



#ETB WEEK

11-15 March 2024



ETB WEEK 2024

Flagship Event Thomond Park

Thursday 14th March 2024



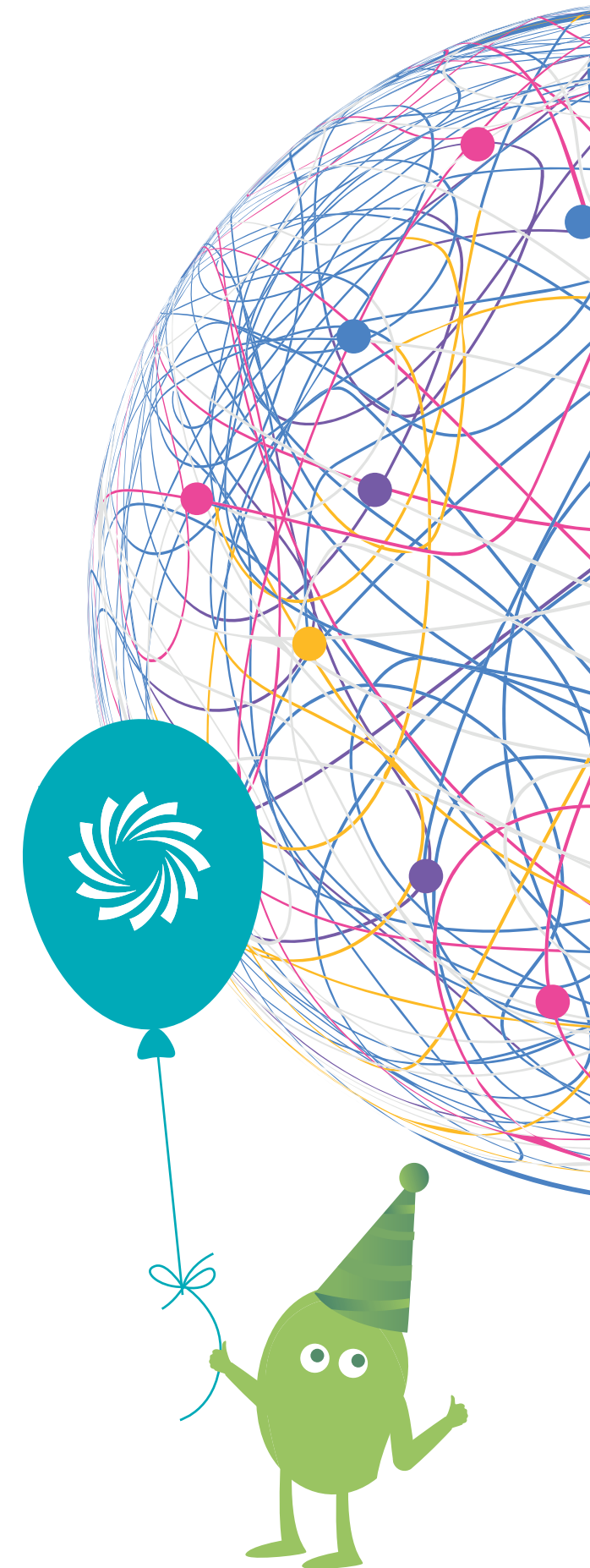
EVENT PROGRAMME

12pm	<p>Registration Hot finger food Opportunity for photographs</p>
12:30pm	<p>Opening remarks by MC Ray Kennedy</p> <p>Presentations Award of Bursary: An Ghaeilge Alumni presentations Award of Bursary: Technology and AI Alumni presentations</p>
2:00pm	<p>Desert & tea/coffee Group photographs</p>
2:30pm	<p>The Tullamore Prodigies perform 'A Place to Learn'</p> <p>Presentations Carpool Karaoke Alumni presentations Award of Bursary: Media & Communications Alumni presentations Award of Bursary: Green Innovation Closing remarks by Paddy Lavelle, General Secretary, ETBI Musical performance by Murli & God Knows</p>
4pm	<p>Event ends Group photographs</p> <p>#ETBWEEK Thomond Suite, Thomond Park, Cratloe Road, Limerick V94 2E27</p> <p>www.etbi.ie</p>

