

WICKLOW Times

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Tuesday 8th December 2020 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

WICKLOW BECOMING 'COVID CENTRAL'

County Wicklow is rapidly becoming Ireland's 'Covid Central' with a higher Covid incidence rate than Dublin and is currently one of only six counties where the Covid-19 incidence rate is more than 100 per 100,000 people. The incidence rate in County Wicklow now stands at 108.1, according to the latest 14-day records. In the preceding two weeks it was 95.5. In the Bray East Area the latest incidence rate is 128.5, with 22 cases between November 17th and 30th.

In Dublin it is 90.8, in Cork it is 52.3, in Kildare it is 48.5. There has now been a total of 1,590 Covid-19 cases in Wicklow to date.

The rapid increase in County Wicklow is being put down in part to the recent large-scale outbreak in St Columcille's Hospital where many of the staff work in Bray and surrounding areas and a large majority of patients are elderly Wicklow residents. There were up to 40 cases in the hospital

between patients and staff.

Another major outbreak came to light last week in Bray. It has occurred in what used to be a nursing home but when it lost its registration morphed into a 'retirement home' whose running was contracted out to a third party.

Recently it became the home of 14 elderly retired Augustinian priests who had been moved from their former residence in Rathfarnham.

However, their new home in Bray which is not regulated as strictly as



Gaelcholaiste na Mara Transition Year students Jessica Nic Raghnall and Anna Ni Dhulchaoi, who are part of the TY store. See story on page 11

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a nursing home saw 10 of the priests contract Covid with 4 of them passing with the virus. Another priest believed to have been critically ill has made a recovery.

In a Statement from the Augustinians to *Wicklow Times*, the Order said "Recently we took possession of a premises in Bray, as retirement accommodation for a group of our retired members. A private company has been engaged to manage the facility under our supervision.

"We have been working with the HSE in recent times in our efforts to deal with the threat of Covid 19.

"Regrettably in recent weeks there has been an outbreak of the virus in the facility. Ten of our members tested positive for the virus and sadly four of elderly members have died. The respective

families have been informed of these deaths and our thoughts and prayers are with them at this difficult time.

"The families of all those in this facility are being kept updated on an ongoing basis as we now deal with this challenging situation. We also continue to deal with the HSE as we care for those who have been ill and all other residents. The facility is now free of the virus. We have followed all necessary Covid-19 guidelines throughout and we want to thank the staff at the facility for their efforts in this regard."

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said: "Up until recently Wicklow county was doing exceptionally well as we were consistently in the bottom one or two in the country for incident rates.

Continued on page 8

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NO MIDDLE MAN, WE SELL, MANUFACTURE AND INSTALL



Eoin Kieran of Greystones undertook a mammoth feat and completed a 42km Marathon. Eoin did this in aid of Greystones Cancer Support and AWARE and made an outstanding €3000 for his efforts. Eoin kindly dropped in a cheque for €1500 to GCS on Wednesday 2nd December (of course while socially distancing)! Chairman of GCS Sonia Walsh says "A huge thank you and well done to Eoin. What a remarkable and resourceful young man. GCS greatly appreciates this fantastic effort on our behalf. And of course a huge thank you to the extremely generous supporters! Well done everyone!!" Pictured are Eoin and Kathryn Whelan from GCS.

Arklow makers craft fair

A group of Arklow crafters are selling their products in two shop units in the Bridgewater Centre on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays for the month of December. "All the local traders are delighted to showcase their new pieces made during the lockdown and we all hope the local community will support us all as it's been a difficult year all around."

Brockagh Resource Centre

If you want to use The Brockagh facility during Level 3 you will need to book in by phoning 0404 45600 Mon to Fri 9am - 5pm. "We will be following guidelines from www.gov.ie on all facility usage."

Greystones Family Resource Centre reaches out

GFRC would like to reach out to families who need that extra support at this time of year. GFRC can link to the families themselves or put them in contact with organisations who help. GFRC is located at 28 Burnaby Court, Greystones; 01.2557528.

24/7 text service

The HSE has launched an innovative and lifesaving 24/7 Text Service. The service provides calming chat, immediate emotional support. The text conversations are anonymous. The aim is provide immediate support in the short term and connect people to resources that will help them in the future. If you need help, don't wait or delay, just pick up the phone and text 50808.

North Wicklow Country Market

The North Wicklow Country Market is open every Saturday from 10:30am to 12:30pm in Newcastle Community Centre for fresh locally grown vegetables, homemade breads and cakes, hams and chutneys. Orders can be made via text (086 8034237) and items will be available for collection on arrival. Please adhere to Covid-19 safety measures when attending.

Royal Hotel record fair

There will be a record fair in The Royal Hotel in Bray on January 10th from 11am to 5pm. The fair was due to take place in November was postponed. Traders of vinyls and CDs from around the country will be there selling a wide variety of bargains and rarities. Masks will be obligatory and there will be health and safety guidelines in operation.

Shankill book sale

The monthly Shankill book sale will continue to operate via a phone and e-mail collection service. You can place and order for specific book titles or authors, and organisers will check if they are in stock, or you can request a specific genre. All books are in pristine condition. There is also a selection of jigsaws and DVDs available. You can collect your book from the Shankill Day Centre between 9am and 11am Wednesdays to Fridays.

Rotary Remembrance Tree once again focal point for shoppers and visitors

Wicklow Cancer Support and St. Vincent de Paul to benefit from Remembrance Tree this Christmas

Despite Covid-19, the Wicklow Rotary Remembrance Tree is in place again this year in the car park off Church Street, Wicklow Town, during the Christmas period.

"The lifting of Covid-19 restrictions didn't come a moment too soon, as our Remembrance Tree Committee swung into action to ensure the tree is erected in time," said Andy Bolger, President, Rotary Club of Wicklow. "Because of Covid-19 restrictions, Rotary members will not be taking donations or accepting messages this year at the Remembrance Tree, but there is still an opportunity to make a donation and leave a message," he said.

"Above all, the Remembrance Tree is an opportunity to remember loved ones and friends who have passed away. It's also an opportunity to make a voluntary contribution to two local charities we have selected this year - Wicklow Cancer Support, and St. Vincent dePaul.

"Those who wish to contribute can go to www.wicklowrotary.org and click the 'Donate' button," he explained. "Alternatively, you can make donations to Rotary Club of Wicklow, c/o Cooney Parle Accountants, New Street, Wicklow by post or drop a cheque in the letterbox with a message which will be stored in the Rotary Remembrance Tree archive."

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Despite Covid-19 restrictions, the club raised much needed funds this year from the Golf Classic, and has also contributed to a wide range of local and international projects including Foroige, the Samaritans, RNLI Wicklow and Bikes for Africa. The Rotary Club of Wicklow is part of a worldwide association whose motto is 'Service above Self'. Club members use their professional skills and expertise in volunteer work in the community and overseas.



Lions Club thrilled with success of masks

Wicklow and Distant Lions Club members are thrilled at the success of their own personalised face masks which have been available for many months.

They have been shipped right across the world to various Lions clubs and private individuals.

The Wicklow Club is very proud that the International Past President and current Chairman Gudrun Yngvadottir (pictured) has requested the masks which she proudly wears in her native Iceland.

She told Lions President Séan Olohan that she finds the beautiful masks very symbolic of the times we live in and is delighted to continue the connection with the Wicklow Club. She wished the club every success with the online fundraising at iFundRaise.ie.

The distinctive royal blue masks are available in Wicklow from Curtain and Blinds and Santiago Balbontin or any Lions member.

When Gudrun became International President she commissioned Séan to write a special song for her inau-

guration which has been a huge worldwide success. It is available on YouTube and is simply called 'Sing with the Lions'.



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WICKLOW Times

is published by
Wicklow Times, First Floor, The Boulevard,
Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01-2869111

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'ANOTHER SLAP IN THE FACE FOR STUDENT NURSES'

Sinn Fein TD John Brady and Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore have spoken up for student nurses and midwives who have been working on the front lines during the pandemic without pay. Their calls for fairer treatment of student nurses and midwives were made in the same week that Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly was criticised by his own Junior Minister Anne Rabbitt when he didn't attend the Dáil debate on nurses pay last Wednesday.

It's understood that Minister Donnelly was at a meeting of EU Health Ministers regarding Covid-19 at the time. It was reported by the Irish Examiner that Deputy Rabbitt, the Junior Minister for Disability, told a private Fianna Fail meeting that Donnelly should have attended the debate to show respect for nurses and frontline staff.

Deputy Brady said "My daughter is a student nurse and I saw first-hand how hard and diligently she has worked throughout the pandemic when on placement. Despite the huge stress and pressure of working on the frontline at the heart of this unprecedented health crisis, thousands of student nurses stepped up to be key workers and to protect our communities by doing real work in hospital wards across the country. Like many other healthcare workers, my daughter contracted Covid-19. After becoming infected, others in our family home contracted it too, including her grandfather."

