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HEALTHY CLUB page 6



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'STAY AT HOME'

While Wicklow has the lowest Covid-19 incidence rates in the country, the rate in Wicklow doubled in just one week. Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly has urged people in Wicklow to 'Stay at Home' to help drive Covid numbers down.

On 6th January Wicklow had a Covid-19 incidence rate of at 273.1, (the lowest in Ireland) ahead of Tipperary 288.3 and Leitrim 365.1. However, on December 29th the rate in Wicklow was just 130.6 which means the rate in Wicklow more than doubled in just one week. Minister Donnelly said: "I would like to make an urgent appeal to the people of Wicklow to please stay at home."

yes exercise and obviously essential workers will need to go to work but we also need to be doing everything we can to limit our contacts at the moment.

"The situation right now is extremely serious and while Wicklow as a county has been doing well, all that can all change over one weekend."

He added: "I know people are exhausted and fed up with the restrictions but we need to keep

going because our behaviour has a real impact on the lives of others.

"Covid cases in this third wave are rising faster than ever before."

"Right now, we have more than 1,100 people in our hospitals and over 100 in ICU with Covid. The only way we are going to reduce those numbers is by following the guidelines."

The Minister added: "It's important to remember there is hope as



St. Columcille's Hospital Nurse Manager, Martina Byrne, St. Annes Ward, receiving the 1st vaccine at the hospital from nurse and Practice Co-ordinator, Orla Wright. See more, page 3

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we are now rolling out the vaccine. As soon as we get the vaccines delivered to us we will be giving them to those who need it the most.

"Just last week we got an early delivery from Pfizer and we were able to increase the number of vaccines being administered from 20,000 to 35,000.

"We are now seeing the first residents of nursing homes in Wicklow being vaccinated.

"Also last week we received the first Moderna vaccines which will allow us to increase the rate at which we will be able to vaccinate still further.

"The only thing that will hold back the rate at which we will be delivering the vaccines will be how quickly we can get them.

"In the meantime, please do everything you

can to keep each other safe by maintaining social distancing, wearing a mask and washing your hands."

While we know that the new UK strain of Covid 19 is in Ireland and spreading rapidly it was also revealed that the South African strain has also been found in Ireland.

However, the good news is that the Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech protects against both new mutant variants that are causing rapid spread according to a new study. The pharmaceutical giant and researchers from the University of Texas carried out lab tests on the strains, one of which originated in the UK while the other originated in South Africa. The variants contain mutations including N501Y, an

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Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil

Local Enterprise Office

Your Local Enterprise Office Wicklow has now launched the 2021 Spring/Summer Training Schedule for small businesses & the self-employed in Co. Wicklow

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For further details or to book GO TO:
www.localenterprise.ie/Wicklow/Training-Events/Online-Bookings

Local Enterprise Office Wicklow, Wicklow County Campus, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow
Phone: 0404 30800
Email: enterprise@leo.wicklowcoco.ie



Tiney celebrates 100th birthday in style

Tiney (Margaret) Timmons recently celebrated her 100th birthday with a drive-by at Moneystown Church surrounded by family & friends. Tiney was born on the shortest day of the year on the 21st December, 1920. Tiney was the daughter of Thomas and Catherine (Harvey) Graham and grew up near Glenwood, Croneybyrne with her six siblings, Tommy, Mary, Johnny, Lizzie and Kitty who have all sadly passed away and her younger brother Michael who is still hail and hearty at the great age of 95 and who lives close by to his sister in Moneystown. Tiney married Jim Timmons and they raised their seven children in Kilmullen, where she still resides with her son Seamus and daughter-in-law Mary. Sadly her first born, Sonny who was born in the big snow of 1947 passed away in 2015. Two of her children, Vincent and Catherine reside in the UK and the remainder of her children, Seamus who she lives with and Marie, Margaret and Bernadette all live close by. Tiney is well thought of in her community and loved by her children, grandchildren, great grand-children and nieces and nephews, some of whom who live abroad and were so disappointed, due to Covid they couldn't travel to be with her on this momentous day. Tiney is pictured above with nephew Pat O'Neill and her brother Michael Graham.

Grangecon trainer among winners at Leopardstown Christmas Festival

Grangecon trainer Francis Flood was among the winners at the Leopardstown Christmas Festival where Millen To One took the two and a half-mile handicap hurdle on the final day at the Dublin track. Jack Kennedy carried the colours of the Striding Small Syndicate on the 4/1 chance which came from well off the pace to score by a length and three-parts from the Joseph O'Brien-trained Slige Dala.

