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RIP BR. TALLON
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SHAMBOLIC TRACK AND TRACING

'BRING YOUR OWN LAPTOP AND HAND SANITISER'

Last week when it emerged that people who had tested positive for Covid-19 were asked to trace their own close contacts and that a test centre in Dublin had no staff to man their lab for two weekends, the Department of Health and the HSE seemed to go into panic mode. Contact was made with health professionals who had volunteered for Ireland's Call back in March and they were asked to become part-time contact tracers. These included retired nurses, physiotherapists, radiologists, speech therapists, etc.

However, the company employed by the HSE emailed those that accepted the offer to say "Bring your own laptop if you have one. You might not need one while shadowing, but you will need one for work as we are still awaiting HSE laptops." The email also said "Bring your own hand sanitiser."

Contracts or roster schedules were not avail-

able for would-be staff and in effect they were being offered zero-hour contracts.

Wicklow Times were contacted by several staff who were shocked by the content of these emails, especially the GDPR implications of storing patients information on their personal laptops, and we contacted local TD and Minister for Health,

Stephen Donnelly, who replied "Contact tracing is an operational/service-related matter, and as such queries on it are most appropriately directed to the Press Office of the HSE for response."

The HSE responded: "A small number of new contact tracer recruits were asked to bring their own laptops to training in one of our centres. Due to the



Fifth year student at Loreto Abbey Dalkey and Bray native, Jessica Kelly, received the Emerging Sustainable Energy Champion Award. See story on page 4

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NO MIDDLE MAN, WE SELL, MANUFACTURE AND INSTALL

large number of new recruits, 270 by last Friday, a small number of new laptops are not available yet. This cohort of trainee contact tracers will not be accessing the Covid Care Tracker live system until they are in possession of a work laptop. The Covid care tracker is a Microsoft Cloud system on a secure server and cannot be accessed by external devices. All new contact tracers will have a work laptop before they are rostered on to begin contact tracing."

This statement is self-evidently at odds with the emails *Wicklow Times* has seen that were sent to applicants.

We also asked the Minister and HSE would it not be better to have these health professionals actually employed in the health service and use the services of people such as retired Gardai, to do the

contact tracing. They refused to answer this.

Separately Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore expressed major concerns after it was revealed that hundreds of speech and language therapists continue to be redeployed for testing and contract tracing leading to many children waiting for much needed assessments.

In response to a Parliamentary Question from Social Democrats co-leader Róisín Shortall TD, the HSE confirmed that, as of September, a combined total of 317 occupational and speech and language therapists had been redeployed for testing and contract tracing.

As Party Spokesperson for Children, Deputy Whitmore says this is affecting children in Wicklow. "The HSE in their own admission state that the redeployment of

Continued on Page 3...

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Email: enterprise@leo.wicklowcoco.ie



Ruby Treacy with an alien, celebrating Halloween in Arklow last week.

Bray Tidy Towns AGM

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Bray Tidy Towns will take place at 7.30pm on Thursday 19th November via Zoom. Agenda will include: Minutes of Previous AGM, Annual Report, Financial Report, Election of Committee Members. If you wish to attend please contact Mary at 0872104844 and she will send you a link or email braytidytowns@gmail.com

Childline highlights service following tragic loss of lives

The Childline listening service, as delivered by the ISPCC, is reminding all children, young people and families that the service can be contacted for free and in confidence, following news of the tragic loss of lives in South Dublin last week.

Any child or young person up to the age of 18 in Ireland can contact Childline at any time of the day or night by calling 1800 66 66 66, chatting online at Childline.ie, or texting to 50101.

Childline is here to listen to and support children and young people in relation to any issue which may be on their mind, or if they would simply like to talk. The service is non-judgmental, non-directive and available nationwide.

The ISPCC also provides support to parents and carers, through the ISPCC's Support Line service. The service can be contacted at any time by emailing parentingsupport@ispcc.ie, or between 9am and 1pm Monday - Friday by calling 01 243 2000.

Community call hours extended

The County Wicklow Community Call helpline service operating hours have been extended and will

operate from 8am to 8 pm, over the weekend and during the week, Telephone: 1800 868 399 or email covidsupport@wicklowcoco.ie. Trained staff are available to co-ordinate assistance to elderly and vulnerable persons.

Council opening hours

Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow: Opening hours 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. by appointment only. Due to improvement works currently being undertaken at County Buildings a section of the main foyer area will be closed to the public to comply with Health and Safety requirements.

The Central Customer Service area will facilitate members of the public presenting by appointment for Motor Tax, Housing, Planning and Environment services. Members of the public are requested not to present without prior appointment. Where possible payments can be made electronically or by phone, motor taxation can be also be renewed online or submitted by post. Planning applications can also be submitted by post.

Nitrogen and Phosphorus Statements now available

The Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine has announced that interim Nitrogen and Phosphorus statements (N&P Statements) for the period January to September 2020 are now available on the Department's online system www.agfood.ie.

These statements are particularly useful to allow farmers to plan for the remainder of the year, in order to ensure compliance with the limits of the Nitrates Regulations, thus avoiding penalties for breaching the limits of 170 kgs of Nitrogen per hectare or the limit for those who hold an approved derogation the limit is 250 kgs of Nitrogen per hectare.

Farmers not already registered for agfood.ie can do so by logging onto www.agfood.ie and clicking the 'Register' button. To register a mobile phone number for future SMS text alerts log on to <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/contactsupdates/> to access the sign-on form.

Wicklow Libraries

During Level 5 restrictions, Wicklow County Council's library services can only be availed of online. However, there are a wide range of services that are still available to the public, for example; e-books, downloadable audio books, online newspapers, e-magazines and online language learning. A PIN can be obtained from library staff by phoning or emailing your local library, or Library HQ. All details are on www.wicklow.ie/living/services/libraries.

Virtual confidence building course for visually impaired

Sight loss charity Fighting Blindness is running their final Living with Sight Loss course of 2020. The popular - and free - confidence building course for visually impaired people in Ireland will begin on Thursday 12 November and run every Thursday from 11am to 3pm. The course will finish Thursday, December 10.

To meet Covid-19 social distancing guidelines, the charity transformed the face-to-face five week course into a virtual webinar series. This will be the third online version of the course and previous participants found the online delivery convenient, interactive and dynamic.

There are over 250,000 people in Ireland living with blindness or vision impairment. Living with Sight Loss is designed to increase the confidence and independence of people who are living with any form of sight loss. The informal course will provide information and practical advice on a range of essential everyday topics such as getting out and about, information about welfare rights, and how technology can make life that bit easier.

Niamh (Waterford), a participant in a previous virtual Living with Sight Loss course said, "I found the course very useful and helpful, it was well structured. The speakers were also excellent."

Kathleen (Dublin) said, "I know I could probably find a lot of this



information online but nothing can compare to having a shared experience of learning new things in the company of others who are also experiencing sight loss. The fact that this course was delivered through Zoom really suited me as I had direct access from the comfort of my home.

"My overall verdict on the course is that I have come away a more confident person, while I can't change my condition I can take control and not let it stop me from doing

what I love to do. I would highly recommend this course to others and I sincerely hope they continue as a problem shared is a problem halved and there is such comfort in knowing you're not alone in sight loss."

The course is delivered through the accessible video conferencing platform Zoom. A telephone dial in option is also available.

Places are limited and must be booked in advance by contacting Fighting Blindness on 01

674 6496 or needtotalk@fightingblindness.ie.

This course is delivered through the 'Need to Talk' project, an emotional support and confidence building service supported by the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

For more information about the Need to Talk counselling and confidence support service visit www.fightingblindness.ie/support/need-to-talk



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'Needs of Mother and Baby Homes Survivors must be front and centre'

Speaking on the Mother and Baby Homes legislation which passed the Oireachtas last week, and in response to the Commission of Investigation Report submitted to Government on Friday, Deputy Jennifer Whitmore says "the needs of Mother and Baby Homes Survivors must be front and centre of any Government response to the Report".

"Now that the Mother and Baby Homes Report has been submitted to Government, it is important that the Government reflects on how difficult the past few weeks have been for Survivors and commits to putting their needs and concerns front and centre from now on.

"The past few weeks have seen very poor handling by Government on the subject of access to information for Survivors, their GDPR rights as well as the sealing of documents for 30 years. It revealed little to no consultation with Survivors or their representative groups resulting in legislation which was offensive and disrespectful.

"I welcome the Government's decision to

allow Survivors access their personal information, but what needs to happen now as the Report is being reviewed, is for assurances to be given to Survivors that what they have just experienced in the past few weeks will not happen again. A culture change needs to happen within the Department and in the whole-of-government approach to this legacy issue.

"However, serious questions need to be asked as to why the Minister suddenly reversed his decision when the Data Protection Commissioner issued their advice. Why was this advice not considered before when it was raised by myself and



Jennifer Whitmore TD

opposition members of the Dáil when we put forward various amendments to this effect?

"I have dealt with a number of Survivors from Wicklow who have clearly been traumatised again by the Government's mishandling of this issue and I am concerned for their mental health now that

the Commission of Investigation Report is due to be handed in to the Department.

"What they need now going ahead are assurances from Government that full and proper consultation is carried out with Survivors and their representatives, full transparency and accountability in decision-making and increased provision of mental health supports for Survivors particularly as contents of the Report emerge. I would urge the Minister to engage with Survivors on these issues and make sure that their voices are at the forefront of any Government response to the Commission of Investigation Report" concluded Whitmore.



Rathdrum Fire crew dealt with a burning overturned vehicle recently. Gardai are investigating the incident. Photo: Wicklow Fire Service

SHAMBOLIC TRACK AND TRACING

Continued from Page 1...

staff has mainly impacted on Primary Care and in particular therapy / clinical staff leading to an increase in the number of patients on a waiting list for therapy services.

"In 2019 Wicklow had some of the longest waiting lists in the country for speech and language therapy with over 570 children on the waiting list for a first assessment in the HSE area that also includes West Wicklow.

"Anecdotally, I am hearing the situation would appear to have worsened this year for children in Wicklow because of staff and resources diverted to address the current pandemic. I am waiting on

figures from the HSE but suspect that the waiting list for Wicklow is even longer now. I have spoken to parents and medical professionals across different fields who are seeing things worsen over time.

"The fact that these specialised therapists are still involved in swabbing and making phone calls seven months after the pandemic started is entirely unacceptable. While we are living with COVID 19 for the foreseeable future, it is important that we address the backlog and growing waiting lists which will not go away.

"Assessments and early intervention are absolutely vital in the development of children who need extra support. It is unacceptable that a child should have to wait more

than one third of their life to be seen. I'm sure there are many more children across the country in similar situations.

"Back in the summer, the HSE advertised for testing and tracing staff but it has clearly failed to recruit sufficient numbers and is instead still relying on the redeployment of its own specialised staff who are urgently needed in their own roles.

"This is simply a dire situation for children waiting to be seen; for parents burdened with the knowledge that their child's development is being delayed; and for our professional frontline staff who are near breaking point," concluded Deputy Whitmore.

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Irish rugby legend John Hayes is an ambassador for Sport Ireland's 'Your Personal Best' month, which is encouraged men aged over 45 to engage in at least 30 mins of moderate physical activity five days a week. See page 12 for more details

Fundraising campaign to resettle Syrian family in Baltinglass

Baltinglass native Paula Kavanagh has set up a GoFundMe campaign for the resettlement of a Syrian family currently living in a refugee camp in Lebanon.

