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Tuesday 14th January 2020

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# END TO SECRET DEALS

## COUNCIL LOSES FOI BATTLE

Wicklow County Council has lost its battle to keep the details of its agreement with developers of the Florentine Centre in Bray secret. In a ground breaking decision which will have ramifications for past and future decisions around the disposal of public assets, the Information Commissioner has directed that the terms and conditions surrounding the disposal be made public.

Independent councillor Joe Behan who took the appeal said "I welcome the decision by the Information Commissioner to direct Wicklow County Council to release to the public the majority of its development agreement with the Florentine Centre developers.

"I decided to take this case to the Information Commissioner because the Council refused to

divulge the details of the agreement to Council members or the wider public. I argued strongly that the taxpayers and citizens of the county are entitled to know what is being done in their name when public assets are being sold off.

"I am delighted that the Information Commissioner held that my submissions 'correctly identify a public interest in transparency and

accountability around the use of publicly owned assets'. The Commissioner stated that 'the Council was not justified in refusing access to the majority of the records.' The Commissioner also quotes the Dept of Public Expenditure and Reform which states that 'the Freedom of Information Act 2014 means that FOI bodies are not in a position to



Isobel Carr, Jordan O'Brien, Ciara Condren, and Kaitlin Wolohan from St. Mary's College, Arklow, at the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition in the RDS last Thursday.

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"This decision by the Information Commissioner should be read and studied carefully by the Council management as it clearly dismissed most of the arguments used by the Council to prevent publication of information on the Florentine Centre development.

"I believe the decision should ensure far greater transparency by unelected Council management in their dealings with developers and future potential partners and it should serve as a wake-up call for all of us to be constantly on our guard when the disposal of public assets is being proposed.

"Bray Town desperately needs new life and the Florentine Centre is eagerly awaited by all. However, as it is still a public asset, it is vital that

its development and disposal is open, transparent and in the best interests of the public whom we all serve."

In coming to her decision,



Cllr Joe Behan

sion, the Information Commissioner declared "I consider that the developer is a service provider for the purpose of the FOI Act, on the basis that it has contracted with the Council to provide a service - namely developing (continued on p 5)

## Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil

### Local Enterprise Office

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WICKLOW



The 'Bray Beach Bellies' Linda Ullaman, Stephanie Veale, Pat Hannon, Deirdre Fitzgerald, and Laura Stewart taking a dip at the annual Bray Lions' New Year's Day Swim, helping to raise funds for local charities. Pic: Andres Poveda.

## Kilmacanogue History Society

Kilmacanogue History Society's next talk is on Tuesday 14th January at 8pm in the Glenview Hotel. Marc McMenamin is the guest speaker. He is a journalist and documentary maker and the title of his talk is 'The Codebreaker'. This fascinating story outlines how a gifted polymath and cryptographer, was drafted by Irish intelligence services to track the movements of a prolific Nazi spy, Hermann Görz.

Codebreaker is a riveting and deeply researched account of an extraordinary period of history. This presentation will take you back to the secret world of espionage in Ireland during World War II when the fate of an independent Ireland settled on the shoulders of an unassuming employee of the National Library and is a fascinating opener to the society's 2020 season.

## Register now for 2020 Spring Clean

Now is the time to register for the National Spring Clean. It can be done at a date which suits you or your group. It's very easy to register and receive a clean-up kit. Visit [www.nationalspringclean.org](http://www.nationalspringclean.org) to register and get your free clean-up kit.

## Loughlinstown emigrant brings new show to Garden County Radio

Dylan Walshe, a singer-songwriter from Loughlinstown, currently living in Nashville, Tennessee, is broadcasting his new non-profit radio show on Garden County Radio from Greystones every Sunday from 9pm to 10pm.

"I'll have a host of my friend musicians dialing in such as James Fearnley from The Pogues, Zander

Schloss of The Circle Jerks, Billy Bob Thornton, Chris Scruggs and plenty more," says Dylan.

Dylan himself is an Irish folk singer-songwriter who has toured with Flogging Molly, Avatar, The White Buffalo, The Mahones, and has recorded with James Fearnley.

## Once Upon A Time in Hollywood

Quentin Tarantino's latest film, Once Upon a Time in Hollywood... will be screened in the Whale Theatre in Greystones on Thursday 16th January at 8pm. Doors, 7:15 p.m. Tickets €10.00. Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt and Margot Robbie star in this comedy-drama set in 1969 Hollywood. Booking and details of all future Whale Theatre events from [www.whaletheatre.ie](http://www.whaletheatre.ie). You can also be a friend on Facebook and receive up-to-date event information.

## Greystones Archaeological and Historical Society Talk

'Experiences and Contributions of Women During the War of Independence' is the title of a Greystones Archaeological and Historical Society talk in the Kilian House Family Centre in Greystones at 8pm on Wednesday 15th January.

The talk will be given by Dr. Mary McAuliffe, Assistant Professor of Gender Studies UCD. Her research includes social history, as well as war/military and oral history. Publications include: Richmond Barracks 1916: We Were There: 77 Women of the Easter Rising. Co-editor, Kerry 1916: Histories and Legacies of the Easter Rising. Biography of Senator Kathleen Browne 1876 to 1943. Dr. McAuliffe is Committee Member and Treasurer of Association of Professional Historians. All welcome to come along. Small charge of €2 at the door, to help defray costs.

# Purple House ask public to run 30km in January

Purple House Cancer Support Centre is 30 years old this year and to help make their need for a permanent Centre a reality, they are asking the public to take the challenge of running, walking or cycling 30km this month.

"Or organise any fundraiser around the number 30, what a great way to get fit after Christmas!" they said.

Earlier this year, Purple House learned that the home they have had for years was no longer fit for purpose and they needed to move out. They say that they had also outgrown the space and say that it's time to find somewhere new.

"We need your support to help make our vision of the creation of a permanent Community Based Cancer Support Centre of Excellence, a reality.

"Somewhere for children to play with other kids who have lost mammy or daddy, granny or grandad, or who are living with cancer in their family. Somewhere for parents, children and loved ones to attend counselling sessions, sit in a beautiful garden with new friends, enjoy the relaxing therapy of a massage, or simply have a private room where they can grieve in peace.

"Luckily, we have found somewhere new to live. We can't share the details just yet as it's

going through the sale process, but it's bigger, and it will mean we can help more people. Best of all, it means we have a permanent space in the heart of your community."

The new permanent Centre will provide: More private rooms for counselling and therapies; A specially-designed cancer rehabilitation gym and recreational area; A dedicated children's cancer therapeutic and family support area; Dedicated rooms for cancer survivorship and education

programmes; A much bigger drop-in space, offering cancer support and information at a time that suits families; A garden where families can spend precious time together making memories. Register your 30km challenge at [www.purplehouse.ie](http://www.purplehouse.ie) or by phoning 012866966. Members of the public can also Buy A Purple Brick for the new Centre at [purplehouse.ie](http://purplehouse.ie). Everyone who buys a brick will have their name placed in the new therapeutic garden forevermore.

## Slightly Less Ado About Nothing

Temple Carrig School presents a drama play - Slightly LESS Ado about Nothing - an abridged version of one of Shakespeare's favourite comedies. It will be performed in the Whale Theatre on Friday, 17th January.

The town of Messina in Italy is thrown into a state of wild excitement with the visit of the Prince, Don Pedro, and his army on the way back from the war. Love is in the air, but not for local girl Beatrice and one of the Prince's officers, Benedick, who despise each other with a passion that surely can't be quenched? A Jazz band that will bookend the evening with 5 or 6 short song/comedy performances. Two singers will be Kay Lynch who is a professional soprano who toured with Riverdance for years and Chris Holland who sang in Les Mis in the Westend. A night of silliness, song and, of course the play. Organised and compered for the evening will be Liam Andrews transition year student of Temple Carrig School and all in aid of The Mustard Seed foundation.

Friday 17th January 2020 at 7.30pm Tickets €10 . See [www.whaletheatre.ie](http://www.whaletheatre.ie) or call the booking office on 01 2010550

## Bray Camera Club 2020 Photography Exhibition

The Bray Camera Club members exhibition is currently on display in the Signal Arts Centre until Sunday 19th January.

Since its foundation in 1971, Bray Camera Club has provided a forum for its members (an eclectic mix of amateurs, professionals and competition prize-winners) to learn from and support one another in improving their photographic skills and developing their creativity. The Club members use a variety of photography equipment to collect images - from mobile phones, to compact cameras and digital SLRs, to film and large format cameras.

The Club's photography range incorporates all photographic disciplines: abstract, street, wildlife, landscape, studio, close-up and portrait photography are all explored. Whenever the Club presents its work to the public, all members are encouraged to display the best of their photography and with a wide variety of photographic disciplines being showcased, this exhibition is sure to appeal to anyone with an interest in photography or even just a curious eye.



The Forde family at the New Year's Day swim in Arklow

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# Wicklow Hospice transfers to Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services

## Doors scheduled to open at new care facility in Q2

Responsibility for Wicklow Hospice passed last Thursday from Wicklow Hospice Foundation to Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services (OLH&CS), bringing it under the management and governance of OLH&CS, ahead of its official opening later this month.

Wicklow Hospice will be the first specialist palliative care facility in County Wicklow, providing in-patient care to those with life-limiting conditions. Coming under the governance of OLH&CS, it joins the 200-bed facility in Harold's Cross and the 12-bed facility at Blackrock in Dublin, as part of the largest provider of specialist palliative care in Ireland.

Wicklow Hospice will provide 15 in-patient public beds and specialist Community Palliative Care services across the county (excluding West Wicklow, which comes under St. Brigid's Hospice in Kildare).

The facility at Magheramore has been developed as a result of the work undertaken by the Wicklow Fundraising Foundation over the last ten years, with the 3.5 acre site kindly donated

by the Columban sisters. The HSE has delegated responsibility for its management to OLH&CS, as a section 38 facility. The HSE will meet the operational costs of the facility and fundraising for capital costs and enhancements for patients and families will be driven by OLH&CS.

Chief Executive of Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services (OLH&CS), Audrey Houlihan said; "We are delighted to welcome Wicklow Hospice into the OLH&CS family. As the facility comes under our management, I would like to pay heartfelt tribute to the people of Wicklow and the Wicklow Hospice Foundation, for getting the facility to this point. It is a testament to every person who took part in the many fundraising projects that Wicklow

now has a facility of this calibre, which will be used by generations to come."

Chair of Wicklow Hospice Foundation, Sean Dorgan said; "After many years, and loyal support from the people of Wicklow, the doors of the Wicklow Hospice will soon open and we are very happy to hand the responsibility for the management and governance of the facility to OLH&CS, one of the oldest and largest specialist palliative care providers in the country. We are delighted to have realised our vision and we look forward to the development of Wicklow Hospice in response to local needs."

Recruitment for positions at Wicklow Hospice will commence in the coming weeks. Applications will be invited for a range of roles and will be pub-

lished on [www.olh.ie](http://www.olh.ie) and on OLH&CS social media channels.

Members of the public are invited to public open days on Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th January with tours of the facility taking place from 11-3. All are welcome.