Signal Arts Centre's 2022 submission call

The Signal Arts Centre is now accepting submissions for exhibitions in 2022. The closing date is 5pm on Friday 5th March 2021.

A submission proposal should include title, and

should cover what you would hope to exhibit if you were successful. A minimum of six images is required (in digital format), clearly marked with your name and title of the pictures. All images should be suitable for print reproduction and accompanied with their dimensions.

Your submission should also include your C.V. (art related only). There is an exhibition fee of €250 to be paid by the artist if selected.

Send your submission by post or email, to: Exhibition co-ordinator, Signal Arts Centre, 1A Albert Avenue, Bray, Co. Wicklow, or email exhibitions@signalartscentre.ie

Laragh and Glendalough Tidy Towns

"Meetings have not been going ahead this year for obvious reasons but we would ask residents to keep the area rubbish free. Spring will be a very welcome occurrence this year. There are things we can do during the winter months, such as making your garden wildlife friendly by feeding the birds, research for spring planting, taking care of your tools and cleaning patios or decks."

New domestic violence outreach clinic

Greystones Family Resource Centre (GFRC) would like to reach out to families who need that extra support. 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.

Greystones Family Resource Centre will focus on domestic violence with a new Outreach Clinic with Bray Women's Refuge that will run once a month in Greystones FRC. Additionally, Bray Women's Refuge offers a number of supports to Greystones community; 24 hour, seven day, Helpline: 01.28661631 Safety Planning; Outreach Services; Court Accompaniment. Please ring 01 2866163 to attend the Clinic. Greystones FRC offers a listening ear to those affected by Domestic Violence. The Centre also acts as a signposting service, 01 2557528.

Wicklow most generous county in terms of new donors to charity

ActionAid Ireland, which works with women and children in the developing world, has announced that Wicklow has become the second most generous county in Ireland per percentage of the population, moving up from fourth place. Wicklow was the most generous when it came to people newly signing-up to become supporters of ActionAid.

Siobhán McGee, CEO of ActionAid Ireland, said: "This has been a very tough year, for everyone, but we are heartened by the continued generosity of the Irish people, especially people in Wicklow, where people not only stuck with us but many began supporting us for the first time. We are expecting 2021 to continue to be difficult for the communities that we work with, as the effects of the pandemic on global economies become worse. Already this year we have seen an increase in children dropping out of school and in child marriage, globally. Thank you to the people of Wicklow for continuing to care about these global issues and for all of those who began supporting our work this year."

Over the last 20 years almost 25,000 child sponsors have helped ActionAid transform the lives of some of the world's poorest people. Child sponsorship is a special relationship - when you become a child sponsor you join your child in their fight for a better life and you get to see the difference your support has on their community over time. Sponsorship from the Irish public provides children with opportunities to transform their lives. This year despite very challenging circumstances we continued to work closely with communities and helped to protect vulnerable people from the pandemic - including by providing water, sanitary items, and trainings. For more information about sponsoring a child visit actionaid.ie.

Sugarloaf Lions support local families in need

On 18th November Sugarloaf Lions Club launched an appeal to raise funds to help meet the needs of local families in financial difficulties at Christmas.

Traditionally Sugarloaf Lions Club had collected food and money with the help of local supermarkets like Dunnes Stores, Tesco and Supervalu but Covid-19 meant that this time their normal fundraising channels were all closed off.

"Our appeal was to help us raise the funds to provide support for families in need living in Greystones, Delgany, Newtownmountkenedy, Kilcoole, Newcastle and Kilmacanogue and was widely promoted throughout the locality and via social media.

"Over the past 5 weeks as funds came to hand and on occasion working with St Vincent De Paul, our

members distributed vouchers for food and fuel and earlier this week we achieved our goal. We had managed to raise the funds (€10,000) necessary to fill the gap that our Christmas Food Appeal had customarily filled and some 200 families had been provided with food and fuel vouchers in time for Christmas.

"Sugarloaf Lions are very grateful to everyone who helped us in reaching our target and ensuring that a little festive cheer could be brought to those who are less fortunate, in these strange and difficult times.

"A particular word of thanks is due to all those who hosted static collection buckets for us, especially the six local pharmacies in Greystones, Kilcoole and Newtownmountkenedy: Fiona Roche Pharmacy, Dodds Pharmacy, Adrian Dunne Pharmacy, McGeesans Pharmacy, Sam McCauleys, and Kilcoole Pharmacy."

Wicklow Lions say thanks after difficult year

All charities found 2020 to be an extremely difficult year for fundraising, and Wicklow and District Lions Club was no exception.