INTRODUCTION

Following the success of *ETB Day* and the inaugural *ETB Excellence Awards* in 2023, the ETBI Communications team had their work cut out to put together a new and no less exciting programme for **ETB Week 2024**. While the initiative in 2023 had been a local, regional and national affair, the team went international in 2024 with **The International ETB** webinar and an inspiring and challenging keynote on educational leadership from Zachary Walker. We also introduced the inaugural national **ETB Alumni** awards to honour exceptional former ETB learners who excelled in their field or made an outstanding contribution to their communities, and **ETB Bursaries** in the areas of Technology & AI, Green Innovation, Media & Communications and An Ghaeilge. These bursaries consisted of €5000 financial and professional support thanks to our generous sponsors. An essential fun element of ETB Week was provided by our Carpool Karaoke competition, where ETB staff and learners from around the country were invited to record their version of "A Place to Learn" with some very funny results. Many ETBs also organised their own local events and initiatives to celebrate ETB Week, and members of the ETB Communications Network played a key role in supporting both these and the national initiatives in 2024.

We gathered in Thomond Park on the 14th of March and had quite a day: there were a few tears and a standing ovation when Jim and Darragh Phelan came to stage to accept Vicky Phelan's ETB Alumni award. There was laughter when some unexpected faces appeared in the **Carpool Karaoke** video and a great response to the first ever performance by the Tullamore Prodigies. But mostly there was a sense of collective pride: in the achievements of our Alumni, the potential of our learners, and the commitment of our staff to the sector where excellence and inclusion unite. And to top it all, special musical guests Murli & God Knows managed to get us all up dancing!



Alumni Awards



Through our Alumni presentations we honoured former ETB learners from across our member ETBs who have achieved excellence in their chosen field or made an outstanding contribution to their local community. Each Alumni was presented with a specially commissioned sculpture by woodturner Kathleen Walsh using cypress, sandstone and charcoal.

ETBI



For the first Alumni award, ETBI President and Chair of GRETB Cllr Michael Maher made **ETBI's** Alumni presentation. This was presented to a former ETB learner who has made a significant contribution not only to the ETB sector but to the wider education sector across her 20 years covering developments in education for the Irish Independent. From her coverage of education cuts to the effects of covid on students, **Katherine Donnelly** has remained a strong voice for inclusion and for the disadvantaged. We were honoured to make Katherine our inaugural ETBI Alumni.

Tipperary ETB



We moved to the stars with **Tipperary ETB's** nominee. The nominee attended Coláiste Phobal Ros Cré from 2003 to 2009. He went to UCD where he studied Engineering and was a UCD Entrance Scholar in 2009. He also won the Engineering Technology Teachers Association national award for best Leaving Certificate project that year. Currently, he is the Chief Engineer on Eirsat-1, Ireland's first satellite. The satellite was launched into orbit from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California on 1 December, 2023, and is seen as a hugely historic event for Ireland's space industry. Tipperary ETB was proud to select **Dr Joe Thompson** as for ETB Alumni 2024 as a leading example of the STEAM-based educational opportunities available to ETB school graduates.

Dublin & Dunlaoghaire ETB



ETBs are proud that excellence and inclusion are not mutually exclusive and the next Alumni 2024 presentation by **Dublin and Dunlaoghaire ETBs** CE and Director of FET to their nominee is an example of this. After coming to Ireland as a refugee from Angola 22 years ago when she was 23 with no English, **Carolina Tavares Vinteme** has progressed through adult education to a Culinary Arts degree and now teaches on their community education service working with adults with intellectual disabilities and women. Her family are also part of the ETB family: her eldest went to Balbriggan Community College and is now in University. Her second child got an A in Irish in the Leaving Cert and is also in UCD and her youngest is currently a student in the ETB.

Kildare & Wicklow ETB



Not only did **Kildare & Wicklow ETB's** nominee attended his local ETB before establishing a highly successful business, but his sons have carried on the tradition! **Simon Cross** attended the small vocational school in Rathangan before setting up Cross engineering, which today it is a thriving, innovative agricultural engineering firm in the capable hands of Simon's two sons, Jason and Gary who also attended their local ETB school Ardscoil Rath Iomghain before going on to study engineering. Cross engineering employs local people, and continues to support the local school via apprenticeships, guided tours and engineering advice.