Our Lady's Hospice in Harold's Cross was established in 1879 by the Congregation of the Religious Sisters of Charity. The Congregation was founded in Dublin by Mary Aikenhead in 1815, in response to the grinding poverty pervading the city. The Congregation's response to the needs of the people was inspired by their motto - Caritas Christi Urget Nos - the love of Christ empowers us.

To find out more about Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services, visit [www.olh.ie](http://www.olh.ie), Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or YouTube.



Pictured in Wicklow Hospice at Magheramore are Audrey Housihan, Chief Executive of Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services (OLH&CS), and Sean Dorgan, Chair of the Wicklow Hospice Foundation. The hospice will open under the management of OLH&CS, the largest provider of specialist palliative care in Ireland.

## Go ahead given for 25 apartments at Albert Avenue

Wicklow County Council has granted permission for 25 apartments and a café at 5 Albert Avenue, Bray.

The development will consist of 8 one-bed apartments, and 17 two-bedroom apartments. Access for commercial, emergency and residential vehicles will be through the main entrance off Albert Avenue.

The existing warehouses on the 0.274 hectare site, adjoining Bray Dart Station, will be demolished. The application was lodged by Esther Maloney.

The Warehouses are occupied by Bray Building Supplies and Bray Self Storage.

Bray Building Supplies lodged a submission objecting to the development, arguing that they occupy the property under a Commercial Letting and are entitled to a 35 year Lease with five-year rent reviews.

Cullen Tyrell & O'Beirne solicitors, made the submission on behalf of Bray Building Supplies, stating that "our clients objection is based on the fact that the Applicant does not have possession of Unit 2, 5 Albert Avenue, which forms part of the planning Application."

The Council's Planner's Report stated that "As per the Development Management Guidelines, it is not a matter for the planning authority to resolve civil disputes regarding title to land or premises or rights over land. Section 34(13) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) states, a person is not entitled solely by reason of a permission to carry out any development. The application form indicates that the applicant is the owner of the lands. An advisory note could be attached to any permission."

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Cllr. Jennifer  
**WHITMORE**

Your Social Democrats Representative for Wicklow

### Priority Areas

- Making Wicklow a leader on **climate change and biodiversity**
- **Better public transport** for communities and commuters
- A new deal for families on **work-life balance and childcare**
- Progressive **Women's Healthcare**
- An **education** system that brings out the best in all our children
- **Affordable housing** that builds community

### About Jennifer

- Party **Spokesperson for Children**
- **Chair** of Climate & Biodiversity Action Committee, Wicklow CoCo
- BSc **Ecology**, post grad **Environmental Law**
- 20 years **international** experience in Environmental management and Law & Policy
- **Track record** of getting things done

**WHITMORE WORKING  
FOR WICKLOW**

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- 📷 @WhitmoreJen





A digital impression of the completed Main Street façade

## Work starts on Bray Main Street façade

The work has started on the old façade on Main Street to incorporate it in to the new Florentine/Bray Town Centre entrance.

Speaking on the matter, Cllr Steven Matthews, Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District, said "Following my many requests, the developer, Oakmount agreed to preserve as far as possible this heritage façade.

"When we met initially, a few years ago to discuss the Florentine project I asked the design team to retain the façade. It was suggested that it may not be feasible or structurally possible to do so but it would be considered. I was subsequently informed that it would not be retained in the overall project.

"Following one of our progress reports and the announcement that work was to be carried out on Main street frontage I asked again that Oakmount would preserve as far as possible the original frontage. It now appears that we are going to be able to retain most of the original façade and this will be weaved into the new design. A lot of credit for this needs to go to our council management in Bray Municipal District. I asked the management to request the developer to protect and preserve this structure and they have managed this request successfully.

"Our built heritage and beautiful Victorian building stock is important to our town for many reasons. I have always fought for our architectural heritage, unfortunately we lost the battle to protect St Paul's Lodge on Herbert Road but in this case we have been successful in protecting a small piece of our Main Street."

**Wicklow County Council's Arts Office is inviting applications for the following funding streams in 2020:**

- Individual Artist Support Scheme
- Arts groups / Organisations Award Scheme
- Arts Festival Award Scheme

Application forms may be downloaded from  
[www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie) under Arts Office.

Closing Date for Receipt of Applications is  
**Thursday 27th February at 12 NOON**

### Return to:

Arts Office (Bursaries 2020), Wicklow County Council, Bray Municipal District, Civic Plaza, Main Street, Bray, County Wicklow  
Emailed or late applications will not be accepted.

There is a funding clinic to discuss making an application to the INDIVIDUAL ARTIST Support Scheme on January 18th at Mermaid Arts Centre.

INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS may book on

<https://www.mermaidartscentre.ie/whats-on/events/wicklow-county-arts-office-funding-clinic>



# He stepped out and he stepped in again!

There was surprise in north Wicklow politics last week when it emerged that Fianna Fáil local election candidate, Saran Fogarty, had deserted the party and joined the Greens.

Saran ran for Fianna Fáil in the Bray West area (Kilmac/Enniskerry) and had been championed by Deputy Stephen Donnelly. Unfortunately, he missed out in getting elected and the seat went to Rory O'Connor (former Fianna Fáil member and great grandson of former Taoiseach Seán Lemass), who ran as an independent when he was deprived of running for the party. However, Fogarty was barely a week in the Greens when he exited them.

In a statement to *Wicklow Times* he said "I have decided to withdraw my membership of the Green Party, for now. It is my hope that I will re-join after the forthcoming General Election. My reason is simple: I genuinely want Stephen Donnelly to be re-elected and as he's a member of Fianna Fáil I've discovered that I wouldn't be able to canvass for him, whilst being involved with another political party. Stephen is one of the few, if not the only, politician in the country with a plan to fix the health service. He's already spent years working in health system transformation in the UK and his experience would be

help get him as many other votes as possible".

Stephen Donnelly told *Wicklow Times* "Saran is canvassing with me in Bray at the moment and will be doing so as part of the team right through the election. He has always been very interested in environmental issues and in Trinity has been getting more involved. I know he's interested in dedicating what political / activism time he has fully towards climate action, and as such is looking at the Greens."

Pictured below is a photo Sarán posted in November 2019 during the Dublin Fingal bye-election but was deleted by him following the revelation of

FF Senator Lorraine Clifford Lee's offensive tweets. Senator Lorraine Clifford Lee got the nomination 'unilaterally' over local Bray man and Swords based Cllr. Darragh Butler the nephew of former Wicklow TD Ciarán Murphy and son of long time Bray Fianna Fáil members Phil and Fidelma Butler.

During the local elections the then Fianna Fáil candidates Sarán Fogarty and Chris Walsh held a Cross-Party Donation Drive for Women's Sanitary Products (Period Poverty) in Bray on Friday 26th April, 2019 at which Senator Lorraine Clifford Lee was guest of honour.



Stephen Donnelly TD

invaluable in this country. He's definitely got my vote and I'll be doing my best to



Pictured is Saran Fogarty, with Senator Lorraine Clifford Lee, Niall Collins and Niamh Traynor on the canvas trail in the recent Bye-election in Fingal.

## WHITMORE ANNOUNCES GENERAL ELECTION BID

Social Democrats Councillor Jennifer Whitmore has confirmed her intention to contest the upcoming general election, speaking at the launch of her election campaign at the weekend in Greystones.

Cllr Whitmore said: "I have been a local public representative now for six years, and it's a job that I have been honoured to do.

"I had never intended to get into politics, but after spending over a decade overseas in Australia and Scandinavia, when I returned to Ireland, I saw the potential for our incredible county of Wicklow.

"We live in a beautiful county and country, but there are basic issues that are holding us back. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, but we need to apply best international practice to the areas of transport, environment, housing, health and childcare to make Wicklow a better place for our communities, and serve as an example nationally for other counties.

"I am running in this election with the intention of winning a seat in Dáil

Eireann, as I believe that this is the best way that I can contribute to bringing about these necessary changes, and deliver on these objectives for the people of Wicklow.

"For me, it's important that public representatives are focused on delivering results, and establish a track record of getting things done.

"Over the past six years, as a full-time Councillor, I have worked with community groups to deliver an extensive number of projects, such as the Greystones Inclusive South Beach Playground, primary and secondary schools, sports and community facilities, and environmental projects across the county.

"I am also Chairperson for the newly established Strategic Policy Committee on Climate and Biodiversity Action for Wicklow County, and



Cllr Jennifer Whitmore

I'm using that forum to drive policy and change through the Council.

"Nationally, as the Social Democrats Party Spokesperson for Children, I was at the forefront of delivering national legislation through the Dáil that extended unpaid parental leave to help parents juggle work and family commitments in September of last year.

"My professional background is in environ-

mental law, fisheries and ecology, and I worked for many years in Australia, developing legislation and policy for the New South Wales Government. I want to utilise that expertise to address the climate and biodiversity crisis that we are facing, and I am determined to make Wicklow a leader in climate action.

"However, we also face a housing, health and affordability crisis in this country. We need politicians that are capable of implementing effective, practical, evidence-based policy solutions to our problems - across a wide range of issues."

Whitmore concluded "I believe that I have the expertise internationally and professionally, and a work ethic and ability to get things done, to be a very effective TD for Wicklow at a national level."

# END TO SECRET DEALS

(continued from p 1)

publicly-owned land - to the Council. Accordingly, I do not see how disclosing the records would constitute a breach of a duty of confidence provided for under the contract which is owed to a person other than an FOI body or a service provider.

"FOI law has been in force for over 20 years. The Council publicly tendered for the development of publicly-owned land. In the circumstances, I cannot accept that the parties could reasonably have had a mutual expectation of confidentiality over the entire agreement which governs that development...I also see that the tender documentation notified tenderers that the Council was subject to the FOI Act and that as a result, tenderers should identify clearly any aspect of their submission which was either commercially sensitive or confidential in nature. In summary, I do not consider that this blanket confidentiality clause could be enforced so as to oust the application of FOI to the entirety of an agreement by an FOI body which publicly procured a developer for the purpose of developing publicly-owned land."

She also examined another argument the council put forward: "During the review process, the Council claimed that the records are also exempt under section 32(1)(a)(i). It says that there is a Garda investigation of allegations relating to the Council. It says: 'the investigation into matters relating to Wicklow County Council includes all matters and agreements surrounding the Florentine Centre which relates to this agreement'."

"It submits that disclosing the records now would interfere in the progress of a live investigation and risk prejudicing both the individuals involved and a fair trial. It submits that it would leave any possible prosecution unsafe because of a potential challenge to a lack of fair procedures.

"A mere assertion of an expectation of harm is not sufficient. The actual content of the records is important and consideration should be given as to what the records actually reveal. However, in its submissions, the Council does not demonstrate how releasing these

particular records is expected to cause the harm identified or why the harm could reasonably be expected to occur.

"In short, it has failed to link the content of the records with the nature of the alleged harm. I cannot see from the content of the agreement itself what connection there might be between the information in it and prejudice or impairment of the kinds envisaged by section 32(1)(a)(i). Even if the records relate to the Garda investigation, as the Council says they do, this does not, in and of itself, establish a link between their release and the harms envisaged in section 32."