The crisis in Syria has resulted in over 6 million refugees who have fled the devastation of civil war. Covid-19 has made already poor living conditions even worse for Syrians living in refugee camps.

The objective of the Baltinglass Welcomes committee is to make all of the arrangements for the resettlement of this family. In partnership with the Irish Red Cross, the group will sponsor a family that will live in Baltinglass and become members of Irish society.

In order to do this, they need to raise 10,000 for a security deposit for housing and the initial financial support (setting up a home, transportation, medical needs etc.) that the family will need in order to settle into Ireland.

They hope to complete the fundraising by the end of November 2020, so that a Syrian family has the chance to start a new life in Ireland in January 2021.

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Community groups to benefit from funding for integration projects

Community groups in Wicklow are to benefit from funding to support integration projects during the pandemic, it was announced last week.

The following Wicklow organisations have been awarded support by the Communities Integration Fund; Greystones Family Resource Centre; Blessington Educate Together; Wicklow Educate Together; The Road to Roundwood - Community Sponsorship Group; Africa Irish Society of Wicklow (AISW).

Minister Simon Harris said "I am delighted that five organisations in Wicklow will benefit from almost €21,000 through the 2020 Communities Integration Fund to support their activities which are more important than ever."

"People in Wicklow have come together like never before for the betterment of their communities, and in these challenging times it is vital that we ensure that everyone in our society feels included and that they belong."

"It is so welcome that almost every county in Ireland will benefit from funding for locally run projects to support the integration of migrants."

"As the Fund is intended to support the integration of migrant and host communities, all applications had to demonstrate how they will involve both migrant and host communities in the activities proposed."

"A total of almost €500,000 in grant funding has been provided to 113 groups nationwide this year. This is the fourth year of the Communities Integration Fund, bringing the total amount made available to date to over €2.0 million."

"The projects granted funding are small community-based projects. A maximum grant amount of €5,000 and a minimum grant amount of €1,000 is allocated to any single project."

The Communities Integration Fund was first established in 2017 to implement the commitment under Action 51 of the Migrant Integration Strategy

to support actions by local communities throughout Ireland to promote the integration of migrants and refugees.

"Community groups received funding for activities such as intercultural awareness, combatting racism and xenophobia, sport and community games and education."

"I wish these organisations every success in their endeavours and I thank the Minister for Disability, Equality, Children, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman TD, for his commitment to this area."

Bray teenager honoured at 2020 SEAI energy awards

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) last week announced the winners of the 2020 SEAI Energy Awards during an online awards ceremony in which a Bray teenager received the Emerging Sustainable Energy Champion Award.

Fifth year student at Loreto Abbey Dalkey and Bray native, Jessica Kelly, received the Emerging Sustainable Energy Champion Award following a public call for nominations from SEAI. Ms Kelly was nominated by Dalkey Tidy Towns. She is a Green Schools member and has a keen interest in the environment and sustainable energy. She attended the RTÉ Youth Assembly in 2019 and attended the Youth Saving Our Seas Conference in Malta for her work cleaning local beaches.

Upon receiving her award, Ms Kelly said "I am absolutely thrilled to have won the Emerging Sustainable Energy Champion Award. It is genuinely such a surprise, but I am absolutely over the moon, I'm honoured, and I hope that I can do it justice by continuing to be an advocate for the environment within my community. I would like to see people re-evaluate and reassess how we travel. We have a golden opportunity to think about how we can cut the environmental costs of our journeys, even if that just means walking, cycling, sharing lifts or even just doubling up some of our journeys to make the most of our resources."

A total of ten awards were presented to individuals, businesses, communities, and public sector organisations in recognition of their commitment and dedication to sustainable energy and climate action. The online awards ceremony was hosted by broadcast journalist, Andrea Gilligan, who was joined by Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications Eamon Ryan T.D. for a special interview.

Commenting on the leadership shown by all the finalists and winners, Minister Ryan said "The SEAI Energy Awards celebrate success, leadership and ambition in sustainable energy. I believe Ireland's energy transition is going to be good for us as a country and our people are going to be good at it. We have real skills and capabilities and it starts with everyone in their own way making change, demanding change and delivering it. I congratulate those participating in the SEAI Energy Awards who are committed to the change that's needed and are already helping to create a cleaner energy future."

SEAI received 124 entries to the 2020 SEAI Energy Awards with projects delivering combined energy savings of €42million. Commenting, William Walsh, CEO of SEAI, said "Despite the significant challenges this year, the volume and quality of entries reflects an unwavering commitment of individuals, and organisations to sustainable energy and climate action. The next decade will demand accelerated and significant change in every part of our society to reduce our carbon emissions. SEAI will support those who want to take such action. The commitment shown by each of our finalists is hugely inspiring and now we want others to see how they too can benefit from sustainable energy."

Other 2020 SEAI Energy Award winners include; Seamus Hoyne

(Outstanding Contribution to Sustainable Energy); Astellas Ireland Kerry Plant (Energy Team of the Year); Danone Wexford (Large Business - Exemplary Energy Management); Terra Spirits & Liqueurs, Cavan (SME - Exemplary Energy Management); Dublin City Council (Public Sector - Energy Leadership); Dunleer Sustainable Energy Community (Inspirational Energy Community); NUI Galway (Excellence in Energy Research and Innovation); SSE Airtricity Energy Services (Energy in Buildings); and Green Generation, Kildare (Innovative Deployment of Renewable Energy).



Loreto Dalkey student Jessica Kelly with her Emerging Sustainable Energy Champion Award

Bray Women's Refuge reports a surge in demand for help

There's been a surge in demand for help at Bray Women's Refuge in recent weeks. The refuge has had to reduce its capacity during the Covid-19 pandemic but is still operating a 24-hour hotline

After becoming aware of the surge in demand, Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly has urged women across Wicklow to seek help if they are feeling threatened at home. He said it was vital women knew there is always help available to them if they are feeling trapped or simply need someone to talk to.

"Bray Women's Refuge say they have experienced an increase in calls from individuals and professionals seeking information and support, women seeking crisis refuge accommodation for themselves and their children as well as from individuals seeking support through the court application processes for legal protection.

"In addition, the Still Here TV and radio adverts, developed by the Government in collaboration with a number of frontline services, has been launched to

underline the message help is available.

"We know that home is not a safe place for all of us, and unfortunately domestic violence increased during the initial lockdown we faced in the Covid-19 crisis. I want victims of domestic and sexual abuse to know that An Garda Síochána, the Courts Service and other services, including the vital supports provided by our community and voluntary sector, are still here for you as we now face more restrictions.

"For anyone living in an abusive relationship or living in fear for their safety right now must feel like an impossible situation. If you are in this situation I want you to know there is always help out there for you at any time of day or night.

"The Bray Women's Refuge offer support to not only women across the county but the whole country. They are ready at any time to offer a safe haven for victims of abuse

as well as advice or counselling. It's also important to remember that the 5km restriction on movement does not apply to you if you are seeking help.

"And perpetrators need to know that irrespective of what restrictions are in place, it doesn't impact on this Government's resolve to tackle domestic and sexual violence."

Bray Women's Refuge can be contacted on (01) 286 6163 or through the Bray-Women's Refuge Facebook page or through their website or email info@braywomen-srefuge.com.

An Garda Síochána last week announced the commencement of another phase of Operation Faoiseamh. This phase will once again see An Garda Síochána prioritise citizens vulnerable to and victims of Domestic Abuse.

This 3rd phase will see An Garda Síochána combine the actions of the previous phases and proactively reach out and

make contact with previous victims to provide reassurance, support and to offer the assistance of local and specialised resources. There will be a renewed focus on the enforcement of court orders and the prosecution of offenders.

An Garda Síochána has recorded an 18% year on year increase to date in calls for assistance in respect of Domestic related issues between 2019/2020.

Ireland is currently at Level 5 of the National Framework for Living with COVID-19. The Health Act 1947 (Section 31A - Temporary Restrictions) (Covid-19) (Amendment) (No.8) Regulations 2020 are currently in force and restrict movement of persons from their place of residence.

Travel restrictions do not apply however in the case of domestic violence or to escape a risk of harm, whether to the person or to another person.



The mens Rolex watch and the Australian Dollars that were seized by the Criminal Asset Bureau

€248,000 frozen in accounts, cash and watches seized following CAB operation

The Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) conducted a search operation in Co. Wicklow and Co. Dublin last Thursday 29th October.

The searches targeted the assets of members of a suspected Organised Criminal Group based in Dublin and Wicklow.

The operation consisted of the search of two residential properties along with three professional premises. The following items were seized: 201 Reg BMW 318; Cash to the value of €248,149 frozen in various bank accounts; Cash to the value of €11,800 and \$4,000 Australian Dollars; Gents Rolex Watch; Ladies Rolex Watch; Selection of Designer clothes.

The search operation is seen as a significant development in CAB targeting Organised Crime Gangs involved in committing rural crimes across the country.

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Wicklow libraries fly the flag for LGBTI community

Wicklow County Council Library Service along with LGBTI Allies of County Wicklow recently marked Social Inclusion Week with a visibility campaign which focused on sending out a message of welcome to the LGBTI community.

Libraries have always striven to lessen social exclusion by serving as designated safe spaces for vulnerable groups. The aim of this project was to reduce social exclusion by raising awareness through the flying or displaying of the traditional rainbow flag and the LGBTI allies flag at all 13 of their library buildings.

County Wicklow Partnership (WCP) also arranged to have people from the LGBTI community to be recorded while telling their stories. Wicklow County Council Library Service shared the subsequent podcasts on Facebook and other social media platforms.

Mary Millet from WCP explained: "The experiences of parents of young LGBTI people and adult coming out stories are hugely important to LGBTI young people and their parents, it's always comforting to know that others are on the same page." These recordings may be accessed on the library Facebook page, the library website and other podcasting platforms.

Michael Nicholson, Director of Services, Wicklow County Council, welcomed the

programme saying: "Libraries have a reduced capability of running activities or events due to present restrictions. The availability of these podcasts helps increase awareness of challenges facing the LGBTI community and celebrates diversity. This project has been possible due to shared funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development and Wicklow County Council".

Currently Wicklow County Council Library Service is concentrating on building a comprehensive collection of LGBTI resources across all genres and for all age groups.

"It is important that everyone in our community is looked after in terms of reading material. We will be looking at having current LGBTI informative material and also an extensive range of junior, young adult

and general fiction which will be borrowed by the entire community", says Outreach librarian, Margaret Birchall.

She added: "The LGBTI visibility campaign has been very successful which is evidenced by the amount of positive responses on the library social media platforms. We will build on this success by focussing on ensuring all library staff receive training around LGBTI issues."



Funding for two Wicklow estates to connect to public water Networks

Over €454,000 has been earmarked for the Garden Village estate in Kilpedder and the Rath Luain estate in Dunlavin to connect their water services to the public networks.

Discussing the announcement, Green Party TD Steven Matthews, said, "This is extremely welcome news for residents in these estates and I know it has been a long road for many of those involved in the applications for funding and I would particularly like to commend all those involved in seeing this come to fruition.

"This funding has been released under the rather long winded 'multi annual developer provided water services infrastructure resolution programme'. The focus of this first multi annual programme is on estates in towns and villages which have not been taken in charge by local authorities and rely on developer infrastructure, where the resolution is to connect their water services to the public networks.