ETB Bursaries

ETB Bursaries were awarded to exceptional current ETB learners to support their future study, entrepreneurship or community activism in the areas of Technology & AI, Green Innovation, Media & Communications and the Irish Language. Each Bursary included €5,000 financial and professional support.



Sponsored by **An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta** (COGG) and presented by chair of COGG's board, Cathnia Ó Muircheartaigh.

Bursary Award: An Ghaeilge

Winner



Is scoláire é buaiteoir Sparánacht na Gaeilge a raibh grá na teanga le feiceáil ó 3 bliana d'aois agus atá imithe ar aghaidh ó shin chun cur go mór le forbairt na Gaeilge agus an chultúr Ghaelaigh ar fud a scoile agus a pobail.

The winner of the Irish Language Bursary is a student who's love of the language was evident from 3 years of age and who has since gone on to make a significant contribution to the development of Irish language and culture across her school and her community.

Aoibhinn Ní Craibhínn from Coláiste Oiriall in **Cavan and Monaghan ETB** will be a superb ambassador for

Irish language and culture and COGG are looking forward to supporting her onward journey and career in the Irish language.

Runner Up



The runner up, presented with a all gifts voucher for €500, was **Amelia Ní Reen Ní Mhathúna** from Coláiste Daibhéid, **Cork ETB**. Chuaigh Amelia i bhfeidhm ar na moltóirí lena clár nuálach maidir le cuairt a thabhairt ar bhunscoileanna áitiúla Béarla chun úsáid na Gaeilge mar theanga chumarsáide bheo a spreagadh i measc na ndaltaí. Amelia impressed the judges with her innovative programme of visiting local English-medium primary schools to encourage the use of Irish as a language of living communication among the pupils.

Bursary Award: Technology & AI



This bursary was kindly sponsored by **Wriggle Learning** and presented on the day by their Director Post-Primary Schools and FET Colleges Beryl Furlong.

Winner



The winner of the Technology and AI Bursary is a student for whom the terms 'exceptional' and 'all rounder' don't quite do justice. From poetry to gymnastics, debating to academic achievement, this **Limerick and Clare ETB** student's **VerifyMe** model to discern "true" human authorship in the era of Open AI is truly innovative and was a worthy overall winner at this year's BT Young Scientists & Technology Exhibition. The ETB bursaries aim to invest in an ETB student's future and the judges could think of no student more deserving in this STEM category: **Sean O'Sullivan**.

Runner Up



The runner up in this award is a **Wexford & Waterford ETB** FET learner who faced lemons during the covid-19 crisis by being made redundant but went on to make lemonade by starting a 'Start Your Own Business' course in his local ETB. His Power Golf Fitness business has gone from strength to strength and we're sure many of you golfers out there will soon have his innovative Golf fitness app on your phone. Congratulations **Frank Power**.

Alumni Awards

Kilkenny & Carlow ETB



In 2018, four years after her own cancer diagnosis, **Vicky Phelan** gave a now-infamous address on the steps of The High Court that would result in important changes as to how cervical checks are carried out in Ireland. Her positive impact on the future health of all Irish women is simply immeasurable. Vicky attended Coláiste Cois Siúire, a **KCETB** school for her post primary education before attending the University of Limerick where Vicky would become a researcher in the Centre for Applied Language Studies. Vicky always placed immense value on education throughout her life. She referred to herself as a 'true life-long learner' and often referenced how education unlocked her passion for travel, and paved the way for her career path in life. It is apt therefore that she is remembered with an annual academic bursary in her old school via the Vicky Phelan Scholarship. Vicky's husband Jim and son Darragh accepted the ETB Alumni award from the Principal of Coláiste Cois Siuire -Conor Power, KCETB CE Eileen Curtus and Director of Schools Pauline Egan.