Concluding she says "I believe that there is a strong public interest in transparency and accountability around this agreement, which involves the development and disposal of the asset of an FOI body. Secondly, in deciding what information serves that public interest, I would distinguish between on the one hand, the final agreement between the Council and the developer to develop the site and on the other hand, commercial details relating to third parties.

"Thirdly, the amount payable by the developer to the Council has been disclosed in Council minutes, as have the basic requirements of the tender to develop the land, in the tender documentation. Finally, the Council advised this Office that the development is on schedule for practical completion by year end. A recent media report indicates that completion is more likely to occur in February or March 2020.

"I believe that any potential prejudice to the developer would diminish with the passage of time and that the Council's fears as regards the advancement of commercial activity on the site are unlikely to materialise as a direct consequence of the release of the agreement at this time.

"On balance, I believe that the public interest would be better served by granting access to the records.

"I find that the Council was not justified in refusing access to this information under section 36(1)(b) of the FOI Act."

## Upgrade works address odour problems at Wastewater facility

**John Brady TD has welcomed confirmation that works to upgrade the odour Control System at the Murrough Wastewater Pumping Station in Wicklow Town has been completed.**

This work has been carried out on foot of a complaint Deputy Brady lodged with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in relation to foul odours emanating from the Sewage Treatment works.

Speaking after receiving confirmation that the upgrade to the odour

control system has been completed Deputy Brady said "I'm glad that after a number of months the work to upgrade the odour control system at the Murrough Wastewater facility in Wicklow Town has been carried out. This was one of the main recommendations from an EPA inves-

tigation into serious odour problems at the Murrough wastewater facility.

"In July last I lodged a complaint with the EPA in relation with the serious ongoing foul odours coming from the wastewater facilities in Wicklow Town. This complaint was subsequently fol-

lowed up by inspections by the EPA, both the pumping station and the Treatment plant were inspected twice. On foot of those inspections the EPA compiled a full report and Irish Water had been instructed to carry out a number of actions to address the serious problem. One of those actions was to upgrade the odour control system. Irish Water has now confirmed to me that the work has now been completed.

"Further smoke tests to check out the existing building odour seals are also to be undertaken. A number of changes have also been made to work practices on site in an attempt to address the risk of odours."

Deputy Brady concluded "The issue of the serious ongoing foul odours coming from the wastewater facilities in Wicklow Town has been ongoing now for a number of years. At times it gets so bad locals have to leave their own homes.

"I welcome these works that have taken place which I hope will help resolve the ongoing issue of foul odour coming from the facilities. I will continue to work with the local community to ensure that the serious problem is resolved," concluded Deputy Brady.



Leah Clarke from Wicklow Town was conferred as a Member of Accounting Technicians Ireland (ATI) at a ceremony in the Talbot Hotel, Stillorgan, with her father Liam. Leah also received her Diploma for Accounting Technicians.

## Harris secures over €800,000 for major refurbishment of Wicklow Swimming Pool

**Wicklow Minister Simon Harris has announced that he has secured Government funding of over €800,000 today for Wicklow Swimming Pool.**

This funding will enable a total refurbishment of the swimming pool including changing rooms and a gym.

Speaking to the *Wicklow Times*, Minister Harris said, "I am delighted to have worked with the community to secure the funding for the Wicklow swimming pool. I have no doubt this major investment will make a real difference for this important public facility in Wicklow Town and will benefit so many people and families in our community.

"I look forward to the refurbishment now progressing and to continuing to work closely with local communities and groups across our county to deliver investment for our sports and community facilities," concluded Minister Harris.



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Eire Og Greystones young musicians performing at Tesco, Greystones; Emily Farrell, Tom Farrell, Jack Creamer & Julianne Creamer. Pic: John McGowan

## Seals at Bride's Head likely to be protected until April

Wicklow County Council has said that it is amenable to the suggestion by Seal Rescue Ireland that Bride's Head beach be kept closed to the public until April to protect a colony of seals.

Last year the beach was closed during mating season between August and December however executive director of Seal Rescue Ireland Melanie Croce has said that she believes the ban should be extended to April. Ms Croce is reported as saying that once pupping season is over, grey seals start to shed their coats and do so until the end of April. During this process the seals come to land and don't eat or swim, they just rest. If even one person enters the beach during this period, all the seals will leave.

Ms Croce said she did not believe the extended closure would be an inconvenience to the public as there is another bathing beach closer to the carpark. Wicklow County Council told *Wicklow Times*, "The Council is keen to ensure that the Grey Seals at Brides Head beach are protected from disturbance and is amenable to the proposal by SRI to extend the restrictions on public access to the beach until the end of April. Advice is currently being sought from National

Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) on this matter.

"Prior to the erection of signage in August 2019, there were anecdotal reports of dogs and people approaching seals and causing disturbance. In response to this, the Council sought advice from both Seal Rescue Ireland and NPWS. Wicklow Municipal District restricted public access to Brides Head Beach on a temporary basis and erected signs explaining why.

"The following wording was used on signs: 'Warning. Grey Seal pupping and resting site ahead. Please do not go on to the beach August - December'. Seals are legally protected under the Wildlife Act 1976. It is illegal and dangerous to approach resting seals or to allow dogs to do so. Seals may abandon this area if disturbed by contact with humans or dogs. Help us to protect the special wildlife on the Cliff Walk. Observe seals only from a distance and try to keep out of sight at all times. Never allow dogs to bark at or approach seals."

# Council signs Climate Action Charter

Wicklow County Council has signed the Climate Action Charter which commits the Council to playing its part in tackling Climate Change. The Charter is an agreement between Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Mr Richard Bruton TD; Minister for State for Natural Resources, Community Affairs and Digital Development, Mr Sean Canney TD and Wicklow County Council.

"I am proud to sign this important charter committing Wicklow County Council to play our part in tackling Climate Change", said Cllr Irene Winters, Cathaiorleach, Wicklow Council, adding: "We stand ready to lead on climate action and have huge ambition for what the local authority sector can achieve with government support."

Cllr Jennifer Whitmore, Chairperson of the Climate and Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee (SPC), said: "This Charter gives Wicklow County Council direction and sets ambitious targets for actions to be delivered over the coming years. It will set the tone for a busy work plan for the Council's newest SPC".

Wicklow County Council Chief Executive, Mr Frank Curran, commented: "Climate change is the defining issue of our time. It requires a serious and urgent response. Wicklow County Council recognises that we have a duty to capitalise on our unique position to lead lasting change for the County."

The Charter was developed in consultation with the local government sector and commits

signatories to a number of objectives to address the climate challenge and advocate for climate action and behavioural change among citizens.

It reflects the extensive work Councils are already undertaking and have planned in the area of climate action. Of significant note, all Councils published Climate Adaptation strategies that set out the measures each will take to respond effectively to climate change and to enhance resilience to its impact.

Councils anticipated and planned for the enhanced role now falling to them and have positioned the sector over the last number of years to build on the expertise and competencies they have to work with all sectors of the community to provide the local leadership necessary to bring about real and meaningful change.

All Councils are thinking ambitiously and creatively about what they can do to have real impact.

The Climate Charter is one of the measures included in the government's Climate Action Plan to Tackle Climate Breakdown, which names local authorities as Lead Partners in seven actions

and as Key Stakeholders in a further 22.

Among the wide-ranging actions required of local authorities under the Government Climate Action Plan are to:

- Undertake deep retrofits of local authority buildings and social housing stock;
- Develop and implement cycle network plans for all major cities;
- Develop a sustainable transport plan for all cities with a population exceeding 75,000;
- Climate-proof development plans and deliver National Planning Framework objectives for compact growth;
- Deliver technical and behavioural change training to local authority staff;
- Support the development of one-stop-shops for residential and commercial energy efficiency;
- Develop an online checklist for companies to measure their sustainability;
- Manage low emission zones including through pricing policies and restricted access;
- Roll out Electric Vehicle charging network and deploy electric vehicles within council fleets;
- Develop plans for 'decarbonising zones'; and,

- Implement a new National Waste Prevention Programme and Regional Waste Management Plans. Councils are already undertaking significant climate mitigation and adaptation measures from within existing resources;
- All councils have prepared and will implement Climate Adaptation Strategies.

- Four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) have been established as a shared local authority service to support capacity within the sector and act as a catalyst for wider change.

- Climate and environmental sustainability are key considerations for councils in their strategic planning and day-to-day actions across all service areas, most significantly in planning, transport, housing, lighting, waste management, and economic development.

- Councils are leading the way on electric vehicle charging points, walking and cycling routes, waste management, biodiversity and other key areas.

- Councils are to the forefront in responding to extreme weather events caused by climate change such as the flooding, storms and drought of recent years.

## Model United Nations conference to be held in Wicklow

Wicklow is taking the lead in an educational activity proving popular in schools and universities across the world. A Model United Nations event for first and second-year students is being organised by Educate Together Secondary School Wicklow on Friday 27 March taking place at the school and in the Glenview Hotel.

This innovation by Wicklow's newest secondary school is turning into a truly national event with schools from Galway, Cork and Dublin joining up to experience the interesting skill set promoted by this activity - research skills, drafting documents, critical thinking, teamwork, deliberation, negotiation, conflict resolution and leadership skills.

Students will roleplay various roles from the United Nations conferences - the secretariat roles, country delegates, administrators, the United Nations Press Office, the Security Council and presidential roles in various assemblies.

This is a complex event in terms of preparation, but the result is that learning springs to life as students simulate debates on major world issues from the per-

spectives of a diverse number of countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Sweden and the Russian Federation. Students will represent the point of view of those countries in debates on topics like climate change, terrorism, human rights and nuclear disarmament.

A number of training sessions are being organised in Wicklow and Dublin in the weeks ahead to help students prepare. They will learn to take effective notes, listen actively, show empathy and develop the ability to see issues from multiple perspectives. The objectives of Model United Nations are to help students grow in confidence, build their persuasive skills and develop their ability to show grace under pressure.

It is also a way to learn about current affairs, to network with students from other schools and to build public speaking skills. This new Model United Nations event includes even more opportunities than the conference itself to try different speaking activities. For example, one feature will be a declamation competition where students give their own versions of speeches from films or from history - a challenge for students who want to further enhance their public speaking development.



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Leilani Philips, Senuri Wickramaratne, and Patricia Purina from St. Mary's College, Arklow, at the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition in the RDS.

## National Learning Network Bray: Training for Education and Employment

If you are out of work, had a illness, set back, need some support, have a disability or if you left school early and you are looking to get a job or qualifications and further education then you might be interested in calling into the regular National Learning Network Open Mornings.

You will see first-hand the training courses they have on offer. The centre in Beechwood Close (beside the Recycling Centre), Boghall Road in Bray opens its doors every Wednesday from 11.00am -to 1.00pm and people are invited to come along to meet current students and instructors to learn more about their training courses. It's a great opportunity to see first-hand what's involved in the courses and to see the additional supports that are on offer such as education supports, psychologist, and peer support to help you to a new start!

