely disabled on account of malnutrition. These were statistics that strongly affected Liam's thinking. He had delivered a paper to the Singapore Congress contrasting the conditions of people with disabilities in developed countries with those of undeveloped nations. He strongly deplored the deprivation of millions of their basic human rights to nourishment, while billions were spent on armaments. Liam displayed his passionate feeling and concern for his fellow man, and had he lived longer, it is more than likely that he would have become a major force against poverty on the world stage.

Liam lost no opportunity to protest against barriers that impeded accessibility and mobility. Liam's representations to the Revenue Commissioners resulted in the exemption of excise duty on cars for disabled drivers from 26 August 1976. In the course of a campaign to secure special parking facilities for disabled drivers, Liam was fined in court for illegal parking. He refused to pay the £2 fine and was prepared to spend seven days in jail. He duly informed the Minister for Justice of his resolve. As a result, special parking places for the disabled were introduced.

In a high profile legal case, initiated in 1979, Liam pursued his right to be a juror. He refused to accept the effort to give him exemption and commenced a legal battle with the State. A successful outcome to the case was doubtful



Liam Maguire

but the legal team were prepared to pursue the matter through the Irish courts and the European Court of Human Rights. This approach would have ensured major publicity and consequent embarrassment to the courts. The case ultimately fell due to Liam's early death much to the disappointment of all involved.

From 1977 to 1980 Liam fought tooth and nail to have 750 buses, which were to be built by Bombardier at Shannon, made accessible. His research showed that three American bus manufacturers were required by their states to build only buses which were accessible to people with disabilities. Liam worked through ICTU and Dublin City Corporation to urge the matter and he also aided the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers who were pressing to have the buses built in Inchicore. A glorious opportunity was lost, however, and this failure set back the introduction of accessible public transport by over 20 years. Liam Maguire's vision was too far ahead of his time.

Early in the seventies Liam would have recognised the importance of legislative underpinning to obtain a better and a just world for people with disabilities. His input into this area was immense. His international contacts convinced him of the necessity and the benefits of this approach. He was prolific in writing papers outlining these aims and the need for laws to secure rights.

Perhaps his first major paper on the subject was delivered to the Union of Voluntary Organisations for the Handicapped in Wexford in 1977. Entitled 'A Fair Deal For The Handicapped' it was published by the IWA and widely circulated to all politicians, unions and other interested parties. However, his main work in this sphere was through the trade

union movement. ICTU held a major seminar on 19th May 1979 at which several papers were delivered to trade union officials. Liam's paper was wide-ranging and covered the various areas of needs which required to be tackled – training and employment; education; housing; residential care and the need to quantify the extent of the problems.

By 1980 Liam was busy on many fronts – at home and on the international scene and must have found it extremely demanding. In January 1982, he fell in the snow, damaged his hip and was hospitalised. Ten weeks later, despite a wound which hadn't healed, he flew to Singapore and Tokyo, keeping abreast of Disabled Peoples International affairs. On his return to Dublin, he was again in hospital. A skin graft proved unsuccessful. Due to the pressure put on it, the second hip had now started to be vulnerable. But Liam was not content to give the wounds the necessary ten months to heal. Against medical advice he flew to Houston, Texas, for a meeting of airline representatives. On his return his condition had worsened and he died at 10.45pm on the 16th September 1983. His formidable struggle against injustice was ended.

And so the disabled movement lost one of its greatest advocates.

His early death was a grave setback to the achievement of his aims. There is not doubt, however, that his sterling work has eased the path of those who followed in his footsteps.

Phelim O'Reilly lives in Clontarf. For almost 35 years he was a member of the National Executive/Board of directors of the IWA. He has served as vice-chairperson, honorary secretary and honorary treasurer during that period.

Liam joined the Irish Wheelchair Association in 1970. When the Dublin Branch was formed in October 1970, he was elected vice-Chairperson

IWA Christmas Card order form

Pack of 10 Christmas Cards costs €5.99 plus postage and packing. Cards are made in Ireland. All proceeds from the sale of the cards go directly to IWA services. It could not be easier, just complete the order form below and we will do the rest.

No. of Packs required _____
 Price per pack €5.99
 Postage and Packing €1.25

TOTAL COST: € _____

Please use block capitals:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Please return order form with your cheque or postal order to:
 Fundraising Department



Irish Wheelchair Association,
 Blackheath Drive,
 Clontarf, Dublin 3.
 Phone: 01 818 6469
 Fax: 01 833 3873

CAREER PROFILE:**RAY PHELAN**

Aspiring photographer 24-year-old Ray Phelan from Ballymun is currently studying in IWA's Rehabilitative Training Unit. He recently completed two work placements and tells **Kiara Lynch how they helped him build confidence**

Tell us about your educational background

I went to Holy Spirit National School, Ballymun, then onto Ballymun Comprehensive. I constantly struggled with schoolwork, and I left school when I was 15. When I was 16, I started attending classes such as IT and cookery in my local Youthreach centre, and it was there I was diagnosed with dyslexia. It was in the Youthreach centre that photography caught my attention; the more I learned in my photography class, the more I enjoyed it. I found I could capture the way I saw the world. The Youthreach centre encouraged me to go on to further education, and when I was 18 I started in the Central Remedial Clinic Vocational Training Unit taking classes such as communications, woodcraft, and literacy and numeracy for three years. When I was 22, I started studying in IWA's Training Unit. Since I've been here, I've taken IT, art and retail classes, and I've had two work placements.

Where have your work placements been and what do you feel you've gained from them?

My biggest gain has been my confidence in myself and my abilities. My first placement was in 2008 in a pet shop in Ballyfermot. I was very nervous as my reading skills are poorer than others, but Rahim Nazarali (IWA's Liaison officer for the Rehabilitative Training Unit) encouraged me to try it. Once I had been there a few hours, I had worked out a system: the different food types were different colours, so if I felt nervous and was having trouble reading them, I could pick them out by colour. I really enjoyed the week, and I gained a lot of experience in dealing with customers.

Later in the year, I worked at the Irish Film Festival 'Lights Out' for a week, which I loved! I got the chance to take photos, take part in workshops, and really got involved in the festival. It was an exciting week and really made me think about a career in photography. This semester I'm starting a photography class so I'm hoping that will lead me further towards a career in photography.

Where would be your ideal job location be?

My aim would be to find a job based on the northside of Dublin. I've lived in Ballymun all my life, and all my friends and family live round there, so ideally I'd like to stay living in

the area. I don't drive, so public transport is my main source of transport. Even now, just getting to Clontarf for class takes up to an hour and a half, as the buses are very unreliable. I also find it very hard to read and understand the timetables at the bus stops. I think a system that could read the timetable out by pressing a button would make a big difference, not just for people with dyslexia, but for people with visual impairments.

What are your career ambitions?

My goal is to get an internship or work experience with a professional photographer, getting a chance to learn the ropes so to speak. I'd like to see how a professional goes about setting up shots and working with light. Eventually, I'm aiming to get my own place and a full time career in photography.

USEFUL CONTACTS**IWA Rehabilitative Training Unit**

Rahim Nazarali, Liaison Officer
rahim.nazarali@iwa.ie
01 818 6479

CRC Vocational Training Unit

Doug Annert
Manager of the Vocational Training Unit
01 854 2242



TAKING ACTION: RIGHT TO BE ACTIVE REGARDLESS OF AGE



Maureen Mc Nabola relied on the Motorised Transport Grant to maintain her independence. When Maureen was told she was no longer eligible because

she was over 66, she felt she was being discriminated against

THE ISSUE

I live outside Carrick-on-Shannon in a small rural community. As an active citizen and volunteer, I rely on my husband to drive me everywhere for committee meetings, shopping, visiting family, etc. As far as I'm concerned, it's the environment not my visual impairment that restricts my travelling independently.

To support us in keeping a small, reliable car on the road, I have availed of the Motorised Transport Grant. The Motorised Transport Grant is a means-tested grant paid by the Health Service Executive (HSE) towards the purchase and/or adaptation of a vehicle being purchased by a person with a severe disability where the car is essential to obtain or retain employment, or on occasion granted to someone living in an isolated area even though they may not be in employment. Since 1 January 2008, the maximum Motorised Transport Grant is €5,020.50.