"This is only the start of the process and as a local representative, I will continue to follow up with the Department to try and speed up the process for residents. As Chair of the Oireachtas Housing Committee, I will try to bring issues like this to the forefront of our discussions as there are a huge number of long-term housing infrastructure problems across Wicklow and Ireland that need to be addressed."



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Funding for Greystones Scuba Diving Club

The Greystones-based scuba diving club the Aquanauts has received a grant under the FLAG scheme.

The third tranche of the awards has seen over €550 million handed out to 33 local communities across the country.

Fisheries Local Area Action Group grants which are co-funded by the Irish Government and European Union are aimed specifically at helping coastal communities around the country.

The Greystones based Aquanauts received just under €7,500 of the €9,300 they spent upgrading facilities at their clubhouse. The money was used to add a shower in both the men's and women's changing facilities. The club also used some of the funding to purchase computers.

Welcoming the news, Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said: "It's tremendous to see clubs getting the support they need to improve their facilities. The Aquanauts do fantastic work by regularly collecting rubbish from the seabed along the coast around Greystones.

"It's so important the Government is able to help clubs raise funds especially at a time like this when they need support more than ever.

"I would encourage coastal clubs in Wicklow to

apply for the FLAG scheme as soon as possible. There is also an extensive list of grants for training and companies working in the marine sector.

"Marine based businesses in Wicklow can easily investigate what grants are available by contacting Ireland's Seafood Development Agency".

Details of the FLAG scheme and other supports for coastal communities as well as how to apply can be found at www.bim.ie/schemes/.

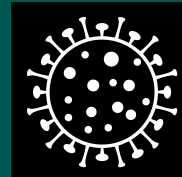
Announcing the third tranche of awards, Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue T.D., said, "I am delighted to announce today a further 33 coastal projects to benefit from EMFF funding through the Fisheries Local Action Groups established as part of my Department's EMFF Programme supporting the development of our seafood sector and coastal communities.

"These latest grant awards mean a total of €3.3 million FLAG funding has been awarded this year alone to 188 coastal projects."

Minister McConalogue added, "These projects will provide valuable economic and social benefits to our coastal communities during a difficult period for many. This is just one of the ways in which my Department's EMFF Programme is making a positive difference to our coastal communities."

The National Framework for Living with COVID-19

Taking Care of our Wellbeing & Resilience in Wicklow



Coronavirus
COVID-19
National
Programme

COVID-19 has turned 2020 into a year like no other.

The National Plan for Living with COVID-19 is fundamentally about our personal and collective resilience and wellbeing. So, let's start with ourselves — keeping well individually will help us support one another and our communities.

We all need a little help at times – Healthy Ireland is building a programme of activities around five simple actions that we can all take to keep well.

1 Keeping active

Outdoor activity is important for physical and mental health. Sport Ireland will support people to stay active through the winter. Look out for online activities you can join.

2 Keeping in contact

Person-to-person connection is vital to our wellbeing. Don't let isolation become a problem — ask for help if you need it, offer help if you can. Wicklow County Council will provide a helpline and support services as part of The Community Call.

3 Getting creative

Learn something new, get back to nature, find ways to relax, rediscover your own locality. Engage creatively with local historical spaces and places. Wicklow County Council and the Creative Ireland Programme will provide initiatives in the arts, crafting, culture and heritage.

4 Eating well

Make the connection between the food you eat and how you feel, mentally and physically. Bord Bia will support healthy eating this winter. Libraries will promote a grow your own food initiative for spring. Safefood's *START* campaign will help parents to introduce healthier habits with their kids.

5 Minding your mood

Anxiety is a real problem – do not ignore it. Find out where to go if you or someone you know needs support. The HSE's *yourmentalhealth.ie* website has useful information and look out for the upcoming HSE online *Minding Your Wellbeing* programme.

Make a daily plan to do at least one thing every day that will keep you well.

There is an abundance of things to do and to discover in Wicklow.

Find what's available at gov.ie/HealthyIreland or on the Wicklow County Council website.



The National Framework for Living with COVID-19 will help us to manage the risk associated with the virus. However, we also need to focus on wellbeing — the wellbeing of our country and the personal wellbeing of every one of us. That requires three things: healthy people, strong businesses and resilient communities.

Wicklow Community Call helpline is there if you need practical support or someone to talk to:

1800 868 399



Comhairle Chontae
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Wicklow County
Council



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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Tilly Egar-Mooney and Darcy Odlun dressed up for Halloween in Newtown

'Urgent clarity needed on Greystones Community National School accommodation'

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has called for urgent clarity over the accommodation situation facing Greystones Community National School.

Greystones Community National School is currently being accommodated by Greystones Rugby Club.

The new Community National School building in Charlesland was meant to be opened for this school year, however the pupils have been denied occupation of the building despite a Certificate of Compliance being issued. The Department has deemed the building to be not yet fit for handover.

Deputy Whitmore says that the lack of clarity over the future accommodation of the school is impacting on the school's ability to plan.

Deputy Whitmore has also raised the impact this is having on Greystones Community College who are also seeking information on their future accommodation status, raising it with the Minister on numerous occasions. Greystones Community College is currently being accommodated in Greystones Tennis Club.

SocDems Spokesperson for Children Deputy Whitmore said "As ex-Chair of the Board of the Greystones Community National School I am aware of the ongoing accommodation needs of students and staff and the incredible work carried out by the school community to work around the lack of a permanent building in place.

"However, this year's setback of not being able to begin the new school year in the new building in Charlesland has been extremely disappointing to say the least. Unfortunately, no further clarity has been provided by the Department of Education as to when the students can move to the new premise.

"This is now impacting on the schools' ability to plan ahead particularly when it comes to the enrolment of future children in ASD classes. I have written to the Minister consistently on the matter since news broke that the new building was not

opening this September. I also wrote a letter signed by all 5 Wicklow TDs requesting an urgent meeting with the Minister about the current situation but which was refused.

"This week I have requested the Minister to meet with all five TDs once again and for urgent clarity regarding the accommodation situation for Greystones Community National School and Greystones Community College so that schools can plan ahead for the future and secure the necessary educational supports required for future classes.

"Uncertainty is not only impacting on the schools, but the whole area as people are uncertain as to the future capacity of schools and where to send their children in years to come. It's now a community-wide issue which needs urgent attention from the Department of Education," concluded Whitmore.

Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, recently responded to Parliamentary Questions about the schools situation in Greystones, and said that Senior Department officials met with Kildare Wicklow ETB (KWETB) and Greystones Community College on 23rd September to discuss the school's current arrangements and the immediate and future accommodation requirements for the school.

"My Department has agreed to look at all potential options in the area in the short and medium term ahead of the schools move to its designated permanent site in Charlesland, Greystones. This will include the provision of appropriate temporary accommodation, including specialist rooms, as quickly as possible as the current school year progresses. My Department officials will continue to work closely with KWETB to ensure the needs of the school community continue to be met."

DEATH OF BR.TALLON CFC, OF ST BRENDAN'S

The 97 year old was the last religious principal of St Brendan's Christian Brothers College at Woodbrook. Yet the 85 year Christian Brothers' presence in Bray from 1935 continues

The death has occurred at the age of 97 of the distinguished Wicklow educator and Christian Brother, the Rev. Br. Mel Tallon, CFC, the last Christian Brother to serve as principal of St Brendan's Christian Brothers College, Woodbrook, Bray. He continued to serve as Brother Superior of the adjacent St Brendan's Monastery for a number of years where the Christian Brothers presence continues today.

Br. Tallon, as College Principal, and Mr. Seamus Duddy as Vice-principal were synonymous with the running of St Brendan's College.

A Dubliner, Br. Tallon had previously taught at St Paul's CBC, Syngé Street, Dublin; Mitchelstown CBS, Cork; Christian Brothers schools in other parts of Dublin, Our Lady's Mount, North Monastery CBS, Cork, and was principal in Oatlands College, Stillorgan, before coming to St Brendan's CBC, Woodbrook, Bray. In 1984 he replaced the Rev. Br. Joe McGrath, CFC, who following 28 years membership of the Irish Christian Brothers left the order to pursue a priestly vocation with the Diocese of Ferns, where he has served as Parish Priest of New Ross and Vicar General of the Diocese of Ferns, and has since been appointed an Honorary Prelate of His Holiness The Pope with the honorific title of Rt. Rev. Monsignor. Notable past pupils of Br. Tallon's include consultant cardiothoracic surgeon Mr. Tom Aherne at Mitchelstown CBS and the journalist/broadcaster Matt Cooper at North Monastery, Cork, amongst many others.

Born Edward Tallon and known as Eddie, he was the eldest of eight children, four boys and four girls, born in Dublin city to Michael Tallon, a shop keeper on Townsend Street and Jenny McDermott. Br. Tallon grew up on Griffith Avenue and attended the all-Irish medium Coláiste Mhuire CBC, then at Parnell Square. His next brother was the architect, trustee of the Gate Theatre and Papal Knight, Dr. Ronnie Tallon, of Scott, Tallon & Walker Architects, considered by many to be amongst the greatest and most prolific architects in Irish history.

Ronnie Tallon's design and aesthetic abilities was shared by

his brother Eddie (Br. Mel), who expressed this architectural flare in his interest in gardening, especially evident in his planting of the grounds of St Brendan's CBC, particularly of trees and rose plants. He would mow the lawns and playing fields by tractor while reciting the Rosary.

The Irish Christian Brothers (CFC) was founded by Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice at Waterford in 1802 in the Ignatian tradition of St Ignatius Loyola, which also inspires the Jesuit and Loreto Orders to name but a few. In 1832 the Presentation Brothers, which founded Presentation College, Bray in 1921, broke away from the Christian Brothers.

With the arrival of the Brothers in Bray in 1935, it was the first foundation inaugurated between the Christian Brothers Schools at Gorey, Co. Wexford founded in 1854 and Dún Laoghaire (now CBC Monkstown) in 1856. Taking over the Baron Plunket estate at Old Connaught House, the Brothers established the order's senior noviciate school of Coláiste Chiaráin and ran a farm on the adjacent lands. Mount St Mary's College was established at Ferndale on the estate and Walcot House on Old Connaught Avenue was acquired as St Brendan's Christian Brothers Secondary School which opened in September 1956. Dedicated to St Brendan the Navigator (c.AD 484, Ciarraige Luachra, Tralee, Co. Kerry -AD 16 May, 577, Annaghdown, Co. Galway), described as one of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland, believed to be the first European to Discover the America, by which time Irish monks had already settled Iceland, he is considered the Patron Saint of the United States Navy. St Brendan's Feast Day of 16 May was traditionally celebrated as the school's Sports Day. The legendary journey recorded

in the Navigatio sancti brendani became famous across medieval Europe resulting in a growth in veneration of St Brendan, with many places being named in honour of St Brendan, including the Prussian city of Brandenburg. Sea charts and maps of Christopher Columbus' time often included an island denominated Saint Brendan's Isle that was placed in the western Atlantic Ocean. The author Paul Chapman argues that Christopher Columbus learned from the Navigatio that the currents and winds would favour westbound travel by a southerly route from the Canary Islands, and eastbound on the return trip by a more northerly route, and hence followed this itinerary on all of his voyages. The adventurer Tim Severin who in 1978 recreated the voyage of St Brendan demonstrated that it is possible for a leather-clad boat such as the one described in the Navigatio could reach America. In 2016 St Brendan's controversially adopted the new name of Woodbrook College, which has caused a great degree of hurt amongst the school's former pupils, one telling this paper that he "feels like his old school has been abolished", another saying that he felt "the school's traditions seem to have meant nothing" and another complaining that no consultation with past pupils of the College seems to have been conducted.

