**MEDIA INFORMATION.**

8th March

**EARLY-DRIVE Programme Powered by MINI at Mondello Park.**

* Mondello Park and MINI Ireland expand association with EARLY-DRIVE Programme.
* MINI Hatch models will provide fun and engaging experience for young drivers.
* Programme expanded for individual students looking to excel their driving standards.

With road crashes being the single biggest killer of 15-24 year-olds in industrial countries\*, Governments cannot wave a magic wand to make young adults safer overnight, and there are no shortcuts to experience. But there are measures that can help reduce the risks associated with young drivers. One such programme initiated in Ireland by Mondello Park is EARLY-DRIVE Powered by MINI, a road safety programme aimed at young adults (15-18 years) primarily transition year students.

The EARLY-DRIVE Powered by MINI programme delivers a safe but fun road safety experience in a controlled environment in Mondello Park. Based on international best-practice standards and developed in association with the Irish School of Motoring, the course includes a road safety class room session, practical demonstration and a chance for students to undergo their first lesson on a purpose built track with road markings, traffic lights and warning signs, giving the experience of a main road environment.

Each year, more than 2,500 students complete this course and under the new agreement, MINI will provide four MINI Hatch models for students who will no doubt enjoy driving on track with MINI’s exhilarating go-kart feeling. The course is delivered under the watchful eye of qualified driving instructors and all of the MINIs feature dual controls within closed roads of Mondello Park. This environment allows students to learn the basics of driving and road safety without having to worry about other drivers and the hazards of learning on the open road. This year the programme has been expanded to include a virtual reality simulator to give students insights and knowledge of various types of distracted and dangerous driving.

Mondello Park General Manager Roddy Greene welcomed MINI's expanded support of the venue saying “We are delighted to partner with MINI on our EARLY-DRIVE programme. Road safety is such an important topic and the EARLY-DRIVE programme offers young people the chance to drive in a controlled environment and learn about road safety”.

Austin Behan General Manager for MINI Ireland said: “MINI has been for generations, the chosen car to learn to drive in thanks to smart design and engineering quality. Nothing beats the feeling of your hands behind the wheel of a MINI with its close-to-the-ground, go-kart feeling. We are excited to work with Mondello Park and drive this programme to help make a difference on our roads”.

As part of their support of Early-Drive, MINI will provide places on the course to schools from all over Ireland. The schools to benefit will be chosen by the MINI Retail network, who will send pupils from their local areas to Mondello Park to experience EARLY-DRIVE completely free of charge. If your school is interested in applying please contact MINI Ireland on Facebook and send a direct message.

**-ENDS-**

**About The BMW Group**

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world’s leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises 30 production and assembly facilities in 14 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

The BMW Group sold over 2,490,000 passenger vehicles and more than 165,000 motorcycles worldwide in 2018. The profit before tax in the financial year 2017 was € 10.655 billion on revenues amounting to € 98.678 billion. As of 31 December 2017, the BMW Group had a workforce of 129,932 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

In 2018 BMW Ireland announced that its retail network will be making a significant €37 million investment across its operations in Ireland and in the process will be creating 120 new jobs over the course of an 18 months period. This substantial financial commitment coincides with the expansion of BMW i, the electric vehicle sub brand of BMW, in Ireland.

The BMW i brand will now become an integral part of all Irish retailers’ operations to sell and service the Group’s current and future range of electrified vehicles including BMW i3, BMW i8, range of plug-in hybrid vehicles as well as the forthcoming BMW iX3 and the MINI Electric. Of any manufacturer, BMW Group has the highest market share for new car registrations in Europe and in Ireland sales of electric/hybrid BMW and MINI Vehicle in 2017 went from 173 units sold to 336 units sold in 2018. We anticipate the sales of hybrid to grow considerably in the years to come.

As part of our Corporate Social Responsibility, BMW supports a different charity each year, an area that BMW Group Ireland takes very seriously. For the past two years BMW Ireland has support Temple Street Children’s Hospital. BMW Group Ireland not only provides a financial contribution through fundraising events but also offer their time in the charity environment through volunteering, applying their skills to a non-profit cause and lending of products, services and other resources.

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