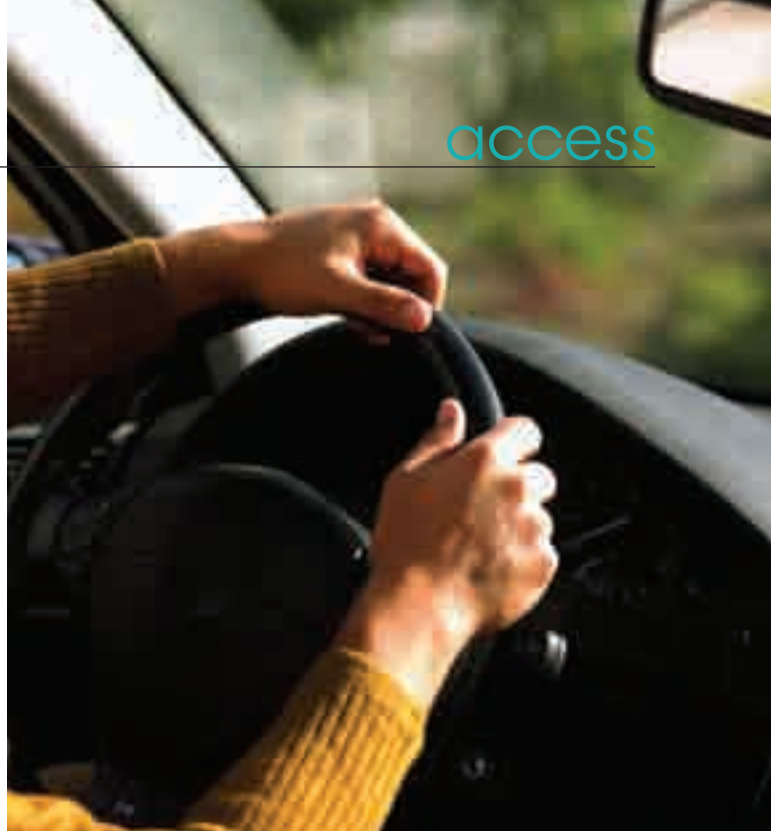
Back in early 2007, I re-applied for the Motorised Transport Grant only to be informed that I was no longer eligible as I was now over the age limit of 66. I felt I was being discriminated against because of my age and decided to take further action.

THE ACTION

I appealed the HSE decision and at the same time began to contact my local TDs and write to Government Department Ministers. Unfortunately, all the responses confirmed that eligibility for the grant was restricted by an age criteria and there was nothing that could be done.

Not to be defeated on the issue, I met with the Equality Authority in Dublin. On review of the facts, the Equality Authority appointed a solicitor and the process of challenging the case began in March 2007. My case was taken under the Equal Status Acts 2000-2004 which prohibits discrimination on nine grounds:

- ◆ The Gender Ground



- ◆ The Marital Status ground
- ◆ The Sexual Orientation ground
- ◆ The Religion ground
- ◆ The Age ground
- ◆ The Disability ground
- ◆ The Race ground
- ◆ The Traveller Community ground

It was always an ambition of mine to be able to tackle ageism in our society. I feel you should be able to retain allowances after 65 to enable you to stay living independently. It's not like your disability goes away when you reach a certain age.

THE OUTCOME

My case challenged that the age limit criteria of the Motorised Transport Grant contravened the Equal Status Acts on the grounds of age. The case was settled on the 1st July 2008 and shortly afterwards I received notification from the HSE that I would be awarded the Motorised Transport Grant. I feel this landmark decision will benefit so many people. I am delighted with the final outcome because on many occasions I thought the case was just dead in the water. I believe in people power – people need to speak out for themselves.

Maureen Mc Nabola is Vice-Chairperson of IWA Carrick-on-Shannon Branch and was Leitrim Person Of the Year 2007. Maureen is a lover of traditional music and was one of the founder members of Ceoltas na Eireann in Drumsna. She is currently involved in a RTE documentary called 'Mothers of Ireland'.

For further information on who qualifies for the Motorised Transport Grant, contact your local Citizens Information Centre or www.citizensinformation.ie

POST OFFICES under threat of closure



With so many small post offices closing up and down the country, Josephine Dwyer looks at the role of local post

offices and asks members about the impact of closures

Rathoe Post Office in County Carlow has been a family run business for the past 70 years. It sits nestled beside the church and village hall. For local man Joe Connors, the post office is a vital part of community life. These days it is run by Joe's sister-in-law, Anne, and offers a one-stop-shop for postage, paying bills, cashing pensions or benefits, and buying essential groceries.

Joe told me how the post office serves a great social need. "It's still a place to meet and chat. So many people are isolated today, and the weekly trip to the post office is often their only opportunity to meet people. If people didn't turn up, they would be missed."

Closure of Rathoe Post Office would mean that local people would have to travel to Tullow to conduct their business. But, as Joe pointed out, there's no public transport – let alone accessible public transport – to get you to Tullow. "As a rule, I feel that most changes in our society are for the better," added Joe, "But closing local post offices is definitely not a change for the better."

While Joe's family hopes to pass the business on to another generation, the fact remains that in their immediate border area of west Carlow, Wicklow and Laois, more than 20 post offices have closed in the past few years. The smaller post offices are simply finding it difficult to survive in the present climate.

Another IWA member, John O'Dwyer, who lives in Carrick-on-Suir, County Tipperary, is concerned that his local post office will be closed and the service relocated to the far side of town. John explains the implications of this: "As a powered wheelchair user, my access to town and services is restricted by un-dished paths, parked cars on pavements, and narrow

"Without access to the post office, I couldn't conduct my own affairs and would lose my independence"



Joe Connors with his sister-in-law, Anne, Postmistress of Rathoe Post Office

doorways. There is always an obstacle. Without access to the post office, I couldn't conduct my own affairs and would lose my independence."

Like so many people, John feels the present trend to close the small local post office is a step backwards for our communities and that everyone should have the same ease of access to public services.

Post offices clearly still have an important role in communities, large and small. They afford access to a wide range of services and provide

people with a sense of security and being connected; a rare quality in our changing times.



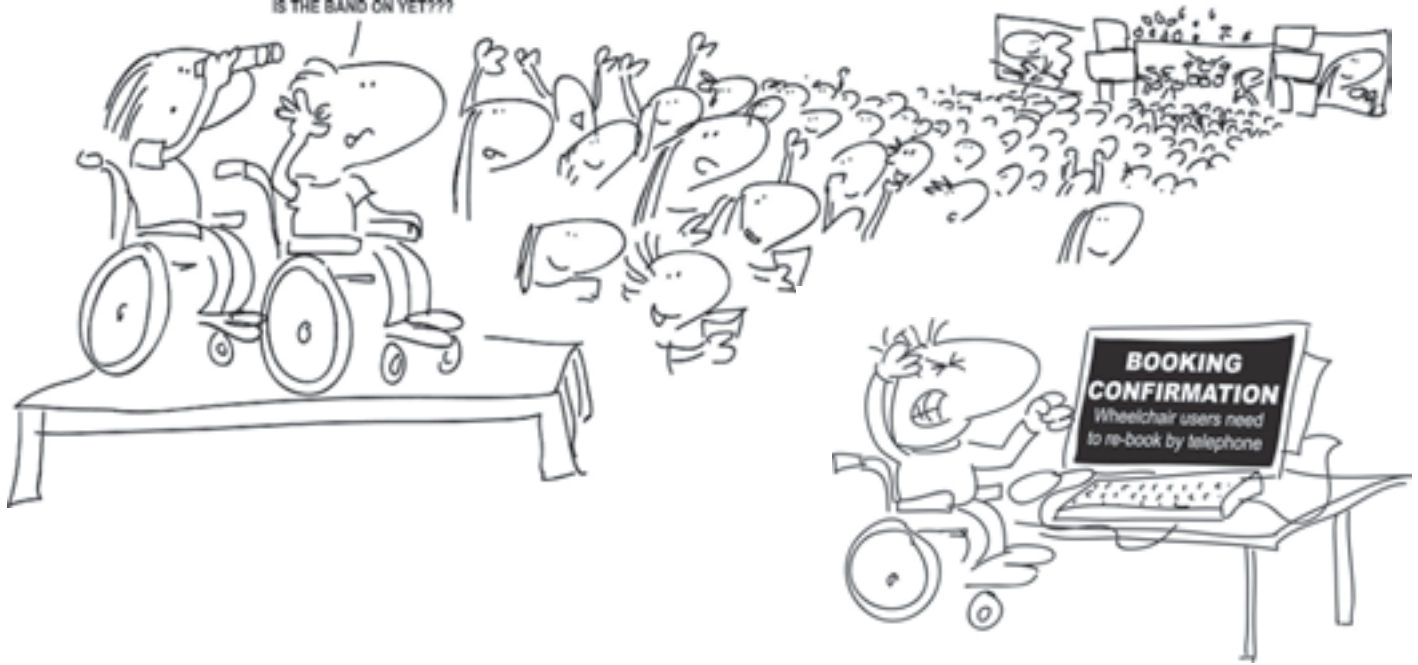
Mud, lies and **ROCK 'N' ROLL!**

**Ticket: €65. Parking in the disabled parking area three miles away: €50.
Scraping mud off your wheelchair after an Irish gig: PRICELESS!**

CARTOONS BY JOHNNY CONNAUGHTON



IS THE BAND ON YET???