The biggest loss was the cancellation of the annual Lions Quiz which has been running for over 25 years. The weekly winter quiz benefits so many local charities and schools so it was a major loss during 2020.

Another big loss was the food and cash collections at supermarkets. Due to restrictions members were unable to stand at local supermarkets with buckets and trolleys to collect food for SVP.

Luckily the club was able to leave unmanned buckets and one trolley at Gallagher's SuperValu in Wicklow for one weekend thanks to Kevin and Robbie and staff.

people in the local community. People are unbelievably generous especially to our club as they realise the work we do for local people in need. I personally would like to thank everyone who helped us as a club and I am happy to say we were able to help out many families in our district during the difficult Christmas period. We received many donations of which we will always be extremely grateful. iFundRaise/Wicklow and District Lions Club remains open for all donations. On behalf of our members we want to wish everyone a totally different and happy New Year in every way possible."



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Bray increases parking charges by 66%

Shoppers, commuters and visitors who venture into Bray are in for a shock as Bray Municipal Council has slapped a 66% increase on parking charges and has extended the 5 day charges to now include Saturdays.

At a meeting of Wicklow County Council held on 11th December, 2020 and following a vote, (17 for with 13 against) it was agreed to pass a resolution to vary car parking charges with Zones D and H from 30 cent per hour to 50 cent per hour (from €3.00 per day to €5.00 per day) and to extend the parking period from Monday to Friday to Monday to Saturday (Zone D = Strand Road from Martello Terrace to Fontenoy Terrace and Quinsboro Road - East of railway to Strand Road and Zone H is the North Beach Car Park).

This means that locals and other commuters that use the Dart will be hit with a €500 a year additional charge for going to work on public transport.

Sinn Féin TD and local Bray man, John Brady said "It's completely bizarre especially with a local Green councillor and TD in the town. We are supposed to be encouraging people to use public transport and here we are hitting those that use it with an extra 500 a year charge.

It's probably cheaper for them to take their cars to Dublin especially when you factor in the cost public transport. And why bring in charges for Saturday? Are they trying to drive the few remaining loyal shoppers that come to Bray to go elsewhere? They could just as easily go a few miles up the motorway to Carrickmines and park for free. The most annoying factor in this was that there was zero consultation with the people of Bray."

Independent councillor Joe Behan also voted against the charges and proposed that the issue should be sent back to Bray Municipal District for a decision. "Why was there no consultation? This was a Bray issue that should have come back to Bray.

This was sold as a way of raising money for community projects in Bray but in the past parking money always went to Wicklow, I will be keen to see if this extra revenue really comes to Bray," he said. "Another aspect to the issue is that there is a general 'creep' along Newcourt Road and Putland Hill as people look

for free parking, this will only increase. Over the last 3 years east Bray has been without 200 parking spaces as the Florentine Shopping Centre is being built, this increase could have waited until this project was finished and indeed until the Pandemic was over. The retailers in Bray have suffered enough already without driving more would-be shoppers from the town."

At the Council meeting Sinn Féin Councillors Grace McManus and Daisy O'Brien put forward a motion to increase the hourly rate but to keep the day rate the same.

Cathaoilreach of Bray Council, Anne Ferris then put forward to increase the hourly rate by 20c and the day rate by €2. This was passed by 17 to 13.

Cllr McManus and O'Brien argued that nursing home staff on the seafront were unhappy with the proposed increase of the day rate.

"There's nursing homes down there, so you have front line staff who are unhappy with the increase in the day rate," said Cllr McManus.

"The other big issue that

came back is the people who park down the beach for the day to use public transport to get to work. A couple of people who work near the City centre told me the increase of two euro a day or ten a week, would mean it is cheaper for them to drive to work, rather than get the train."

"20c per hour adds up for people when you add it up each week and month," said Cllr O'Brien.

"The message we're sending by imposing extra charges on people during this time of burden isn't good."

Putting forward the proposal, Cllr Ferris argued that the 20c increase would raise €200,000 in revenue for the Bray area.

"I do not believe this increase will put people off parking down the seafront," said Cllr Ferris.

"I have surveyed a number of businesses on the seafront who have been asking for this increase for many, many years now, because they're concerned about all day parking outside their premises and their customers not being able to get parking."



First Covid Vaccine in St Columcille's

Nurse Martina Byrne was the first person to receive the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in St. Columcille's Hospital last week. Speaking afterwards she said "It's the easiest and most important thing I've ever done."

Martina said as she received their vaccine: "It only took a matter of minutes but if enough people take the time to get it, it will positively impact our lives like nothing else."