The courses, funded by the Kildare & Wicklow Education and Training Board, offered here are:

- Vocational Skills Foundation, which is aimed at early school leavers, and leads to a QQI Level 3 in Employability Skills,

- Job Seeking - Employer Based Training, where the focus is on getting a job and also leads to a QQI

Level 4 in Employment Skills

- Skills for Education & Employment, which is aimed at those who want to go onto further education or enter/reenter the workforce. It allows students to gain a QQI Level 4 qualification and a wide range of employment and business skills. This is done in an encouraging environment that promotes wellness and increases confidence.

- IT and Business Administration which leads to a QQI Level 5 in Information Processing and progression to Further Education as well as Employment

All of the courses offer work placement. For more information, please see their ad in this section, call 01 282 9643 or get the latest updates on Twitter @NLNWicklow, www.facebook.com/NLNWicklow. Don't forget the Open Mornings take place every Wednesday from 11.00am to 1.00pm in the centre on the Boghall Road, Bray

## Students dreaming of Croke Park final as Student Enterprise Programme is launched

Secondary students across Wicklow are dreaming of a Final appearance in Croke Park in 2020 as the Local Enterprise Offices' Student Enterprise Programme for 2019 / 2020 was launched.

The programme, which is Ireland's largest business and enterprise programme for second level students, was launched by Pat Breen, T.D., Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection and rugby star Josh Van Der Flier, Wicklow native. Van der Flier is the Student Enterprise Programme Ambassador for 2019 / 2020 and a former participant in the programme while a student in Wesley College in Dublin.

Over 1000 students from 16 secondary schools in Wicklow are taking part in this year's Programme in the hope of making the National Finals in Croke Park on the 1st May. The enterprise education initiative, funded by the Government of Ireland through Enterprise Ireland and delivered by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices in local authorities throughout the country, saw over 25,000 students from 515 secondary schools across the country take part in 2018 / 2019.

Wicklow has a strong track record in the Student Enterprise Programme. Our students have brought

home National titles to Wicklow in Intermediate and Senior categories in recent years. Cillian Scott, a pupil of Colaiste Chill Mhantain, Wicklow Town, was National winner of the Intermediate category in 2017. Luke Byrne, from Colaiste Craobh Abhann, Kilcoole, developed a simple silicone band called Headphone Helpers and took the Senior title in the National competition in 2016.

This year's Programme will see two new pilot competitions across the Junior, Intermediate and Senior categories. The first, the "My Entrepreneurial Journey" pilot will be run in the Junior and Intermediate cycle and is open to any students involved in wider competition. It requires them to map out the life of a successful entrepreneur and what it takes to be your own boss.

In the Senior category there is a new "Most Creative Business Idea" section. Under the theme "Go Green: Be Sustainable" students can push their most innovative ideas, without having to produce a product or service and it is open to all

senior students taking part in the wider competition. Head of Enterprise, Vibeke Delahunt said; "The aim of the Student Enterprise Programme is to instil that little bit of entrepreneurship in every student that takes part. The Local Enterprise Offices work closely with the schools to help spark their ideas but also ground them in what will help them make sales. These skills are invaluable and to see the

amazing ideas, year on year, many of which have become viable businesses, is inspirational not only to their fellow students but to anyone involved in business and entrepreneurship."

The Student Enterprise Programme also has a new website at StudentEnterprise.ie, which will feature regular blogs and houses a full range of Student Enterprise resources.



Cillian Scott, a pupil of Colaiste Chill Mhantain, Wicklow Town, was the national winner of the Intermediate category in 2017

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- Skills for Education & Employment
- Vocational Skills
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Job seekers under 26 may receive a training allowance. These courses are funded by the KWETB. Eligibility criteria apply.



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Wicklow RNLI held its annual Service of Remembrance on New Year's Day in memory of all deceased lifeboat volunteer members, sailors from the town and all those associated with the sea from Wicklow. The ceremony began with a short religious prayer conducted by Fr. Donal Roche and Rev Jack Kinkead, who blessed the flowers and wreaths. After the blessing, Coxswain Nick Keogh and the lifeboat crew took the floral tributes out into the bay and placed them on the water. A minute's silence was also held in memory of all the former members of Wicklow lifeboat who have risked everything to save the lives of others ever since the RNLI Lifeboat station was established in 1857. Pictured are Graham Fitzgerald, Coxswain Nick Keogh and Peter Byrne

## Proposed footbridge over Avonmore river

Wicklow County Council is proposing to construct a new suspension footbridge in Rathdrum over the Avonmore River.

The purpose of the bridge would be to connect both the Jubilee Way and Avonmore Way walking routes. The proposed location for the new bridge is to the north of Rathdrum Town, just north of Rathdrum Rugby Club and south of the Vale of Clara.

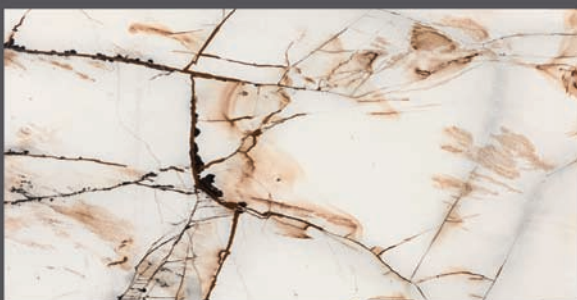
The project design has been developed through consultation with NPWS and Coillte. It is hoped that the completed project will provide a recreational amenity for both walkers and cyclists, providing access to Rathdrum town from the woodland.

According to the Council's Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, the proposed works will take 26 weeks to complete. The start date has not yet been confirmed as a contractor has yet to be appointed. However the Council is hoping for a March 2020 start date, with work in the river itself starting in May and completed before the end of September 2020 to comply with fisheries restrictions.

A submission or observation in relation to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development would be situated, may be made, in writing, to Caroline Fox, Administrative Officer, Community, Cultural and Social Development, Wicklow County Council, Station Road, Wicklow Town, or email ccsadmin@wicklowcoco.ie before 4:30 p.m. on Friday 7th February 2020.

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# 'Wicklow needs a Transport Taskforce'

Social Democrats General Election Candidate, Cllr. Jennifer Whitmore has called for a Transport Taskforce to be established for County Wicklow to urgently address the public transport needs of the county.

Cllr Whitmore said "Every single one of us in County Wicklow is impacted by a lack of regular, efficient, affordable public transport, whether you commute daily to work in Dublin, want to easily visit your local shops, or want a way to get your children to school and back without having to drive them there. Over the last couple of months, we have had a number of public consultations on public transport in the County, including the N11/M11 consultation, the BusConnects plan and the N81. However, it would appear that no-one is taking a holistic view of our public transport needs across the county.

"It is clear that there is no single solution to the

transport chaos that we experience in Wicklow. It has taken years and years of underinvestment by successive Governments to get us to the position we are currently in, and it is going to take a focused and concerted effort to get us out of it. It will involve improvements in our rail line, our commuter bus service, our community bus service and our roads infrastructure. It will also take a focus on providing shared working spaces and local employment, to enable demand reduction.

"It is time for joined up thinking on this problem. I believe that a Transport Taskforce that sets an ambitious target of reduction in car usage, applies both short-term and longer term goals and that



Cllr Jennifer Whitmore

brings together all key agencies to look at how that will be achieved is the only way to get the results we need quickly. This Taskforce will have to involve all relevant agencies, including Transport Infrastructure Ireland, the National Transport Authority, Bus Eireann, Irish Rail, Dublin Bus, Local Link,

Wicklow County Council amongst others.

"This is one of the biggest problems facing Co. Wicklow at the moment as it is impacting on every aspect of our lives, our environment, our communities and our economy. I worked overseas in Norway and Australia for many years and have seen firsthand how other countries get this right - it is possible, it just needs vision and political will.

"I have written to Shane Ross TD, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, to ask that he establish this Taskforce immediately. I have also written to all Wicklow TDs to ask that we all work together for the benefit of the county. It's time to get this right."

## New Year - Newtown

In 2018 it was announced that half a million euro was to be allocated to seven County Wicklow projects under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, funded by the Department of Rural & Community Development.

Blessington, Hollywood, Newcastle, Newtownmountkennedy, Rathdrum, Tinahely, and Wicklow town were to benefit from the scheme, which was established to enhance rural towns and villages and help to stimulate economic development.

Welcoming the funding announcement for Co Wicklow, Minister Simon Harris said the Town and Village Renewal Scheme was a key part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development. "It is vital that we are focusing on supporting and developing our rural towns and villages in Co Wicklow," he said.

Newtownmountkennedy was allocated €120,488 for public realm works. The Tidy Towns group along with the general community were to fund 10% of the budget for a works programme that would be carried out during 2019.

Newtownmountkennedy Tidy Towns and Newtown 2050 voluntary groups ran a Strictly Come Dancing Event on the 21st April 2018 to raise funds to support the necessary village environmental improvement works.

The proceeds of almost €50,000 were divided equally between the two supporting groups. The combined funds will be used for their stated purpose of improvement of village and area amenities for all. The Newtownmountkennedy & District Tidy Towns are already supporting the present Council sponsored Village Renewal Scheme, as well as effecting many other ongoing town beautification and improvement initiatives of their own.

Residents and business owners were contacted by Paul Kavanagh, the then Chairperson of Newtownmountkennedy & District Tidy Towns, to inform them of the changes to be made on the main street. Works commenced in earnest in the Autumn of 2019. What has been completed so far are:

- \* Upgrades and improvements to certain footpaths.
- \* Replacement of wooden telephone poles with steel poles and telephone wires to be placed underground.
- \* Street lamp bulbs have been changed to LED type lighting to reduce power consumption.
- \* Planting of 12 upright oak trees along the southern end of the main street.
- \* A defibrillator has been installed at the southern end of the town beside the Henry and Rose Takeaway shop. Another one is planned for the northern end of the town at the Post Office.

However there is still much to be accomplished, such as: Storm water drains will be checked and cleared and repaired as necessary; A new 2 way lollipop crossing will be installed at the T junction at the Monteith

Memorial and St. Joseph's church; the existing pedestrian lights will be removed; A further crossing point is being considered at the Parkview Hotel to enable safer crossing by pedestrians to get to the doctor's surgery on the corner and the Post Office, and for bus stop users too.

Line marking on the roads will be upgraded, as agreed with the traffic division of an Garda Síochána, and the possibility of new restricted limits on parking times on the main street is likely. Three positions for two Electric Vehicle charging points will be introduced and solar bins and ordinary bins will be installed at various points along the main street and 20 bicycle racks will be installed. Street furniture, including seating at the bus stops, will be upgraded or replaced as necessary. As part of their heritage, an old fashioned type phone box will be placed somewhere on the main street and will possibly be put to use as an online tourist information centre for the area.

If anyone has any questions on the Town & Village Renewal Scheme, please feel free to contact Newtownmountkennedy & District Tidy Towns Vice Chairman, Paul Kavanagh, c/o the Community Centre on 01-2810913 or email on new-towntidytown@gmail.com.