"This is an event that would have been very close to Vicky's heart. Vicky often spoke about being a proud 'life long learner', how important knowledge through education is and how it can empower people to achieve their personal goals in both their career and in life. If something needed to be researched, she was on it! and that ability came to the fore when she needed to find answers regarding the situation we found ourselves in regarding her health and the health of other women. We're all still learning. Vicky would be very proud to receive this award, and for us as her family it is a very proud moment. Thank you." **Jim Phelan**

Mayo Sligo & Leitrim ETB

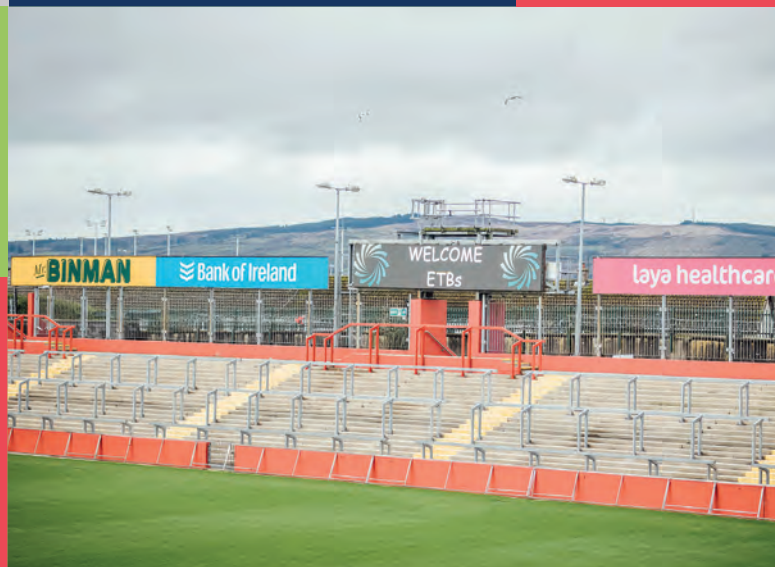


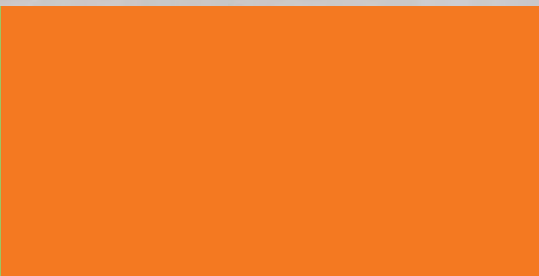
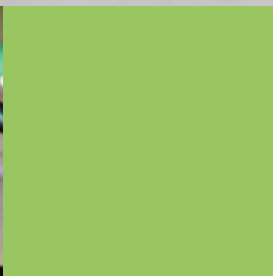
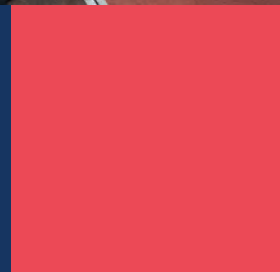
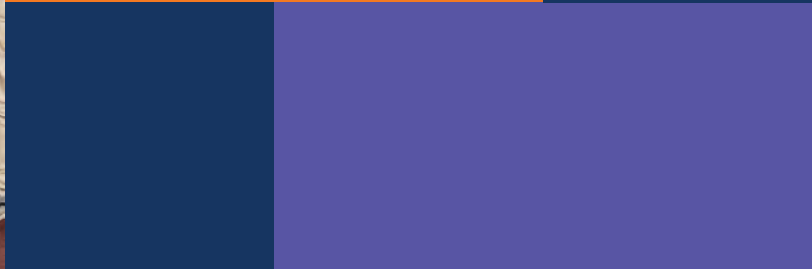
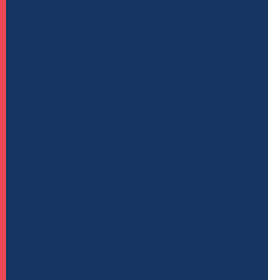
Our ETB Hall of fame, through these Alumni nominations, highlight the achievements of exceptional former learners. Many of those here today are well known but we also honour those learners who's journey represents the possibility, pathways and core values of our sector. Our **Mayo Sligo & Leitrim** nominee is an exemplar of these elements. A graduate of Youthreach in Ballinrobe, this learner overcame educational challenges and found her stride through alternative pathways. Excelling in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, she earned the prestigious Feargal Quinn Award for her remarkable academic achievements. Currently pursuing a PLC in Business at the Galway Technological Institute, **Emma Kearns** aspires to specialise in hospitality at ATU Galway or Sligo and start her own business. Her journey highlights the transformative power of perseverance and alternative education in unlocking one's potential. Beyond academic excellence, Emma's optimistic outlook, collaborative spirit, and readiness to assist others exemplify her remarkable character and leadership qualities. Emma was presented with the award by MSLETB CE Tom O'Grady.