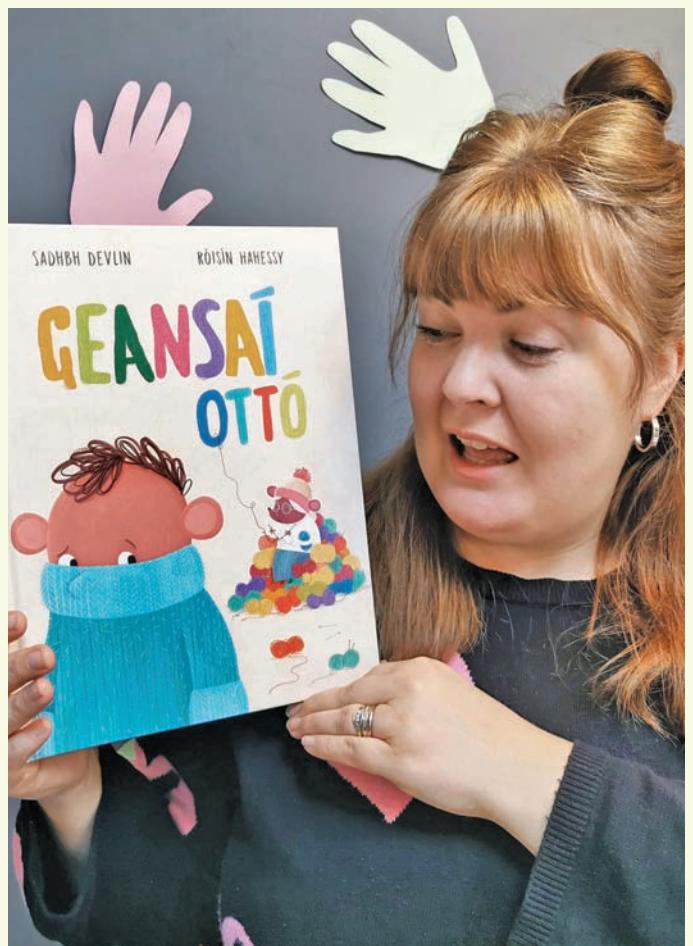
"He was seriously ill and ended up in ICU. It was our family's worst nightmare and my daughter was distraught. She is very proud to be a student nurse and all our family is so proud of the work that she does. I know that our family was not alone in what we experienced during the pandemic. Many other healthcare work-

ers, including student nurses, went into wards every day despite knowing the potential risks to themselves and their families because they wanted to play their part in serving the wider community.

They were rightly praised by all politicians at the time but they need more than praise - they need to see proper action from the Government to ensure they get fair pay. They are exhausted and feel completely exploited. Many are anxious and fearful about paying their rent, mortgage or basic bills. But instead of support them, the Government offers a round of applause but no fair pay. This is a scandalous and exploitative way to treat essential workers who form the backbone of our healthcare system and who have worked so hard and with such bravery to protect us all.

"Rounds of applause and kind words don't pay the rent or the bills. The Government has badly let our student nurses down and it is totally unacceptable. This week, I and my Sinn Féin colleagues voted to give a fair wage to student nurses. Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Green TDs voted to refuse it.

Speaking to *Wicklow Times*, Deputy Whitmore said "It is time that we address ongoing exploitation of student nurses and midwives in our health service. Our health service can-



Bray author's new book spotted on Late Late Toy Show

Bray Author Sadhbh Devlin (pictured) was thrilled to spot her brand-new book with illustrator Róisín Hahessy in a prominent position on the set of the Late Late Toyshow on Friday 27th November.

She says, "It's been a really strange year to have a new book published, because none of the usual opportunities for promotion and celebration, such as book-signings and launches have been possible. So, it was a real boost to see our little book on one of the biggest and best shows of the year!"

Illustrator, Róisín Hahessy, who currently lives in Brazil, and has been missing her usual annual visit home was also delighted with the outpouring of support from friends and family as they spotted it on screen - although she had to explain to her Brazilian husband what a big-deal the Toy Show is in Ireland.

Sadhbh Devlin is from Bray. Her first picture BÍ AG SPRAOI LIOM! illustrated by Tarsila Kruse was published by Futa Fata in 2017. BEAG BÍDEACH came quickly after in 2018, illustrated by Róisín Hahessy. This book was a huge hit with young readers and was nominated for four prestigious awards; CBI Book of the Year Award, Gradam Réics Carló, Irish Literacy Association; Book of the Year Award and iBBY Ireland; Hans Christian Andersen Honour List 2020. Sadhbh and Róisín have joined forces again to bring you Geansaí Ottó.

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Four Wicklow projects nominated for 'Pride of Place' awards

Four Wicklow groups have been nominated for the 'Pride of Place' Awards which are to go ahead this year online, honouring communities across the island for their work during the Covid-19 crisis.

Dubbed the 'Oscars of the Community Sector', the Pride of Place Awards is an annual competition organised by Co-operation Ireland and sponsored by IPB Insurance. It promotes and celebrates the best in community development and recognises the selfless efforts of people in making their local area a better place to live, work and socialise.

Local authorities from across the island nominate groups in their communities who they feel have made a significant contribution to improving their neighbourhood, working collectively. The competition culminates with a Gala Awards Ceremony.

Ashford Community and Heritage Centre; Arklow Meals on Wheels; Carnew Bia Abhaile and County Wicklow Volunteer Centre are among the 82 groups to have been nominated in 2020 - the 18th anniversary of the awards which was to be hosted by Kerry County Council but will now take place online due to COVID-19.

RTE's Marty Morrissey will host the event and the awards will be streamed at www.prideofplace.ie

Mr George Jones, former County Wicklow Councillor and Chairman, IPB Insurance, said: "IPB Insurance is proud to be associated as title sponsors of the IPB Pride of Place Awards and more importantly what they represent. It is clear that working together and getting things done increases people's pride in where they live and in turn helps build vibrant communities.

As a mutual insurer that insures local authorities and their communities across Ireland, these awards are excellent partnerships."

Pride of Place Chairperson, Mr Tom Dowling, said: "The purpose of these awards has never changed. They are about recognising and celebrating the extraordinary, inspirational and tireless work being done by communities all over the Island of Ireland as they strive to make their place a better place in which to live.

"This year more than ever, the work of our communities was even more important as they managed the challenge of Covid-19 and ensured our vulnerable people were looked after. We are proud to have the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate all the wonderful communities who participated in this year's awards."

Dr Christopher Moran, Chairman, Co-operation Ireland added: "Co-operation Ireland has no other programme that embodies the charity's ethos better than Pride of Place and in 2020 it's even more important it takes place to recognise the huge efforts of ordinary people during the pandemic.

"The impact Pride of Place has had in towns and villages across the island since it started in 2003 cannot be underestimated, and its continuing success is down to the dedicated volunteers and their love of where they live."

For more information on the 2020 IPB Pride of Place Awards, go to www.prideofplace.ie/

Greystones Climate Ambassador awarded for Outstanding Achievement

This year has been like no other, and one educational programme that successfully transitioned online is the Climate Ambassador programme. Twelve awards for an Outstanding Achievement were presented to individuals and teams from across Ireland at the virtual Climate Ambassador Awards on Thursday 26th November 2020 for their work in communicating and taking action on climate change.

Minister for the Environment, Campus Plastic Free July blog, or Climate and Communications, on the Instagram page for Eamon Ryan T.D., attended the awards and acknowledged the commitment of all Climate Ambassadors and their valuable work in communities across Ireland. Over the course of the year, Climate Ambassadors carried out 397 climate actions, directly engaging over 165,000 people, and also created 585 climate communications, reaching an estimated 1.9 million!

Niamh Gurrin of Greystones started her year as a Climate Ambassador at training on February 1st and quickly went about organising monthly clothes swaps between hundreds of students in UCD, plastic free campaigns and film screenings all in the first 3 months of this year.

Niamh was quick to transition online and helped organise a virtual Green Week in UCD featuring green lockdown tips, an upcycling tutorial, slow fashion celebration and a #ClimateStrikeOnline. You might spot her name over on the Green

provided with training on climate science and communications and become part of a powerful network of committed individuals sharing their knowledge, learning from each other and building relationships. Throughout the year they are asked to undertake four key actions - two climate communications and two climate actions, though many individuals go over and above what is required.

The Awards are a celebration

of the hard work that has taken place over the last year and the enormous effort and dedication that the Climate Ambassadors have shown throughout the process. To mark this, each Climate Ambassador received a certificate of recognition.

In addition, twelve Outstanding Achievement Awards were presented to Climate Ambassadors based on the work they have carried out during the year.



Niamh Gurrin



Motion on child homelessness lingers on agenda for over a year

It has been a year since Bray Sinn Féin Councillors Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien and Grace McManus submitted a motion to Wicklow County Council about Child Homelessness. However the important motion has still not been discussed at a Council meeting.

The motion states the Council "will have Child Homelessness as an agenda item at each meeting until the child homelessness figure for the County reaches zero."

Cllr O'Brien explained, "Motions are a fundamental part of how we do politics. It is a direct opportunity for issues to be brought to the agenda of a meeting, discussed by elected members and resolved one way or another. Ordinarily there is a list of Motions and there may be an occasion where you submit a motion and it could take two meetings before it is brought to the floor. There are only four motions ahead of this motion on the agenda which gives an indication of the fact that our Council has not discussed one Motion coming from elected reps in over a year.