Martina was given a HSE vaccine information leaflet, along with more detailed manufacturer's patient information leaflet, before getting the vaccine. Afterwards, each person vaccinated was given a vaccine record card, showing the name and batch of the vaccine they have received. They will each return for their second dose, to be fully protected, in three weeks.

GM of St. Columcille's Hospital, Hilary Flynn, said: "Today is a great new story for the hospital and our community at large. The arrival of the vaccine has brought a much needed buzz to our hospital & staff. This vaccine will hopefully now mark the beginning of the end for Covid."

The vaccine will now be rolled out to all healthcare staff and vulnerable patients in St. Columcille's Hospital over the coming weeks. Worldwide, vaccines save at least 2-3 million lives each year – and protect many more from crippling and lifelong illnesses. Only COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorised by the European Medicines Agency, having met stringent safety and effectiveness standards, will be used in Ireland. All COVID-19 vaccines will be carefully monitored over time and updated safety data and information will be published and shared by the HSE, on our website and in our printed information materials.

'STAY AT HOME'

Continued from page 1

alteration in spike protein of the virus, which is a target for vaccines. In the new study, which has not yet been peer-reviewed, blood samples were taken from 20 people who received the Pfizer vaccine.

Laboratory studies found that the samples had neutralising levels of antibodies which worked against the new strains.

Last week Aontu leader Peadar Tobin criticised the speed of the vaccine rollout, stating that it would take 48 years to vaccinate the population of Ireland. Deputy Tobin was speaking after the first week of the rollout which saw just 4,000 injections delivered. Speaking on Newstalk last Thursday morning, Minister Donnelly defended the pace of the State's vaccination programme, saying "We're not slow. We're moving at the same pace as the rest of Europe." 470,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccines will have been delivered into the country by the end of the first quarter, he said. Speaking on RTE radio's Morning Ireland, Mr Donnelly said that by the end of the February it's expected that all nursing home residents and staff and all frontline workers will have been vaccinated. Nursing Homes Ireland (NHI) welcomed the commencement of the rollout of the Covid19 vaccine to multiple nursing homes last week. 22 nursing homes were scheduled to receive the vaccinations from 7th January. Tadhg Daly, NHI CEO stated: "Today marks a very significant milestone for a sector that has

endured the worst impact of Covid19. The virus lives with us more than ever before but today marks a very significant and important step for our nursing homes in overcoming a pandemic that they have been living with on a constant basis the past nine months. We continue to engage with the HSE with view to expediting rollout of the vaccine to nursing homes across the country in as quick a manner as feasible. The necessity for speedy rollout is exacerbated by the huge growth in numbers within our communities, with this leading to an increase in cases in our nursing homes." Professor Dermot Power, NHI Gerontology Expert, states: "This represents a pivotal moment in time for nursing home care. It truly is life-changing and life-saving, with the vaccine protecting residents in our nursing homes from this most virulent and, for some, deadly virus. NHI are urging every nursing home resident and staff member to ensure they avail of the vaccine in order to protect themselves and colleagues from a virus that has detrimentally transformed our lives the past nine months."

Ibec has said that exhaustive efforts must be made by everyone to ensure that the latest wave of Covid restrictions are effective in addressing the health crisis facing the country and that this is the last lockdown.

Ibec CEO Danny McCoy said: "The business community supports the Government's call for a collective effort in suppressing the rising number of Covid cases and will

play its part in this endeavour. This includes facilitating the need for non-essential workers to work from home.

"The speed by which vaccines are rolled out will be central to efforts to tackle the health crisis. Once again, Ibec is calling on Government to urgently and collectively work with business to expedite the widespread rollout of Covid vaccines and promote a greater role for speedier and cost-effective Antigen testing.

"The exceptional performance of the overall economy over the past 12 months, as reflected in yesterday's Exchequer Figures, highlights that Government has the necessary resources to support those sectors which are continuing to bear the heaviest burden of the ongoing restrictions." The Covid-19 vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech protects against two new mutant variants that are causing rapid spread across the UK, according to a new study."

The pharmaceutical giant and researchers from the University of Texas carried out lab tests on the strains, one of which was found in the UK while the other originated in South Africa.

The variants contain mutations including N501Y, an alteration in spike protein of the virus, which is a target for vaccines. In the new study, which has not yet been peer-reviewed, blood samples were taken from 20 people who received the Pfizer vaccine. Laboratory studies found that the samples had neutralising levels of antibodies which worked against the new strains.