One of 12 upright oak trees planted along the southern end of the main street in Newtown

# PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT BIFE IS 'MADNESS'

The proposal to build a 1,000-student school on the grounds of the Bray Institute of Further Education site on Novara Road in Bray has been described as 'madness' by staff and management of the college. A campaign is being mounted by staff, management, students and local residents to oppose the plan by every means possible including the possibility of seeking a Judicial Review of any decisions.

It is claimed that if the school is located in BIFE grounds the BIFE Campus' Biodiversity Area would be destroyed with 500 mature trees being felled. Wicklow County Council has a preservation order on many of these trees.

Novara Avenue would effectively become a carpark from 8.30 to 9.30 and from 3.30 to 4.30 every day with hundreds of cars dropping students off. Bray town centre would also

become a no-go area at these times. Novara Avenue and the surrounding area would become a building site for up to 4 years with trucks and heavy machinery accessing and leaving the site.

The two new large 3 to 4 storey buildings would affect the light for a large number of residences nearby casting a shadow over their properties

BIFE staff and students coming from South

Wicklow and Wexford would have no parking facilities with only 30 parking places available for up to 2500 staff and students. Cars would be parked all over Novara and Sidminton Avenues and there would be no parking or turning area for BIFE's three large coaches.

There would be no playing pitches for BIFE's sports and horticulture courses and no proper playing pitches and play areas for the

new secondary school.

Critically adults and children would be sharing sports hall facilities and showers which is totally unacceptable

Karl Glynn-Finnegan, Director of Adult Education, Lecturer in Sociology and Psychology and Teachers Union of Ireland representative told *Wicklow Times* "When BIFE was originally built as St. Thomas' Secondary School the school catered for 650 students and the site as it stands was deemed appropriate for that number of students.

"Today BIFE caters for 1,000 day students and almost half as many night school students and now the Department has plans to demolish the existing building and build two 1,000 student schools on the campus.

"The proposed two four-storey blocks together with a large sports hall to the front of the site would see a significant reduction in green space and general facilities for students and under the new plan car parking spaces, (currently 240 spaces) would be reduced to just 30 meaning that a staff of up to 150 (including VTOS located off Bray Main



The proposed new campus layout for BIFE



BIFE's campus as it is currently

Street) and the hundreds of students and staff who travel from north Wexford and south Wicklow -who have no other public transport options- would be required to find parking along Novara Avenue, Sidminton Road and surrounding residential streets.

"This move would significantly restrict the future development of BIFE and would provide Educate Together with premises with similarly limited recreational facilities and parking and like BIFE no room

to expand further to respond to local needs.

"It should be stressed we fully support Educate Together's campaign for a new building and believe that the students and teachers, who are fellow members of the Teachers Union of Ireland 'deserve better than what the Department of Education is planning.

"We believe it is the worst case scenario for both parties and we both deserve better.

"There are other options (Ravensdale College) that will not

cause disruption to the local area, inconvenience students and deprive them of amenities, and inconvenience teachers in both schools.

"We want what's 'Best for Both' and this plan certainly is not 'Best for Either'. The Department of Education seems determined to progress this plan and has refused to meet with the BIFE Board of Management to discuss the matter. Now, BIFE students and staff are initiating a campaign to protect our campus and our future."

Fianna Fáil TD Stephen Donnelly said "The Government has put BIFE & NWETSS in an impossible situation. The solution should be to have these two fantastic educational facilities in their own lands, and that's what I've been calling for for nearly four years now.

"BIFE's plans for expansion are really exciting and will be a huge boost for Bray. And NWETSS desperately needs a new school. Both are possible, but the political will does not seem to be there."

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Ciaran Healy from 3rd Class in Moneystown National School is pictured holding his incredible homemade Viking shield which he made in conjunction with a class project on the Vikings

## Decision due soon on Kilmacanogue development

A decision is due to be made later this month on a planning application for a development beside Pluck's in Kilmacanogue.

Wicklow County Council is due to make the decision by January 23rd, on the application which was lodged by Clearwater Properties in June 2019 to develop a three-storey detached building beside Pluck's consisting of four apartments (first and second floor), restaurant and shops (ground floor), and two office suites (first floor). An existing outbuilding is to be demolished as part of the development and the existing carpark layout reconfigured. The Council requested more information on the application in August 2019, and received the additional information last month.

A submission objecting to the development has been made by Patricia Cronnelly and John Punch, who have expressed concerns about a potential traffic hazard, and argue that any proposed development in the area is premature since it is located within the constraints study area for the N11/M11 improvement scheme. They also say that the development would be detrimental to the character of the village. They argue that a development in keeping with the historical character of the village would be more appropriate. They also note the proximity of Kilmacanogue National School (400m away) to the proposed fast-food restaurant and the potential for increased litter.

## Avondale student examines link between music and road user perception levels

The recent 56th BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition hosted over 550 innovative and exciting projects from talented students across the country.

Wicklow's Brendan Conroy from Avondale Community College was among the hopeful entrants with his exhibit entitled 'Music To My Ears: A Statistical Analysis of the Effects of Earphones on a Road User's Perception', in the Social Behavioural Science Category.

The objective of the project was to investigate if using headphones negatively affected perception levels and put road users at risk of injury. Brendan explained that he was inspired by his siblings' recent attempts at learning to drive and by "numerous memes about people turning down the radio in order to see better and [he] decided to test if there was any scientific logic to this theory".

With the support of his Science teacher Aoife Sullivan, Brendan surveyed 100 students, and his research-based experiment revealed some interesting results. The 50% of participants who wore headphones and listened to either music or podcasts while engaging with an online hazard road test, recorded a reduction in acuity levels and were less aware of possible dangers and risks. In addition, it was also discovered that boys were more aware than girls while wearing headphones and that podcasts appeared to have impact-

ed perceptual levels less, although Brendan acknowledged this aspect of the research would benefit from further investigation.

As the RSA notes that driver distraction could pay a role in up to 30% of all road collisions in this country and could be a contributing factor in road fatalities and injuries, the importance of such investigations can therefore not be underestimated.

It is no surprise that An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and the keynote speaker, Physicist Professor Brian Cox commended all exhibitors on their creativity and excellence. With budding scientists like Brendan Conroy striving to improve both our knowledge and interactions with our environment, we can all be assured a better world lies ahead.

The 56th BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition took place last Wednesday to Friday. Students from 244 schools across the island descended on the RDS to set up their projects and begin to prepare for the days ahead.

The following projects from local schools entered: 'Is Humanity Becoming More Eco-Friendly?' (Presentation College Bray); Manual Horse Loading System (Colaiste Chraobh



Brendan Conroy from Avondale Community College, Rathdrum, with Pat Casey TD, and Cllr John Mullen at the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition in the RDS.

Abhann); Electric Paint - how much graphite is needed to heat your home? (St Gerard's); Music to my ears: A statistical analysis of the effects of earphones on a road user's perception (Avondale Community College); food waste lightbulb (St. David's); Indoor Generation - Can we reverse it? A statistical survey on the benefits of outdoor activities on young people (St Mary's College); Reduced timetable for children with special needs - are we proud of this as a country? (St Mary's College); Save the planet one flush at a time (St Mary's College); Marvellous Microbes and Mental Health - change your food to change your mood? (St

Mary's College); To investigate if vegetarianism is a healthier diet choice than an omnivorous diet (St. David's).

In a speech to a packed house of young scientists, An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar opened the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition. Speaking to the students, he expressed his admiration at the calibre and creativity of this year's projects. The topical nature of students' projects "suggests that change is coming", he said, encouraging students "to keep innovating, to keep creating and to keep using your imagination to create a better world."

The BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition is much more

than a competition - it is the experience of a lifetime for the students and teachers who take part. Designed to raise schools' engagement in the critical subjects of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), the Exhibition calls upon students aged 12-19 years from all over the island of Ireland to showcase innovative science and technology projects to approx. 50,000 visitors each year.

The BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition is supported by several valued partners including the Department of Education & Skills, Analog Devices, CISC, Perrigo, RTE and the Department of Education, Northern Ireland.



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Delegates representing Baltinglass schools Scoil Chonglais and Scoil Naomh Iosaif (L-R) Evan Fleming, Patricia Gurhy (Principal, Scoil Chonglais), Thomas Ahern (Teacher), Evie Paul, Michelle Hanafin (Teacher), Mairead Hennessy (Principal, Scoil Naomh Iosaif) and parent Maria Reino, at a Shared Learning Day held recently in Maynooth as part of the Teaching Council's BEACONS programme - Bringing Education Alive for our Communities on a National Scale.

Through BEACONS, the Teaching Council is leading a diverse group of stakeholders and people exploring new ways of supporting more and better conversations between teachers, parents and students at local community level. The goal is to develop a range of models that any school could choose from and adapt to their own needs, based on the emerging core principles of the programme. The intention for this work is to facilitate enhanced engagement between local communities and national consultative processes on issues of common interest and importance.

# A challenging year ahead for Wicklow hotels

Hotels and guesthouses in Wicklow are reporting a year of mixed performances for 2019, according to the results of the latest industry barometer from the Irish Hotels Federation (IHF).

Business sentiment amongst hotel and guest-house owners is continuing to fall with just over a third (35%) reporting a positive outlook for 2020, as the uncertainty over Brexit and the high cost of doing business take their toll and overseas visitor growth continues to slow down.

The latest CSO figures show only a 1.5% increase in overseas visitors to the end of November, compared to a 5.5% increase for the eleven month to end of November 2018.

While almost half of hoteliers (48%) reported an increase in business for the year, just slightly fewer (44%) reported a fall. Business levels from the domestic and US markets remain strong, with 48% of hoteliers reporting increases in the domestic market and 44% of hoteliers reporting increases in the US mar-

ket. However, the UK market continues to decline. Seven in ten hoteliers saw a drop in business from Great Britain this year, while over half reported a fall in business levels from Northern Ireland. The fallout from Brexit next year and the high cost of doing business remain key concerns for the sector with many highlighting the significant negative impact that escalating insurance costs and local authority rates are having on competitiveness.

Commenting on the results, Brian McNamara, Chair of the Wicklow branch of the IHF, said the Government must put more supports in place to assist tourism businesses. "We continue to face high costs of doing business, which have been compounded by the Government's decision to increase the tourism VAT in last year's Budget.

The threat to businesses posed by escalating insurance costs is well documented. Our members are also reporting significant pressure from rising local authority rates.

"The Government has to do more to tackle the costs that are stifling businesses. Tourism is a highly competitive business and these costs are making us less attractive as a destination. Decisive action is needed now to mitigate the impact this will have on tourism, especially the regions.

"Irish tourism has been one of the great success stories of the economy in recent years, supporting 270,000 jobs and promoting balanced regional growth across the country. With 70% of these jobs outside Dublin, it is a major contributor to rural economies, and regional tourism is most likely to be hardest hit by

Brexit and falls in visitor numbers. Here in Wicklow it supports 13,900 jobs and contributes some 135m to the local economy annually," he said.

Hoteliers also reported that recruitment in the sector remains challenging. With one in five hotels planning to increase staffing levels over the next 12 months, Mr McNamara welcomed the changes to the employment permits system for workers outside the EU announced this week by Minister Heather Humphreys, T.D., Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

On a seasonal note, Christmas parties continue to be an important source of business for 60% of hotels nationally. Of those, over a third reported an increase in business this festive season compared to 2018 with a similar number (32%) taking on additional staff for the Christmas period.