"There are now at least 14 Motions on the agenda that have not been heard, including a critically important Motion from Bray Municipal District calling for a full and independent review of Bray Fire Service. What adds to the frustration is that standing orders only permit your name to be associated with three motions on the agenda."

Cllr McManus said "We have discussed the backlog of motions at several protocol committee meetings over the past year, but we have not seen progress. I've written to the Cathaoirleach to request that we discuss this issue at the protocol meeting in December, as in my view the backlog is a real barrier to active democracy in the county."

"The urgency of the need for our child homelessness motion to be discussed is clear when we look at the latest figures for the county.

"We have seen over 245 families, and 469 presentations of children as homeless, or at risk of

homelessness, to every single month that Wicklow County Council in 2020 so far. It is estimated that a quarter of these are repeat presentations.

"As of the end of September, there were 30 children in temporary own door accommodation, and 15 children in Bed & Breakfast emergency accommodation in the county.

"These figures deeply sadden me. For any child to be faced with the uncertainty, fear and often trauma involved in being at risk of homeless, or homeless, is something that a modern society that values all its children cannot stand over.

"We have a responsibility not only to ensure adequate and compassionate responses to any presentation of a child at risk of, or facing homelessness, but also to examine the conditions that are causing this in the first place and raise some view it," concluded Deputy Brady.

"At the same time, we have a council that doesn't see an issue with allowing an important issue such as child homelessness linger on an agenda for a year, I think that fact speaks volumes as to how important an issue



Visiting the new Social Housing Development at Urban Villas, The Murrough, are Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien, Senator Pat Casey, Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow Municipal District John Snell, and Frank Curran, CEO of Wicklow County Council. See story on page 8

Almost 2000 students from Wicklow to receive €250 Covid-19 grant this Christmas

Minister Simon Harris has confirmed almost 2,000 students from Wicklow will receive the Covid-19 once-off Emergency Grant of €250 in this Christmas.

Minister Harris secured funding in Budget 2021 for a €50 million support package for third level students, who have experienced significant upheaval as a result of Covid-19.

If a student is in receipt of a SUSI grant, they will receive a €250 addition to your grant on December 18th.

Minister Harris said: "2020 has been a really difficult year for students and their families. Students have been confined to the box room or the kitchen table doing their studies and it has been really, really hard. As part of the Budget, we secured funding to financially assist students. This will happen in two ways.

"If you are a student in receipt of SUSI, and 2,000 people from Wicklow are, you will receive €250 in addition to your grant on December 18th. Students should make sure their bank details are updated on your SUSI account by December 7th.

"And if you are not in receipt of SUSI, you can use the €250 to reduce any fees you may have, or use it for college facilities.

"I know this won't replace the year that has been but I hope it is recognition that the Government is conscious of the affect this pandemic has had on young people and I hope it helps this Christmas."

THE PURE MILE



Pure invite groups, communities, individuals, schools, walking groups, cycling groups, scouts, special interest groups, businesses, organisations, **EVERYONE**, to take part in the Pure Mile Project and **ADOPT A MILE OF ROAD, OR MILES OF ROAD, IN YOUR LOCAL AREA OR IN THE UPLANDS**, and help Pure to 'CleanUp The Uplands'. There is over €5,000 worth of prize money to be won and all entries will feature in the Pure Mile Calendar.

For Details and an Application Form for the Pure Mile Competition:

web: www.pureproject.ie/the-pure-mile | email: info@pureproject.ie | tel: 0404 45547

Your Environment – Your Community – Your Heritage

Pure is a partnership project and the first of its kind in Ireland which incorporates statutory and non-statutory organisations, including: Wicklow County Council, South Dublin County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Coillte, National Parks & Wildlife Service, and the Wicklow Uplands Council. Funded by The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, Pure was established to combat illegal dumping/fly-tipping in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands.



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Wicklow Rotary Charitable Trust (Charity Nos. CHY22611 and RCN 20204994).

Rotary Club of Wicklow



REMEMBRANCE TREE

Car park Wicklow Town

Despite Covid-19, the Wicklow Rotary Remembrance Tree is in place again this year in the car park off Church Street, Wicklow Town during the Christmas period. Because of Covid-19 restrictions, Rotary members will not be taking donations or accepting messages this year at the Remembrance Tree. However, there is still an opportunity to make a donation and leave a message.

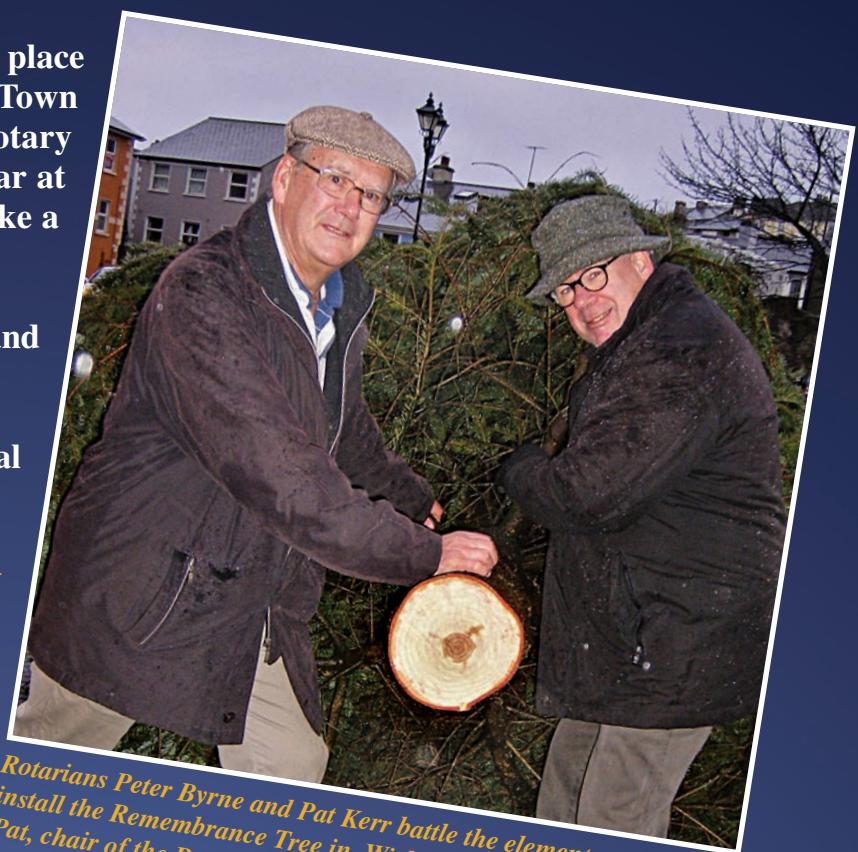
The Remembrance Tree is an opportunity to remember loved ones and friends who have passed away.

It's also an opportunity to make a voluntary contribution to two local charities: Wicklow Cancer Support and St. Vincent dePaul

To make a donation, Google Wicklow Rotary www.wicklowrotary.org and click the "Donate" button. Alternatively, make a donation to Rotary Club of Wicklow, c/o Cooney Parle Accountants, New Street, Wicklow by post or drop a cheque in the letterbox with a message which will be stored in the Rotary Remembrance Tree archive.



Remembrance Tree



Rotarians Peter Byrne and Pat Kerr battle the elements to install the Remembrance Tree in Wicklow Town. Pat, chair of the Remembrance Tree committee encourages Wicklow people to shop local and donate to local charities.



Rotarians will ensure the Remembrance Tree is in place over the Christmas period once again this year.



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Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien, turns the sod at the new Social Housing Development at Hawkstown Park, Wicklow Town, with Joe Lane, Senator Pat Casey, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow Municipal District John Snell, Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, and Frank Curran, CEO of Wicklow County Council at the Family Homeless Hub, Fitzwilliam Road, Wicklow Town

Housing Minister visits Wicklow

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD, met with the Chief Executive, Frank Curran, and Senior Officials in Wicklow County Council recently to discuss progress on the Housing Programme.

The Minister commended Wicklow County Council on its progress on delivery to date saying: "We share a common goal that we want all our citizens to have access to good quality housing to purchase or rent at an affordable price. In Wicklow today, I am reassured that the Council is committed, energised and

committed, energised and mobilised to deliver on its ambitious delivery targets and I want to reiterate that my Department and the relevant stakeholders are here to assist and support in realising that task. We know that demand has outstripped supply by some way and that it is crucial we increase supply. Homelessness remains a major problem and one I am committed to helping our local authorities deal with."

Frank Curran, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council, stated: "Wicklow is projected to exceed its target for Housing Delivery with anticipated output of 1,297 housing units by 2021 over the three delivery streams of Build, Acquisition and Leasing.

This outcome highlights the critical focus and priority that has been firmly placed by Wicklow on responding to the housing challenge through the development and implementation of the Delivery Programme."

He added that "the significant challenges faced by the Council in dealing with homelessness is being met through a variety of methods, with

social housing delivery, Park, Wicklow, a development of 40 family homes.

ported accommodation and also of interagency relationships to ensure a coordinated and structured response."