In 1941 the Brothers took charge of St Kevin's Primary School, Blacklion, Greystones from the Sisters of the Holy Faith and in 1961 the Christian Brothers founded Ard Scoil Chaoimhín CBS, Arklow, Co. Wicklow. St Brendan's College was not the first secondary school considered for the Old Connaught area. In 1857 the Vincentians considered Old Connaught as the location for a Preparatory Minor Seminary to the 1842 founded All

Hallows Foreign Missionary College, Drumcondra. A new school building was built at Woodbrook in 1972, opened and blessed by the Most Rev. Dr. John Charles McQuade, Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, the last official engagement of his episcopate before his retirement. The 1972 structure was replaced with new school buildings in 2015 when the new school was blessed by the Very Rev. Monsignor Daniel O'Connor, Episcopal Vicar for Education for the Dublin Archdiocese. The school is now co-educational with the girls' uniform displaying a plaid kilt.

Notable past pupils include: the Very Rev. Fr. Aidan Troy, CP, former Minister Provincial and General Counselor of the Passionist Order, who opposed the sectarian protests in Belfast at Holy Cross Girl's School, Ardoyne; developer and Ben Dunne's solicitor Noel Smyth; former Wicklow Fianna Fáil TD Joe Behan; dentist Dr. Fergus Duddy, past President of the Irish Endodontic Society; award winning RTÉ Lyric FM radio presenter and artist Bernard Clarke; RTÉ television news journalist and broadcaster Anthony Murnane; and Fair City actor Maclean Burke.

Br. Tallon passed away at the former Christian Brother run St Patrick's Nursing Home, Baldoy, Dublin and was interred at the adjoining Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice Cemetery. He was predeceased by his sister Jen, brother Tony and Ronnie. He is deeply missed by his brother Michael, sisters Marie, Pauline and Irene, sister-in-law Patricia, brothers-in-law Seán and Tom, nieces, nephews, grandnieces, grand-nephews, great grandnieces, great grandnephews, relatives, friends, past pupils and confreres in the Congregation of Christian Brothers.



The late Rev. Br. Mel (Eddie) Tallon, CFC, the last Christian Brother to serve as principal of St Brendan's Christian Brothers College, Woodbrook, Bray, with Mr. Seamus Duddy, Vice-principal and the 1985 Leaving Certificate class.

St Catherine's Adult Day Centre granted permission to relocate to Kilcoole

St Catherine's Adult Day Centre has been permission to relocate to their proposed new site in Kilcoole.

Wicklow County Council unanimously agreed to the placing of modular units on lands attached to the Holy Faith Convent in the village. The Council has granted permission for the new 600sq metre facility to remain on the site for three years.

The new structures should be in place and in use by the middle of next year. However, it is hoped the temporary structure will ultimately be replaced by three permanent buildings in the future.

The Day Centre caters for adults with special needs offering them a range of courses from cooking to gardening.

Minister Simon Harris said: "I am delighted to see progress in

respect of St Catherine's Adult Day Care Centre moving to Kilcoole. The unanimous support for their proposal is a testament to how highly the community values the work of St Catherine's.

"I will continue to work with the families and all the team at St Catherine's Association to ensure the relocation of the school to its new permanent home and buildings happens as speedily as possible and as ever they can count on my full support."

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said: "I'm delighted to see the progress being made in getting St Catherine's a new home in Kilcoole. The work they do is absolutely invaluable and in many cases

life-changing for the people that use them.

"We are lucky to have such a well-run organisation in our county that deserves our full support."

Fianna Fáil Cllr Gerry Walsh said he was delighted to see St Catherine's getting such strong support from the Council.

He said: "This is a project I've given my full backing to which is why I was so eager to see them reach this important milestone."

"Everyone understands just how important the work that takes place at St Catherine's is which is why there is so much goodwill towards them."

"However, it's important we push on now and help them move to the next stage of their ambitious plans to develop a purpose-built facility."

Irish Rail makes commitment to fix bridge at Greystones South Beach

Social Democrats councillor for Greystones Municipal District, Jodie Neary, has confirmed that Irish Rail will fix the existing railway bridge at the second arch by South Beach playground in Greystones where flooding frequently occurs.

Cllr Neary had contacted Irish Rail after a recent spate of flooding prevented access to dog walkers, swimmers and commuters walking from the Dart to the Park n Ride.

"Flooding under this bridge has been going on for years. I remember it flooding as a kid, so in

some way we have learned to live with it however, with an increase in the number of families in the area using our much loved amenities including the South Beach playground, I felt it was time to address this once and for all. Particularly, during COVID, many people

are enjoying the outdoors more than ever so access is a central issue here.

"It has also been an issue for many commuters who will know after heavy rains water will remain on the footpath for days, sometimes never clearing up in time before the next rainfall.

This will only worsen during the winter months and while the number of commuters has decreased since COVID it still needs to be addressed.

"I had contacted the Council about flooding between the railway bridge and the Park n Ride which sometimes meets along the path by the playground but was told it is quite a significant job that would require funding that is not currently available. They pointed to the fact that the problem partly remained under the responsibility of Irish Rail who own the bridge at the second arch.

"During rainfall, water collects at the railway line and drips into a pool of water where water from other areas meet underneath the bridge. I contacted them to see if they would consider fixing the bridge to alleviate the collection of water in this area and address access issues for people who enjoy the local amenity.

"I was delighted to receive confirmation from the engineer and infrastructure Department in Irish Rail that they have now reviewed this issue and are working on a solution to rectify the problem. They are working with a target to complete works by the end of this year or early 2021" concluded Cllr Neary.



Cllr Jodie Neary at the entrance to Greystones South Beach

Application lodged for Delgany residential development

A planning application has been lodged with Wicklow County Council for a strategic housing development in Delgany of 232 residential units, consisting of houses and apartments.

The application was lodged by Drumakilla Ltd and a decision is due to be made on the application by 15th December. Public submissions are invited until 24th November. The development would include 136 apartments within 2 four-storey apartment blocks and within 5 three-storey duplex blocks as follows: 28 one-bed, 82 two-bed, 26 three-bed.

The development would also consist of: Provision of a new vehicular entrance from Bellevue Hill Road to the west of the site and new vehicular access from Convent Road to the east. Provision of pedestrian and cycle connection from the site to north, south east and south west. Change of use of Gate Lodge to management office. Change of use of Protected Structure (consisting of a Church and villa) to community/cultural facility and creche (551sqm). Provision of extension to rear of the Protected Structure for creche use (73sqm). Demolition of modern extension to Protected Structure, demolition of bungalow and demolition of out-building (total 1,896sqm). The Development also includes site clearance, landscaped private, communal and public open space, removal of walls, new boundary treatments, 420 parking spaces, and 364 cycle spaces.



NETWORKS

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ESB Networks will contact you before your meter is replaced. Together we can move towards a low-carbon future while we keep the nation humming.

Find out more at esbnetworks.ie/smartmeter





Minister Simon Harris, Principal of Scoil Nioclais Naofa in Dunlavin, Michael Moran, and Cllr Avril Cronin, on a recent (pre-lockdown) visit to the school.

'Heritage Heroes' from Wicklow celebrated at National Heritage Awards

The efforts of individuals, families and community groups from County Wicklow to ensure the preservation, protection and promotion of Ireland's built, natural and cultural heritage were recognised recently at the National Heritage Awards 2020.

Hosted by the Heritage Council, the event took place virtually and was presented by RTÉ broadcaster, Anne Cassin.

To take account of restrictions on gatherings due to COVID-19, rather than focusing on the organisation of in-person events this year, more than 770 heritage experts and enthusiasts developed projects around this year's theme of 'Heritage and Education: Learning from our Heritage'. Comprising online talks and exhibitions, videos, podcasts, slideshow presentations, blogs, websites, social media accounts, as well as small, restricted social gatherings, more than 850 projects were submitted. Each one was considered for a National Heritage Week Award.

The National Heritage Week Awards were expanded this year to include an award for the best project in each Local Authority across the island, with Glendalough Heritage Forum claiming the prize in County Wicklow. Their project,

'Glendalough Heritage Forum: short films, website, promoting heritage', is a series of short films to promote understanding of the area's cultural heritage.

The volume and variety of projects received this year reflects the dedication of individuals and communities to capture, celebrate and share Ireland's rich and varied heritage.

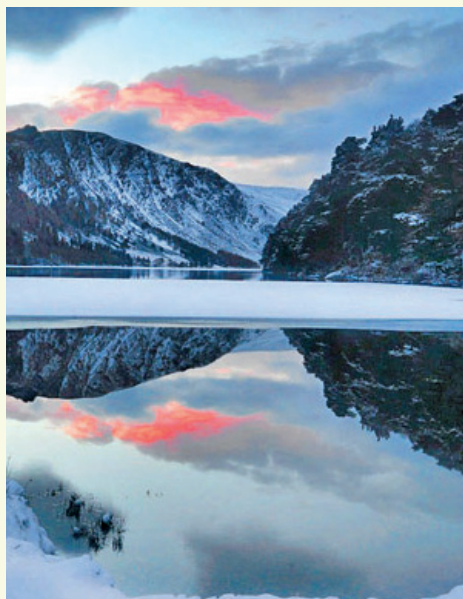
Commenting, Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan TD, said: "The annual National Heritage Awards offer important recognition of the tireless work undertaken by people - not just during National Heritage Week, but year-round - to ensure the story of Ireland's heritage continues to be told in a meaningful way. I am delighted to see the interest and excitement generated by the Awards among communities across the country, and offer congratulations to all winning and nominated projects."

Referring to the €95.5m for heritage announced in last week's budget - an increase of 51% on 2020 - Minister Noonan continued, "I am delighted that the Heritage Council will receive an additional €2.5m next year to develop and grow its programmes, including its supports for communities who care for our heritage."

Chief Executive of the Heritage Council, Virginia Teehan added: "Although National Heritage Week took place against the challenging backdrop of the public health emergency, I am buoyed by the remarkable response from people across the country to get involved with this year's changed event regardless. This is clearly reflected in the sheer number of projects which were submitted for all to browse and enjoy, all of which were considered for a National Heritage Award.

"I believe this year's event and the circumstances surrounding it will go far in opening Ireland's heritage up to even broader and more diverse audiences, ensuring increased access and understanding well into the future. It has also shown how digital technology, including social media can be readily deployed to facilitate engagement with our heritage, particularly among younger generations, whose interest must be nurtured from an early age. On behalf of everyone at the Heritage Council, I offer sincere congratulations to not only the winning and shortlisted organisations, but to all those who were nominated and involved in the organisation of National Heritage Week projects.

"I am also delighted to take this opportunity to introduce the theme for National Heritage Week 2021 - 'Inclusive Heritage / Heritage for Everyone' - which will help us to build on the enhanced engagement we were delighted to see during this year's event."



Glendalough

Arklow woman named as Ireland's Inspirational Hero

Following a nationwide search to uncover Ireland's most inspirational people, Mary O'Brien from Arklow is celebrating after being named an Inspirational Hero in the Gala Retail and Virgin Media Inspiration Awards.