JulieAnn Harper and Gerard O'Brien present Sinead Tarmey of the Wicklow Hospice Foundation with a €3,275 donation from the Ladies Christmas Ball which was held recently in the Woodenbridge Hotel.

## Funding to upgrade Charlesland running track

Minister Simon Harris has announced funding of more than 309,000 to upgrade and improve the Charlesland Running Track in Greystones.

Announcing this funding for Greystones, Minister Harris said, "We are fortunate in Greystones to have excellent sports facilities but it is important that we continue to invest in them and improve them so we can meet the needs of our community.

"This Government funding I am announcing for Greystones to upgrade the running track in Charlesland will make a real difference for this facility and the many people who use it in our locality.

"As we try to create a healthy Ireland and a healthy population, we need to invest in sports and community facilities to help promote active lifestyles and exercise.

"I look forward to seeing this investment now happening and the benefits of it for Greystones," concluded Minister Harris.

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Teacher Joanne English, and St. Mary's College Arklow students Lauren Raftery and Ciara Kelly, with Fianna Fail leader Micheal Martin at the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition in the RDS last week. Students from 244 schools across the island descended on the RDS to set up their projects and begin to prepare for the days ahead.

## Cllr Paul O'Brien elected to National League Executive

Paul O'Brien, national president of the Irish Soccer Referees Society and local County Councillor has been elected onto the National League Executive Committee at the recently reconvened FAI AGM.

"It is easy to sit on the fence and throw stones, but that's not going to resolve the difficulties facing the FAI and it certainly isn't me, I want to try and make a positive difference. That is why I allowed my name go forward for election onto the NLEC.

The reality is that the games enjoyed by so many have to continue, the staff in the FAI, who have done nothing wrong have to be employed & the sport must be managed. So, when this opportunity presented itself I allowed my name to go forward for election", stated O'Brien

The FAI was plunged into crisis last March after it emerged it's former CEO John Delaney loaned the association 100,000, which was subsequently hid from most of the board members & stakeholders at the time. Since then Delaney has departed along with the entire FAI Board, this clearout will be completed when the current president Donal Conway steps down on the 25th of January and four new

independent directors are appointed. The association is also facing debts of over 62m despite being reassured that they would be debt free by 2020.

Cllr O'Brien stated he was fed up of some elected representatives and others complaining on social media about the situation despite never even attending a football match, let alone knowing what was really going on.

"The reality is if the FAI goes into liquidation we could lose our place on the world stage & be banned from playing international football. The Irish supporters have been voted the best supporters in the world on numerous occasions & yet some are calling for this, which is crazy. The damage this could lead to could take years to recover from and effect all aspects of the game, including grass-roots football. I know plenty of decent people involved in the game, the real stakeholders & they just want what is best for our sport, as do I. To see this crisis engulf the Association is



Cllr Paul O'Brien

heartbreaking but be under no illusion, it was self inflicted, but one we must recover from".

Asked if & how the FAI can ever recover from this O'Brien went onto to say "The Minister in charge needs to stop managing the crisis by social media & how many likes & comments he can get. He needs to sit down with all the stakeholders & get this crisis resolved, purely for the sake of the game and the many decent people involved. There also needs to be a clearout of the "hangers on" in the FAI, to many are in there for far too long & have used their positions within their

respective leagues & the FAI to enhance their own personal interests. The new board needs the time and space to manage the crisis & restore the associations reputation & fortunes. Finally I think the footballing family needs to come together and unite, not tear ourselves apart and those that know nothing about the sport need to stop trying to point score for their own gain.

"I will be stepping down as the national president of the referees next September, as I'm limited to serving two terms and I know I'm going to be busy with my county council work and running in the upcoming general election. However, I felt this was far too important to run away from, soccer is the biggest participant sport in the Country and if I can help it in any way I will. Some people will say I'm mad and that it's a poison chalice, but to me the stakes are too high, others might say I'm only jumping on the bandwagon, well the reality is I won't get paid for doing this and I can assure my constituents that my county council work will always come first and not suffer."

# Wicklow town shines in 2019 litter rankings

Wicklow is among the cleanest towns in the country, according to the final litter survey of 2019 by business group Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL).

The town is in 8th position in the ranking of 40 towns and cities, an improvement on last year's summer survey. The survey showed overall litter levels in Ireland's towns were up on a year ago.

The An Taisce report for Wicklow stated: "Again a strong performance from Wicklow Town, with six out of the ten sites getting the top litter grade and no heavily littered sites. The Glen Beach Cliff Walk - a wonderful cliff walk, getting plenty of use was spotless throughout. The 'Viewing & Picnic' Area on Dunbur Road was in much better shape than in the previous survey. The residential area of Marlton Court was excellent in terms of presentation, maintenance and litter. Other top ranking sites included the Main Street and Wicklow Town Council Car Park. Cigarette butt litter was very pronounced at South Quay and responsible for a downgrading from the top litter grade, while food-related litter was scattered along some of Dunbur Approach Road."

Kilkenny topped the IBAL litter rankings for a record 4th time, having last won in 2014. It finished ahead of Kilkenny, which was 3rd in 2018, and Swords at the top of the table. In all, 21 of the 27 towns inspected were deemed clean, a great result but down on previous years. Galway edged out Waterford to claim cleanest city as it enters its year as European City of Culture. The city areas of Galvone in Limerick, Ballymun in Dublin and Cork Northside were 'littered', with Dublin North Inner City at the foot of the rankings.

The past decade has brought a 13% reduction in litter levels in our city centres, while litter in towns has remained constant over the same period. "We've seen the fruits of the greater attention given to keeping our city centres clean," explains Conor Horgan of IBAL, "to the point where they are now almost as clean as our towns. In 2019, for the first time, all were deemed clean." IBAL has been surveying disadvantaged city areas over the past 5 years but has seen little reduction in litter over the period.

Sweet wrappers, chewing gum and cigarette butts remain the most common forms of litter on our streets. "Perhaps no one item illustrates the link between litter and the broader environment better than the cigarette butt," contends Conor Horgan. "Cigarette filters are essentially single-use plastic which readily winds its way into our sewers and rivers, adding to the problem of plastic pollution, which threatens to see more plastic in our oceans than fish by 2050. Yet every day we see people nonchalantly flicking butts onto our pavements."

From next year, an EU directive will force tobacco manufacturers to cover the cost of cigarette butt collection and processing in an effort to drastically reduce the numbers of cigarettes disposed of in the environment. "Alongside regulation, we would like to see active recycling of butts, which would encourage their proper disposal, as once a butt is littered on the ground, it cannot be recovered." Irish start-up NoButts.ie is turning butts into cellulose acetate for re-use in sunglasses and other products and is looking to set up supply arrangements with local authorities. 2019 was the 17th year of the IBAL Anti-Litter League.



## NTR Fund acquires 19.2MW Ballycumber Windfarm

NTR has added a further 19.2 MW to its renewable energy platform through the acquisition of Ballycumber windfarm located near the village of Tinahely.

The project was acquired by the NTR Renewable Energy Income Fund II, a wind, solar and energy storage fund that operates in a number of European markets.

The project, which comprises six Siemens turbines, went into operations in 2019 and is one of the last remaining wind projects to avail of the Irish REFIT tariff.

Manus O'Donnell, Chief Investment Officer of NTR said: "We are delighted to add this high quality REFIT-backed wind asset onto the platform which is located close to Dublin, the location of heaviest demand for energy in Ireland. While our investments are diversified across a number of European countries, the Irish market continues to be a core market for NTR, an Irish-based team, as Ireland transitions from the Feed-In-Tariff regime to auctions, which are due to start in 2020."

This latest acquisition brings renewable energy assets under management by NTR on behalf of its two funds to 515 MWs of wind and solar projects located throughout Ireland, France, Sweden, Finland and the United Kingdom.

NTR is a sustainable infrastructure investor and asset manager that acquires, constructs and manages renewable energy projects.

Its first fund, NTR Wind 1 LP, was launched in 2015 to invest in pre-construction onshore wind projects in Ireland and the UK. This fund has investments of just under 225 MW of wind projects.

Its second fund, NTR Renewable Energy Income Fund II, targeting 500 million, invests in both pre-construction and operational onshore wind and solar projects across a number of European markets. To date, NTR has acquired over 290 MW of wind and solar projects for this fund.

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'What's Inside', an exhibition by Rachel Bernard, will run in the Signal Arts Centre in Bray from 17th February to 1st March.

Rachel Bernard is an artist who originates from Brittany in France and has been living in Ireland since 2005. Her preferred medium is oil.

Originally working with heavy texture and a palette knife to brush and fine ink, she has developed a range of styles which include surreal and abstract paintings. Her desire is to keep moving forward in developing new ways to express her feelings and influences. Following huge learning experiences, working in Signal arts to running her own gallery and studio, she then worked from a smaller establishment where she could produce works whilst conducting art classes.

She now produces paintings from home. This gives her the freedom to work without the escalating costs of renting in the Bray area. Her most recent works follows the theme of human emotions, and she loves the challenges of transferring these to works of art. The range of paintings vary from large to small to suit both taste and budgets.

All are welcome to attend. The opening reception is on Friday 21st February, 7pm - 9pm.

## Greystones author tackles UCD's Europa League campaign in first book

Greystones author Kevin Burke has released his first book, **One Night in Dudelange: Adventures in the UEFA Europa League**, which examines UCD's 2015 Europa League campaign.

Kevin was one of the main contributors to the popular UCD fanzine *Student Till I Graduate*, and has never missed a UCD goal in Europe. His own European Cup exploits include draws against Lazio and a top-flight English team, being left out (by himself) of a match against Besiktas in Turkey, and narrowly missing out on being drawn to play Dudelange.

It's safe to say that University College Dublin AFC are unlike any other football club in the world. The

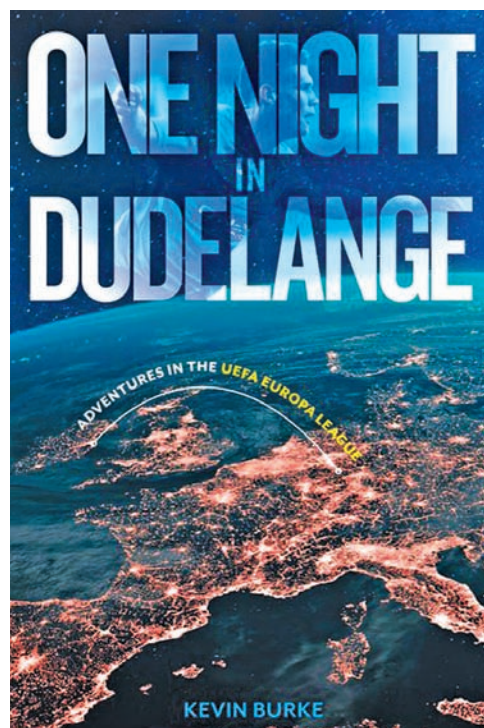
first western team to play in China have also been world champions, started riots in Sudan and had the Archbishop of Dublin deem it a mortal sin to play for their main rivals. For those who play for the club, career success is more likely to mean a Government Ministry or a high-ranking CEO position than a move to a Premier League club.