Cavan & Monaghan ETB



Jamie Duffy is a past pupil of Beech Hill College, Monaghan and was studying politics at university in Belfast when he released his first single, Solas. This track marked a significant achievement in streaming for an Irish artist, surpassing 60 million plays on Spotify, making it the most successful debut since Hozier's "Take Me To Church. Jamie Duffy now has nearly one million monthly listeners on Spotify alone, and has been number one in the classical charts in the Netherlands and Kazakhstan. Jamie's unique sound comes from a blend of classical and Irish traditional music, both genres he experimented with modernising. As well as chart success, his songs have inspired the creativity of others, -alongside the millions of views Duffy has racked up on his own social media videos, more than 50,000 TikToks have been made with his audio as the soundtrack. Despite his musical career beginning to take off, Jamie recently graduated from Queen's University Belfast with a degree in International Relations and Politics. Jamie was requested to perform in New York as part of the St Patrick's Festival so couldn't be here to accept his award but sent a lovely message [here](#).





Alumni presentations

Cork ETB



Cork ETB's Alumni nominee is an award-winning science communicator and holds a PhD in Environmental Science from UCC. A proud alumni of Coláiste Choilm, for the last 10 years he has been a TV presenter on the award-winning "10 Things to Know About" on RTE1 TV where he presents science stories focussing on science, the natural world and the environment. Since 2013 **Fergus McAuliffe** has also been a regular contributor to Newstalk FM Futureproof on Sunday mornings, a show which aims to inspire the Irish public's curiosity for science and is the recipient of a string of awards that recognise his unique ability to

educate, engage and inspire the public through his science storytelling. In 2018 Fergus established "Girls into Geoscience Ireland", a programme designed to tackle gender bias that has reached hundreds of students across Ireland over 7 years. Fergus credits his school with instilling in him a love for science, the environment, and for following his curiosity for engaging people with science education. Always seeking new ways to explore sustainability, he passionately believes in the power of science education to empower people to feel more confident in their own knowledge of many of society's and Earth's greatest challenges.

Louth & Meath ETB



This Alumni nominee is a fantastic example of how ETBs offer pathways to learners wherever they are on their learning journey. After finishing school in 1996, a family and a career in aviation took **Claire Chidgey** away from completing her studies but in 2018 she returned to **Louth & Meath ETB's** Drogheda Institute of Further Education. As a mature learner, Claire balanced the needs of her family and her professional goal amazingly well to excel within her educational journey to becoming a teacher. Now a teacher working in adult education herself, Claire relates brilliantly to her students as a result of her own experiences and

journey. Her story should provide inspiration to others who for differencing reasons did not pursue their preferred pathway, but who can make their dreams a reality and go on to make an outstanding contribution to their local community. Sadie McDermott, Director of FET in LMETB made the presentation.

Kerry ETB



Kerry ETB's Alumni nomination has also excelled within the academic field but embodies a different pathway: that of school leaver. **Brian's Votta's** seamless journey from post-primary school straight into Kerry ETB's Pre-Teaching and Education Studies course, and subsequently on to University College Cork (UCC), is a great example of FET as first choice for school leavers. Brian is also dedicated to advocating for underrepresented students through initiatives like the Access UCC PLUS Programme and the Schools Outreach Team. He has received the prestigious 'NUI Equal Educational Opportunities Award' and the Dr.

Mary Barry Wall Bursary. Brian graduated from UCC in 2023 with a first-class honour's degree in History & Geography and is currently studying on the Professional Master of Education programme in UCC. It is striking to note that Brian says "out of a Master's programme of approximately 130, only two (myself included) come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds". Kerry ETB were delighted to celebrate Brian's accomplishments and CE Colm McEvoy made the presentation.