Two new fire stations for West Wicklow

Wicklow is to get two new fire stations, according to the 2021-2025 Fire Service Capital Programme which was launched at the end of December. The new fire stations are to be in Dunlavin and Baltinglass. The North East of Wicklow will also see the allocation of a new fire appliance.

West Wicklow councillor Edward Timmins said "I wish to welcome the allocation of €1m for the construction of the new Fire station in Baltinglass and the €1m for the new station in Dunlavin.

"I had been lobbying the council for these new stations for the past few years and was always very hopeful of a positive outcome. The works on Baltinglass are due to commence in 2022 and in Dunlavin in 2023.

"I would also wish to compliment the staff of both stations who have had to work in difficult conditions. In relation to the existing site in Baltinglass I hope this can be maintained for the benefit of the community."

Sinn Féin TD John Brady welcomed the proposed expenditure for Wicklow but also warned that there are still serious issues within Wicklow's fire service that need to be immediately addressed.

Speaking after the launch of the 2021-2025 Fire Service Capital Programme Deputy Brady said "Today we saw the 2021-2025 Fire Service Capital Programme being launched. There is some good news in the programme for Wicklow. Over the 5-year programme Wicklow will get two new fire stations, one in Dunlavin and the other in Baltinglass. The North East of Wicklow will also see the allocation of a new fire appliance.

"€1m has been allocated for the new fire station in Baltinglass, the site has been allocated and the design is already completed. A further €1m has been allocated for the new station in Dunlavin which is currently at design stage and is expected to be completed in 2023.

"Whilst this funding is welcomed, there are still many challenges that need to be addressed in the Fire Service in Wicklow."

"Last September a Sinn Féin motion calling for an Independent review of the Fire Service in North Wicklow was passed unanimously by Bray Municipal District. This was tabled as part of the campaign for a full time Fire Service in Bray. That review has not yet commenced as the motion that was passed in Bray has to be discussed at a full Wicklow County Council meeting and unfortunately it hasn't been prioritised and is still lingering on the agenda. Recruitment and retention are major issues in the retained service. Bray has been left undermanned for long periods of time due to these difficulties. In major urban areas the retained service is not fit for purpose, and now is the time to address these issues and provide funding to allow the establishment of a full time Fire Service in Bray. "Under this programme Wicklow will get one new

fire appliance, this is welcome, however the current deployment of appliances in the County needs to be looked at. The County currently has only one Hydraulic Platform, this is used to help fight fires in high-rise buildings.

This appliance is kept at the Fire Station in Wicklow Town. The majority of apartment blocks and high-rise buildings are in the north of the County and the fire stations don't have immediate access to the Hydraulic Platform in an emergency, it would need to be dispatched from Wicklow Town, losing valuable time. A second Hydraulic Platform for the County must be looked at as well as the replacement of older fire appliances. The 2021-2025 Programme which was announced is welcome, but it also a missed opportunity to fix many of the difficulties in the retained Fire Service."



Wicklow sportswomen awarded for achievements in 2021

Undisputed world lightweight champion boxer Katie Taylor was crowned The Irish Times / Sport Ireland Sportswoman of the Year for 2020. It is the Bray boxer's fifth time to win the award and underlines her status as an Irish and world superstar. Wicklow runner Fionnuala McCormack was also honoured at the Awards after she led the Irish cross country team to silver at the European Cross-Country Championships in Lisbon.

Taylor enjoyed a highly successful 2020, defending her titles against Belgian rival Delfine Persoon and Miriam Gutierrez from Spain. Last year Taylor unified the lightweight division with a somewhat controversial majority decision over Persoon in a high-profile bout at Madison Square Gardens in New York.

In August of this year, she fought Persoon again, this time at Eddie Hearn's Matchroom HQ in Essex. Once again, the high-quality bout went the distance but this time all three judges gave it to the defending champion, on a score line of 98-93, 96-94, 96-94.

Taylor followed up that decisive victory with a comfortable win over Gutierrez in a mandatory defence of her WBC, IBF, WBO and WBA titles in November.

Accepting the award from her US base in Connecticut, she said it was a privilege and a great honour to be recognised in this way.

She told presenter Des Cahill that turning professional had been beyond her wildest dreams.

On another memorable day for Irish running, Fionnuala McCormack who's from Newcastle and runs with Kilcoole AC, came fourth while Aoibhe Richardson and Ciara Mageean both achieved top 20 finishes.

It was a brilliant effort from the trio with McCormack's sister Una Britton, Fionnuala Ross and

Mary Mulhare also earning silver.