Nominated by family and friends for the Inspiration Award, Mary's entry stood out for her dedication and endless hard work. Mary founded the Arklow cancer support back in May 2009 after losing her daughter Orla at the young age of 21 from a brain tumour. She felt there was no support in her area when her family was going through such a difficult time, and she wanted to help support cancer patients and their families in Arklow and the surrounding area. Since then Mary has set up a volunteer to drive program which provides transport to and from the various hospitals bringing clients for the treatments, she also set up free counselling for clients and their families. During the pandemic, and to this day Mary has continued to operate, bringing comfort to those during a difficult time.

Inspirational people from across Ireland were nominated for the Gala Retail and Virgin Media Inspiration Awards, with 26 inspirational county heroes being named from the hundreds of entries received. Each of the 26 award-winning heroes

demonstrated how they have made Ireland a better place with their selfless acts and inspirational deeds during the Covid-19 crisis, and how they have gone above and beyond for others in their local community.

Commenting on the quality of the entries, Gary Desmond, CEO of Gala Retail comments: "we wanted to deliver a national platform to shine a light on and reward the amazing people who have become true heroes during life under lockdown and who are making a real difference to Irish society.

"2020 has been hugely difficult for everyone however, it has also demonstrated the immense community spirit that exists within Irish communities. Operating in communities throughout Ireland, Gala Retailers have seen first-hand some of the great work that people have been doing and we are proud to have been able to recognise some of these inspirational individuals. We were overwhelmed by the level of nominations we received and Mary's entry along with the fellow inspira-



Mary O'Brien

tional heroes are true examples of people who are making Ireland a better place for us all."

2020 marks the second year of the Gala Retail Inspiration Awards created as a way of celebrating the selfless acts and inspirational deeds of people in Ireland who are making the country a better place.

As a community retailer with 175 convenience stores nationwide, Gala store owners often hear of

inspirational stories in their local communities, and this year's Gala Retail and Virgin Media Inspiration Awards have elevated Ireland's unsung heroes onto a national stage, giving these inspirational people the recognition they deserve.

Gala Retail has gifted €20,000 of prizes to the winners, with 26 county winners being awarded with luxury stays in some of Ireland's most beautiful Blue Book properties.

Equine Assisted Ireland announces development of National Register of Practitioners

Equine Assisted Ireland has announced the development of a National Register of Practitioners. The development of a National Register is part of a pilot programme which has been initiated by Horses in Therapy and Education International (HETI).

Equine Assisted Ireland, the organisation for Equine assisted activities in Ireland, will become one of the first countries to participate in this pilot program. With the growth in this field of work increasing every year in Ireland, there is a need to develop a national register which will be accessed by potential clients and which will outline the scope of services provided, credentials of practitioners and will also provide information relating to areas of governance such as Safeguarding Policy, Safety Statements, etc.

It is proposed that the HETI (Ireland) National Register will be a list of the names and contact details of individuals and organisations who provide Equine Assisted Therapy, Education and Activities.

The National Register will act as a resource for service users wishing to access provision for which verification must be supplied in order to commission or fund the provision. The Register would, for example, provide assurance that practitioners have appropriate up-to-date insur-

ance cover or that they have relevant experience and training to safely offer Equine Assisted Therapy, Education and Activities.

The Register may also ultimately provide Federation, Business, Institute and Associate members with a more effective means of mutual support through greater emphasis on developing national networks and essential operational credentials. HETI seeks to act as a guiding point for members, to link those who wish to be part of a National Forum of member organisations.

Jill Carey, chairperson of Equine Assisted Ireland said "She welcomes this move towards a more professional and regulated approach to equine assisted activities in Ireland"

'Outrageous that frontline workers not eligible for flu vaccination'

Aontu representatives concerned that Gardai and teachers are not entitled to the flu jab

Ciaran Hogan, the Aontu representative for Wicklow, is one of many Aontu reps to share concerns of the party across the country. Together they are calling on the department of Health to revise its decision that would deny the jab to members of An Garda Síochána, Primary and secondary teachers.

Ciaran Hogan says "The Level 5 lockdown has kept most of us at home, and out of our jobs and social spaces, but there are still some workers who need to go into the highest risk situations. Members of the Gardai have been dealing with gatherings, verbal abuse, and belligerents. School teachers are in a room with 20-30 children who by their nature contact and spread infections no matter of the restrictions. A highly contagious virus is infecting over a thousand people a day - Covid 19 displays many of the same symptoms as the influenza virus.

"How can we expect to have a functioning police force, and functioning schools when any cold or

flu symptoms will take a worker off duty for up to two weeks? These positions, already stretched and strained, will suffer further and the burden of work will increase on those still able to work to the point where the system collapses.

"Any loss of working time by these vital public servants at this critical juncture of the country's journey through the Pandemic will cause further pressure on the nation's financial position. Should teachers have to self isolate suddenly, the entire class group would be sent home leaving the parents in a precarious position of unreliable work time."

Ciaran continued: "I feel personally affected by

this terrible decision as my brother is a member of An Garda Síochána stationed in Dublin city center. No doubt he will be trying his best to keep healthy but in the line of duty he must interact with so many people the chance of him getting any sort of cold, flu or even corona virus is worrying.

"The decision by Health Minister Stephen Donnelly to withhold the flu jab will prove disastrous over the winter flu season, and shows a clear lack of communication and understanding with frontline workers. In general the handling of this lockdown situation has been a bungled mess that unfortunately follows from Sthphens Donnelly's

record of poor action and understanding.

"We in Aontú will do all we can to bring such irregularities to light with simple and common sense solutions to benefit the welfare of hardworking people. Too often the government overlooks the obvious while opening its doors and ears to the vociferous well funded campaigns of interest groups. Meanwhile the man in the street groans under the burden of such neglect.

"We will do all we can to ensure the country emerges from the Pandemic in the best shape possible as well as fulfilling one of the party's core principles of safeguarding life."

People urged to test their homes for cancer-causing radon gas

For European Radon Day (7th November), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is calling on all householders in County Wicklow to test their homes for this cancer-causing radioactive gas. Radon is the second biggest cause of lung cancer after smoking. In Ireland, it is estimated that about 300 lung cancer cases each year are linked to radon exposure.

Radon gas can seep into your home through small cracks and gaps in the foundations of the building or openings around service pipes. It comes from the rocks and soil in the ground under your home. Radon has no colour, taste or smell, so the only way to know how much of this pollutant is in your home is to carry out a radon test. The test costs about €50 and is all done by post using one of the services registered with the EPA. The test kit includes two radon detectors - one should be placed in the bedroom and one in the living room. After three months, the detectors are posted back to the provider and analysed to see how much radon they have been exposed to in your home. The results are posted back to you, with advice on how to deal with any high radon readings.

Stephanie Long, Manager of the EPA's Radon programme said "Exposure to high levels of radon can cause lung cancer and many families are unknowingly living with this indoor air pollutant. Last year, two homes in Co. Wicklow were found to have extremely high levels of radon, the highest of which had over 19 times the acceptable level. Living with this level of radon gives a radiation dose equivalent to getting 13 chest x-rays a day."

You can visit www.radon.ie to find out how to test your home and keep you and your family safe. Reducing radon levels is simple and inexpensive and will immediately reduce the risk of developing lung cancer. For moderate levels of radon, improving indoor ventilation may reduce the level by up to half, the cost of which is low. For higher levels, a fan assisted 'sump' can be

installed which can reduce radon levels by over 90 per cent. The sump can be installed in a day by a contractor with little disruption to the home.

Alison Dowdall of the EPA added, "Radon is everywhere but is only a problem if it is ignored. Testing for radon - where high levels are found - and fixing the problem are both relatively straightforward and easy to do. Now more than ever, as people spend more time at home, we would urge everyone to take action on radon, improve your indoor air quality and keep your home safe from this cancer-causing gas."



Dan Kenny making a delivery to Blessington resident Babs Merrin.

Celebrating 40 years in business in Blessington

Back in 1980 in the middle of a recession when most young people were leaving Ireland Dan Kenny made the brave decision to rent an old VG shop on Main Street, Blessington.

From there the business has evolved and progressed with thousands of people being employed in the store over the years. Dan currently employs about 60 people. "It's been amazing," said Dan, "to see generations of the same family shop and work in the store".

Over the years Dan has continuously developed the store culminating in a complete refurbishment this year to celebrate 40 years in business in Blessington. "Sustainability and greater choice were the key motivators of this refurbishment", according to Dan, with energy efficient lighting and refrigeration throughout the store. "Our extended number of aisles and great fresh food range means even more choice and value for our customers too."

Community involvement has always been important to Dan with sponsorship of Tidy Towns and local schools and sports clubs. Those who visit the shop's rear car park on the Kilbride Road are always impressed with the stunning lake view and the beautiful school garden done in collaboration with St. Mary's Junior School.

With his own love of boating Dan was delighted to sponsor a new rowing boat for Blessington Rowing Club and in recent weeks was very happy to see the arrival of the benches he sponsored in the Blessington Forum & Access Group's Sensory Garden beside the Blessington playground.

At the heart of the community for so many years, Dan has seen Blessington grow and grow. Many of the 40 year celebrations have obviously had to be cancelled due to Covid, but Dan had one customer he wanted to mention. Babs Merrins was his first customer 40 years ago and is still a loyal customer today at 100 years young.

The nationwide call for the benefits of supporting local is surely evident in Dan's continued reinvestment in the Blessington store.



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Ellie Sheane from Wicklow, pictured at the launch of the 2020 Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal, which is moving to an online-only appeal this year due to Covid-19. People are being asked to 'Team Up for Team Hope' by building personalised gift-filled showboxes for children affected by poverty in Eastern Europe and Africa on teamhope.ie

Three local charity and community groups benefit from Begin Together Fund

Purple House Cancer Support, Greystones Family Resource Centre, and Lakers Social and Recreational Club are among the 116 projects to receive support from Bank of Ireland's Begin Together Fund.

The financial support will help local community groups and non-profit organisations continue to serve their communities through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The three Wicklow grantees will each receive up to €5,000 to support a range of projects and initiatives spanning mental wellbeing and physical wellbeing.

Bank of Ireland is working with The Community Foundation for Ireland, which is administering the fund, and a number of expert partners - the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Sport Ireland, Action Mental Health and Sport NI - who assisted in developing the fund's focus and social impact objectives.

Commenting on the announcement, Maria Coleman, Head of Bank of Ireland for Wicklow, said "The aim of the Begin Together Fund, launched back in February which seems a lifetime ago now, is to support charities and community organisations that

are making a real difference to the financial, physical and mental wellbeing of their communities. As society begins to open up again it's important to remember that charities and community groups have seen their income severely impacted by COVID-19 but the work they do is more important than ever. For that reason I'm delighted that the Begin Together Fund is providing this timely support for these Wicklow projects."

Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of the Community Foundation for Ireland, said:

"The COVID-19 Pandemic, its economic impact and recovery is causing great uncertainty for people, families and communities across the country. Bank of Ireland's Begin Together Fund, administered by The Community Foundation for Ireland, is a perfect example of partnership which can deliver real supports for people who have seen their home and work lives severely impacted by COVID-19. While this is a period of huge challenge, The Community Foundation for Ireland remains absolutely committed to working with its partners for a fair, caring and vibrant Ireland with thriving communities."