But the club's most memorable adventure was in the summer of 2015, when European football came to the college campus in Belfield. It was in May of that year that the newly-relegated club unexpectedly qualified for the UEFA Europa League through the UEFA Fair Play award - and as a result, the college's team of Arts students, Actuary Master's and Theoretical Physics grads went from playing intervarsity competitions to World Cup stars in the space of six months. A sensational win over Luxembourg side F91 Dudelange - now Europa League group stage regulars - and the birth of the manager's son just hours later saw the club make headlines across Europe, and they followed that up with an agonising defeat against a Slovak Bratislava side laden with full internationals and ex-Premier League players.

One Night in Dudelange - Adventures in the UEFA Europa League, by Greystones author Kevin Burke, tells the full story of that summer. Quotes from the players, coaches, officials and supporters give an insight into what it's like to make your European debut - and to get sent off on it - and to go toe-to-toe with players you recognise from Championship Manager.

But it's also the story of the behind-the-scenes League of Ireland experience in Europe - all the little odds and ends you mightn't think about as you walk through the turnstiles or turn on the TV, but which are essential parts of making any European game run smoothly. What happens when your prospective opponents refuse to help out with visas, or you can't find a flight to the away leg? How can social media help in scouting the opposition? And what was in the 67-page UEFA rulebook on jerseys that meant the club had to dump their kit in the bin and order a new one?

One Night in Dudelange is available in Dubray's, the UCD campus bookshop, on Amazon, or from the publishers at Shop.VisionSP.co.uk. Price €15 plus P&P.



# The Joy of Painting: An exhibition by Bray Active Retirement

Bray Active Retirement's members exhibition 'The Joy of Painting' runs in the Signal Arts Centre from March 16th to 29th.

Henri Matisse viewed his masterpiece 'Le Bonheur de Vivre' of 1905 as 'Creating an art of balance, of purity and serenity, devoid of troubling or depressing subject matter.

An art that could be for every mental worker, for the businessman as well as the man of letters, for example, a soothing, calming influence on the mind, or something like a good armchair that provides

relaxation from fatigue'.

When this painting became a recognised 'work of art' the upcoming Picasso was disconcerted, which prompted him to out-do Matisse with his 1907 canvas 'Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)'. However Matisse appears the guardian in our darkest times of something that human beings need to be able to imagine and believe in. Happiness is a

human right and Matisse speaks up for it beautifully.

The Bray Active Retirement Group might not all want the angst of being a Matisse or Picasso but come together every week to create art, share enthusiasm, fun, and the possibility of taking home a masterpiece. They bring their work to share with you from Monday 16th March until Sunday 29th March 2020.

The joy of painting is at heart the joy of sharing and the works exhibited here reflect not just hours, but years of work by the participants. There is always a process of revealing oneself in the art we make and that is possibly the hardest journey we undertake. Sharing our art with others is the joy.

Opening Reception Sunday 22nd March 3pm - 5pm.

## Coming up at Mermaid...

### The Royal Ballet

On Friday 24 January Mermaid Arts Centre is delighted to welcome the Royal Opera House presenting The Royal Ballet Pepita, The Sleeping Beauty (Encore Screening).

This production of The Sleeping Beauty has been delighting audiences in Covent Garden since 1946. A classic of Russian ballet, it established The Royal Ballet both in its new home after World War II and as a world-class company. Sixty years later, in 2006, the original staging was revived, returning Oliver Messel's wonderful designs and glittering costumes to the stage. Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky's enchanting score and Marius Petipa's original choreography beautifully combine with sections created for The Royal Ballet by Frederick Ashton, Anthony Dowell and Christopher Wheeldon. This ballet is sure to cast its spell over anyone who sees it. Tickets cost €14/12 and are available from Box Office on 01-2724030 and at [www.mermaidartscentre.ie](http://www.mermaidartscentre.ie)

### Shaun Dunne presents Restoration

Restoration is a new play exploring violence, healing and the insecure dynamics of youth work in Ireland. In the wake of a violent outburst by a young person, the staff at a youth service in Dublin are attempting to move on. But healing is hard when you're on the floor and out the door. Healing is hard when your wounds are still raw... Made in consultation with youth workers from the north inner-city, Restoration is a new play from the award-winning Shaun Dunne (Rapids, Making a Mark) directed by Darren Thornton (A Date for Mad Mary), exploring the politics of restorative practice and youth work in Ireland. Supported by the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon and Mermaid Arts Centre. Shaun Dunne is part of Six In The Attic, an Irish Theatre Institute artist development programme and is a resident artist at Project Arts Centre. A preview showing of Restoration will take place in Mermaid on Saturday 25 January at 8pm. Tickets cost €16/14 and are available from Box Office on 01-2724030 and at [www.mermaidartscentre.ie](http://www.mermaidartscentre.ie)

### Street Art Opera

The building opposite Mermaid Arts Centre will come alive on Saturday 25 January from 4pm to 7pm as Dumbworld bring together street art, mapped projection and contemporary music in an experience for public spaces, open and accessible to all. Drop in and pick up headphones at Mermaid and watch the ten minute opera on the walls outside! Two octogenarians stage a hit on an errant husband. Two angels play I spy as they watch over the city...These short ten-minute works appear like street art on a city wall, then morph into an animated video, with an orchestral soundtrack broadcast to wireless headphones, and lyrics appear as dynamic and crafted subtitles. Created by John McIllduff and Brian Irvine. Funded by the Arts Council. Duration: Loops every ten minutes - Drop by whenever suits between 4pm and 7pm. Admission is free. For more information contact Box Office on 01-2724030 and at [www.mermaidartscentre.ie](http://www.mermaidartscentre.ie)



The building opposite Mermaid Arts Centre will come alive on Saturday 25 January with Street Art Opera

**Yes, it's true! Its 2020 already and we are still feeling the effects of those food binges over the festive period.**

Everywhere people are asking "How was your Christmas?". More often than not the answer is "Great, but I ate too much". So whether you are trying to drop those extra holiday pounds or you just fancy trying your hand at something new, then joining a club may be the right idea for you. And in Co. Wicklow, there are plenty of clubs to choose from.

January is a great time to think of taking up a new hobby or joining a club. Many clubs run special offers and deals at this time of year.

You won't be alone either as many other people will have had the same idea. Why not see if a friend or co-worker wants to come along with you, some clubs offer discounted membership for people joining together. As well as participating in an activity, clubs offer a social aspect and many hold events with some even having their own clubhouse. Family memberships are available in many clubs, particularly sporting clubs. Participation in a club is a great, inexpensive way to get out and socialise. Besides the many benefits of getting fit, there is also the added benefit of just 'turning off' for a few hours every week. There is only so



much bad news we can take.

And finally, for you 'young at heart', remember that many a romance started in a local club!

There are a huge amount of clubs of all types and sizes around Co. Wicklow that can accommodate a myriad of interests. Joining a club is a great way to meet new people while building your confidence, learning a new skill or taking part in a sport.

There is an obvious social aspect to most clubs as well, with many members meeting up in their own time. Joining a club is a great way to expand your knowledge and experience in a particular sport or hobby you are passionate about.

Joining a club also looks good on your CV, showing you to be a sociable and active person, and is a great chance to make friends who share your specialist interests.

From children to senior citizens, there should be something in the area to fit the bill. Many clubs in the garden county are formed around various sports but there are clubs for everything from public speaking,

reading, chess, gardening, to more business oriented groups that meet for professional reasons. Sometimes membership can be free, or paid monthly or weekly in a payment plan.

For those into sports, there are a wide variety of options available, and Wicklow boasts a multitude of active and thriving sports clubs. From outdoor sports such as tennis and football, to indoor sports such as badminton and table tennis, there is sure to be a local sports club nearby where you can participate in your preferred pastime.

For those who might be less passionate about sports but who still want to keep fit, joining a fitness club might be an alternative option to take. If your passion is dance, joining a dance class is the way to go.

There is a large variety of clubs in Co Wicklow to choose from for people of all ages, interests and abilities. Every kind of club from sports to social are right under your nose so why not turn off the television and sign up today. Take a look at the adverts on this page to see if any of these clubs fit the bill for you.



## New Year New You - get fit and active

**It wouldn't be January without New Year resolutions! Over the festive season the extra pounds inevitably pile on and the legacy of one too many servings of Christmas pudding have many of us feeling overweight and unhappy.**

However with a little commitment and a resolution to get into shape, it's easy to shed weight. You can transform yourself in time for summer and enjoy your holidays.

For all the benefits of a healthy body, regular exercise is important. Try to get into the habit of exercising regularly - start off lightly and gradually build up. Setting goals and knowing your personal risk factors is half the battle to developing and maintaining a fitness programme.

Joining a gym or health club can be a great help, particularly for those who need some motivation. Aerobic and cardio-vascular exercises are the best for all round fitness and weight loss. Aerobics classes, rowing machines and running are some of the best ways to keep fit.

Dance classes and swimming are excellent ways of getting fit and having fun at the same time. Walking has also become a popular choice for Irish people, and all you have to spend is the price of a good pair of trainers. Cycling is great for burning the calories and Co Wicklow has some beautiful scenic routes that are not to be missed.

So with the excesses of Christmas a distant memory, now is a great time to focus on your goals for the coming year. For many of us, these goals will centre around physical health and well-being. A healthy body can often mean a healthy mind which is why it's so important to keep fit and stay in shape.



### Bray Wheelers Open Night

Wed 29th Jan 2020 at 7pm



**Overview of club activities**

- > Couch to 50km series
- > Intro to group cycling
- > Leisure activities
- > Racing programme
- > Coaching sessions
- > Social aspect
- > Youth and juniors
- > Women's and men's cycling
- > Bike maintenance tips

Clubhouse, Schools Road, Boghall, Bray, Co Wicklow  
[www.braywheelers.com](http://www.braywheelers.com)  
[www.facebook.com/BrayWheelersCC/](https://www.facebook.com/BrayWheelersCC/)

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## LEARN NEW SKILLS

## GET ACTIVE



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Joanne Kenna (Certified Service Advisor of the Year) and Tony O'Brien (High Voltage Technician of the Year) of Avon Motors, Rathdrum, receive their national awards from Denis McCrudden (Hyundai Training Manager) and Directors Ray and Paul Carter.

## All-Island Business Angel Conference 2020 to take place in Wicklow

HBAN, the all-island organisation responsible for the promotion of business angel investment and a joint initiative between Enterprise Ireland, InterTradeIreland and Invest Northern Ireland, will host its annual All-Island Conference at Powerscourt Hotel on Thursday, 6th February 2020.

The all-day event aims to encourage more people to get involved in business angel investing, highlighting the opportunities and rewards that it presents. Business angel investment is continuing to grow across the island of Ireland, with an increasing number of start-ups receiving vital early-stage funding from individual angel investors and syndicates. In December last year, HBAN announced that its members have now invested more than €100M in start-ups across the island of Ireland since 2007. HBAN's conference will explore the theme of 'Driving value with exits and data', with speakers discussing how data can inform better investment decisions and ultimately, lead to more exits. Meanwhile, a combination of talks, panel discussions and masterclasses will equip attendees with the knowledge they need to create a healthy portfolio.