The Minister then embarked on a whistlestop tour, visiting the Homeless Hub facility at Fitzwilliam Road, Wicklow, refurbishment of which is nearing completion, and turning the sod at Hawkstown



Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Senator Pat Casey, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien, Jackie Carroll, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow Municipal District John Snell, and Frank Curran, CEO of Wicklow County Council at the Family Homeless Hub, Fitzwilliam Road, Wicklow Town

WICKLOW BECOMING 'COVID CENTRAL'

Continued from page 1..

"Unfortunately, things have definitely slipped in recent weeks. Over the past week the 14-day incidence rate per 100k population in two local electoral areas have markedly increased - Arklow from 53.5 to 122.2 and in Greystones the rate has moved

from 60.8 to 117.8.

"The good news is all other LEAs the rates have either remained static or decreased particularly in the Baltinglass electoral area which at 38.2 has the lowest rate in the county.

"However, Bray East, Bray West, Arklow and Greystones are

all above the national average so I would just urge people to remain vigilant.

"I know everyone is tired but doing simple things like maintaining social distancing, washing your hands and wearing a mask is helping to save lives," concluded Minister Donnelly

New Local Link route from Arklow to Carlow

A new Local Link route from Arklow to Carlow has been added to the service. The new route was announced by Local Link Carlow, Kilkenny and Wicklow and will facilitate travel across these three neighbouring counties for residents in Wicklow.

Deputy Jennifer Whitmore TD, who recently called for a significant increase in investment in Local Link services, said "I really welcome this move as I have been campaigning and calling for increased investment in local link routes for quite some time. The new route will facilitate increased travel between neighbouring counties for Wicklow residents and is a step in the right direction towards increased public transport provision in the county."

"No doubt this will benefit the residents in

neighbouring towns and villages close to the route such as Shilelagh, Tinahely, Anacurra, Woodenbridge, Aughrim as well as Arklow. This new hop-on hop-off service will help connect these towns and once the economy reopens after COVID will help generate more income for local businesses as more people pass through."

This latest move by the NTA is a progressive step towards reducing car dependency as well which is important in our fight against climate change but much more needs to be done to

roll out many more routes across the county and this will require substantially more funding. I have written to the NTA on this matter and have requested a meeting to outline the urgent need for more funding and to prioritise Wicklow in future roll out of local link services. I have been lobbying for more local link routes and in my time as a County Councillor, I worked closely on the development of the Wicklow-to-Glendalough route with Local Link and Wicklow Tourism.

"

used, the better the case we can make that the demand is there so that Wicklow can receive the necessary funding for more local link services," concluded Deputy Whitmore.

'Battery trains could solve our rail issues'

Green Party TD Steven Matthews has asked the NTA to trial battery electric trains on the Greystones to Wicklow rail section as a potential solution to service issues on that route. Deputy Matthews made the request at an NTA briefing last week.

The new technology available for battery powered trains could provide a much-improved frequency of service. The plan currently proposed by the NTA to improve service is to run diesel trains as far as Greystones where passengers would switch to a DART for the onward journey to Dublin. The Diesels stop at Greystones as they slow down the entire service when they run in the path of DART services.

Deputy Matthews' suggestion could remove this electric / diesel conflict and

allow complete journeys from Wicklow without a change at Greystones.

Speaking about the proposal Deputy Matthews commented, "I had previously asked the NTA about the feasibility of electrifying the section to Wicklow. It's a relatively simple section with no bridges or clearance issues so that proposal could also be a longer-term solution."

"With unprecedented Green investment in public transport and Wicklow Town designated a Key Growth Town under regional planning policy an



Steven Matthews TD

increase in service frequency on the railway is required. With the DART+ projects forging ahead for Dublin West and North it makes perfect sense that Bray to Wicklow gets included in that massive investment in public transport. Plans to procure 600 electric train units are well underway for the DART+ project and battery electric units can be part of that plan."

The planned service improvements between Bray and Greystones were also discussed at the briefing and the objective is to provide a twenty-minute service between both towns. This will require considerable civil engineering works to partially double track both ends of the section."

Deputy Matthews also asked if the construction of the LUAS to Bray could be done in tandem with Metro South. The LUAS extension was mooted to follow the Metro upgrade. "I don't see any reason why both jobs can't run together and I'm delighted that the NTA agreed with me on that."

"These projects won't be delivered overnight but in constantly working with Minister Eamon Ryan's Department of Transport and the NTA I'm confident that public transport provision for all parts of Wicklow will no longer be ignored as it has been for so long," concluded Deputy Matthews.

Over 9000 people in Wicklow receive PUP arrears totalling over €4 million

Some €4,123,888 in arrears under the Pandemic Unemployment Payment has been paid out to 9,139 people living in Wicklow, Minister Simon Harris TD has said.

Minister Harris said "I welcome the approval by my colleague Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys, of the payment of arrears under the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) to 286,000 people nationwide today. The total amount paid out this morning was €129.2 million. This includes €4,123,888 paid to 9,139 people living in Wicklow."

"Many of the people who received arrears today may have not been expecting it so this is a welcome boost, especially ahead of Christmas. The Pandemic Unemployment Payment has proven to be an essential lifeline for so many workers. Over €3.4bn has been paid out, demonstrating the Government's determination to protecting workers."

"The money was paid ahead of the rollout of the Christmas Bonus, which will see almost €390 million paid out to 1.6 million people nationwide. Between these arrears and the Christmas Bonus, over a half a billion euro will be paid out nationwide over the course of a week. What better approach to take than to invest it in the local economy and support small businesses ahead of Christmas. Retailers in Wicklow have had a challenging time during the Covid pandemic and all of us should do right by them and buy presents and other essentials this Christmas."

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Teen busker pens a song to help the homeless

5th year student Molli Meaghan-Tresson has penned her own Christmas song called 'Last Christmas' as a fundraiser for Brother Kevin and the Capuchin Homeless Services.

For the last two Decembers Molli has busked on the streets in Wexford and at Dun Laoghaire pier with the aim of donating all her earnings to local Homeless Charities. In 2018 she donated all her €1,230 earnings to a local homeless charity based in Wexford Town and last Christmas Molli busked on the pier in Dun Laoghaire and again she donated all €750 to a local homeless action group based in Dun Laoghaire.

This year, due to the unknown with regards to Covid restrictions, Molli didn't know if she would be able to busk in busy public settings as planned so she wrote and recorded her own song instead.

'Last Christmas' is written from the perspective of a homeless couple who are watching more well-off people run around excited over Christmas buying each other gifts, etc. while the couple are just hoping to survive the cold night. The song has elements of Christmas spirit, hope and love, as well as an element of cold harsh reality.

Molli wrote the song and sent a demo to Gavin Glass of Orphan Recording Studio based in Curragoe, Wexford, who helped produce it. It is now available on Spotify, iTunes, Amazon Music, YouTube and other media platforms.

Molli was aware of the financially hard year so many people have faced so was aiming for a large amount of plays on Spotify rather than asking for donations directly.

A huge number of plays on Spotify would lead to a payout. It is also available to buy on iTunes for €1.29 with all profits going to the charity. Molli has also set up a PayPal account so people CAN donate if they would like.

Conciliation process begins in Greystones Community National School building dispute

The builder of the new Greystones Community National School building and the Department of Education met with the newly appointed conciliator in their dispute for the first time on Friday 4th December. The conciliation process is expected to last three to six months.

The Department of Education advised: "The issue preventing the occupation of Greystones CNS has been referred to Conciliation - the standard dispute resolution mechanism under the Public Works Contract. It is hoped that the conciliation process can provide a mechanism for resolution to the issues currently impacting on the handover and occupation of the building."

Minister Simon Harris welcomed the commencement of the process, saying, "It is frustrating to see the new Greystones CNS building sitting empty while both schools are in temporary accommodation. While the commencement of the conciliation process is welcome both schools need certainty as regards where they will be accommodated in 2021".

The Department of

Education also advised Minister Harris that ongoing work is taking place to provide technical rooms for Greystones Community College.

The Department of Education advised Minister Harris "Agreement has been reached with Greystones Rugby Club to provide specialist subject rooms for the Community College on the Rugby Club grounds adjacent to the existing CNS classrooms.

The Department's Architects have been in contact with Wicklow County Council in this regard and a planning application for the additional classrooms is being prepared and will be submitted shortly. The Department will also be making arrangements for the tendering process for the additional classrooms to run in parallel with the planning application.

"The intention is that when the CNS move into their new building, the Community College will be able to avail of the full set of temporary accommodation that will then be available on the Rugby Club grounds.

"As a contingency, the Department has also begun discussions with Greystones GAA Club and will explore the possibility of providing temporary accommodation for the Community College on the GAA grounds should that need arise.

"The Department has also contacted the Principals of all of the post-primary schools in Greystones with a view to all of the schools working together to urgently identify the exact extent of the enrolment pressures in the area for September 2021."

Minister Harris concluded "I will continue to

work with the school, parents' association and the Department of Education to ensure that Greystones Community College's technical rooms and accommodation for 2021 are delivered as speedily as possible."

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said "In a perfect world this issue could have been resolved a lot sooner. I know there is immense frustration amongst the parents that their children are not in their new state-of-the-art school.

"But we are finally starting to see some progress which has to be welcomed. I have been in constant contact with the Department to try and help speed things along.