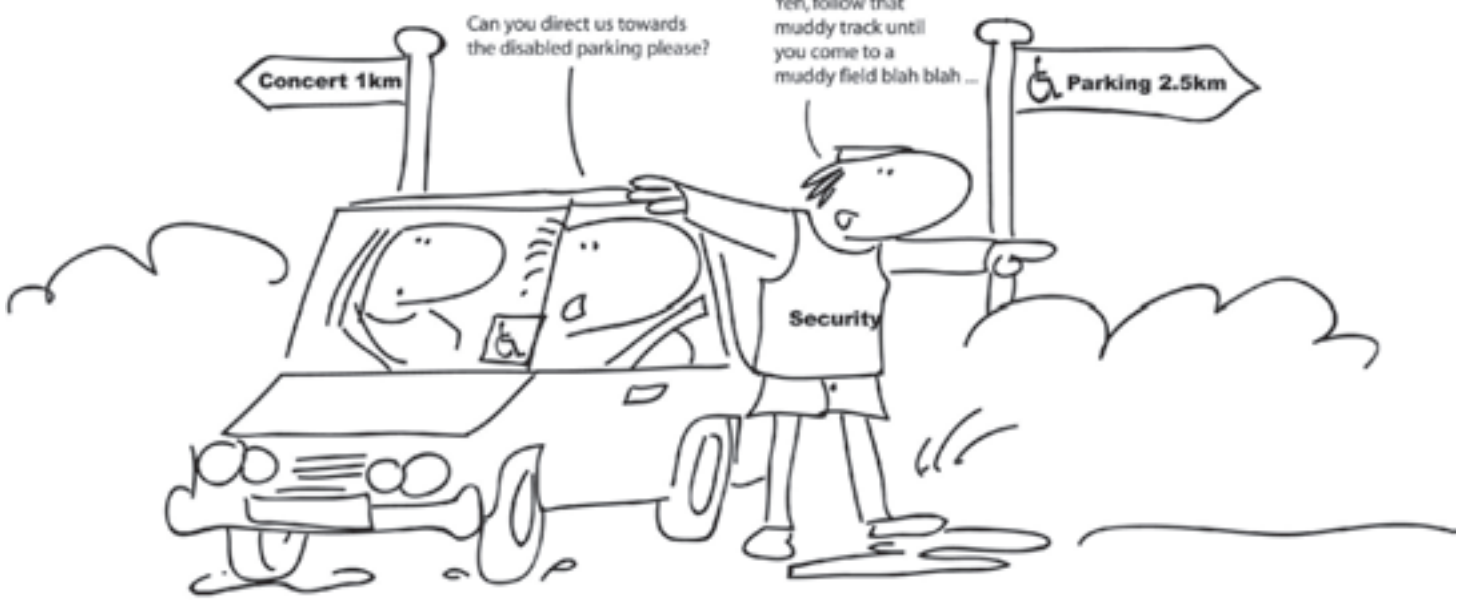


Can you direct us towards the disabled parking please?

Yeh, follow that muddy track until you come to a muddy field blah blah ...

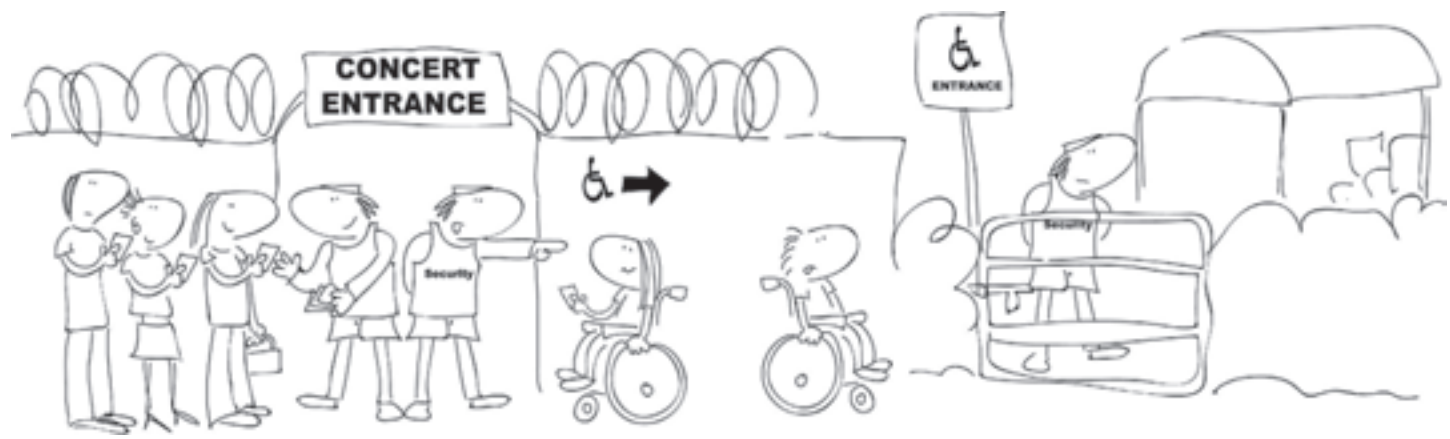
Concert 1km

Parking 2.5km



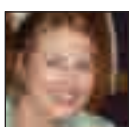
CONCERT ENTRANCE

ENTRANCE





Dublin AIRPORT ACCESS



In line with new EU legislation, Dublin Airport Authority has appointed a company to provide all assistance services. Kiara Lynch finds out how the new system works

As of July 2008, managing bodies of European Airports have full legal responsibility for the provision of assistance to people with disabilities travelling through their airports. Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) has appointed OCS (One Complete Solution Ltd) to provide these assistance services. I spoke with Steven Wheeler, OCS Regional Manager, and Liz Moore, Customer Relations & Quality Manager DAA, to find out more about OCS's services.

Liz emphasises that the first step for any passenger is to notify their airline of their requirements. "It's up to the passenger to inform their flight operator upon booking, or at the very least 48 hours in advance of their flight, that they require assistance. If the passenger books online, they are obliged to then ring their flight operator informing them of their requirements." Steven adds, "It's vital the operator knows a passenger is coming with assistance requirements because while OCS can make sure the passenger is

assisted to board the plane, we cannot make room for their wheelchair on that flight. Only the operator can do that."

Your flight operator will take note of any extras they need to accommodate on the flight, such as manual or power chairs, and then pass on details of your flights, along with your assistance requirements, to OCS. When informing your operator, Liz advises: "Be as specific as possible – the more information you give, the better, so they can pass it on to OCS, who will then be ready to meet your requirements."

A major dislike for wheelchair users has always been manual boarding of planes and the waiting times for assistance. Steven believes passengers will see significant improvements. "We've invested a lot of time and money in our services. We currently have three ambi-lifts in Dublin, and are in the process of ordering two brand new replacements. This has made manual boarding of passengers a thing of the past. Also, part of our contract with DAA states we must meet specific time schedules, so that will hugely reduce passengers' waits for assistance."

Assistance is available throughout your journey through Dublin airport. Steven says, "We can have assistance in place upon your arrival in the car park, if required." There are blue call points located inside arrivals and beside the disabled parking bays, which put you straight through to the OCS desk. Steven's final piece of advice is that passengers should re-specify their assistance needs upon check-in. *OCS has also been appointed to service Cork and Shannon airports.*

STEP BY STEP GUIDE

1. Inform your airline operator of your requirements when booking or at least 48 hours before departure. Think about the following questions:
 - ◆ Are you bringing your wheelchair on the flight?
 - ◆ At what stages will you require assistance? For example: boarding the plane, in the car park, through check-in, or at the boarding gate?
 - ◆ Do you need to bring your own wheelchair to the door of the plane?
2. Remember that your airline operator is responsible for ensuring that it has sufficient space onboard and ensuring that OCS is aware of all your requirements.
3. OCS is then responsible for meeting all your airport access requirements.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Aer Lingus Assistance: 0818 365 011
 Email: specialassistance@aerlingus.com
 Ryanair Assistance: 01 249 7761
 DAA customer service: 01 814 4717

New York, **NEW YORK**



New York City is a destination that holds a relentless fascination for Irish people. With the favourable exchange rate, good accessibility and electric atmosphere, a recent trip reminded **Gary Allen why everyone should go there at least once**



Gary at Times Square

There was a time not so long ago that a trip to the US of A was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. More recently, that dear-departed species the Celtic Tiger has made it, while not exactly a routine trip, one that can be undertaken without re-mortgaging the house. So it was, that with our pennies saved up and turned into dollars, myself and my wife took a trip to NYC a little while ago.

On landing in JFK we took a Yellow Cab into Manhattan. This turned out to be quite good value as Yellow Cabs are

huge and cannot charge anymore than \$46 plus tolls for the trip to Manhattan from JFK, which turned out to be about 45 minutes drive with traffic. I'd recommend it if your travelling that direction. In fact, we used Yellow Cabs during our entire trip and had no problem at all and it worked out quite cheap, especially with the exchange rate in our favour.

