

Peer wants e-scooter lessons to be learnt in NI

ULSTER Unionist peer Lord Rogan of Lower Iveagh has called on Stormont politicians and officials to learn lessons from the ongoing trial of e-scooters in Great Britain, before they are permitted on Northern Ireland's roads and cycle lanes.

Speaking in a House of Lords debate, Lord Rogan queried how the police could differentiate between rental e-scooters – which are being used in the trial – and privately-owned e-scooters, which remain illegal on public highways in England, Scotland and Wales.

He said: "Registration plates would seem to be the obvious solution, but this was rejected by the Department for Transport."

Lord Rogan welcomed the requirement for riders to hold a full or provisional car, motorcycle or moped licence.

"But I am less reassured by the absence of any form of training before they take to the roads," he said.

"Given the nature of the trial scheme, it should be straightforward for registered renters to either provide a short practical demonstration or require riders to show that they can safely use an e-scooter before being unleashed."

The Ulster Unionist peer said he was in favour of cycle helmets being made compulsory for riders, rather than voluntary as at present.

And he urged the Government to keep the e-scooter upper weight limit of 55kg under active review in the expectation that it could be reduced "as technology improves and batteries get smaller".

Calling on Ministers to take onboard the safety concerns he and other peers had raised, Lord Rogan added: "I hope that policymakers are listening in Northern Ireland where e-scooters are still not allowed on public highways, but could make an appearance before too long."

# Award shortlisting for Edenderry Primary School 'tree detectives'

EDENDERRY PS's young 'tree detectives' have been shortlisted for a prestigious Times Educational Supplement (TES) award.

It comes on the strength of their involvement in a European-wide project that saw them study bud growth with partner schools.

Alarming, due to climate change, the international study found that bud growth is now happening earlier than the historical average in each of the participating countries.

This led the pupils and their enthusiastic teacher and international co-ordinator, David Smith, to embark on a lovely initiative to do their bit for the environment – they decided to plant 100 saplings within the grounds of the school, with more to be planted at a later date.

"I entered the TES awards for the first time this year using my experience in eTwinning," David explained. "The 'Tree Detectives Around Europe' project harnesses a number of technology tools, both online and traditional.

"Aside from the eTwinning platform, we used various web tools and a very powerful 'iNaturalist' app which allows our Edenderry Ps 'tree detectives' to confirm the identity of tree species and locate our targeted trees on an interactive European map."

Quite appropriately, given David and his team's extensive use of online technology, the Lurgan Road primary school was shortlisted for a TES award in the 'Best Use of Technology' category – the only NI school to be shortlisted in that category.

Being mindful that 'Edenderry' is the anglicised version of 'Eádon Doire' – meaning 'the brow of the oak wood' – David and his pupils set out to identify a number of tree species for the study around the school grounds.

Trees were identified via their leaves in the summer, and the timing of bud growth for each tree species was monitored

Data was collated and shared with over 20 schools in a vast area stretching as far as Turkey, Greece, Spain, and northern Finland.

It took that kind of scale to identify beyond any doubt a very clear trend – namely that whatever the country, bud growth is now happening earlier than it used to.

Remarkably, the Edenderry PS teacher and his team of 'eco-warriors' were not content with simply collating data pointing to

climate change – they wanted to be part of the solution in the form of tree planting on a significant scale within the school grounds.

David commented: "We decided to be active in offsetting these results.

"Working with the Woodland Trust, I ordered 100 saplings to plant in the Edenderry school grounds – in keeping with one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to do with climate action."

The 'tree pack', kindly provided free of charge by the Woodland Trust, was delivered in March of last year, and the saplings have been going strong ever since.

The planting of saplings also coincided with educational exchanges, as part of the EU-wide Erasmus programme, which saw the local pupils share the data they had collected with their peers in France, Finland and Spain.

The school's student council is



Working on the European environmental project were, from left, Edenderry PS pupils Tasia Sneddon, Ben Barlow, Sydney Moore and Jodi Smith. C2041504

now hoping to plant more saplings – in the shape of a maze, to promote outdoor play!

Due to the current pandemic, this year's awards ceremony will be held online on Friday,

November 13 – no doubt it will prove to be a lucky day for David and his tree detectives!



Edenderry PS teacher and international co-ordinator, David Smith spearheaded the eTwinning 'tree detectives' project with partner schools throughout Europe. C2041503



The saplings were kindly supplied free of charge to the Edenderry PS 'tree detectives' by the Woodland Trust. C2041502

# 76% in borough 'satisfied' with public transport

THE 'Attitudes to Walking, Cycling and Public Transport in Northern Ireland 2019/20' report, published last week, has revealed that 76% of respondents in the ABC Borough were "satisfied" with public transport in the area.

Province-wide, the main reasons respondents were 'not satisfied' with public transport and facilities in their area were, 'not enough services' (68%), 'no direct services to where I want to go' (47%) and 'times of buses/trains not suitable' (40%).

Almost a third (30%) of respondents said they never use public transport.

The report, produced by the Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch (ASRB) of the Department for Infrastructure, presents findings from the 2019/20 Continuous Household Survey (CHS).

This is the third year that this question set

was included in the CHS.

According to the report, 87% of respondents consider 'walking' to be active travel while 80% say the same about 'cycling'.

Overall 59% of respondents (or 56% in the ABC Borough) were satisfied with the current situation for walking in their area in 2019/20, down from 64% in 2017/18.

The most common reasons respondents were 'not satisfied' were 'poor lighting at night' (52%), 'traffic goes too fast' (50%), 'poor footpath conditions' (48%) and 'not enough footpaths' (45%).

Bad weather (38%), lack of footpaths (26%), and cars driving too quickly (23%) remain the top reasons that discourage respondents from walking short journeys.

In terms of cycling, 50% of respondents were satisfied with the current situation for cycling in their area (51% in the ABC Borough). This is a decrease from 55% in 2017/18.

Seven in 10 respondents (71%) said they were 'not satisfied' with cycling in their area due to 'no cycle lanes'. This remains the most common response since 2017/18.