



Mugging on Lucan footbridge, perpetrators still at large

by Bairbre Ní Bhraonáin

THREE muggers who stole from a local woman crossing the footbridge going from Tesco into Lucan village last weekend remain at large.

The woman was accosted by three teenage boys at 2pm last Saturday (18th March) as she crossed the bridge. The three boys then mugged her and ran off.

Though the mugging was reported and a clear description given of the three youths, the muggers have not been caught and are still at large.

Local people are advised to be extra vigilant now when crossing that footbridge.

A Garda spokesperson told Liffey Champion: "Gardaí in Lucan are investigating a theft from person on the 18/03/17 at approximately 2pm.

"The incident occurred on Doddsboro Footbridge, Lucan. No arrests have been made."

Escalation policy in place at Naas General Hospital due to high admissions

by Bairbre Ní Bhraonáin

A WARNING escalation notice issued by Naas General Hospital last week is still in place this week.

The escalation policy was put in place due to the hospital's admission numbers reaching a critical level.

The hospital advised all patients to consult their GPs if possible rather than showing up at the emergency department.

The HSE has instigated an Escalation Policy at the hospital due to high levels of attendances and admissions.

A spokesperson for Naas General Hospital said: "Patients attending the ED (Emergency Department) at this time may experience some delays.

"In order to assist us we are requesting that patients in the first instance, consider using their GP or K-Doc out of hours services for medical assessment, where possible.

"The situation will be reviewed on an ongoing basis."

No 'Operation Surround' drink driving initiative for north Kildare

by Bairbre Ní Bhraonáin

WHILE the gardaí's drink-driving campaign Operation Surround saw four people in south Kildare arrested, no plans exist to introduce a similar initiative in the north of the county.

Gardaí in Leixlip Garda Station said however, that there are three checkpoints set up for every shift done in the area.

Therefore drink-driving offenders in north Kildare don't get off the hook when it comes to driving under the influence.

Operation Surround set up 22 checkpoints in February which netted two car seizures for no insurance and 25 fixed charge notices for traffic offences.

The initiative, according to gardaí, involves a series of high vis MAT (Mandatory Alcohol Testing) checkpoints carried out simultaneously at key locations.

The operation was led by Traffic units in Naas and Athy and was supported by uniformed gardaí attached to Monasterevin, Kildare and Newbridge stations along with regional armed support and local detective units.

The object of Operation Surround checkpoints is to target and intercept drivers who are under the influence of alcohol by mandatory testing.

Hospitals told: 'Give Cancer patients a break'

by Bairbre Ní Bhraonáin

THE Irish Cancer Society and local politicians are calling on Naas and Tallaght hospitals to waive parking fees for cancer patients.

The Irish Cancer Society is calling for a moratorium on cancer patients' parking charges in Naas General Hospital.

Local councillors are also adding their voices to the call for not only Naas General Hospital to cut its parking fees but also for Tallaght hospital to do the same.

The Cancer Society has called the €4.80 for four hours parking at the hospital 'crippling' for patients and their families. Last December, a national petition of 3,000 signatures was part of a campaign to get hospitals to waive parking charges for cancer patients. Despite this campaign, no hospital in Ireland has changed its parking pricing policy for these patients.

Last year, Naas General Hospital raised €137,000 from parking fees, a rise of €10,00 on last year.

At the end of February, the Irish Cancer Society contacted every hospital that provides cancer treatment in Ireland and found no difference between the 2016 and 2017 rates.

Parking fees are big business and according to the Irish Cancer Society, last year, hospitals offering cancer treatment made almost €18.75 million in car parking fees. This figure represented a rise of €4 million on the previous year.

Donal Buggy, Head of Services and Advocacy at the Irish Cancer Society said:

"Patients are telling us that they can't cope with the cost of parking but the hospitals aren't listening.

"We are overwhelmed by the huge public reaction to our campaign to 'park the charges' for cancer patients.

"This demonstrates the breadth of support for free parking for people being treated for cancer,

something that affects thousands of people every day.

"We want politicians and the HSE to acknowledge the financial impact of hospital parking on families and we need to see real action to address it."

In a survey of car parking across the country, the Society found that a four hour stay in hospitals in Leinster (excluding Dublin), cost €5.20. Naas General Hospital came in just behind at €4.80 for the same period of time.