'I will continue to work closely with both schools and the Department to try and get this issue dealt with once and for all.'

Liz McManus encourages local writers to join Irish PEN

Writer and former TD Liz McManus recently took part in the launch of the new Irish PEN/PEN na hÉireann. Nearly seventy people joined the 'Zoom' event, which was moved online in accordance with public health guidelines on COVID-19. Liz is a founder member of the organisation which has grown out of the Freedom to Write Campaign. She said "As a former Chairperson of the Irish Writers Centre I'm delighted we were asked to re-establish Irish PEN in a new form, after the writers' organisation had ceased to function in 2019.

"Our new Board members worked very hard over the summer to ensure a smooth transition to the new Irish PEN," she said. "Although we are setting up new structures and processes, we are obviously committed to the core principles of International PEN. These include promoting literature in and about Ireland, defending the rights of writers to responsible free expression, and highlighting the role of literature as a positive force in society."

Lady Gregory was the driving force behind Irish PEN in the 1920s. In 1935, Sean O'Faolain declared Irish PEN's manifesto: "We recognize and fight for the intellectual fraternity of mankind." Each year, Irish PEN also recognises writers who made an outstanding contribution to Irish literature. Recent recipients have included Colm Toibín, John Banville, Anne Enright, Catherine Dunne, and the late Evan Boland.

The launch of the new entity Irish PEN/PEB na hÉireann took place on 15 November, the Day of

the Imprisoned Writer. The event was a lively mix of music, poetry readings, and updates. Two county Wicklow resident musicians, Cormac Breathnach and Eamon Sweeney provided the music.

Jennifer Clement, President of PEN International, spoke of the vital role that Irish PEN plays within the international PEN family. And Brian Keenan gave a reading from his powerful memoir *An Evil Cradling*. The big surprise of the evening was the announcement that the patron of Irish PEN/PEN na hÉireann will be President Michael D. Higgins. The President sent a warm and supportive message, which was read out during the launch. President Higgins has, of course, long been an advocate of the principles of Irish PEN. In the foreword to Fr Gaughan's *A Personal Perspective on Irish PEN*, the President states: "As a nation we can be deeply grateful to Irish PEN for upholding the written word

denial of freedom of expression to fellow writers around the world, a denial which is an attack on the very notion of truth itself."

Liz McManus points out that Irish PEN is more than just a writers' group. "Irish PEN encourages anyone who takes an active interest in literature to get in touch. We believe in responsible freedom of expression, so we actively campaign on behalf of imprisoned or intimidated writers. We have taken part in high-profile campaigns on behalf of, for example, Turkish poet Ilhan Sami Çomak, Indian poet Varavara Rao, and Iranian writer Nasrin Sotoudeh. I am delighted that a poem of mine is being translated into Turkish and will be delivered to Ilhan Comak in prison."

"Irish PEN currently has more than fifty members," Liz continues. "Next year will be the centenary of PEN International, and we look forward to growing the organisation over the coming years."

Anyone interested in joining Irish PEN/PEN na hÉireann should visit: www.irishpen.com.

Computer Programming course in Bray

Computer Programming is one of the most exciting fields to get into. Most of us use computer programmes every day - probably without even thinking about it.

Learning how to design a programme is a different story. Bray Adult Education Centre has been offering fantastic learning opportunities to the people of Bray and north Wicklow for decades. The centre's new programming course will be an exciting string added to the centre's bow.

Computer Programming takes the learner to the heart of the industry. It's the designer's view. When

you learn how to write the code, you learn how to control what happens. Computers are just tools in most people's hands. With the skills on offer here, they can be much more than that.

Ireland is an internationally recognised hub of the global computing industry. This course offers an open door to anyone interested in getting into the industry at the most vital end. And it's available right in the heart of Bray, in the Civic Centre. The course will start in January. The centre is open for applications now.

As part of Kildare & Wicklow ETB, it's a great example of public money being invested in the local population.

Harris virtually visits Wicklow primary schools

Wicklow Fine Gael Minister Simon Harris TD virtually visited three local primary schools last week to take questions from students regarding his job and issues they wished him to raise in the Dail.

Minister Harris had online virtual meetings with 5th and 6th class students from Carysfort National School in Arklow, Delgany National School and Newtownmountkennedy National School.

Minister Harris said: "It was a delight for me to be able to meet with Wicklow primary school students. I was very impressed with how they are engaged with current affairs - local national and international. The students talked about inclusion, disability issues and what life will be like after the covid-19 pandemic. Pupils also outlined to me their project work - such as the blue star project where they are learning about all the countries in Europe. There were also tough questions about social media, the election in America and how I felt about Brexit.

"It is remarkable to see primary school students so civically engaged and I would like to pay tribute to their teachers, Mrs Bailey, Mrs Craine, Mr Lawson, Mr Enright, Mrs Gillick and Mr Keddy for all the wonderful work they have done".

Arklow students create Transition Year store for mini company

The students at Gaelcholáiste na Mara have been exceptionally busy over the last number of months - researching, designing, creating, and manufacturing a wide variety of products and services as part of their respective mini-company projects.

They have made marvellous progress during this time, during which they have enhanced their prototypes, fine-tuned the manufacturing process, and added the final

ishing touches to their students' creations in preparation of anticipated demand during the forthcoming festive market.

Among this group of highly entrepreneurial

port young local TY enterprises from all over

O'Brien and Karl Drummond, who have created their very own online store, which, in their own words, "has been developed to support young local TY enterprises from all over the country by helping them promote and advertise their products and services". Their inspiration was prompted by the nationwide COVID restrictions and the consequential inability of their friends and colleagues to sell directly to potential customers via Christmas markets and fairs.

Hence the creation of 'The TY Store', which can be accessed by all at www.thetystore.ie, through which customers can view and purchase a vast array of handcrafted products, that are locally produced by students from the area.

Among the items available for purchase are 'El Natural Beauty Products', which are environmentally friendly

products packaged

"in compostable containers with a lavender scent that will leave you feeling refreshed, enhanced and rejuvenated."

To add further to that relaxed feeling, customers can also purchase "luscious aromatic candles made from 100% natural materials presented in recycled jars" that are handcrafted by 'Wonderful Wicks and Bath Bombs'.

'Snug Mugs' offer personalised mugs from which you can enjoy your favourite tipple

"cuddled up on the sofa or hard at work", while 'Socks and Stuff' offer custom-made materials "perfect for crafting or changing up some old or plain clothes". Both

these products can be accessed online but are available for collection locally.

Should you wish to sample a tasty treat, then "Diet Desserts" offer several deliciously decadent options - which are all created with health consciousness in mind. Their products include a wide variety of desserts and spreads, and their

catchphrase is "who said Diet Foods couldn't be fun?"

'Funkey Masks' is an initiative by Patrick Leccardi and Louis Malcomson that provide custom-made masks and key chains that can be individually designed to suit any personal requirements.

"BEEKind Clothing", meanwhile, is a clothing brand created by Lauren Ryan and Ciara Nolan which aims to add greater awareness to the importance of positive mental health among teenagers - through the donation of a percentage of their profits to the charity Jigsaw.

All these products, and more, are available for purchase via The TY Store - which can be accessed by all online at www.thetystore.ie. The student's teacher, Tiarnán De Hál has said that he is "an-bhródúil as an obair iontach atá déanta ag na daltaí seo ó thus na bliana.

Tá cruthaitheacht, samhlaíocht, dúthracht, diógraíais, comhoibriú agus fuinneamh den scóth líirithe acu agus is mó an pléisiúr a bheith ag obair ina dtéantá.



Alannah Bel Wheeler, Aoife De Priodragás, Aoife Ní Chonghaile, Lauren Ní Riain, Erin De Rís, Amy Jane Sillery, and Ciara Ní Mhórdha who are part of the TY Store.



Gaelcholáiste na Mara Transition Year students Karl Drummond, Tara Nic Cathmhaoil, Alicia Puirséalach, Doireann Ní Mháirtín, Ella Ní Dhúill, Chris Ó Briain who are part of the TY store.



Computer Programming at Bray Adult Education Centre

Big news: Computer Programming can now be done part-time at this centre!

The course is funded by the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI).

This is a chance to learn about programming and programming languages.

- Students will learn about programmes that have already been developed and they will also learn to construct reliable software of their own.
- They will learn to test this software before use.

Industry standards are at the heart of this course.

This is a part-time option. It will run on one or two mornings from January until the end of May.

This course can

- Open doors to work in this field
- or
- Lead to further studies.

The name of the award on offer is:

Programming Design Principles [QQI code 5N2927]

Bray Adult Education Centre is in the Civic Centre beside the HSE building.

Other courses with places available in January:

- Computers for Beginners and Near-Beginners
- 21st Century Skills for Work
- English for Speakers of other Languages



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'Look for Local' campaign launched to highlight Wicklow businesses

Businesses and consumers asked to #lookforlocal this Christmas and support businesses and jobs

Consumers and businesses in Wicklow are being encouraged to shop local this Christmas and are reminded of the huge range of goods and services they can access on their own doorsteps with a new Government campaign to 'Look For Local'. As we all plan to have a safe Christmas, the Government is reminding people of how easy it is to shop and trade locally, and support their own local businesses, either by phone, online for home delivery, or collection.