The centre of New York City is laid out in a grid system with streets running east to west and avenues running





In front of the Apple Store

north to south. I found the streets very easy to negotiate with dips on almost every street corner.

We stayed in Fitzpatrick's Hotel on 55th St, which is very close to Central Park.

The hotel was generally quite accessible. Both the bedroom and bathroom were large and easy to manoeuvre in, and any small gripes I did have were more than compensated for by the central location.

The weather was pleasant during our trip and there is no better outdoor pursuit in NYC than a walk in Central Park. It's quite strange at first being in a place of exceptional tranquillity and beauty while being surrounded by skyscrapers worthy of equal admiration.

Shopping is a sport in NYC and Fifth Avenue is the playing field. One place we both wanted to visit was the Apple Store on Fifth Avenue. The building itself is a funky looking glass box with the shop itself underneath the street. At the time we visited, there was a long queue to get in. However, we were quickly ushered to the top of the queue and dispatched down the lift to the store. To the gadget head, this is Nirvana and the equipment is substantially cheaper than you would pay here.

Although I'd been in NYC before, I'd never been to Times Square and I wanted to make the effort this time. To make the most of it, this trip should be done at night. It's a major tourist attraction so it was jammed when we went. The sheer brightness of the place is what hits you and it's easy to see why they call it the 'the city that never sleeps'.

Further down in Manhattan is the site where the twin

towers once stood. I wasn't sure about visiting Ground Zero, but St. Paul's Chapel changed my attitude. This church was a resting area for rescue and recovery personnel during the events of September 2001. Inside, it is littered with flags, caps and pendants of all kinds and from all places. These are a powerful reminder of what happened that day.

So, that's just some highlights of a fantastic trip! You don't need very long in NYC; I'd suggest a few days would do just nicely, but it's a few days everyone should do at least once.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (They can provide up to date details on transport options in NYC along with literature on accessibility)

www.nyc.gov/html/mopd

+1 (212) 788 2830

Transport

www.ny.com/transportation/access.html

www.ny.com/transportation/taxis

www.aerlingus.com

Hotels

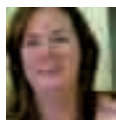
www.fitzpatrickhotels.com

www.expedia.co.uk

Tourist Info

www.nycvisit.com

Holidaying **at home**



Considering taking a break in Ireland?
Colette Molloy provides some
inspiration...



THE FAIRVIEW GUESTHOUSE
College Street, Killarney,
Co Kerry. T: 064 341 64
www.fairviewkillarney.com

The Fairview Guesthouse is an award-winning deluxe 4-star purpose-built guest house in Killarney. The fully accessible Fifth Season Restaurant is located in the guesthouse.

What kind of access is there?

Level access to the guesthouse with an elevator to the first floor. There is parking provision in the forecourt for people with limited mobility.

How wide are the doors? All doors are over 90 cm wide.

Describe the bedroom

facilities: There are two spacious accessible en suite bedrooms on the first floor. There is room for a hoist; you may bring your own or organise hire.

Describe the shower/bath

facilities One bedroom has a roll-in shower with fixed seat and grab-rails and the second bedroom has a Jacuzzi with grab-rails.

Are the grounds accessible?

Yes, the forecourt at the front of the guesthouse leads directly to the entrance.



ABHAINN RÍ SELF-CATERING COTTAGES
Ballintober, Hollywood,
Co Wicklow.
T: 045 867 147
www.abhainn-ri.com

Abhainn Rí Cottages are located on 100 acres of farmland in Hollywood overlooking the Blessington Lakes and Wicklow Mountains.

There are four three-bedroom cottages (one fully accessible) creating an ideal opportunity for family or group bookings.

What kind of access is there?

There is ramped access to the accessible cottage with ample parking.

How wide are the doors? The doors are more than 90cm wide.

Describe the facilities The living room and kitchen are well fitted and spacious. There is one en suite accessible double bedroom on the ground floor. You may bring your own hoist or arrange hire.

Describe the shower/bath

facilities There is a spacious wet room with roll-in shower, shower seat and grab rails.

Are the grounds accessible?

Yes, the surrounding grounds are level and accessible.



HARVEY'S POINT HOTEL
Lough Eske, Donegal
Town, Co Donegal
T: 074 972 2208
www.harveyspoint.com

Harvey's Point Hotel is located on the shores of Lough Eske and at the foot of the Blue Stack Mountains. The luxurious accommodation includes twelve accessible bedrooms.

What kind of access is there?

Level access with internal ramps and an elevator. There are ample accessible parking spaces close to the entrance.

How wide are the doors? All doors are over 90cm wide.

Describe the bedrooms: All bedrooms are very spacious with room to pull up close to the bed.

There is space for a hoist. You can bring your own or arrange hire.

Describe the shower/bath

facilities: All en suites have roll-in showers, fixed shower seats and adequate grab rails.

Are the grounds accessible?

They are wheelchair accessible.

COMPETITION For a chance to win a weekend in Harvey's Point Hotel go to page 63



Colm Caren

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT



IWA driving instructor Colm Caren talks to Robbie Cousins about the challenges involved in learning to drive

Colm Caren believes the most important tip that he can offer any learner driver looking to build their driving competence is to practice. He says: “No matter what your situation, when it comes to driving, the main goal is to build up your skills to such a level that you no longer think about what you are doing and your driving becomes innate.”

After sustaining a back injury in the early nineties, Colm, who then worked as a mainstream driving instructor, contacted IWA about relearning the skills to drive. He was told that there was too much demand for the service, and with the original founders of the specialist service in Dublin soon to retire, there may not be anyone in place to offer the service for quite a while. After explaining his own background, Colm met IWA staff members Paddy and Micheál Saunders to discuss the possibility of continuing the service after their retirement. Following an interview in IWA, Colm not only relearned his own skills, but also received instruction from Paddy and Micheál on carrying out driver assessments and adapting lessons to meet the needs of individual clients.

He says: “When I began providing lessons one of the guys would sit in the back of the car observing and providing advice. Their observations were insightful and indeed were great in helping me build my confidence as a driving

instructor for people with disabilities.”

Now having operated for a number of years with clients from the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) and IWA Clontarf, Colm has made a few observations on the challenges people with disabilities face in learning to drive.

He says: “Every student driver has a unique set of requirements, no matter what their circumstances. However, drivers with a disability require a lot of assessment before they can first take the wheel of a car. The assessment process is very important as everything from the car to the lessons is being tailored to meet their specific needs. I work with the OT (occupational therapist) in carrying out the initial assessment, and I take responsibility for the client once they start driving the car.”

He continues: “In many European countries, the OT would sit in the car with the driving instructor and client during lessons to help the situation on an ongoing basis. However, in Ireland, with an acquired injury the practice generally sees the OT hand over the client to the instructor as the client’s medical treatment and physiotherapy treatment reaches a point where they are physically able to drive. I believe that because the relationship for the purpose of learning to driving evolves from an OT/client to a client/driving instructor dynamic, clients are able to achieve a greater level of independence more quickly than might be the case in other countries.”

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DRIVING

Colm explains that there is high level of psychology involved in learning to drive. “The first rule of becoming a good driver, no matter who you are, is that you have to

want to be a good driver. By and large, I only get clients presented to me that want to learn to drive. Some clients may have had their disability all of their life, and have reached a point where they want to drive later than others. In this instance, there can be many confidence issues to be dealt with. For instance, a client who has been a wheelchair-user all their life would probably not be as confident about the physical machinery of a car as an experienced driver who has acquired a disability and has to relearn.”

“Others may have acquired an injury because of a road accident, and there may be a different set of confidence issues to be tackled for them. There is a large spectrum of clients, but ultimately, the greatest challenge almost always is that of building confidence.”

Colm continues: “To help a client with their confidence, I first assess whether they are lacking confidence in a practical sense, or lacking confidence for possible historical or psychological reasons. Some clients would be nervous getting back on the road, particularly if they have suffered injuries as a result of a car accident.”

“Clients might have problems with traffic awareness, balance, comfort, concentration, or indeed the strength required to operate a vehicle. I assess all of these at an early stage and tailor the lessons to overcome these confidence ‘underminers’ to the extent that before long clients should be able to monitor their own endurance.”

IMPORTANT SKILLS

He cites the ability to react at speed as one of the most important skills to be learnt. “Once a client is confident of their ability to react at speed, they very quickly become aware from a mechanical point of view how good they are in these type of stressful situations. And they generally tend to get a huge confidence boost from this.”

He explains that once he has taken the client through the basics of driving, it is all down to them to get as much practice as possible. “There is no substitute for practice. Driving competence can only be achieved through practice. New and previously experienced drivers might be starting from different points, but they will eventually arrive at the same level as a result of practising. If you do something 100 times and someone asks you to do it 101 times, you know you will be able to do it.”