Galway Roscommon ETB



This alumni nomination is described by **Galway & Roscommon ETB** as an outstanding student who also possess generosity of spirit. In September 2021, **Isabella Tierney** embarked on a transformative journey at Galway Technical Institute to explore her passion for Fashion Styling through the Fashion Buying, Styling, and Visual Merchandising course. She became Editor of "The Edit @ GTI" magazine and hosted a fashion and sustainability event, continued onto an Erasmus + work placement which saw her work in Tenerife with Daniel Pagés to craft a carnival queen dress for the second-largest carnival in the

world. On completing her course at GTI with distinctions in all modules, she was accepted into the final year of a BA Honours Fashion Design and Promotion in the University of Sunderland. Post-graduation, Isabella began a placement in New York City, where her work featured Harper's Bazaar. Isabella says "I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support and encouragement from my teachers and lecturers throughout this journey". GRETb with this Alumni nomination acknowledged Isabella's contributions, achievements to date, and her potential to make a meaningful impact within the fashion industry and beyond. Chair and CE of GRETb Michael Maher and David Leahy made the presentation to Isabella.

ETB Bursaries

Bursary Award: Media & Communications



This Bursary was sponsored by **Hopkins Communications** and Judy Hopkins made the presentation.

Winners



In a very competitive category, the judges were very impressed by the work of a highly accomplished Dublin animator whose work has been nominated for official selection in Animation Dingle 2024. They were also excited by the work of a Kerry student whose own challenges with anxiety led her to develop the 'Bright Minds' mobile app with a fellow student, which enables students to communicate with a teacher confidentially during a lesson. So a battle between the capital and the kingdom ensued and there could only be one result. It was a dead heat! So the bursary and professional support from Hopkins will be split between **Colin**

Reddin from Colaiste Dhulaigh in **City of Dublin ETB** and **Shauna O'Keefe & David Peskett** from Castleisland Community College, **Kerry ETB**.

Runner Up



The runner up prize went to a talented stop motion animator with a passion for lego who aspires to enter the film industry as a director or screenwriter. From St Farnan's Post Primary School in **Kildare & Wicklow ETB**, congratulations **Corey Talbot**.

Alumni presentations

Donegal ETB



This **Donegal ETB** Alumni nomination is truly exceptional and encompasses the ETB principle that everyone deserves excellence in education. **Dr. Niall Muldoon** serves as the Ombudsman for Children, a position dedicated to advocating for the rights and well-being of children in Ireland. With a background in child psychology and extensive experience in child protection and welfare, Dr. Muldoon has dedicated his career to ensuring that children's voices are heard and their rights are upheld. He is a former student of the Abbey Vocational School in Donegal Town where he completed his post-primary education. Prior to his

appointment as Ombudsman for Children, Dr. Muldoon worked in various capacities within the field of child advocacy, including roles in social work and child mental health services. His commitment to promoting the rights of children and addressing issues such as education, health care, and family support has earned him widespread respect within the community. Dr. Muldoon's approach to his role as Ombudsman for Children is characterised by compassion, integrity, and a steadfast dedication to making a positive difference in the lives of young people. Unfortunately, Niall was unable to attend the event but he sent a lovely [video message](#), and Donegal ETB CE Anne McHugh accepted the award on his behalf.

Longford & Westmeath ETB



Longford and Westmeath ETB's Alumni inductee embodies the twin ETB themes of academic excellence and inclusion. **Kieran Owens** is a PhD qualified Civil Engineer and an MBA graduate with over 15 years' experience working on complex projects across several sectors. Kieran joined PWC from industry in 2014 having previously led teams in design; manufacture; management and delivery of complex infrastructure projects and programmes. Kieran has public and private sector experience across a broad range of industries including engineering and construction, utilities, IT, nuclear, financial services and industry. As

the graduate of a DEIS School, Mullingar Community College, Kieran has been a source of great inspiration for many of our students and staff. As a Research Fellow; he has published several academic papers and in the world of work he led research into renewable energies but what impresses **Longford & Westmeath ETB** most is Kieran's desire and willingness to come back to visit and inspire students, many of whom come from profound economic disadvantage; since 2023 the school has its own alumni programme to inspire and motivate students and equip them with the skills and, above else, growth mindset that is so integral to helping them thrive in the education realm and beyond. The award was presented by LWETB CE Liz Lavery.

Waterford and Wexford ETB



VECs, the predecessors of the ETBs we celebrate today, were often challenged to overcome the perception that the so called 'tech' was somehow 'second best'.