'Pool in West Wicklow will have huge potential for increased water safety awareness'

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has welcomed further confirmation by Wicklow County Council of their priority to see a swimming and leisure facility for West Wicklow saying the potential for increased water safety awareness will be huge.

Speaking on the issue, Deputy Whitmore says "I'm delighted that the project remains a priority with Wicklow County Council and acknowledge the efforts made to date and in particular by the Pool for West Wicklow campaigners.

"I'm particularly delighted to see that Wicklow County Council has acknowledged the opportunity the new swimming and leisure facility will provide for increasing water safety awareness in West Wicklow.

"I understand that the new facility could be used to facilitate water safety courses provided by Water

Safety Ireland (WSI) and that there is potential to house Water Safety Ireland in the recreational facility itself. This will bring huge benefits to the 26,000 residents in West Wicklow who know how important water safety awareness is for the area due to its proximity to Blessington Lakes.

"These manmade lakes contain a body of water that have specific water safety concerns associated with them. Water Safety Ireland have a startling statistic revealing that 62% of drowning fatalities occur inland ie: on rivers and lakes so it is crucial that water safety is

enhanced in this part of Wicklow.

"I am encouraged by WSI's plans to develop Ireland's first inland life-saving training centre here and which will go a long way towards increasing much needed water awareness and training. With a new Pool, WSI will have access to the natural water courses at the lakes as well as the indoor pool facility increasing its potential immensely. This could ultimately help save lives.

"Many people don't realise that water safety training in lakes is different to water safety training on sea and ocean water and so this is a fantastic new

opportunity I hope will be given serious consideration.

"Now more than ever it is apparent just how important large-scale recreational facilities are to local communities. It's important for people's health, for their mental well-being and for social cohesion. It's also important for the local economy and for local services such as WSI training services.

"I'm also very encouraged to hear that the Council will hold regular meetings with the local community, through the campaign for west Wicklow pool committee, and with WSI and hope that all channels of communication are opened and that this potential will be explored in full," concluded Deputy Whitmore.

Men over 45 urged to get active as part of Sport Ireland's Your Personal Best Month

Wicklow men over 45 are being encouraged to engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days a week for the month of November.

The "Your Personal Best Month" is aimed at getting men over 45 more physically active as studies have shown that men of this age, particularly those from disadvantaged communities, are amongst those least likely to be active. As a result, they suffer from worse health, mental and physical, and are more likely to die younger, than the rest of the population

Speaking about the project, Cllr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach, Wicklow County Council said: "As Cathaoirleach, I know the importance of keeping active at all times, but especially during the current COVID pandemic, and I want to add my voice to encourage everyone to engage in as many outdoor activities during the month of November, remembering at all times to stay within the 5k limit and observe social distancing.

"Your Personal Best Month" is encouraging men to stop making excuses and to engage in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days a week. It will run throughout the month of November.

The campaign is also being supported by the nationwide network of Local Sport Partnerships, who will provide practical support on the ground.

Also involved are various sporting National Governing Bodies such as Cycling Ireland, Athletics Ireland, Get Ireland Walking and Swim Ireland, who will provide information, advice and programmes for men who want to become more active with resources available at www.sportireland.ie/.

Sport Ireland's Irish Sports Monitor 2019 revealed that only one-in-four men aged 45-54 meet the World Health Organisation's recommended 150 minutes of exercise per week. On average, men of this age are physically active for just 87 minutes per week or 12 minutes per day, with one in six not participating in any sport or exercise.

Socio-economic standing also influences activity levels: those with the highest education and income are twice as likely to play sports than those from the poorest backgrounds who, in turn, are the most likely to lead sedentary lives with 16 per cent claiming to take no form of exercise.

Sport Ireland is the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland and this includes participation in sport and physical activity. "Your Personal Best Month" is aimed squarely at a group in society that has consistently been amongst those least likely to enjoy the benefits of participating in sport and physical activity, with funding for the project coming from the Dormant Accounts Fund.

Sport Ireland Chief Executive, John Treacy, said: "We are delighted to launch 'Your Personal Best Month' which will help to shine a light on the need for men over the age of 45 to get more physically

active and engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise five days a week."

He added: "People can exercise and be physically active during Level 5 restrictions, and we would encourage everyone to continue to do so for their own wellbeing, but we also ask that people respect the guidelines and exercise within 5km of their home and if they are exercising with others to maintain social distancing of 2m as it's important that we all play our part in keeping everyone safe."

Speaking at the project launch, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs and Sport, Jack Chambers TD, said: "The positive role that sport and physical activity play in our health and physical wellbeing as a nation should never be underestimated. 'Your Personal Best Month' will have a positive impact on a group that are consistently under-represented when it comes to participation in sport and physical activity. The current pandemic has highlighted the need more than ever for people to care for themselves and sport and physical activity are a brilliant outlet for many to do so."

Also present at the launch were Professor Niall Moyna, Head of the School of Health and Human Performance at Dublin City University, along with actor and broadcaster Simon Delaney and for-

mer Ireland rugby international John Hayes who are acting as campaign ambassadors.

Professor Niall Moyna of DCU added: "Health related problems due to lack of physical activity continue to rise in Ireland and it's a major concern. We know that people who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds are at much higher risk of developing these health problems, and education and access to employment all play their part - people underestimate the importance of those determinants and how they impact on our health. I would stress to anyone though, that it's never too late to reset. We want people to set realistic goals, not something that's unsustainable. Just 30 minutes a day; 15 minutes from your front door and 15 minutes back, five days a week."

We all have a responsibility to protect ourselves and those around us. Exercise within 5 kilometres of home and distance yourself at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from other people. Avoid an area if it looks busy and remember to keep active in line with Government advice. The latest information, advice and guidelines regarding Covid-19 is available on Gov.ie.

For more information contact Denise in Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership on wicklowlsp@wicklowcoco.ie



Actor and presenter Simon Delaney is pictured at the launch of Sport Ireland's 'Your Personal Best' month, which is encouraged men aged over 45 to engage in at least 30 mins of moderate physical activity five days a week.

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Yvonne McKenna, CEO of Gaisce

'Lá Gaisce' celebrated in schools across Wicklow

'Lá Gaisce' took place across Ireland on Wednesday 21st October, with this year's theme for the President's Award calling on adults to 'stand with young people' as society responds to lockdown Level 5.

More than 1,000 are pursuing their Gaisce Award at Bronze, Silver and Gold level in Wicklow.

Celebrating Gaisce - The President's Award's 35th year, Yvonne McKenna CEO says: "Established 35 years ago as Ireland's national youth award and the nation's highest recognition of a young person's initiative, achievement and voluntary contribution, Gaisce - The President's Award is a treasured and celebrated rite of passage for young people in Ireland. Through Gaisce, young people explore what interests them about the world and how to play an active role in shaping it. While many things have been interrupted for young people during the pandemic, their Gaisce journey has remained".

The President's Award leader in Coláiste Chroabh Abhann, teacher Sarah O'Reilly said of the importance of Gaisce:

"Working alongside the Gaisce participants for the past five years has been an extremely rewarding experience. It is a huge honour to facilitate these young adults in their own personal and physical growth. I run Yoga classes after school and it's fantastic seeing the students improve week on week.

Unfortunately, Covid 19 and lockdown posed many difficulties, but the participants showed huge resilience in perusing their target goals and completing their challenge areas sa bhaile. They proved to themselves that despite the unforeseen obstacles blocking their paths, that they can still achieve the pact that they made with themselves. We hope to complete the Adventure Journey at the end of this school year and award the amazing, adaptable young students their bronze medals."

Lá Gaisce is an opportunity to celebrate the effort and achievement of all Gaisce participants, past and present, and to acknowledge the social impact of their active citizenship. It is a non-competitive Awards programme - young people can take their own time to proceed with challenges and show commitment and resilience in order to receive their Award.

Hundreds of schools around the country celebrated the day - including running local award ceremonies for those who have completed their Bronze and Silver medals.

The awareness event trended on social media from 8am-late on Wednesday 21st October as schools and young people shared their story online and Oireachtas members responded to the call to 'stand with young people'.

'Increased assistance to ensure internet connectivity for students'

Fine Gael Minister Simon Harris TD told the Dail how he is ensuring students have internet connectivity to work online as much as possible.

Minister Harris said "It has been, and is, a significant priority for me in the context of the shift to online teaching and learning that has arisen from public health restrictions to provide support to students to facilitate connectivity and examine options designed to seek to minimise the extent to which connectivity challenges can act as a barrier to full participation in higher and further education.

"On engagement with the Union of Students in Ireland, I made it clear that the student

assistance fund can be used to meet connectivity costs.

"As part of the package of financial supports, the government provided funding to purchase ICT devices and, in addition to that, we have significantly increased the student assistance fund which can be used to meet connectivity costs.

"The big piece is obviously the delivery of the national broadband plan but in the interim, there are initiatives across a number of Departments to facilitate connection through community-based broadband hubs and liaison with

telecommunication providers on packages, including unlimited data.

"It is also worth noting that, at present, the Higher Education Authority provides a WiFi solution, Eduroam, designed by and for the higher education community which operates across education locations nationally. The Higher Education Authority is currently working on options to extend the reach of Eduroam beyond the traditional campus locations.

"Among the potential sites for the proposed pilots are broadband connection points, public libraries, museums, municipal buildings, public transport, airports, some of which are already being availed of in that regard, and public areas".

IT Carlow lecturer and students take honours at Smarter Travel Campus awards

Institute of Technology Carlow took home three of the top honours at the Smarter Campus Travel Awards recently.

The undergraduate winners in the Design subcategory were 2nd year industrial design students Georgia Markham, Evan Lowry and Fredo Eyong for their travel aid app. The concept behind the app is to help students with their daily commute while making travel more eco-friendly and is linked to a smart screen station within the campus. It facilitates students who want to walk, cycle or carpool to college and includes daily notifications about their commute.

Marketing students Roisin Dowling, Niamh Atkinson and Jennifer O'Dwyer also had great success, winning the Digital Marketing category with their college carpool app that encourages students to carpool while travelling to college. Their car-

pool karaoke video was also shortlisted as a finalist in the Multi Media Video category.

In the lecturer category, IT Carlow lecturer Dorothy Keane took honours in the Marketing and Digital Marketing subcategory.

"I was delighted to get involved with the Smarter Travel Campus project to promote a greener and smarter campus at IT Carlow. The students displayed great enthusiasm creativity and digital marketing expertise in their projects", commented Dorothy Keane.

In total, three industrial/product design groups IT Carlow groups reached the top 10 shortlist in the Engineering & Innovation - Design section, two institute groups were nominated

in the Marketing and Digital Marketing category and there was also a nomination in the Multi Media Video category.

The Smarter Travel Campus Awards invite students to create entries relevant to their course discipline that encourages and enables walking, cycling, public transport and carpooling. Lecturers who assign students projects to promote smarter travel are also judged for their effort to bring smarter travel into the curriculum. The awards are open to individual and group entries from a variety of disciplines, including; engineering, innovation, health, sport, events, marketing, digital marketing and multimedia (animation, audio, video, graphic design and illustration).

Major win for school secretaries in Wicklow

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has welcomed the news that school secretaries in Wicklow and across the country will see their job regularised under a preliminary agreement with the Workplace Relations Commission last Tuesday.

According to Forsa, around 1,000 school secretaries and caretakers on low pay with no job security are to have their conditions of employment "regularised" under a preliminary agreement reached at the Workplace Relations Commission.

