



# Festive events to ring in the new year

## Heavy rain could dampen weekend celebrations

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HEAVY RAIN expected today and tonight could put a dampener on New Year's Eve celebrations across the State, but a brighter day is expected to herald the new year tomorrow, according to Met Éireann.

Dublin is hoping to compete with international cities in its new year celebration for the first time this year with a three-day festival that began yesterday and climaxes tonight with a concert.

The outdoor concert featuring Damien Dempsey, Dublin band the Coronas and a performance of *Riverdance* will be held on Dublin's College Green tonight.

The area in front of Trinity College will be cordoned off from 2pm today to 6am for the over-18s event which runs from 8pm to 12.30am. Tickets for the show cost €10.

The festival is being sponsored by Fáilte Ireland, Dublin Tourism, Dublin City Council and Dublin City **Business Improvement District**. Concert tickets are available at nyedublin.ie and ticketmaster.ie. Ten per cent of ticket sales, after VAT and booking charges, will be donated to Focus Ireland.

Minister for Tourism Leo Varadkar said he hoped there would be a good attendance, which also includes outdoor markets, street theatre and children's events. "It's the first attempt that we're making to take away some of the new year's tourism market from Edinburgh and New York and

other cities so hopefully if people are free they'll take part in that," he said on RTÉ radio yesterday.

The ringing of the Christ Church Cathedral bells to welcome in the new year in Dublin will begin at 11pm tonight. The performance, led by ringing master Leslie Taylor, is this year expected to be a record-breaking event.

The cathedral's 19 bells, ranging in weight from a quarter of a ton to 2¼ tons, will be swung through 360 degrees, which will be a world record in number of bells ringing "full circle", organisers said.

In addition to the closure of College Green, South William Street in Dublin will be closed to traffic tonight and tomorrow from 8.30pm to 10.30pm.

AA Roadwatch has warned of heavy traffic around the country over the weekend. Road conditions are expected to be very wet today and there is a chance of some ground frost later in the night. It also reminds motorists that stopping distances are 10 times longer in ice and to slow down and leave plenty of time to reach their destination.

The Irish Aviation Authority has warned people about the danger of releasing Chinese-style lanterns into the sky tonight. Spokesman for the authority Paddy Kennedy said the lanterns have become hugely popular in recent years but are dangerous.

"We certainly don't want to be seen as party poopers but the release of these lanterns cause two very real dangers. The first is that they can be ingested into the

engines of aircraft and some contain metal parts.

"Also it has been the case on previous occasions that these lights can be mistaken for distress signals and lead to false alarms for emergency crews," he said.

The lanterns, which are brought up into the air by the heat from candles inside, can reach heights of up to 1,000ft. However Mr Kennedy warned that unless people have sought permission to release the lanterns from the authority, it is illegal to do so.

Meanwhile Mr Varadkar has announced Dublin Tourism will be taken over by Fáilte Ireland from the new year as part of the Government's programme to reduce the number of agencies and quangos.



**Rock band the Coronas with concert MC Michele McGrath. Dublin will ring in 2012 tonight with a New Year's Eve countdown concert on College Green that will include The Coronas, Damien Dempsey and members of the *Riverdance* troupe.**