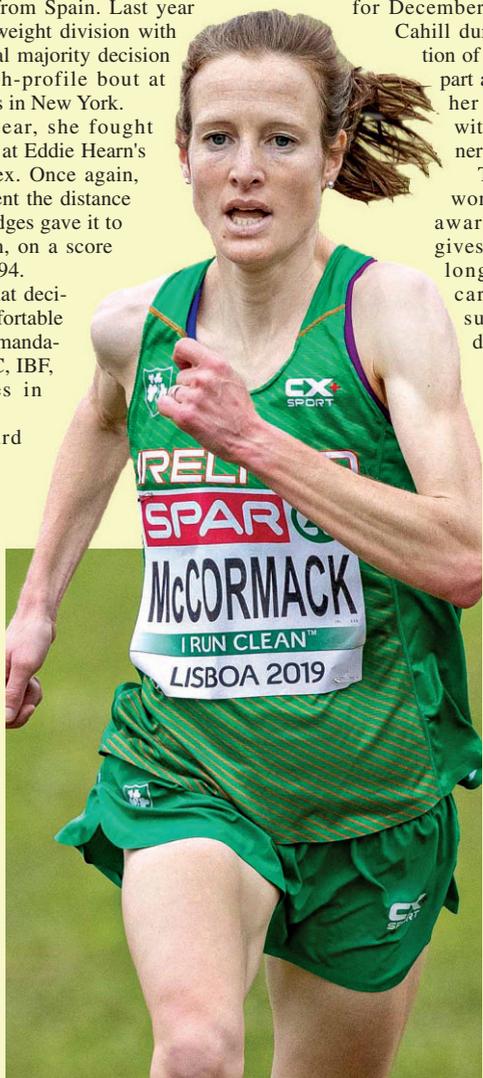
McCormack who won the first monthly award - for December 2019 - told RTE's Des Cahill during the online presentation of her award that the special part about that day was having her sister Una on the team with her, being medal winners together.

The fact that McCormack won her first Sportswoman award in December 2006, gives some indication of the longevity of her sporting career and the consistent success she has enjoyed down the years.

She previously won at the European Cross-Country Championship in 2011 before becoming the first woman to successfully defend the title in 2012.

Last October she qualified for the Tokyo Olympics claiming fifth place in the Chicago marathon in a time of 2:26:47. Only two Irish women have run faster, record holder Catherina McKiernan (2:22:23) and Sinead Diver (2:24:11).

A month later she claimed her 9th national cross-country title. That was another special day - and a sign of things to come in Lisbon the following month - as sister Una joined her on the podium after she took bronze.



Funding boost for six swimming pools

Six swimming pools across Wicklow are set to receive almost €60,000 in funding to help support them through the current restrictions. In a bid to help support the sector the Government has allocated €2.5 million to swimming pools across the country.

Sport Ireland has appointed Ireland Active, the representative body for the leisure, health and fitness sector to administer the swimming pool grant scheme 2020, supported by Swim Ireland.

In Wicklow it will see the Coral Leisure pool in Arklow receive €9,107 and the Arklow Bay Hotel pool being granted €5,584

While the Coral Leisure pool in Wicklow is in line for €9,794 with a further €12,371 being allocated to Shoreline in Bray.

The Glenview Hotel is set to receive €8,677 but the biggest grant is being awarded to the county's largest facility at Shoreline in Greystones who will receive €13,746.

Minister Simon Harris said "2020 has been a difficult time for swimming pool operators. The need to implement restrictions to combat the spread of Covid 19 has resulted in uncertainty and difficulty in planning for swimming pool operators. The funding announced today will provide financial stability to the sector in the uncertain months ahead.

"Earlier this year, the government announced a significant increase in the budget for sport in 2021, which will provide further resilience to the sport sector as we look to emerge from the current crisis.

"I welcome today's announcement of investment in existing Wicklow Swimming Pools. Swimming is essential for the physical and mental wellbeing for many people in County Wicklow. I want to see this developed further in the years ahead including a new municipal pool for West Wicklow in addition to Wicklow's existing swimming facilities."

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said the grants totalling just over €59,000 were coming at a

time when the county's pools needed them the most.

He said supporting swimming in Wicklow was a major priority as the pools provide an essential service for their communities.

"There's no doubt the past year has put the county's pools under a lot of pressure which is why this funding coming at this time is so important," said Minister Donnelly.

"Our pools are a vital resource not only for teaching both children and adults how to swim but also a place where they can learn about water safety.