Speaking on the issue, Deputy Whitmore says, "Any parent of school-going children will know that school secretaries are the heart of any school community. They are the first people our children see in the morning, and they are people that help ensure the smooth running of any school. What many people won't be aware of though, is that most school secretaries are employed by their local board of management, often on poorly paid and irregular short-term contracts. In fact, most school secretaries are not entitled to basic things like sick pay or pensions, and have to sign on during the school holidays.

"I have met a number of school secretaries across Wicklow who relayed to me the difficulties with living on low pay and without job security. The situation has been very unfair to such an important and

skilled workforce who work hard for school communities, particularly during the pandemic.

"I want to commend Fórsa Union which has done huge work in trying to get this injustice rectified with the Workplace Relations Commission. I'm delighted in their progress towards getting the State to address low

pay and job security for school secretaries and caretakers.

"I have supported this call for many years now and have met and engaged with many Wicklow secretaries over the course of their campaign.

"I understand there remain many difficult issues still to resolve but

welcome the continuation of talks on regularising pay conditions and pensions of secretaries and caretakers. It is time that the Department of Education value the important work that these secretaries do and ensure they are treated fairly and directly employed by the Department," concluded Whitmore.



Deputy Whitmore at a protest with St. Kevin's School Secretary Felicity O'Dowd

Over 14,000 free or subsidised higher education places launched

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD has announced over €30 million in free and subsidised higher education places under the Jobs Stimulus package to help get people back to work, upskill workers and build economic confidence while continuing to manage the impact of COVID-19.

The funding has been approved to support the provision of 11,597 places on short, modular courses together with an additional 2,555 postgraduate places.

Minister Harris said: "The higher education sector has responded swiftly and effectively to the challenges that have arisen over recent months.

"The courses we are launching today will form a further response to the impacts of the global pandemic, providing upskilling and reskilling places for those who have been most affected and ensuring that they have the skills most needed by employers today. Many courses focus on future proofing the skills of those in employment, particularly in roles that may be impacted by digitalisation.

"These courses will enable people across the country to embark on new

pathways, or refresh or reskill in their employment. We must ensure a jobs led recovery by putting upskilling and SME supports centre stage. This is a crucial part of the jigsaw."

The 2,555 postgraduate places will be on 207 existing courses in 23 public and private higher education institutions. The places are available on courses in a wide range of skills areas, including Data Analytics, Environmental Sciences, Engineering, Tourism and Hospitality, ICT & Health and welfare including Medical Technology.

Modular courses are short and focused and will be offered in a flexible manner, allowing people to gain important skills without taking a considerable period away from the labour market.

Each module will be stand-alone so that partic-



Minister Simon Harris

ipants can gain skills and put them into practice immediately in the workplace, but modules are also accredited in such a way as to provide building blocks to a full qualification should the student so wish.

These 538 modular courses across a broad range of subjects in 32 higher education institutions, represent a new route into lifelong learning, and provide

upskilling and reskilling opportunities for those who need it, while ensuring that they remain close to the labour market.

The Minister said: "This is exactly the kind of initiative we need to increase Irish university capacity to extract and adapt high-demand modules from existing programmes, and develop tailored courses, to suit the needs of enterprise and lifelong learning."

Alan Wall, CEO of the Higher Education Authority said: "It is great to see the HEA working in partnership with higher education institutions to unlock the flexibility of third level in dealing with difficult times."

Details of these courses will be available on the HEA website, and anyone interested in applying should contact the higher education institution directly for further details.

'University-owned accommodation refunds should be provided'

Minister Simon Harris TD has outlined his work in securing refunds for college owned accommodation.

Minister Harris said: "Following the decision to minimise on-site teaching, five of the seven universities have confirmed that students who do not wish to proceed with their booking in university-owned student accommodation can cancel it without charge, while those who opt to leave their accommodation will receive refunds.

"I am awaiting confirmation of the policies of the remaining two, Trinity College and Dublin City University, DCU, but have made it very clear in meetings with the representative bodies of universities and institutes of technology, in the presence of student representatives, that the Government's position is that university-owned accommodation refunds should be provided.

"For students in the private rental market, I am urging providers to be flexible in finding solutions given the circumstances that students find themselves in. There are, however, no powers

directly available to me under the current legal framework for private accommodation.

"Refund or cancellation policies in student accommodation should be set out in the licence agreement signed at the beginning of the academic year and, in the first instance, students should engage with their accommodation provider to try to reach an arrangement. I have asked my Department to continue to engage with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to monitor and report to me on developments and further actions that could be taken."

On the 24th July 2020 as part of the Government's announcement on the July stimulus package an additional funding allocation of €47.5m was provided for Higher Education skills-related programmes. The initiatives to receive funding were identified by the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) following discussions between them, the Irish University Association (IUA), Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) and the HEA.



Subject to public health clearance, the 2020 Leaving Cert exams will begin on November 16th and conclude on December 11th, taking place on weekday evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays. Free membership of iRevise, an Irish online study and exams resource, is being offered to all students registered to sit 2020 Leaving Certificate State exams. Study notes, sample exam papers and answers, multi-choice questions, essays and marking schemes, as well as live and online tutorials, are all part of the revision support. Students can register their details now, on iRevise.com, to be emailed a coupon code allowing two months unlimited free access to the site. The complimentary revision resource will support the students in what has been a most challenging exam year, according to Padraig Ryan, iRevise Commercial Director.

"These students have had to cope with a most stressful school year, and are obviously now focussed on completing their second level education and demonstrating their learning. iRevise is delighted to offer our resources free of charge to help ensure they are as well prepared as possible."

The business was developed by engineers, brother and sister Eoghain and Ailish Ryan, in the middle of the last recession. Pictured above is Chloe Ryan.

Google open applications for 2021 scholarship to support women in Computer Science Education

Google have opened applications for the Generation Google Scholarship for women in computer science in Ireland which will see each successful applicant being awarded €5,000 annually, for the duration of their undergraduate studies. This is the second year of the scholarship which was previously named the Women's Techmakers Scholarship.

The aim of the programme is to further gender equality in the field of computer science in Ireland, by encouraging women to excel in computing and technology, and become active leaders and role models in the industry.

In 2019 twelve students were awarded the scholarship and are still continuing their journey in computer science education.

Erifeoluwa Jambadiand is a student from Technological University of Dublin and said of her experience "My mentor has become a vital asset to me in helping to discover more about the field of work I'm interested in and how I can pursue a career in it. Mentorship and networking have been a real benefit to me alongside some of the other aspects of the scholarship programme like Get Ahead which has helped me expand and improve my coding skills and understand how I can apply them outside of the classroom."

Open for applications now, the Generation Google scholarship is

an extension of the global programme and scholarships will be awarded based on the applicants strength of impact on diversity, demonstrated leadership and academic background.

Speaking about the programme, Jessica McCarthy, Director of Engineering at Google Ireland, said: "Google is committed to inspiring a new generation of women to begin careers in computer science and our Generation Google Scholarship programme does just that. To ensure gender equality in the Irish tech industry we need to encourage women to study in the computer science & engineering fields, offer support and mentorship to women and help foster a positive view of the working experience for women in tech. In our inaugural year our programme selected twelve women studying in computer science in Irish universities and we are pleased to announce applications are now open for this year's scholarships. We hope that this dedicated programme in Ireland will help

engage a new generation of young Irish women to continue their education and careers in tech."

The ten Generation Google Scholars will each receive a €5,000 award for the duration of their undergraduate studies. Scholarship funds will be distributed to selected scholarship recipients, on an annual basis, for the duration of the student's undergraduate programme for up to four years.

Those eligible to apply must be currently enrolled as a first or second year undergraduate student at a university/institute of technology in Ireland. They must intend to continue pursuing their Bachelors degree at a university/institute of technology in Ireland for at least the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years. They must be studying computer science, computer engineering, or a closely related technical field, demonstrate a strong academic record, and exemplify leadership and show a passion for increasing the involvement of women in technology.

Those wishing to apply for the Generation Google Scholarship for women in Computer Science in Ireland, can do so by visiting the Google scholarships page. Applications will be open until Friday 4th of December 2020.



KathyAnn Murphy from Arklow, a theatre and film director and designer, and self taught make-up artist, created a series of creative looks on herself last week in the lead up to Halloween as part of 'Freak Week'. KathyAnn says that she "decided to do Freak Week as a form of creative outlet during these times where it's so questionable what's going to happen with the arts."

Lions Peace Poster competition winner announced

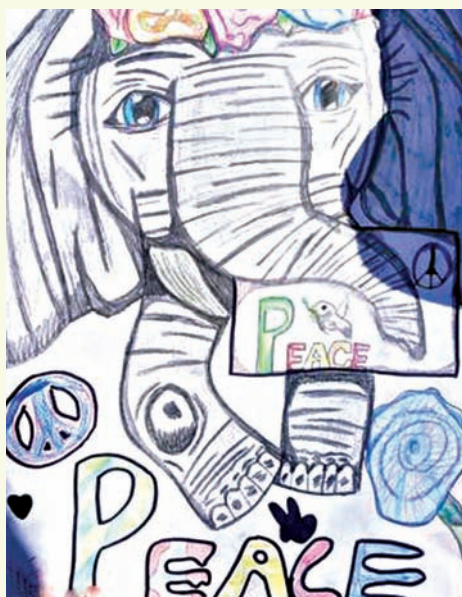
Wicklow and District Lions Club has been involved in the Lions Peace Poster contest for many years and in spite of the current difficulties the club has organised the event once again in 2020.

This international project was created back in 1988. It gives young people between 11 and 13 the opportunity to creatively express their feelings for world peace and to share their visions with the world through their artistic talents. 600,000 children from 75 countries participate in the competition annually and Wicklow Lions Club says it is delighted to sponsor this exciting event for the children in the local schools.

The overall winner this year is Jessica Quinn from Dominican College in Wicklow. Jessica's work of art will go forward to the All Ireland competition. Bonita



Jessica Quinn from Dominican College Wicklow with her winning design.



Runner up in the Lions Peace Poster contest, created by Bonita Crowe from Colaiste Chill Mhantain

Crowe from Colaiste Chill Mhantain was a very close runner up.

The initial winners from the various schools were; Jessica Quinn 1st and Clodagh Forsey 2nd from Dominican College. Their teacher is Ellen Horan.

Representing CCM were Bonita Crowe 1st and Viera Karsnakova 2ndplace. Their teacher is Ruth Kelly. The contest was organised locally by Lion Declan McNerney. All the winners received a voucher which was presented by Sean Olohan Lions President.

Primary school pupils encouraged to take part in 'Someone Like Me' art competition

Minister of State with special responsibility for disability, Anne Rabbitte T.D., last week marked the launch of the annual 'Someone Like Me' primary schools competition which, this year, has been Covid-19-proofed to ensure that primary school pupils across County Wicklow can take part whether they are at school, engaging in blended learning or studying from home.

The prestigious national art competition, which is now in its fifth year, is organised by the National Disability Authority as a way of fostering more positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities by highlighting the similarities that exist between all people.

Minister of State with special responsibility for disability, Anne Rabbitte T.D. encouraged the more than half-a-million pupils attending over 3,000 mainstream and special primary schools in Ireland to take part in what will be a national creative celebration of the things that unite children of all abilities.