Colm is one of about 14 instructors in the country who provide driving lessons in adapted vehicles. On the issue of driving tests, he explains that even though the Government has bumped up the number of testers in the country to around 250 by engaging private contractors, this has not resulted in an equivalent increase in the number of testers who can test drivers with a disability. “There were originally about 130 testers before the Government doubled that number by engaging private companies to carry out the tests. However, while people with a disability take the same test as other drivers, experienced test supervisors are the only ones who can conduct tests on them. And while it must be said that a considerable number of supervisors



who can provide the service go beyond the call of duty to provide tests, it is very frustrating that the number of clients waiting for tests is growing because there are not enough qualified testers to meet the demand. It is hard to believe that the Government still hasn't dealt with these issues properly and drivers with a disability are being treated with such disregard by the system.”

The services that Colm Caren and the other specialist instructors around the country provide have been essential to helping many drivers with a disability achieve a greater level of independence. And, while he believes that the system of testing is very biased against drivers with a disability, he also believes that as more and more people seek greater independence through learning to drive, it is only a matter of time before the Government will have to act on the test issue. He concludes by saying: “Over the years I have come to appreciate what driving means to people with a disability, and I only wish that the people in charge of the test system could appreciate what passing a driving test means to our clients.”

COLM CAREN'S TOP SIX DRIVING TIPS

- 1) Give plenty of time to assessing your mechanical options. Get this right and save a lot of time and trouble later on.
- 2) Check allowances and arrangements for car and home setup.
- 3) Give yourself the time to master and be confident with driving in general and your specific equipment.
- 4) Keep your ultimate target in sight, even if you have to put up with health and other interruptions.
- 5) Have faith in yourself and stick to it when the frustration is at its worst – that is exactly the time when you are learning the most.
- 6) Enjoy yourself. It is of no benefit to you to get stressed by any one particular challenge. By the time you complete your lessons you should be both competent and confident about any aspect of the test.

GETTING UP and down stairs



Installing a stair or through-floor lift can enable you to continue using the whole of your home. **Dara Woods** from Assist Ireland looks at the types of lifts available

Once it has become difficult or impossible for someone to get up and down the stairs, they face a choice of options: living downstairs, moving to a bungalow or installing a domestic lift. The first option may not be practical because although it is easy to move a bed downstairs, providing bathroom facilities can be difficult and costly. The second option is also costly and may result in the loss of good friends and neighbours. In many cases, this makes installing a domestic lift the most practical and economical option.

Before deciding on a lift, you should ask the following questions:

- ◆ What is the best long-term solution, bearing in mind that some people's condition will deteriorate over time?
- ◆ Does the lift need to be operated by the user, the carer or both? (Controls are available to allow users and carers to operate the lift but these are easier to have fitted at initial installation)
- ◆ Are there obstacles such as doors or radiators near the staircase that will need to be worked around?
- ◆ How will the lift impact on other users of the stairs?

STAIR LIFTS

Stairlifts are powered lifts mounted on stair-fixed tracks which follow the line of the stairs. Both curved and straight tracks are available, although curved stairlifts are more expensive.

Seated stairlifts are the most common type of stairlift. They are helpful if you are able to walk, but find it difficult to use the stairs. You must be able to sit safely on the seat during transit and transfer on and off at the top and bottom of the stairs. Walking sticks can be carried on the stairlift, but if you use a larger walking aid that will not fit on the stairlift, two aids will be needed – one at the bottom of the stairs and one at the top.

Standing stairlifts can be used if you are able to stand while travelling up and down stairs. They may be useful if the staircase is exceptionally narrow or if you are unable to bend your knee when seated.

Perching stairlifts are similar to standing stairlifts,

although they provide a small amount of additional support underneath the buttocks so the user is transported in a perching position.

Stairlifts with a wheelchair platform eliminate the need for the user to transfer out of their wheelchair and onto the stairlift. Instead, you can wheel straight onto the platform. This type of stairlift takes up a lot of room and many domestic stairs are not wide enough to accommodate it.

Most standard straight stairlifts are powered from the mains and are available with a battery backup in case of power failures. Curved stairlifts run on rechargeable batteries that continually top up from charging points at the top and bottom of the stairs.

If you require an outside stairlift to access an entrance, most stairlifts can be adapted for outside use. The controls are housed at the top and bottom of the stairs in a lockable stainless steel box, and a removable control key is situated on the stairlift.



Curved stairlift

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING A STAIRLIFT

- ◆ Will the user want to stand, sit on a seat or use a wheelchair?
- ◆ Will the standard seat provided be suitable for the user? Most companies provide specialised seats and harnesses if needed.
- ◆ Which direction will the user need to face? Most seats face sideways, but if the user has a stiff knee they may need to face forwards to give them more room.
- ◆ If a standing stairlift is preferred, is there sufficient headroom?
- ◆ Can other members of the household easily use the stairs when the lift is folded up?
- ◆ Will the user be able to operate the standard controls or is an alternative method required?

VERTICAL/THROUGH-FLOOR LIFTS

Vertical, or through-floor lifts are helpful for wheelchair users as they don't need to transfer out of their chair when using them. These lifts need more space than stairlifts and may require structural alterations.

Vertical lifts without a shaft are commonly used in the home as they require less structural alterations than lifts with a shaft. The lift car is partially or fully enclosed and travels up and down a wall-fixed track. In order to travel between floors, a trap door is constructed in the ceiling/floor which automatically opens and closes. When the lift is on the ground floor, the gap in the ceiling is covered by an infill that matches the ceiling of the room, whilst in the upper room the infill blends in with the carpet in that room.

Vertical lifts with a shaft usually require extensive structural alterations. These lifts can carry more than one person at a time.

Look for the following safety features when choosing a vertical/through-floor lift:

- ◆ Emergency lowering via a wind-down handle or a battery operated back-up system.
- ◆ An in-car alarm or telephone to call for help.
- ◆ An automatic door-locking mechanism when the door shuts.
- ◆ Smoke and fire detection monitors within the car which will automatically take the car away from the fire and seal the ceiling aperture.
- ◆ Sensors underneath the car to detect any objects which could possibly block its path.

SHORT-RISE LIFTS

Fixed short-rise lifts can be used indoors or outdoors where a change in level occurs, e.g. at a front step or in a split-level hallway. These lifts enable the wheelchair user to propel directly onto the platform and move between levels

without assistance. They are useful in confined spaces where the installation of a ramp is not possible.

Mobile/portable short-rise lifts may be useful for overcoming a small change in level which does not need to be accessed very often, e.g. into the garden, garage. These lifts may be operated electrically or manually and are accessed via a ramp.

STAIRCLIMBERS

Mobile stairclimbers are operated by a carer and are designed to climb up and down a flight of stairs. They are not attached to the staircase and can be transported and used on different staircases. They are available as a seated device which the user transfers into or as an attachment which fits onto a standard manual or powered wheelchair. Some stairclimbers have caterpillar tracks that grip the stairs and others have a wheel cluster which rotates to transport the user up or down. There are also some powered wheelchairs with stair climbing features.

STAIR RAILS

Most staircases have a handrail on one side although this may not extend the full length of the stairs. Some shops sell handrails that will extend the existing handrail all the way along the staircase. Adding a handrail to the other side of the staircase will also provide more support. You can purchase newel rails, which are designed to turn through 90° around the newel post (the upright post of the stair banister). They provide a continuous grip as the user reaches the bottom or top of the stairs and turns the corner.

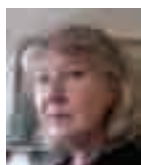
Once you've found the right solution for your situation, and been through the installation process, don't forget that you will need to get any type of lift serviced regularly. Most major companies guarantee their stairlifts for one year. After this, it is recommended that they are inspected every six months and serviced annually.



assistireland.ie



autumn colours



Helen Rock suggests plants that will breathe life into your garden, adding to the pleasures of gardening at this mellow and fruitful time of the year

Let's hope that by the time you read this, we'll all be basking in the middle of a prolonged Indian summer, like last year's. But as I write this, it's already past the middle of August and still raining enthusiastically, to put it mildly. The garden here is unapproachable, literally. If you go outside to do anything – even to pick a few juicy Victoria plums that have magically ripened without sun, or to pluck a handful of lush, nourishing parsley – you get soaked through to the skin.

If there's one lesson to be learned from this, it's the necessity of making garden paths substantially wider than is the current norm in garden designs. An absolute minimum width of 1.2m (4ft) would suit everybody and still allow plants to "lean" over a bit, to soften the path's hard edges and create a more naturalistic garden picture where needed. While on the subject of designing paths, the aim should be to enable a person to progress comfortably through the garden and return to their starting point, without ever having to turn back and retrace their journey.