John Harbison, Chairman Emeritus of Tech Coast Angels (TCA), one of the largest and most active angel investment organisations in the US, will speak at the conference. An active investor, he has achieved returns ranging from 100x - 1,110x in five companies: Microsoft, Apple, Abbott Labs, Nucor and McGraw-Hill. Harbison will discuss how TCA has achieved a 4.9x overall multiple on its angel investments, and how it has developed insights using data analysis to give new angel investors the confidence to build and expand their portfolios.

Dr. Jim Mountjoy, a serial investor and entrepreneur, will draw on his experience to provide insights into how angel investors can recognise a high-potential start-up and how to create value. Jim has spent the last twenty years acting as an investor, mentor, non-executive director and Chairman with a large range of individuals and companies, largely in the technology field. He founded telecoms software company, Euristix, which was sold for over \$80 million, and has also had a number of successful exits in recent years.

Aine Denn, co-founder of Altify, will tell the story of how the company's leadership team built value in their company resulting in a sale to US tech firm, Upland Software, for \$84M. Denn is passionate about giving back to the community and investing in people and businesses that challenge norms. She volunteers as a lead entrepreneur for the Irish government-sponsored programmes Going for Growth and Back For Business, helping to foster the success of female and returning emigrant entrepreneurs. For more information on the event and to register, visit <https://www.hban.org/conference>

## 4,270 people in Wicklow employed in Enterprise Ireland jobs

A total of 4,270 people in Co. Wicklow are now employed in Enterprise Ireland backed companies.

Minister Andrew Doyle said "The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland, the Government agency responsible for developing Irish business globally has reported the creation of 16,971 new jobs by Enterprise Ireland supported companies in 2019. 221,895 people are now employed in companies supported by the agency. This is the highest total employment in the 20-year history of the agency. 65% of total employment by Enterprise Ireland backed companies is now outside of Dublin.

"Cleantech jobs grew by nine percent, Lifesciences jobs by six percent, Fintech by six

percent, Electronics by five percent, ICT and international services by four percent, while jobs in the food sector grew by one percent, reflecting the uncertainty created by Brexit in 2019. The jobs growth translates into a net increase of 4,706 jobs created in 2019.

"In Co. Wicklow, the number of people employed in Enterprise Ireland backed companies is 4,270. This is an increase of 8% since 2016. This comes at a time when more people are working than ever before with the unemployment rate currently standing at 4.8%. Nearly 220,000 total jobs have been created since the start of 2016. Also, more than 6 out of every 10

new jobs have been created outside of Dublin. Fine Gael is not being complacent about this progress. We have put in place Future Jobs Ireland; an all-of-Government plan to prepare Ireland for the digitalisation of the workforce.

"The Government is also continuing to prepare business for Brexit which will pose great challenges to businesses here across many sectors. Enterprise Ireland is continuing to work on a one-to-one basis with its exporting clients on Brexit planning. In 2018 and 2019, the agency approved funding of €125m to its most Brexit-exposed clients.

"With the UK set to leave the EU in a few

weeks, we will soon be entering into complex trade negotiations between Brussels and London. Ireland is coming to these talks in a strong position but there is still a lot of uncertainty and it would be a mistake to underestimate how challenging the process will be.

"Great progress has been made on Brexit preparedness by Enterprise Ireland clients so far - two-out-of-three have taken steps to reduce their dependency on the UK market, and 125m in funding and supports was approved for Enterprise Ireland's most Brexit-exposed clients over the two year period between 2018 and 2019."

## Subaru unveils new Hybrid Forester

Subaru consider Wicklow be an Irish stronghold for the brand, not least because one of their best dealers, Derek Bradshaw's Castle Motors in Bray, have been representing this niche premium brand for longer than any other Irish dealer.

by Martin McCarthy

Subaru are doing well worldwide - and this is because outdoor lovers - mountaineers, sailors, hikers, cyclists etc. have a special affinity with their cars - and outdoor sports are on the increase. This is as true in Wicklow as in Butte, Montana. Subaru have dropped their diesel engine and for 2020 will have a new, more economical, hybrid version of their iconic flat four petrol powerplant.

Subaru's goal is to grow sales in Ireland tenfold - to 1,000 units p.a. by 2025 and MD Pat Ryan says they will do it by convincing new Irish customers - generally of the sporty and outdoors variety - that Subaru are No1 in Safety, No1 in Reliability and No.1 in Capability.

Now armed with the Hybrid, "Boxer" engine, their advanced "Eyesight" collision avoidance system, their uncompromising, permanently on, four-wheel drive system and a luxurious, very high spec interior, they might just get there. The Forester has a very loyal Wicklow following. Too loyal, in fact as many owners have held onto the cars until they are 10, or even 15 years old before changing. The reliability has been incredible.



Especially among the sailing fraternity, where boats get trailer to Lough Derg one week, Baltimore the next and then back to Greystones or Bray, complete with a load of sails, wetsuits and other gear, every other weekend. The Forester does "Heavy Duty" very well.

I drove the new E Forester on the country roads outside Monaghan town, where the superb suspension and 50/50 weight distribution gave a comfortable, reassuring ride over the undulating drumlines Paddy Kavanagh loved to write about.

For Subaru to succeed it will have to tempt away current BMW X3 AWD, Mercedes and Audi Quattro drivers and with a very high spec - including heated wipers - and a starter price of €45,545, the Forester certainly makes the short list.

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## PLANNING

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Alphaplan Design (Tel: 086 2461269, Email: eugene@alphaplandesign.com) Seeks planning permission for a dwelling with connection to services, garage, entrance and associated works at Blackthorn Close, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow for T. Nolan. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

J. Patrick O'Brien, seeks permission for the change of use of existing domestic garage (37.485m<sup>2</sup>) to a residential dwelling which shall include: 1. New side extension to existing structure (21.42m<sup>2</sup>) incorporating 1 bedroom with ensuite bathroom, 2. New rear extension to existing structure (6.87m<sup>2</sup>) incorporating W.C. facility and utility room providing rear access, 3. Modifications to the west and south facing elevations of the existing structure including as part of the proposals a new relocated front door entrance, 4. Connection to the public sewer network and public water supply and 5. All other ancillary site works at Kilmacullagh, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

J. Joe O'Neill intend to apply for Planning Permission for development at this site Woolen Mills, Derrybawn, Laragh, Co. Wicklow. The development will consist of: Permission sought for the completion of 366.32 sq m first floor bedroom extension and roof to existing ground floor plan, Consisting of Dining Room, Reception, Sun Lounge, Toilets, Store, Lift and Lobby to existing ground floor extension. Car parking, Connection to existing services and site ancillary works. Planning Ref No. 08/20. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of planning authority during its public opening hours. The Planning application may be viewed on line at [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie), under planning online enquires. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

## Coffee morning to fight loneliness on Blue Monday

Homecare providers Right at Home is opening its doors to anyone who is feeling the effects of Blue Monday at their inaugural Blue Monday Coffee Morning.

The coffee morning will take place on Blue Monday (20th January) at their South Dublin & Wicklow branch offices

at Unit 3A, Pineview Business Park, Firhouse Road, Dublin 16 from 11am - 1:00pm and all are welcome.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Alphaplan Design (Tel: 086 2461269, Email: eugene@alphaplandesign.com) Seeks planning permission for revised house type on previously granted site (ref. nos. 17/1022 and 19/770) and associated works at Site 3 Ballard, Shillelagh, Co. Wicklow for S. Kavanagh. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Alphaplan Design (Tel: 086 2461269, Email: eugene@alphaplandesign.com) Seeks planning permission for revisions to previously granted dwelling to include dormer windows and balcony to rear elevation and associated works at Ballykillavane, Glenealy, Co. Wicklow for N. Gregory. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I Imagination Station intend to apply for retention permission for the change of use of partial area of unit 1 from commercial/recreational to preschool and associate works at Croghan Industrial Estate, Unit 1, Emoclew, Arklow, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Council Buildings, Wicklow Town, during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee within 5 weeks from submission of application to Planning Authority.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

H.T. Carroll Limited seeks Change of Use Planning Permission for the conversion of the existing ground floor retail unit to residential use & Planning Permission for the addition of a first floor level extension and new roof to the building, to provide for a 1 Bedroom Apartment Unit on each level (2 in total), with private open space the rear of each. Works to include demolition of existing rear sheds and construction of a new ground floor rear extension of 5.5sqm, with a new facade to Albert Avenue, revised roof profile and associated site and landscape works all at 2A Albert House, Albert Avenue, Bray, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Alphaplan Design (Tel: 086 2461269, Email: eugene@alphaplandesign.com) Seeks planning permission for change of use from domestic garage to home office and associated works at Fishers Mountain, Ballinahinch, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow for G. and C. Fisher. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Tom O'Gorman seeks planning permission for Proposed alterations to the existing roof profile including the creation of a gable wall to the side elevation and the introduction of roof lights to the front, along with the construction of a new dormer roof space to the rear of the property at 102 Charlesland Court, Greystones, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Council Buildings, Wicklow Town, during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

In Ireland, one third of older people over 65 live alone and sixty per cent of people aged over 80 live alone.

Speaking about the event, David McKone, Managing Director of Right at Home Ireland, said "In our experience, people experience a dip at this time of the year, when the party season has ended and everything is returning to normal. So, we decided this would be a perfect opportunity to give our clients and staff a lift by inviting them out to our offices to have a chat and a cuppa and raise the spirits.

"Our carers see the positive impact their visits can have on clients. When someone takes time out to sit, chat and listen to them, it can make all the difference to their day. A number of studies have been done in recent

years in this area and they have shown that isolation and loneliness affect the physical, mental and emotional well being of an indi-

vidual. We are trying to address this in a small, but meaningful way." RSVP to 01-9081919/enquiries@righthome.ie.

## Maxi Zoo celebrate their 30th birthday by helping to feed wild birds

Maxi Zoo are kicking off the new year by celebrating the brand's 30th birthday, and are marking the occasion by giving back to Irish wildlife by helping to feed wild birds.

Ireland's largest pet retailer Maxi Zoo have announced their Heart for Wild Birds campaign, which will see the retailer donate 10% of sales from their MultiFit Sunflower Seed Hearts to Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland (WRI) for the full month of January.

WRI promotes wildlife rehabilitation and helps to improve wildlife welfare and conservation in Ireland.

Anthony Cremin, Marketing Manager said "Wild birds are in decline in Ireland, so it's imperative that we help where we can.

"A simple way to do this is by feeding them. When the temperatures drop to below freezing and hard ground hampers the search for food, many animal lovers can help out native birds by providing them with extra food rations throughout the winter to help sustain the wild bird population.

"It was a natural fit to partner with WRI, as animal lovers we commend them on their commitment supporting rehabilitators who work in this field and we are delighted to donate a percentage of our sales to help vulnerable wildlife."

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