The Tánaiste Leo Varadkar said: "We want to remind people that even with restrictions in place, you can still shop local - whether the shops are physically open or selling products through click and collect services.

"We all want to have a safe Christmas. Retailers have made huge sacrifices to keep us all safe and I know many have worked hard to adapt and move online. When pick-



Oisin Geoghegan, Chair of the network of Local Enterprise Offices, Ann Marie Farrelly, Chief Executive of Fingal County Council and Chair of the CCMA Business, Enterprise and Innovation Committee and Ross O'Colmain, Enterprise Ireland at the launch of the Local Enterprise Offices' Look for Local campaign, which is supported by Enterprise Ireland, the local authorities and the Government of Ireland

ing up gifts this Christmas, it's crucial that we do so safely to prevent the spread of the virus.

"It's been a really tough year for business owners, their staff and families. I know many

people are already looking to support their local business this Christmas. We hope this campaign

builds on the upsurge that is already there and encourages people to explore their local retailer this year. Small businesses employ over one million people here, they are a crucial part of our economy and I hope we can all get behind them this Christmas."

The Local Enterprise Office Wicklow "Look for Local" campaign, which is funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, in partnership with Enterprise Ireland and the local authorities, aims to highlight small Wicklow businesses in every sector, asking that people continue to build on the recent groundswell of support shown to local businesses when looking to buy goods or services.



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Christmas

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STAY LOCAL IN Co. WICKLOW

Wicklow County Council is also currently promoting a Love Wicklow, Shop Local campaign to encourage people to shop locally this festive season. The campaign like the Look For Local aims to keep the heart of our community going by supporting locally owned and operated businesses throughout County Wicklow.

Since January, the Local Enterprise Offices nationally have approved over 11,000 Trading Online Vouchers for small Irish businesses, helping them to create or adapt their online trading presence. Over 12,060 Business Continuity

Vouchers to small businesses have also been approved so far this year, while over 55,000 individuals have received Covid-19 specific mentoring or training from their Local Enterprise Office.

The Local Enterprise Office Wicklow has approved 364 of the 11,000 Trading Online Vouchers, 283 of the 12,060 Business Continuity Vouchers, and has provided Covid-19 specific mentoring and training to 1,237 of the 55,000 individuals.

In 2019 Local Enterprise Office supported companies created 3,149 new jobs across the country. In total the Local

Enterprise Offices have financially supported over 7,400 companies who support 38,535 jobs in communities right across the country.

The campaign will be promoted by Local Enterprise Offices across the country along with Enterprise Ireland and the local authorities. It will be supported by national and local advertising and marketing. The campaign will highlight Local Enterprise Office client companies across a range of sectors to spotlight the options out there for those who want to 'Look for Local' in the coming months. Vibeke Delahunt, Head of Enterprise Wicklow said;



Santa drops by to take a look at some of the Christmas lights in Arklow

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- This change is effective from the 2nd December 2020.

Members can maintain their savings balance as and at this date. However, they will not be able to make lodgements to increase the balances on their accounts.

The change is being introduced for several reasons.
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Christmas IN Co. WICKLOW

Shop Local, Eat Local, STAY LOCAL

Small businesses across the country have had to pivot or change their models during this year and now more than ever they deserve our support."

Michael Brougham, Regional Director, Midlands, Mid-East & West, Enterprise Ireland said; "The Local Enterprise Offices and Enterprise Ireland have been on the front line of helping businesses throughout this pandemic and have played a significant role in supporting thousands of businesses. The Look for Local campaign is a chance to highlight all local lifeblood of our cities,

businesses, not just those operating in the retail sector, but in all sectors. Similarly, the campaign will encourage consumers and businesses alike to look locally for their goods and services, supporting local economies across the country."

Frank Curran, Chief Executive Wicklow County Council said; "Local authorities are delighted to support the 'Look for Local' campaign and all efforts to showcase and celebrate local enterprise. Small businesses and retailers are the

towns and villages, providing vital economic activity and employment opportunities. Wicklow County Council is also currently promoting a Love Wicklow, Shop Local campaign. It is hoped that through campaigns like the #LookForLocal and #LoveWicklowShopLocal people will think differently this year when it comes to food and gifts with suggestions such as purchase a locally made gift, book a dining experience, buy a gift card, order a takeout, treat yourself to a pampering session, shop online locally, book an activity, or hire a local tradesperson because now more than ever local businesses need your help."

The campaign will run for several weeks on media and profiling will continue until the end of the year to help spotlight local businesses across the country and encourage people to Look for Local. For more information on the campaign go to www.LocalEnterprise.ie/LookforLocal and agencies, businesses and consumers will also be encouraged to use #LookforLocal on social media to help support the campaign.

'We must support local business this Christmas'

John Brady TD has called on the public to offer their support to local business's this Christmas by shopping local.

Deputy Brady Said: "The past year has really underlined the importance of shopping local. The Covid pandemic has had a devastating impact on local businesses, and unfortunately many in the hospitality trade will not get the opportunity to open for some time to come. Some unfortunately have had to permanently pull the shutters down.

"Covid has had a negative impact on local jobs, families and local economies across Wicklow.

"But every one of us has the opportunity to help out our communities this holiday season by ensuring that we shop local. The Irish Small and Medium Enterprise Association has stated that for every €10 spent within the locality on Irish goods, it will generate over €40 benefit to the community."

"In addition, the retail sector in Ireland employs more workers than any other sector of the economy. Our local businesses are an essential part of the very fabric of our communities.

"If we want to see our villages and towns to thrive, we need to support them.

"Again, I would ask everyone where they can to shop local, to support our local business's this Christmas and let us all help to get our local communities back on track."



Bray main street lit up for Christmas

Tree of Hope

Kavanagh Christmas trees were established in 1952 and Christy who runs the operation in Newtownmountkennedy tells us 2020 has been a year like no other.

Covid-19 has had a massive impact on people's lives and the Christmas tree market is no different.

Christy said "This year we have been selling trees as early as October, I told the purchasers of the trees that these will not last and the reply from all was 'We don't care we will come back and buy another', the reason being people just want to get out of the situation we are in and wanted

to change their mood. In America they call it PMA - your 'Positive mental attitude'.

"So this year we have come up with a new initiative, a new product - the 'Tree of Hope'. This tree will be sold in the pot with the roots and not cut, so people can plant it after Christmas and when Spring arrives new buds will come on the trees, new growth so it will be a

new beginning for the families and the children, they can see we are moving on and moving forward.

"It's a new beginning and the children will be able to watch the new life coming from the tree, and hopefully get over this period of difficulty. Positivity is the key, also they are supporting local which is so important this year, it is easy to go online and buy a plastic tree, but there is nothing like the real thing."

Kavanagh Christmas Trees operate from Dublin and Wicklow: Car Park G, Leopardstown Racecourse, Leopardstown, Dublin 18; Farm Shop, Glendarragh, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow. A63 E270.

If you have any queries please call Christy 087 418 8410 or Kathleen 087 797 4521. You can also visit the Kavanagh Christmas trees website.

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Arklow Cancer Support wish all our clients and fund raisers a very happy and healthy Christmas.

Our volunteer to drive programme will continue to operate over the Christmas period. The office will be closed from Tuesday Dec 22nd to Wednesday Jan 6th.

We wish to say a huge thank you to the community of Arklow and surrounding area for supporting us throughout this very difficult year

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Council commit to get Public Right of Way to Arklow's North Beach re-opened

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has welcomed reassurances from Wicklow County Council that he has been given regarding their commitment to take legal action if necessary, to have the public right of way to the North Beach in Arklow re-opened.

Speaking after a recent meeting with the Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Deputy Brady said "I welcome the commitment I received from Wicklow County Council to initiate legal proceedings if required to have the Public Right of Way to the North Beach in Arklow reopened.

"I have been informed that draft papers including affidavits for a Section 160 legal action have been prepared by the council's solicitors and that they are currently being finalised.

"The council has already served warning letters on those that blocked the Public Right of Way, unfortunately no action was taken by them to remove the illegal barriers. This is a disgraceful attempt by a local landowner to stop access of the public to the North beach and unfortunately it continues to drag on.

"This is a fantastic local amenity that has been used by generations of Arklow people and the blocking of the route needs to be reopened so full unrestricted public access can be restored. Having the issue dragged into the courts serves nobody's purpose and I'd ask again that the right thing is done and that the barriers are removed."

Deputy Brady concluded "The protection of our public right of

ways are very important and any attempts to restrict or curtail those rights has to be opposed. The right of ways to the North Beach and Porters Rock/Seabank areas in Arklow date as far back as 1896, these are fantastic beaches and any attempt to essentially turn them into private beaches will not be tolerated. The evidence gathering stage of the process by the council was engaged with by many local people who have used the right of way over many years and they have given affidavits. Getting the right of way reopened is critical and I will continue to work with the council to ensure it happens."

Process begins to transfer old Bray Courthouse to Council

Local Sinn Féin representatives have warmly welcomed the commencement of a process of transferring the old disused Bray Courthouse to Wicklow County Council for community purposes.