THE GARDEN IN AUTUMN

This is a mellow and fruitful time of year in the garden, a golden time of ripening apples, rich jewel colours and evocative scents. But we mustn't rest on our laurels;

there's still plenty of pleasant work to be done, before the leaves fall in earnest. Tidying up is a constant now, but there's no need to be too tidy. Many plants will have grown into each other by September, and that can look fine and relaxed, like the season itself. It's only those remains that you find ugly and discordant that need to be removed to the compost heap.

A full list of plants that could breathe new life into your garden from August until the first frosts would fill a large book. Among the following you will find some great treasures and something desirable to suit all tastes and situations.

First there are the shimmering ornamental grasses, which make such perfect partners for late perennials and possess a lovely see-through quality. Look out for the fluffy, irresistibly tactile *Pennisetum*, and for varieties of *Molinia*, *Calamagrostis*, *Miscanthus* and *Stipa*. All of these grasses look good with the tall purple *Verbena bonariensis*, which helpfully seeds itself around from year to year in unexpected but well-chosen places.

I cannot speak too highly of the tall white Japanese Anemone called 'Honorine Jobert'. For such a paragon of virtue, this marvellous plant is surprisingly easy to grow and completely trouble-free. After an initial sulk after planting, it takes off and will colonise the most unpromising places, lighting up the driest and darkest corners. Along with its pink cousin, which is not quite as pretty, it flowers non-stop from July to the frosts. If you leave it standing over winter, the seedheads become fluffy and are then carried away by foraging songbirds, who use them to line their nests in spring.

White shows up very well in the dusk too, and if there's a scent, so much the better. Those flowers that only give up their perfume at night are particularly valuable and we should be grateful over the coming weeks to the tobacco plant, *Nicotiana sylvestris*. The best of all its



The walled organic fruit, veg and herb garden at the Botanic Gardens. Photo by Peter Wyse-Jackson, National Botanic Gardens

tribe, its scent at night turns any patch into a place of magic and it shines bright on all but the darkest nights. Other very handsome white flowers that look well now include *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Anabelle' and a very good rose called 'Sander's White', which flowers all season.

Along with bamboos and grasses, the wandflower *Dierama pulcherrima*, is amazingly graceful in the way it moves, constantly swaying and rustling in the slightest breeze. The Canna Lilies and the Gingers (varieties of *Hedychium* are much prized for autumn, particularly for their good foliage, is large and often striped. However, many of these are not reliably hardy and have to be moved under shelter during the coldest months. Late flowering 'red hot pokers', such as the *Kniphofia rooperi*, make a good vertical mark among more rounded subjects and can be kept handsome by regular deadheading of the spent stems.

Salvias, in pure blues, reds, purples and pinks abound at this time and will take you right through to December, barring a heavy frost. Angel's Trumpets, formerly known botanically as *Datura* but now renamed *Brugsmansia*, can be pretty dramatic now. Sizzling colours can be supplied by dahlias. The single ones rather than the doubles are fully fashionable again after a period in the wilderness and quite easy to find these days already potted up and ready to go.

Other stars of autumn include *Rudbeckia*, *Echinacea*, late *Crocsmia*, Asters (aka Michaelmas Daisies), *Solidago* (Goldenrod), *Helianthemum*, *Schizostylis* (particularly *S. coccinea major*) and, though you might not think it, certain productive grape vines. These climbers, if chosen for hardiness and given a south or south-west facing wall in a sheltered spot, will bear prolific fruit which can be as sweet as muscatel – and its leaves will turn the most glorious autumn colours imaginable.

PLACES TO VISIT

Ireland's world-famous Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin in Dublin 9 is open every day except Christmas Day and admission is free. One hot Sunday this June, the former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD officially opened the Gardens' newest attraction, a lovely walled fruit, veg and herb garden which is run on strictly organic principles, using compost made on site. Everybody interested in growing to eat should pay a visit and learn from it.

WINTER-FLOWERING BULBS

Autumn is the great bulb-planting time and as everybody probably knows by now, daffodils and narcissi should be planted as soon as they hit the shops. That said, spare a thought for the sweet little winter-flowering bulbs, such as *Cyclamen coum*, the *reticulata* irises, snowdrops and earli-



"Tidying up is a constant now, but there's no need to be too tidy. Many plants will have grown into each other by September, and that can look fine and relaxed, like the season itself"

est crocus. These look absolutely fabulous in containers, especially in close-up on windowsills or placed where you can see them from the doors and windows of the house.

Sometimes, if the pot or container is small or manageable enough, I bring them indoors for their scent and to admire their beauty up really close. The best time to bring them in is just as their flower buds are showing colour.

Then they open swiftly in the warmth of the house and can be admired and enjoyed by all. Remember that bulbs planted closer to the surface of the compost in pots will flower earlier than the same bulbs planted deeper. This is useful to prolong a particular display.

AUTUMN LEAVES

Don't worry too much about fallen leaves at this early stage of the season (except on grass where they shouldn't be allowed linger too

long). Instead, wait for the winds to blow them into corners, where it's easier to gather them up. Larger leaves that are obviously smothering small, vulnerable plants will have to be scooped up by hand. Any remaining by the time the first hellebores start flowering and the first spring bulbs show their little noses above ground, can be cleared away as the need arises. All fallen leaves can be stored separately until transformed into lovely leaf mould. Known as 'gardener's gold', it makes an invaluable addition to homemade potting composts.



ANGEL DAY 2008

Kathleen Mc Loughlin, CEO, encourages everyone to get involved in Angel Day 2008 on 14th November



Our annual fundraising campaign, Angel Day, is drawing near, and once again I find myself in the position of asking for your support. This campaign is our largest fundraising event and generates funds to provide essential resources to our members.

It is a day when everyone in the association unites to lend their support to the fundraising efforts, ensuring that we really get our message out there and raise as much as we possibly can.

As the economy worsens, our funding sources are getting tighter and it is going to be particularly important to generate public support. We have come so far in terms of our services; I am determined that we will hold this ground and

continue to improve the lives of people with disabilities. It's going to be a challenge but I am optimistic that, with your support, we will be able to reach our Angel Campaign target of €500,000.

This year, as well as a range of Angel pins retailing at €2.00 each, we have Angel pencils – also retailing at €2.00.

We are looking for volunteers who are prepared to sell Angels in their local area, or maybe just sell a box among their friends. Whatever time you can offer, we will be able to keep you busy! Giving your time will help our campaign immensely and, hopefully, you'll have fun too.

If you would like to find out more about getting involved, please get in touch with our Fundraising Department on 01 818 6418.



**ANGEL DAY
FRIDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2008**

We are seeking your support to help in raising €500,000 to make 2008 our most successful Angel Day ever. If you are interested in joining our team, please contact our Fundraising Team: Tel: 01 818 6418 Email: angels@iwa.ie

ACHIEVEMENTS

ANN MARIE HEALY

Mayo member Ann Marie Healy was awarded the title 'Erris Person of the Year' earlier this year. Ann Marie was honoured for working on behalf of people with disabilities in her native Co Mayo. The awards were made to three people, including Ann Marie, for their outstanding achievements. The event, held in association with the Belmullet/Erris Lions Club and sponsored by the Western People, took place in the Broadhaven Bay Hotel. Ann Marie's parents, fourteen brothers and sisters and her partner helped celebrate her wonderful achievement. We will be interviewing Ann Marie in our next issue.



Derek Smith, member and exhibitor



Pauline Langan and Leo Boyd, art teachers in Clontarf ROC

SUNSHINE AND HARMONY EXHIBITION

An art group made up of members of Clontarf Resource and Outreach Centre recently held an exhibition of their work in The Axis, Ballymun. Titled 'Sunshine and Harmony.' This was the fifth exhibition undertaken by the group which was set up through one of the FÁS Community Employment Schemes in 2004. The exhibition showcased projects based around short film, video, digital story telling, photography and paintings in oil, water colour, acrylic and mixed media.



'Purple Mountain' by member Ann Montgomery



Ann Marie Healy at the Erris Person of the Year Award with her parents Mary Kate and Seamus Healy

FUNDRAISERS

ROSE OF TRALEE CHOOSES IWA AS 2008 CHARITY

The Rose of Tralee festival committee chose the Irish Wheelchair Association as its charity for 2008. Aoife Kelly, the Tipperary Rose, was crowned the 2008 Rose and will be an ambassador for IWA during her reign. The fashion show fundraiser held during the festival raised €5,000 and a huge thank you goes to those who worked tirelessly to make the event such a success. The event was well supported by local shops, Brown Thomas (Cork) and Suit Distributors. A Rose of Tralee golf classic was held the following day and it too was a great success, raising further funds for IWA.