"It's also a fantastic way to get fit especially if you don't fancy sea swimming in the winter. Wicklow's pools are a vital part of the communities which is why I've been working hard to support the building of a pool in West Wicklow. We need to do everything we can to protect our pools and make sure they continue to provide an invaluable service to the people of Wicklow."

Joe Cosgrove, Chairperson of Ireland Active said "The funding being allocated today will provide relief for Swimming Pool operators who have been severely hit by the pandemic. This investment will help swimming pool operators continue to provide safe and essential service which is vital to sustain swimming and maintain high physical activity levels. The recognition of Government around the operational and financial difficulties, with the high energy costs of maintaining swimming pools whilst closed, and the challenges of re-opening with reduced capacities is appreciated. It will provide some much-needed financial assistance to the entire sector and has given organisations the confidence to continue trading through these difficult times".

Nine new bus shelters being installed accross the county

You wait for one bus shelter to come along and then several arrive together. Wicklow County Council is installing nine new bus shelters across the county. Three shelters have been installed in the Arklow Municipal district area at Knockmore and Ferrybank in Arklow and one in Rathdrum.

A further three have been erected in the Wicklow Municipal district at Balinalea, Newtownmountkennedy and Wicklow Town. Three more shelters have been installed in the Greystones Municipal District area at Killincarrig, Appplewood Heights and Mill Road.

A further five shelters will be provided in the Baltinglass Municipal District shortly.

Funding for the Bus shelters was provided from the Community Enhancement programme where €75,000 was allocated specifically for shelters.

While Councils don't usually provide such facilities, Wicklow County Council took the decision to install them to meet the needs of elderly residents using the bus network to provide a more comfortable experience for those waiting on a bus.

This initiative also adheres to the Council's climate action plan to encourage a move away from car usage.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council,

Cllr Pat Kennedy, welcomed the new bus shelters stating: "This is a wonderful initiative by the Council and will benefit a large number of our resi-

dents who depend on the Bus network, particularly as we face into the cold Winter months".

Mr Michael Nicholson, Director of Services,

expressed the wish that these new shelters will be well used by all bus passengers and that it might "encourage a move away from car dependency."



The new bus shelter in Newtown

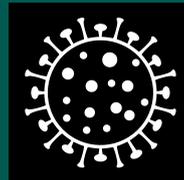


The new Wicklow Town bus shelter



The new bus shelter in Ashford

The National Framework for Living with COVID-19



Coronavirus
COVID-19
National
Programme

Level 5 Stay at Home

COVID-19 infection rates are at an all-time high across all age groups, including the most vulnerable. We must act now to protect our loved ones as well as the health service and front line staff.

We must reduce the rate of transmission.



Please – Stay at home unless it is essential that you go out.



Do not have visitors to your home outside of your support bubble.

Additional measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 have been introduced:



Schools are currently closed for all students, with remote learning in place.



Childcare services will remain closed except for services for vulnerable children and children of essential workers.



Construction will close except for health related and social housing projects, repair and maintenance of critical infrastructure and other essential projects.



Click and collect services are no longer available for non-essential retail. Click and deliver services will continue.

For further information about Level 5 and new measures, go to gov.ie/covid19



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland





Healthy Club initiative launched at Éire Óg

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly recently launched Éire Óg's Healthy Club initiative which will see smoking banned from the club's grounds.

The Greystones club is clamping down on the use of tobacco by introducing a strict no smoking policy anywhere on their premises.

The club say the aim is to protect the health of individuals in their clubs, wider communities and visitors to the grounds by keeping them safe from all tobacco related harm.

Signage has been erected as part of the campaign to help drive home the message.

The club says the policy applies to all members, officials, stewards, coaches, players, parents, spectators, visitors and volunteers.

Minister Donnelly said he was delighted to see the club taking such a firm stance against smoking. "Clubs like Éire Óg play a vital role in setting the right examples for our young people.

"Introducing a no tolerance approach to smoking on their grounds. In Ireland, smoking is the leading cause of avoidable death.

"The HSE estimates nearly 6,000 people die in Ireland each year from the effects of smoking and thousands of others suffer from smoking-related diseases. By introducing a smoking ban the club is showing their young and impressionable members smoking is not something you should think is cool. It's instead sending out the right message that smoking is not the social norm and should be avoided at all costs.

He added: "The best way to do that is to never start!"

Dunlavin native wins National Volunteer Award

Dunlavin local John Fitzgerald was named a winner in the Safety and Emergency Services category in the national Volunteer Ireland Awards for his commitment to CFR Ireland and Wicklow Rapid Response.