Waterford and Wexford ETB's Alumni nominee chose to attend his 'local tech' Wexford Vocational School (now Selskar College) because it was the only school to offer engineering and technical graphics and gave him the skills he needed to become the leader of a highly successful engineering business. Kent Stainless employs an engineering team of over 30 and a fabrication team of 130, supported by administration, finance, purchasing and sales and marketing

departments of 45 people. More than 60 apprentices have become qualified craftspeople throughout their employment with Kent Stainless with some winning national competitions and others going on to represent Ireland in the World Skills competition. WWETB is delighted that Kent Stainless continues to work with them in apprenticeship and the Skills to Advance initiative. **Derek Kent** has praised his old school: the teachers who became friends and its focus on GAA excellence. Derek won a Leinster title with the school in 1984, went on to become Chairman of Wexford GAA and in January 2023, he accepted the prestigious head position as Chairman of Leinster GAA.



ETB Bursaries

Limerick & Clare ETB



The final Alumni presentation of the day was from **Limerick and Clare ETB** and comprised not one but two Olympians.

18-year old world-class Limerick swimmer **Róisín Ní Riain** completed her Leaving Certificate in 2023 at all-Irish secondary school Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh. In between balancing her studies she won Gold and Silver medals at the Para Swimming World Championships in Manchester in July and also broke her first long-course world record at the World Series in Berlin in May. Róisín was nominated for an RTÉ Sport Award for

Young Sportsperson of the Year in December, was named Swim Ireland's Para Swimmer of the Year in November, and is a member of Team Ireland competing for glory this summer at Paris 2024. She is currently in her Spring Semester of First Year at University of Limerick studying for a science teaching degree. Róisín is blessed to possess a mega-watt smile and a tremendous sense of humour, was a great classmate, and a kind person. Born with coloboma which causes a reduction of visual acuity and periphery due to an area of missing tissue in the eye, Róisín has never let her visual impairment define her. Quietly and with great determination, Róisín trained and developed her strength, speed and competency and has become one of the best swimmers in the world today. Without a doubt Róisín will be a wonderful ambassador for our country and will make her family, her friends, her former school, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board and the nation proud.

Sarah Lavin from Lisnagry in Limerick, recently finished fifth in the final of the 60m hurdles in the World Indoor Athletics Championships on March 3rd. She said: "To finish 5th in the world is amazing and to do it in final where the world record was broken too." During her time at Castletroy College, Sarah Lavin completed in and won the North Munster and Irish Schools Titles in the 100m hurdles. Sarah always showed great confidence when competing in the school's events but off the track she showed huge humility. She is held in hugely high esteem by all her teachers and is a fantastic role model and they are immensely proud of her achievements. Sarah earned a scholarship to study Pre-Med at Princeton University in New Jersey, but decided to return to Limerick to train for the European Junior Championships with renowned coach Noelle Morrissey. She also has continued her passion for health-care, volunteering at Milford Care Hospice in Limerick. Looking forward to her outdoor season, Sarah says "We've a Europeans in June which I want to be really competitive at, but the Olympics is everything, it's the biggest stage in the world. Paris will be sensational so I'm really looking forward to what's to come". CE of Limerick & Clare ETB George O'Callaghan presented the Alumni awards to Róisín, and to Sarah's Uncle Phil. Sarah also sent on a [message of thanks](#).

Bursary Award: Green Innovation

SOLAS
learning works

The final bursary award was generously sponsored by SOLAS and was presented by bursary judge and SOLAS Executive Director Alan McGrath.

Winner



The winner of our green innovation bursary is working on a game changer in the form of 4-Stage Advancement Towards Direct Air Capture. "DAC", he says, "is one of humanities most important tools in tackling climate change". The judges feel this creative problem solver from St Brogan's College in **Cork ETB** has a very bright future. Whether that's developing his project further or mastering engineering and physics at Cambridge or Imperial College, the judges want to support, and be part of **Tomás Markey's** future.

Runner up



Our runner up developed anaerobic digestate as an eco-friendly alternative to conventional chemical fertilisers resulting in an agriculture game changer. Winner of the Irish Science Teachers Association Award at the Scifest National Final, and head hunted for further research by ATU in Galway, **Sean Allen**, 6th year student from Roscommon Community College, **GRETB**, is a worthy runner up in this category.






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