2007 Rose of Tralee Lisa Murtagh and Sharon McGarry, IWA fundraiser



Above: Terry O'Brien, IWA Tralee, and his wife Teresa (left) with Sharon McGarry



Aoife Kelly, 2008 Rose, and compere Ray D'Arcy

EVENTS



Above: Eileen O'Mahony, President of IWA, presents flowers to the Lord Mayor, Eibhlin Byrne



Left: Kay's brothers and sisters with Kathleen Mc Loughlin, CEO, Eileen O'Mahony, President, Gerry McMahon, Chairperson with Kay's fellow founder member Oliver Murphy

OPENING OF KAY HAYES TRAINING CENTRE

The newly elected Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Eibhlin Byrne, officially opened IWA's Kay Hayes Training Centre on Friday 11th July. The centre provides dedicated training facilities for staff involved in the delivery of specialised services to people with disabilities. The centre is named after one of IWA's founder members, Kay Hayes, who passed away in February this year.

Speaking at the event, the Lord Mayor said, "I am sure that Kay would be very proud to know that the people who are trained in this centre will leave here with new or enhanced skills and bring those skills to bear in supporting individuals with disabilities right across Ireland."

The event was attended by many of Kay's brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, and grandnieces and grandnephews.

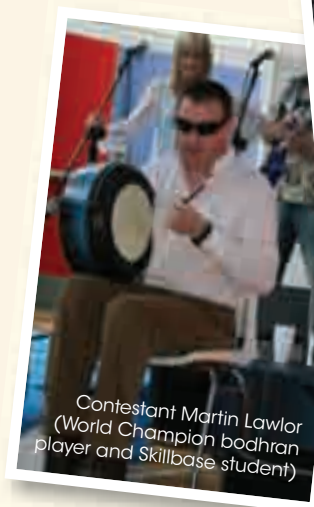
DUBLIN NORTH EAST FUN DAY

A Dublin North East Fun Day took place in Clontarf on Friday 20th June and was attended by staff and members from all the IWA Resource and Outreach Centres in the Dublin North East Region. The Fun Day consisted of many activities including sports, bingo, quizzes, beauty treatments, Nintendo Wii games and relaxation therapy. A barbeque was arranged for lunch, and as the day was fortunate to have glorious sunshine from start to finish, a traditional ice-cream van provided tasty ice cream cones for all who attended.

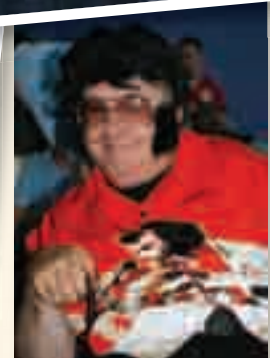
The highlight of the Fun Day occurred after lunch when the many IWA Resource and Outreach Centres and the Carmel Fallon Holiday Centre competed in an 'IWA X-Factor' competition. The judges were 'Chris Cowell', 'Mildred Minogue' and 'Anne Osbourne'.

Sincere thanks are extended to all who donated prizes, hampers and sponsored supplies for the day. A special 'thank you' to Ulster Bank, George's Quay, Dublin, for their generous donation which funded the purchase of the barbeque equipment.

Right: Judges at the fun day were Chris Hoey and Anne Lowry (aka Simon Cowell and Sharon Osborne)



Contestant Martin Lawlor (World Champion bodhran player and Skillbase student)



Right: Elvis was in the house! Tony McNally, service user Clontarf ROC

ADVANTAGE WHEELCHAIR TENNIS



30-year-old Garreth Greene has been playing various sports all his life. He tells Kiara Lynch how last summer he was inspired to try something new – wheelchair tennis

How did you get involved in sports?

When I first started using a wheelchair full time, I was seven years old. My parents wanted me to keep playing sport, so they introduced me to IWA Sport. First, I joined IWA Juniors and started out training for track and field, then when I was nine I started playing basketball. I also got involved in table tennis for a couple of years. I gave up basketball at 26, as I was working full-time and I just couldn't give the commitment required.

How did you get into wheelchair tennis?

I had tried tennis with a friend a handful of times but I wasn't up to much and really needed direction. I heard Mark Barry (IWA Sports Development Officer) had arranged training once a week in Carrickmines Tennis Club during the summer months. I went down and I loved it... two weeks later I was playing in the Irish Open!

Wow! How did you get on?

Even though it all happened very quickly I felt like a better player for entering. I didn't do too badly. There were about seven others in my singles section and I came fourth, and out of four doubles teams, we came third. This year, I wasn't so happy with my performance at the Irish Open but I'm already training hard for the Belfast Open.

Do you need a specialised chair?

Starting off most people use their everyday wheelchairs but ideally you'd be working towards getting a specialised tennis wheelchair. At the moment I'm using my basketball wheelchair. Customised tennis wheelchairs are lightweight and agile, and after a few sets of sprinting for returns, that can make all the difference! A customised wheelchair is also balanced for your optimum posture position while taking shots. The cost varies from €2,500 up to €4,000 depending on your specification.



Gareth (right back) playing doubles at the Open

What are the benefits of wheelchair tennis?

Health is one part – my upper body strength is constantly improving, as I need to be able to push quickly to return shots while holding my racket. I usually train twice a week for two hours, and more coming up to a competition. I think the social part is equally important – it's a great social outlet, training with friends, playing in competitions and meeting new people. Another great benefit is because wheelchair tennis and able-bodied tennis are so similar you can play against able-bodied opponents and on any court.

To find out more about classes in Carrickmines Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club, contact Mark Barry, IWA Sports, on 01 818 6476, 087 984 2384 or email mark.barry@iwa.ie

WHEELCHAIR TENNIS OPEN 2008

The Irish National Wheelchair Tennis Open was run in association with Tennis Ireland and sponsored by INVACARE Ireland. Results were as follows:

Division B Doubles Runners up – Jean Daly (Cork) & Patrick O'Neill (Kilkenny)

Division B Doubles Champions – Robert Winstanley (Eng) & Vince Rudolph (Eng)

Division A Doubles Runners up – Mark Barry (Dublin) & Alex Krol (Eng)

Division A Doubles Champions – Stafford Lynn (Antrim) & Ivor Jess (Antrim)

Division B Singles Runner up – Phillip Gibson (Dublin)

Division B Singles Champion – Vince Rudolph

Division A Singles Runner up – Ivor Jess

Division A Singles Champion – Stafford Lynn

This is Stafford Lynn's second time as National Champion. As well as the above, new players to look out for are Mark Rohan (Westmeath), Pat O'Neill (Kilkenny) and Garreth Greene (Dublin).

Win a weekend break IN HARVEY'S POINT HOTEL



Win a luxury weekend break in Harvey's Point Hotel, Co Donegal consisting of two nights' accommodation in one of the plush and elegant suites at the hotel. Enjoy a delicious buffet breakfast overlooking the still waters of Lough Eske each morning and one candle-lit evening meal for two people in the AA Rosette restaurant.

Harvey's Point Hotel, Lough Eske

Donegal Town, Co Donegal

Tel: 074 972 2208 www.harveyspoint.com

HOW TO ENTER

Send a postcard with your full name and address to:
Harvey's Point Hotel weekend away competition
Spokeout, Irish Wheelchair Association

Blackheath Drive

Clontarf, Dublin 3

Closing date – Friday 24th October 2008. Winner will be notified by post and announced in the winter issue of Spokeout.

Crossword

Following several requests from readers, we are introducing a regular crossword. To be in with a chance of winning one of three annual subscriptions to *House & Home* magazine, simply send your completed crossword to: Spokeout Crossword, Irish Wheelchair Association, Clontarf, Dublin 3. Correct entries will be entered into a draw on Friday 24th October 2008 and three winners drawn.

Crossword No. 1 by Gordius.

Across

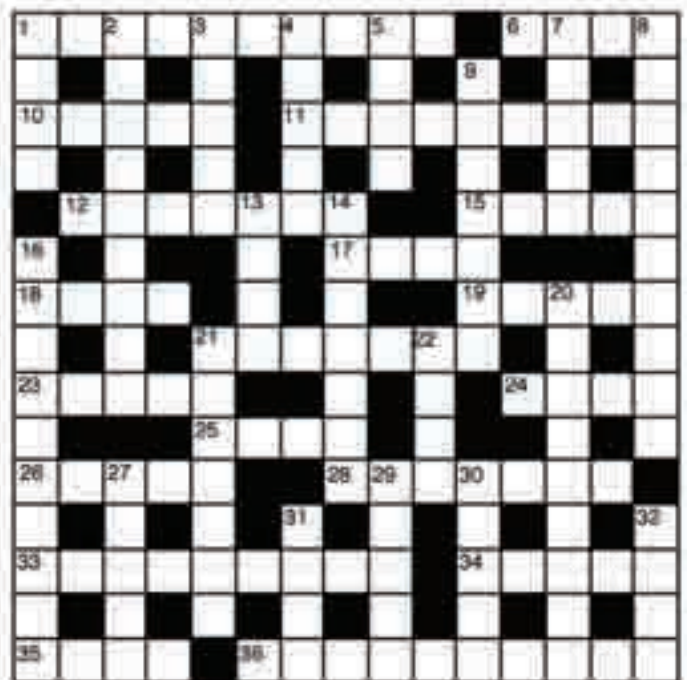
- 1 and 10 across. Global sporting event for elite athletes. (10,5)
- 6. Young cow. (4)
- 10. See 1 across.
- 11. New York venue for the 2007 Disabled Sailing World Championships. (9)
- 12. Breathing tube used when swimming just below the surface of the water. (7)
- 15. The nest of 23 across. (5)
- 17. As always, Vere is confused. (4)
- 18. If you take part in this, there'll be questions asked! (4)
- 19. Savoury jelly. (5)
- 21. Water tank. (7)
- 23. Large bird of prey. (5)
- 24. Verifiable. (4)
- 25. Cuticle. (4)
- 26. Freshwater fish. (5)
- 28. Spire. (7)