"Research carried out by the National Disability Authority shows that 75% of people in Ireland know at least one person with a disability and yet just

30% of people think that persons with disabilities are treated fairly in Irish society," said Minister of State with special responsibility for disability, Anne Rabbitte T.D.

"Equally, only a small number of people believe that people with disabilities get an equal chance when it comes to work, despite most people saying that they would feel comfortable working with a person with a physical disability.

"Positive attitudes support persons with disabilities to take part in society. This is why initiatives such as the Someone Like Me art competition are so important in nurturing these positive attitudes at a very early age, attitudes that will carry through into adulthood and be passed on to the next generation so that

everyone feels that they are a valued member of society.

"Life has been turned upside down for us all in recent months and yet the issues placed under the spotlight of competition remain the same. Because of this, I would like to congratulate the National Disability Authority for ensuring that the Someone Like Me art competition format has been adapted to make sure that teachers continue to be supported to introduce this topic into the classroom within the context of the wider curriculum and that pupils can take part in a meaningful way, in class or at home."

The Someone Like Me art competition literature, to include junior and senior lesson plans, will be delivered to every primary school

in Ireland over the coming days.

The competition, which offers a range of prizes up to the value of €750, is open to all primary school pupils from junior infants to sixth class and entries are welcome from individual pupils, a class pod or even a whole-school as a socially-distanced combined effort. Entries can come in all shapes and sizes and can be anything from a poster or collage to a papier-mâché or mixed-media sculpture.

There will be a junior and senior category winner in every county, along with an overall national winner. The deadline for entries is Thursday 3rd December 2020, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. More information can be found at www.someonelikemecompetition.ie.



Minister of State with special responsibility for disability, Anne Rabbitte TD, marked the launch of the annual 'Someone Like Me' primary schools competition, which this year has been Covid-19 proofed to ensure that primary school pupils across Ireland can take part.

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Pictured are Philip Nugent, Assistant Secretary at The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Lynn Haughton, Founder, The Upcycle Movement, and Martin Tobin, CEO, ERP Ireland

Local start-ups urged to enter Green Alley Awards

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the European Recycling Platform (ERP), Ireland's only pan-European compliance scheme for WEEE and Waste Battery compliance, today called on Wicklow start-ups to enter the 2020 Green Alley Awards, Europe's first start-up awards scheme for the circular economy.

Wicklow businesses urged to apply for the COVID Restrictions Support Scheme

Fine Gael Minister Simon Harris TD has urged Wicklow businesses to avail of the COVID Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS).

Minister Harris said "The government has expanded the Covid Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS) to allow a greater number of business to access the supports they need. This will be crucial to getting our economy, and the businesses who drive it, back up and running when restrictions are lifted.

The scheme provides a weekly cash payment to businesses that are effectively closed or only able to trade at a fraction of their previous turnover because of pandemic-related restrictions. The payment will

generally, be a percentage of their turnover for 2019, up to a maximum payment of €5,000 per week while restrictions last.

"The scheme will apply from 13 October 2020. For further information on how the government has expanded the scheme please contact my office at simon.harris@oireachtas.ie or 01-2813727. The Revenue Commissioners have also published a comprehensive guide to the expanded CRSS scheme and this is available at revenue.ie.

"The government understand the difficulties businesses and individuals are facing and are determined to do whatever we can to ensure we emerge as a stronger and more resilient society, in the period ahead."

The Awards are aimed at all start-ups and entrepreneurs who have developed a business model in the areas of digital circular economy, recycling, and waste prevention. The business idea must help reduce waste or turn waste into resources. The winner of the Green Alley Award receives a cash prize of €25,000.

Philip Nugent, Assistant Secretary at The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment said, "We are currently consuming at a rate that requires three planets. A circular economy provides us with the opportunity to consume less resources and to extend the productive life of the objects we buy and use. Covid-19 has presented a new normal for everyone and there are so many possibilities. The Green Alley Awards aims to bring together the pioneers of the circular economy and I am delighted to support this initiative that encourages new ideas and approaches to saving

resources and reducing waste."

Martin Tobin, CEO, ERP Ireland said, "This new normal has given people the time to look at the amount of waste they're generating around them. We have a unique opportunity here to help shape the future. The Green Alley Awards provides a platform for Irish start-ups to showcase their new environmental businesses. Winners have included businesses that have come up with solutions from producing an eco-friendly alternative to plastic packaging to creating a sustainable alternative to leather. We are looking for companies that are about to launch their products or services or are already in the growth phase. We also welcome start-ups who want to expand into other European markets. These companies represent true innovators and we are looking for that next generation of ideas to help shape this change."

Lynn Haughton, Founder, The Upcycle Movement said, "The

Upcycle Movement is delighted to be able to support the launch of the 2020 Green Alley Awards. One of the biggest challenges humanity is facing today is the drain on natural resources and the immense amount of waste caused by disposable items. The Upcycle Movement takes discarded wetsuits headed for landfill and we repurpose them and turn them into bags and accessories for activity. As a society we have thrown away materials thinking they are waste, we wanted to show how you can make a business out of a waste material. The need for start-ups operating in the circular economy space has never been greater. This award will help to increase awareness of the Irish businesses operating within this sphere and the greater benefit they are bringing to society."

Interested start-ups across Europe can submit their entries by 17th November 2020. After the end of the application phase, several pre-selected start-ups will be dis-

played on the Green Alley Award website for a public vote. The winner of the public vote will be amongst the six finalists. The remaining five will be selected by an expert selection committee. On 22 April 2021, the six finalists will present their idea live on stage in Berlin. The international jury made up of representatives from the Landbell Group as well as external experts including Jan Patrick Schulz, CEO, Landbell Group and Marie-Ann Meigo Fonseca, CEO of the 2019 winning company, Gelatex Technologies will choose the overall winner.

In 2019, Gelatex claimed first prize with their 100% non-toxic, eco-friendly textile material for fashion and interior design. In 2018, Aeropowder won over the jury with their idea for insulating material for packaging made from waste feathers. In 2017, the Finish start-up Sulapac presented a wooden, biodegradable alternative to plastic packaging.

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'Prepping is the key to safe level 5 driving in Wicklow'

Covid-19 Level 5 means that we need to take a small number of preparatory steps to ensure the best outcome from our Wicklow motoring in the coming weeks.

Many are bound by not being able to drive more than 5km, but many others in our county will have to travel much further in connection with work.

The days are getting a lot shorter, wetter and colder, while back up infrastructure for motorists is sure to be less available under Level 5 (petrol stations closing earlier etc.).

In that context, motorists should look at 6 items to help them get safely through the coming weeks.

Bt Martin McCarthy

1. REFUEL AT HALF TANK LEVEL. In other words, do not wait until the fuel level warning light comes on, to refill. Typically, half a tank will give you a range to get to any Dublin hospital, in an emergency.

2. CHECK YOUR FIVE TYRES. Even if your car was sold new without a spare, consider now buying a suitable spare wheel and tyre. Reason is that emergency roadside rescue firms will

probably operate a reduced service in the coming weeks. Note that emergency rescue vehicles rarely carry wheels and tyres, so if your tyre is damaged, you will need that spare, ready to go.

3. PHONE CHARGE CABLE. The phone is the single, best, safely device for Wicklow motorists who traverse the remote uplands, especially. The charge cable costs less than a tenner, and you don't want the phone dying in an emergency.

4. KEEP WIND-



The Toyota Yaris

SCREEN WASHER FULL. Think of heading the back road to Aghrim at night with mud getting on your windscreen. You need to see clearly.

5. BREAKDOWN KIT. High Vis vest, tow rope, reflective triangle, torch / hazard light.

6. LET VISITORS KNOW YOU ARE COMING. The days of the

casual drop-ins are over until December. Ring ahead - so the people you are going to visit can let you know if they have someone at risk in the house. Also, if you don't arrive, they can raise the alarm if you have an accident en route.

On another side, there may be a unique opportunity to spoil yourself and

get a new 211 car in January. The car companies have restarted their massive production lines across Europe and machinery will be flooding onto forecourts across Wicklow in early January. All the major brands - Renault, VW, Ford,

Hyundai, Nissan, Honda, Skoda and others are offering huge discounts to get Wicklow buyers into new cars. This is probably a great time to have a discussion with your local dealer about what specials are coming up and what they might offer on your

trade it. Shop local is best.

One that caught my eye is the new Toyota Yaris which starts at €18,595 with 1 litre engine. However the more economical, and much more powerful 1.5 costs just €1,190 more and will be much nicer to drive.

LANING PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I Tommy Whittle seek planning permission for a change of house type to that granted permission Reg Ref 13/8945 at No.8 Rocky Road, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow. The development consists of a revised house type, detached garage along with all associated site development works. 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 5 dwellings with associated works including proposed new main sewer to connect this development to the existing Ballycoogue waste water treatment plant, and connection to watermains at Ballykillageer, Ballycoogue, Co. Wicklow for M. Healy. 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.

Gospel: Luke 8:4-15

With a large crowd gathering and people from every town finding their way to him, Jesus used this parable: 'A sower went out to sow his seed. As he sowed, some fell on the edge of the path and was trampled on; and the birds of the air ate it up. Some seed fell on rock; and when it came up it withered away, having no moisture. Some seed fell amongst thorns and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some seed fell into rich soil and grew and produced its crop a hundredfold.' Saying this he cried, 'Listen, anyone who has ears to hear!'

His disciples asked him what this parable might mean, and he said, 'The mysteries of the kingdom of God are revealed to you, for the rest there are only parables, so that they may see but not perceive, listen but not understand. This, then, is what the parable means: the seed is the word of God. Those on the edge of the path are people who have heard it and then the devil comes and carries away the word from their hearts in case they should believe and be saved. Those on the rock are people who, when they first hear it, welcome the word with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while and in time of trial they give up. As for the part that fell into thorns, this is people who have heard, but as they go on their way they are choked by the worries and riches and pleasures of life and do not reach maturity. As for the part in the rich soil, this is people with a noble and generous heart who have heard the word and take it to themselves and yield a harvest through their perseverance.'

C.J.

Wicklow shop local vouchers

In an effort to encourage people to continue supporting local business during these unprecedented times in Wicklow, the Chamber of Commerce have launched the online sale of Wicklow Town Shop Local Vouchers.

Wicklow Town & District Chamber of Commerce Wicklow Town Vouchers are high-quality, prestigious Shopping Vouchers, redeemable in over 40 shops, restaurants, coffee shops and other businesses in Wicklow Town and the surrounding area.

A full list of where they can be redeemed is available on www.wicklowchamber.ie and www.wicklowtown.ie/vouchers They also come beautifully presented in a purpose-designed sleeve, making them a fabulous gift to receive. Wicklow Town Vouchers can now be purchased online (wicklowtown.ie/vouchers)

When restrictions are lifted they can also be purchased from Bridge Street Books, Connolly Menswear and from the Chamber office in the Wicklow Enterprise Park on 0404-66433 or email Susana@wicklowchamber.ie

They are available in denominations of €5, €10, €20 and €50 and are redeemable in over 40 shops, restaurants, coffee shops and other businesses in Wicklow Town and the surrounding areas.

Wicklow Town & District Chamber President Rosie Cooney says that "By buying these vouchers you are keeping local jobs in Wicklow Town & District - jobs where family and friends are employed.

It is important that the population of Wicklow Town & District fully embraces the national sentiment of shopping local in these times and continue to support our local business and preserve our town centres".

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