Speaking following the news John Brady TD said "For a number of years now my colleagues Councillors Dermot O'Brien and Grace McManus and I have been working to have the old disused Bray Courthouse handed over for community use. The former courthouse which is situated on the Boghall Road closed in 2006, when court sittings and services were relocated to alternative accommodation leased by the Courts Service in Bray town centre.

"Since that time the former courthouse has remained vacant. We have now received the welcome news that the Minister and the Courts Service have listened to our case and that of the community and they are starting the legal process of handing it over to Wicklow County Council

for community use.

"Over the last number of years, I have consistently raised with the government and the Courts Service the future use of the building. Along with my colleagues we had worked for a considerable time to have the premises used by Jigsaw youth mental health initiative. Unfortunately, I had been informed that the Courts Service were in the process of carrying out an assessment on the old courthouse. They informed me that the existing courthouse in Bray town centre is operating at or near capacity and that the Courts Service considered it prudent to assess whether the building on Boghall Road could have a role in the delivery of court services in the Bray area in the future. Unfortunately, that review seemed to drag on."

Cllr Grace McManus

BRAY DISTRICT COURTHOUSE



Cllr Grace McManus, John Brady TD, and Cllr Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien at the old Bray Courthouse



Past Wicklow participant Ciara Sheahan (left) with fellow participants Karyn Flood and Sarah Garcia Crawford

Ambitious female entrepreneurs sought for Going for Growth programme

The call is now open for ambitious female entrepreneurs from Wicklow, who are looking to take their business to the next level, and would like to participate in the latest cycle of Going for Growth, the award-winning business development programme.

Going for Growth is a six-month part-time programme, supported by Enterprise Ireland and KPMG, which assists ambitious female entrepreneurs to achieve their growth aspirations. There is no charge to those selected to participate.

This is the 13th year of Going for Growth and more than 750 female entrepreneurs have so far taken part in the programme. A total of 88% of participants on the last cycle of Going for Growth reported that they pivoted their businesses to adapt to challenges raised by Covid-19.

The figures, which were gathered in their end of cycle survey, show the resilience and determination of the entrepreneurs on the programme - and the value of the peer support they received while participating.

The survey also found that eight participants from the programme started exporting for the first time - which is quite a feat during a global pandemic.

Going for Growth participants found that the roundtable sessions translated into practical changes in their business. All participants said they would recommend the programme to others.

Past participants from Wicklow include Ciara Sheahan of Orb Media, which creates 360 video and VR content to showcase businesses' stories and products in an innovative and engaging way. Ciara took part in Going for Growth's sister programme Starting Strong this year and encourages anyone interested in applying for the programme.

Ciara says "In a world where female founders face so many challenges that men don't encounter, it takes another level of support to succeed. I felt that Going for Growth gave me that support. I found that the guidance from the Lead Entrepreneurs was a brilliant resource and provided me with guidance at a pivotal period in my business. It concreted my confidence and self-belief both in strategy and direction.

There's a lot to be said for a programme with the warmest welcome and unconditional encouragement."

The programme is seeking applications from female entrepreneurs - across all sectors - who are strongly focussed on growth. Ideally, businesses should be well established and trading for at least two years.

Applications will also be considered from highly innovative entrepreneurs with significant growth expectations at an earlier stage of their development if they have already generated some sales.

Sixty places will be available for the 13th cycle of Going for Growth, which will run from January to June 2021 and the deadline for applications is Friday, December 18th. There is no charge for those selected. Anyone interested is encouraged to register on the website goingforgrowth.com and a link to the application form will be sent to them.

Those selected for the Going for Growth initiative join interactive round table sessions led by Lead Entrepreneurs. The Lead Entrepreneurs are successful business women with personal experience of growing a business. These high-profile business leaders volunteer their time to encourage participants to set and achieve personalised goals and milestones to address the opportunities and challenges they face in driving growth in their businesses.

Some of this year's Lead Entrepreneurs include four previous Going for Growth participants: Dr. Anne Cusack, Critical Healthcare; Chupi Sweetman-Durney, Chupi; Gillian O'Dowd, Azon Recruitment Group and Oonagh O'Hagan, Meagher's Pharmacy Group.

The other Lead Entrepreneurs are: Fidelma McGuirk, Payslip; Fiona O'Carroll, experienced intrapreneur and non-Executive Director; Monica Flood, formerly Olas IT and Susan Spence, SoftCo.

Áine Denn, co-founder and formerly of Altify, and Breege O'Donoghue, formerly of Primark, will lead Continuing the Momentum round tables. This is a further development programme for former participants of Going for Growth.

Julie Sinnamon, CEO Enterprise Ireland, says:

"Enterprise Ireland is very proud to partner with Going for Growth and sees great synergy with the focus of this initiative on helping women-led businesses to become more resilient and to scale nationally and internationally."

"Supporting ambitious business women to start and to grow enterprises is a priority for Enterprise Ireland. A key objective of Enterprise Ireland's Women in Business Action Plan is to strengthen the diversity of management teams in existing businesses and to further increase the number and the impact of female-led business, for the benefit of the economy."

Olivia Lynch, Partner KPMG, says: "Entrepreneurship is critical to Ireland's economic stability and future growth. We know that more men than women start businesses in Ireland, a trend which suggests there is huge untapped potential in our population that could contribute to the future success of the Irish economy."

Applications will be considered from female entrepreneurs across all sectors who are located in the Republic of Ireland. Businesses of all sizes will be considered if a strong growth ambition can be demonstrated. The applicant should already be the owner-manager of a business of which she is a major shareholder and key influencer and should be working full time on the business. It is expected that the business will have been trading for at least two years. In exceptional cases, a business at an earlier stage can be considered.



Black Castle, Wicklow Town. Photo by Des Carey Photography

Bringing Contemporary Art to Wicklow Town

Wicklow Town has a great new addition with the exciting arrival of a new contemporary art gallery. Founded by local artist Louise Cherry, The Louise Cherry Gallery, located on Mortons Lane, Wicklow Town opened its doors for the first time on Saturday December 4th.

"I know lockdown has been really hard for businesses in the town and it has been an extremely difficult year but strangely, in some ways the town has benefited from it too. Since we have all been forced to stay local, the town has never been busier and people, who might have usually commuted to Dublin are beginning to see just what a great place Wicklow is and what it has to offer," says Louise.

"Lots of new shops and cafes have opened and I really hope when everything is allowed to open up properly again, Wicklow will emerge a bright and

shows, her paintings and photography are held in private collections in Ireland and abroad. Living and working in Wicklow Town's old Coastguard Station, Louise's studio, in the original lookout tower has panoramic views of The Irish Sea. "I see and feel the weather with skies and sea stretching across Wicklow and Dublin, the ever changing Irish weather is a huge influence on how I work; wind, rain, thunder and lightning provide an extra layer of passion and energy to each canvas, I love nothing more than a good storm!"

Louise believes "the



the viewer needs to be intrigued. Every time you look at an abstract painting, you should see something different, your eye should be led to a colour, texture or detail that you hadn't noticed before.

"It can be a beautiful and sometimes brutal process, the construction of each painting develops using destructive techniques and surfaces reassemble layer-by-layer over a period of months.

"My process is very physical and my studio is an energetic space, the emerging process leaves me with a painting rich in colour, thick with layers and texture, full of intrigue, and visually beautiful."

"Visit this new gallery, support local, you won't be disappointed. The gallery offers a range of great original gift ideas including sculpture, original canisters, limited edition prints and beautiful designer lamps.



thriving town".

Louise has always been a keen supporter of the town and feels as people haven't been able to visit Dublin galleries, a contemporary gallery like this is a great addition.

The gallery's inaugural exhibition opening last week showcased Louise's new collection of paintings. "During lockdown I was forced to temporarily close my art school, The Art Studio, due to all the restrictions. This was really hard for me and I missed teaching and all the kids, however it gave me plenty of time to focus on my art practice, so that's exactly what I did, I painted to stay sane during lockdown!".

Supporting local, Louise has been showcasing ceramic art by Cathy Burke and designer lamps by Copperfish Lighting, both Wicklow based art and design practices.

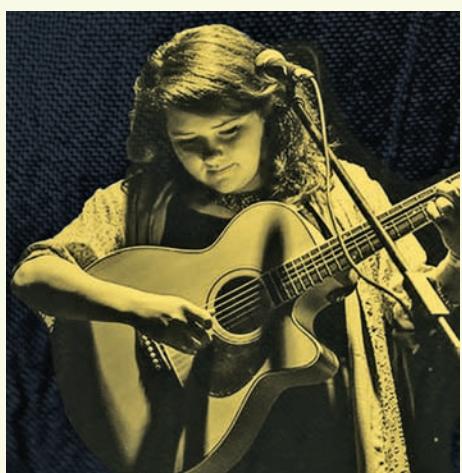
Louise divides her time between painting, photography, teaching and now her gallery. She has exhibited nationally and internationally in solo and group



Louise Cherry

Bray singer-songwriter releases debut single

Singer-songwriter from Bray Clara Byrne has just released her first single 'Conflict Bound' from her upcoming debut album 'Handstitched'.