33. Meddle. (9)

- 34. Orated about part of the wheel. (5)
- 35. Irish athletes will compete in how many sports in the 1 across this year? (4)
- 36. Made or adapted to individual specifications. (10)

Down

- 1. A peg may be the makings of part of the book. (4)
- 2. Making sure someone doesn't forget. (9)
- 3. Powerful light beam used in certain types of surgery. (5)
- 4. Fictional detective, played by the late John Thaw. (5)
- 5. 2.4 cm. (4)
- 7. Star of stage or screen. (5)
- 8. It's not very realistic to deter chaff like this. (3-7)
- 9. One of great experience. (7)



- 13. Flightless bird associated with New Zealand. (4)
- 14. Legumes, with a silent L. (7)
- 16. Eilish Byrne's event in the 1 across. (10)
- 20. Might Paris loan out a programme to get more people involved in sport? (9)
- 21. A hundred years. (7)
- 22. Venue for the first 1 across. (4)

- 27. Frequently. (5)
- 29. Nice surprise provided by the Mad 'Atter. (5)
- 30. The English Derby is run here. (5)
- 31. South American country. (4)
- 32. Curve. (4)

YOUR VIEWS **Got something to say? Write to us at Spokeout, Irish Wheelchair Association, Blackheath Drive, Clontarf, Dublin 3**

INACCESSIBLE POLLING STATION

Dear Editor

I regret that I find it necessary once again to inform you and your readers of the unacceptable access difficulties I experienced on polling day at St Kevin's School Polling Station in Sallynoggin.

On this occasion, well in advance of polling day, I contacted the returning officer's office to enquire about access to the polling station. In response to my enquiry, I received a letter from the returning officer assuring me that I should not encounter any difficulties. He stated that his contractors had examined the site and declared it "suitable for wheelchair access". The letter went on to advise that there were three entrances "which the school has informed us have been used by people using wheelchairs," and continued, "The ramps are the standard measurements, as are the doors."

Polling day arrived. After negotiating very difficult new pavements en-route, I made it to the polling station, where

I was more than surprised to find that normal access was not possible. There were no ramps at the front entrance or at either of the side doors. I was then advised by the polling officer on duty that it would be necessary for me to go back out through the main gate and enter by a gate further up the street where I would find an entrance at the back of the building. I declined this option because there were road works on the street in question creating a difficult terrain. I left without being able to cast my vote. I wonder how many other people were denied suitable access.

Yours sincerely,

GN Belton, Sallynoggin, Co Dublin

If you have experienced access issues with your local polling station, please contact advocacy@iwa.ie

The views expressed on this page do not necessarily represent the views of IWA

small ads

If you have an item for sale, a holiday contact or a personal advert, please send approx 20 words to Small ads, Spokeout, IWA, Blackheath Drive, Clontarf, Dublin 3. Small ads are free-of-charge to members. Adverts for accessible holiday accommodation are €20.00 (cheques or postal orders payable to IWA Ltd).

Cars and accessories

Hyundai Trajet GLS 2i 2006 Seven seater, MPV, leather interior, excellent condition, 32,000 miles. €19,500 ono. Tel: 087 205 2468

Nissan Serena 1.6 SLX petrol 1998 Excellent condition, one owner, seven seater, 48,000 miles, was tax exempt. €5,000 ono. Tel: 01 235 0658

Toyota Yaris 2002 Automatic, passenger swivel seat, recently serviced, four new tyres and battery. €7,950. Tel: 086 126 0856

Fiat Scudo Combi 1.9TD 1999 Suit one passenger using a wheelchair, clamping system included. €2,200 ono. Tel: 086 343 7166

Nissan Micra 1.2 2004 Automatic,

four-door, recent service. €5,500. Tel: 087 633 2748

Renault Extra 1997 Remote controlled ramp to rear, 81,000 miles. €1,500. Tel: 087 698 8869

Wheelchairs, scooters and adaptive equipment

Bedroom items Adjustamatic single bed, adjustable bed table, locker, footstool, folding wheelchair, flatpack wardrobe. €1,500. Collection required. Tel: 086 107 0749 (Co Dublin)

Mobility scooter Electric, very good condition, recently serviced. Cost €2,500. Sell €700 ono. Tel: 01 298 8060

Carony car seat Detachable

base for complete independence. Armrests and adjustable back. Best offer. Tel: 086 385 9274 (West of Ireland)

Mobility Scooter CTM As new, used three times, suitable for air and sea travel. Cost €1,350. Sell €900. Tel: 01 280 9563

Basil Brig-Ayd Super Integral Hoist Fitted to vehicle last October but never used. Tel: 087 649 1431

Basketball chair RGK Interceptor (white & blue) with 25" Spinergy's, double anti-slip & offensive rail, seat 14" w x 15" d, 4 years old, great condition. €1,500. Tel: 086 885 3438

Stairlift Free to good home. Tel: 01 833 3359 (Dublin)

New telephone support service for people living alone in the Bray area

A new telephone support service called 'HOMELink' was launched in May to respond to the social difficulties that people may experience when living alone. The confidential service is free-of-charge and operates in Bray, Co Wicklow.

Lynda Piper-Roche of HOMELink explained how the service works: "Our members will receive a telephone call, at a pre-arranged time, anything from one to five days a week. We provide this call so that we can chat with our members, check on their well-being, remind them of any upcoming appointments, and invite them to our social events."

"The call will also act as a link to

other service providers, such as social services, housing and advice services. For example, if a member wants to find out about services such as home help, meals on wheels, etc, we can put them in touch or point them in the right direction to avail of services that they may be eligible for."

The service can also provide reassurance for people. "In the event of there being no answer, we will advise a contact person (keyholder), and, if necessary, we will contact the emergency services."

Membership is growing steadily. Anyone interested in the service should provide their contact details, together with the contact details of



Lynda Piper-Roche

another contact person/key holder (this can be a neighbour, friend, or relative).

HOMELink, APC Building, Southern Cross Business Park, Boghall Road, Bray, Co Wicklow. Tel: 01 201 4473. Email: homelinkbray@eircom.net

LUCAN DISABILITY ACTION GROUP OFFERS RANGE OF SERVICES



One of LDAG's accessible Fiat Scudo vans, which is available for members to borrow

Lucan Disability Action Group (LDAG) aims to help people with disabilities to live independently and participate in social and economic life.

As well as providing a forum for people with disabilities, LDAG provides the following services:

- ◆ An accessible door-to-door transport service
- ◆ Accessible cars for members to borrow
- ◆ Accessibility audits
- ◆ Personal assistants and note-takers for students with disabilities in third level education
- ◆ Light maintenance work such as painting, gardening and minor DIY.

LDAG currently has over 280 members from Ballyfermot, Blanchardstown, Castleknock, Celbridge, Clondalkin, Clonsilla, Crumlin, Drimnagh, Finglas, Kilcock, Kimmage, Leixlip, Lucan, Maynooth, Palmerstown and Tallaght. Membership of LDAG is free and the organisation welcomes new members.

If you would like to become a member of LDAG or would like further information on services, please contact: Lucan Disability Action Group, Unit 24 Hills Industrial Estate, Lucan, Co Dublin.
Tel: 01 610 0475. Email: info@ldag.ie
Web: www.ldag.ie

Integrated dance classes

Would you like to experience integrated dance for the first time? A workshop, starting 24th September, and every Wednesday for ten weeks from 6.30 - 8pm in Firkin Crane, Cork City, is open to people with and without a physical disability. No previous dance experience is required. For more details please contact Rhona. Tel: 086 067 9101. Email: integrateddance@yahoo.ie

Disabled drivers and passengers using M50 eFlow

eFlow is a new system of barrier-free tolls on the M50. Only cars registered as tax exempt, including driver and passenger vehicles, are eligible. Vehicle registrations are checked automatically against the vehicle registration details and recognised as being tax exempt, meaning that no bill will be posted out. In the unlikely event that you are on this scheme and receive a bill, ring eFlow on 1890 501 050 and they will be happy to assist. The eFlow system operates on the M50 only.