Cllr Ruth Nolan said:

"Cancer patients are paying up to €63 a week in car parking charges. This is a huge financial burden on patients and their families. At the request of the Irish Cancer Society I will be putting a motion down at the April Council meeting asking SDCC to write to Tallaght Hospital on this issue."

Cllr Nolan's motion asks that the council write to the management of Tallaght Hospital to ensure free parking for cancer patients.

Individual hospitals have the authority to abolish charges for cancer patients and a number of hospitals around the country including Mayo General, Portlinculla and Wexford General have arrangements in place that mean cancer patients go free.

Mr Buggy said: "Discretion is required and we are asking hospitals to adopt practices currently in place at hospitals such as St. Luke's, Rathgar, where anyone undergoing chemotherapy and radiotherapy is allowed free parking."

Because there is no national policy on hospital parking aside from maximum stay limits, 'the HSE needs put in place a policy that supports cancer patients' said Mr Buggy.

A spokesperson for Tallaght Hospital Tallaght Hospital, inclusive of the National Children's Hos-

pital at Tallaght Hospital, said:

"There are two options available to alleviate the financial burden on visitors / patients who must attend Tallaght Hospital frequently: Flexible daily passes for €12.50 which enable drivers to enter and exit multiple times in one day and a €25 pass, which enables visitors / patients to enter the car park six times within a three month period."

The Irish Cancer Society has written to all Kildare County Councillors and asked them to put down motions at council meetings next week for hospitals to introduce free parking for cancer patients.

Kildare councillor Thomas Redmond (SF) said:

"I'm on the Regional Health forum and I'll definitely bring up the waiving of parking fees for cancer patients and patients getting dialysis at the next meeting in May.

"I worked in the HSE for 10 years and my wife still works there. I also worked in Tallaght hospital so I've seen what these patients have to go through."

Cllr Vicki Casserly (FG) told Liffey Champion that she currently has a motion tabled for the next HSE Dublin mid Leinster regional health forum in May.

The motion calls on the HSE to examine and reduce the high cost of car parking in many public hospitals, especially for patients with long term illness. It most definitely places financial burden. Cllr Casserly stated: "We attend for weekly infusions and it is something you certainly have to budget for. Crumlin have made improvements with the addition of some free accessible parking spaces but I think more needs to be done for extremely regular patients to ease the burden."

Naas General Hospital had not commented at the time of going to print.



(l-r) President of Galway Cycle society, Samantha Ward, NUI Maynooth president Philip Nolan, Kathryn Thomas and Kerrie Leonard, former patient of NRH paediatric unit which has been chosen as the beneficiary of this year's Galway Cycle, taken at the event launch with some of this year's participants on 11th March at NUIM.

Kathryn Thomas launches 30th Galway Cycle in Maynooth

by Kate Donoghue

TELEVISION presenter Kathryn Thomas helped students and staff of Maynooth University to launch the 30th annual Galway Cycle last Saturday (11th March).

Ms Thomas arrived just as the cycling society returned from a 90km cycle which was part of their training for the yearly charity event.

On 7th April, in excess of 200 cyclists will make the 200km journey to Galway and then return on the 9th, a roundtrip of 400km.

This year, the chosen charity to benefit from the cycle is the paediatric unit in the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) in Dún Laoghaire.

"This year NRH was quite close to us as a group because one of our own, Mark Nugent, had an accident back in April last year," said president of the Cycle Society Samantha Ward.

"We have a screening system where all members of the society can nominate a charity. NRH were put forward as one of the charities and they were chosen."

To date, Galway Cycle has raised around €1.5 million for various charities, with an emphasis on those that help children.

"There will be 200 plus cyclists going to Galway so it takes a lot of work," said Ms Ward.

"We have a rigorous training programme every week on Saturdays and Sundays. It's go, go, go."

On Friday 7th April, the cyclists will set off for Galway from Maynooth. They will spend Saturday fundraising in Galway and cycle back on Sunday 9th April.

"We aim to get back into Maynooth around half five/six o'clock on the Sunday. Brady's in Maynooth is one of our sponsors and they'll welcome us in.

"We'll have a bit of a celebration and, this year being the 30th year, there will hopefully be a few surprises when we come home."

Also at the launch were university president, Professor Philip Nolan, Martin Rocks, who has completed all 29 Galway Cycles to date, and Kerrie Leonard, a patient representative from NRH.