Clara Byrne

Clara has been fortunate enough to support a wealth of Irish talent including Wallis Bird, Mick Pyro (Republic Of Loose), Cathy Davey and Neil Hannon (Divine Comedy). She seeks her lyrical

inspiration in the world around her and seeks solace from that world in the music she creates.

"In a world filled with juxtaposed opinions and clashing ideals, it is getting progressively harder to know where to stand," says Clara.

"It can be nearly impossible not to get bogged down in fighting the opposition or slaving towards winning small mercies. It all seems so vast, so utterly impossible to grasp.

"But there are rare occasions when a clearing appears through the density. These moments when everything is laid out in its most digestible form, is worth waiting for. The woods briefly comes into view and with it a sense that it is all so obvious.

"We cannot go on like this, in this pressure cooker waiting to be boiled alive. We are heading towards a grand finale; the likes of which mankind has never seen before. As we navigate through the late stages of capitalism, its true face appears clearer now than ever before; we the people are expendable.

"And like the true dying beast that it is, it will not go down easy. It will not go down alone. Don't let its dying cries drown out what has become clear to you; we're conflict bound."

Conflict Bound features talented musicians from Irish bands Thumper and Enemies among others. The recording of the single was finalised over the first lockdown through remote recording in three different studios. The video and art work were created by local Bray talent remotely.

Rockin' Christmas Rhymes at Mermaid Arts Centre



The Mermaid Arts Centre will present Branar's Rockin' Christmas Rhymes online on Sunday 20th December at 3pm.

Push back the couch, it's time to jingle bells and rock around the Christmas tree. Branar in association with the Town Hall Theatre present Rockin' Christmas Rhymes live from the Black Box in Galway.

A musical treat for all the family with a merry mix of festive favourites and rocking rhymes performed by a fantastic 5 piece band. This festive feel-good live music show ho ho will have all the family jiving all the way! The cost is €10 per device and it's suitable for all ages, from 2 to 102.

A 30 minute School Shows version is also available the week of 14th to 18th December. Please contact Box Office at info@mermaidartscentre.ie or 01-2724030.

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The faculty of lifelong learning at Institute of Technology Carlow has won the Public Sector Higher Education Support Award as part of its Excellence in Business Awards. Head of Lifelong Learning at IT Carlow, Dr. Joseph Collins said the institute was delighted to receive recognition for its leadership role in responding to the provision of part-time education, particularly as its timing coincides with the 50th anniversary of the college's founding. Pictured with the Public Sector Higher Education Support Award are (l-r): Dr. Joseph Collins, who is head of the faculty of lifelong learning at IT Carlow, with colleagues Clerical Officer Geraldine Cawley and Lifelong Learning Manager Eoin O'Brien.

Takeda announces expansion of product line at Bray facility

Takeda Ireland, a subsidiary of Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Ltd, has officially launched the expansion of its production line at its Bray facility. Last week Minister Simon Harris TD opened the new Oncology Production Suite at Takeda.

The company which has been established in Bray since 1997 currently employs more than 340 employees at the Co. Wicklow facility in which it has invested €20m over the past two years.

The expansion allows for the addition of production, packaging and shipping of two oncology products to the site's manufacturing portfolio, with Oncology production being a new therapeutic area for the Bray site. Commercial production of the first of these products will start at the end of 2020.

James Dinniss, Bray Site Head, commented:

"Over the past two and half years the teams have demonstrated their experience, perseverance and flexibility to deliver this complex project on time and budget through many challenges, not least the COVID pandemic. We are very excited to start production of these Oncology products for patients who currently have limited options for treatments, and we are proud that the products we make will have a significant impact on their life."

Takeda Ireland - Bray,

was established as a Solid Oral Dosage Facility, which produces, packs and ships granu-

lates, solid oral dosage tablets and final packaged products to the worldwide markets. As of today, Bray produces products for the therapeutic areas of Cardiovascular and Metabolic, Central Nervous System (CNS), Gastrointestinal and Oncology.

Minister Harris said: "The opening of Takeda's Oncology Production Suite in Bray is a significant investment in North Wicklow. Three new oncology products will begin by the end of the year. Takeda Ireland, Bray are one of the largest employers in Bray and County Wicklow."

ed 20M euro into the Bray site. 2020 has been a difficult year and the creation of new full-time jobs is a welcome boost to the local economy.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff at Takeda in Bray who not only continued production during the lockdowns in 2020 but significantly increased their volumes to meet the needs of our patients worldwide.

"Commercial production of the first of these new oncology products will begin by the end of the year. Takeda Ireland, Bray are one of the largest employers in Bray and County Wicklow."

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Virtual women's marathon finds online fundraising success

The very first Virtual Women's Mini Marathon invited everyone to live life to the 'Power of 10' - doing 10km over 10 days to raise thousands for charity. In the event, more than €500,000 was raised through GivenGain for Irish charities, thanks to a legion of dedicated supporters and the power of online crowdfunding.

What's more, all this happened after the event went virtual, providing participants with an opportunity to fundraise for their favourite charities.

When the traditional 10K run through Dublin city centre had to be cancelled due to COVID-19

restrictions, the organisers of the Vhi Women's Mini Marathon decided to host a virtual alternative. As well as ensuring that its thousands of participants would still get an experience to remember, they were also determined to continue supporting Irish charities - which have been hit hard by event cancellations while also seeing demand for their services rise. To help them raise money online, event organisers turned to non-profit fundraising platform GivenGain.

"Even though there couldn't be a physical Vhi Women's Mini Marathon this year, there are so many creative ways to raise money at home or in your local area," said David O'Leary, General Manager of the event. "Giving is a wonderful experience, and so many of our participants fundraise for charitable causes close to their hearts. Thanks to our official fundraising platform, GivenGain, creating your own fundraising project has never been easier."

The event was

GivenGain's biggest to date in Ireland, but the platform already works with more than 200 Irish charities - including household names like the Irish Cancer Society, Barretstown and Dogs Trust.

One of the biggest tasks for GivenGain and the Vhi Virtual Women's Mini Marathon organisers was to help charities adapt in time for the event. As traditional physical means of fundraising became impossible, this year has been a crash course in online fundraising for Irish charities -

many of whom had very little online presence before the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help them prepare, GivenGain's Regional Manager for the UK and Ireland, Robyn Andrews, hosted a series of webinars for participating charities to walk them through the online fundraising process - including the basics of virtual event fundraising, advice on using social media to reach out to supporters, and understanding what fundraisers are looking for from the charities they support.

The platform also sent out regular tips and advice to charities via e-mail in the run-up to the event, reminding them of ways to set themselves up for success. In addition, it produced a fundraising guide hosted on the Vhi Women's Mini Marathon website, to help first-time online fundraisers create their projects.

Once the donations started rolling in, charities experienced the benefits of online fundraising first-hand. GivenGain made it easy for them to find passionate supporters not just in Ireland, but around the world. Donors from 44 different countries gave

through the event's fundraising page, some of them as far away as Australia - and more than 1,300 women signed up to fundraise for charities including Breast Cancer Ireland, Mental Health Ireland and the Irish Cancer Society.

Armed with the ability to share their fundraising pages with massive online networks of donors using social media, some managed heroic feats of fundraising. KylieAnn Moynagh-Manley raised €37,000 for CRY Ireland (Cardiac Risk in the Young), smashing her fundraising target, and also encouraged friends and family to fundraise alongside her - who in turn raised thousands more in donations.

GivenGain deducts only a token 5% fee from donations and moreover gives donors the option to cover it themselves - an option taken up by more than 9 in 10 donors. Apart from that, it is completely free to use.

Earlier this year, the platform made formerly premium features available to every single charity, placing large and small nonprofits on a level playing field in their hour of need.

Equally valuable for charities, GivenGain also shares donor data with charities, including contact information - with the donor's agreement.

As the Virtual Women's Mini Marathon approached, charities could thank and encourage their donors and fundraisers - and also use the data to raise awareness of future events to do so.

According to Marius

organisers and charities

and will continue to be part of the Irish fundraising landscape even once in-person races can resume.

"As charities are now discovering, virtual events can be as meaningful and connected as offline ones," says Maré. "Virtual events can never replace real-world events completely, but they'll continue to have real advantages for charities long after COVID-19. In addition, GivenGain looks forward to helping charities to embrace digital fundraising even after events like this."



St. Patrick's Church in Wicklow and St. Joseph's Church in Rathnew would like to extend congratulations to Lillian Timmons who was the winner of their lotto raffle recently. Her daughter Mary Margaret Molloy (pictured) collected the winnings and donated them to the local St. Vincent de Paul Conference on Lillian's behalf.

PLANNING
PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Alphaplan Design (Tel: 086 2461269, Email: eugene@alphaplandesign.com) seeks planning permission for a six two storey dwellings with connection to services and associated works including service road, footpath, boundaries and boundary treatments, public lighting, open spaces with landscaping, and attenuation system at Ballard, Ballinaclash, Co. Wicklow for Pixer Homes Ltd. 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: John 1:6-8, 19-28

A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light. This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'who are you?', he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ'. 'Well then, 'they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No'. So, they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So, John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord'. Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?'. John replied, 'I baptise with water, but there stands among you - unknown to you - the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap'. This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

C.J.



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