A Community First Responder (CFR) volunteer for over 20 years in his native county Wicklow, John epitomises everything that is good about community volunteers. Working on a local

level and witnessing the positivity of his and his colleagues' work, John decided to make their learning known on a national level and support other likeminded volunteers wherever possible.

John set about developing a national representative organisation 'CFR Ireland' to increase awareness of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), use of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and work closely with the National Ambulance Service to increase the number of CFR Groups across Ireland.

According to Wicklow Volunteer Centre Manager Leah Kinsella "We are lucky to have people like John volunteering in Wicklow. Volunteers are often unseen but the contribution they make to Irish society is immense. These awards give us a chance to say thank you and celebrate the difference volunteers make every day."

Arthur and Deborah Carr were named Christine Buckley Volunteer of the Year for their outstanding commitment to supporting those in crisis in Galway.

Joe O'Brien TD, Minister for State for Community and Charities, added "It gives

me great pleasure to congratulate all the winners of the Volunteer Ireland 2020 Awards, which are supported by my Department. After what has been a very challenging year for us all, it is all the more important to thank those volunteers who have gone the extra mile to support the most vulnerable in our communities. In addition to the winners, I would also like to thank Volunteer Ireland for their work to support and champion volunteering around the country."

As a physical event was not possible, each awardee received a special surprise delivery from Volunteer Ireland announcing their win. It included an engraved trophy, a framed message from President Higgins, complimentary tickets to EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum and of course, a hamper of goodies to celebrate with. All 805 volunteers nominated in the awards also received a special thank you card from Volunteer Ireland earlier this month.



Calls for increased environmental funding

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has called for significant increase in funding for environmental organisations. Deputy Whitmore made the call after it was revealed that environmental organisations received on average only €13,000 from the Environment Fund in the Department of Environment via the Irish Environmental Network.

Spokesperson for Climate Action and Biodiversity Deputy Whitmore wrote to Ministers Eamon Ryan and Malcolm Noonan urging for increase funding and reform of the way funding is provided to the sector.

Speaking on the issue Deputy Whitmore said "We are living in a climate and biodiversity crisis but you wouldn't know this if you saw how little funding environmental organisations receive from the State. This is very much the case for organisations in Wicklow. For example, Birdwatch Ireland only received €16,000 in 2019 while the Irish Wildlife Trust received just €15,600 in the same year.

Everyone in Wicklow is aware of the amazing work that Birdwatch Ireland does on so little and how important that work is for local biodiversity. Residents in Wicklow can appreciate the bird sanctuary between Kilcoole and Newcastle and in the work they've done with the Little Tern Programme in Kilcoole.

"We have all benefited from this work on a local level, but

Birdwatch Ireland and other organisations do so much on a national level particularly in the area of sustainable fishing practices and forestry. Just imagine how much more Birdwatch Ireland and others could do if sufficient resources were available to them. The projects that we have all appreciated here in Wicklow could be multiplied giving biodiversity a fighting chance as we tackle climate change.

"While many receive funding from other sources, State funding is crucial to the sustainability of the environmental sector and offers much needed certainty especially during the current pandemic where fundraising is reduced.

"The way funding is issued to the sector is also a cause for concern. Firstly, funding coming from the Environment Fund is unsustainable. Money generated from behavioural levies such as the plastic tax, is unsustainable because it relies on behaviour. As behaviour improves over time, funding is reduced therefore it is unsustainable to rely on it. Levies need to shift

towards taxing polluting industries

such as construction etc... rather than on behaviour which would generate much more funding and in a more sustainable manner.

"Also, funding is provided to the Environmental Network a whole nine months after budgets are announced by Government, causing untold confusion and uncertainty for the environmental sector. Furthermore, funding from the National Lottery has been difficult to access due to a lack of funding mechanism in place.

"I have written to Minister Eamon Ryan and Minister for State Malcolm Noonan outlining these concerns and have requested that they meet and engage with myself and the sector on the issue of much needed increases in funding for environmental organisations and reform of funding streams to increase capacity at a time when we most need it to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss. This must be a priority particular if the Government only recently justified spending over €19m to the Irish Greyhound industry" concludes Whitmore.

Funding for animal welfare groups

Four Wicklow animal welfare groups will receive funding provided by the Department of Agriculture totalling €180,500.

Discussing the announcement, Green Party TD Steven Matthews said: "Animal welfare funding is something the Green Party pushed extremely hard for during the Programme for Government negotiations and it is hugely welcome news that animal welfare groups across the country will receive funding, but I am particularly delighted for the four Wicklow organisations announced.

"I have seen first-hand the work that these groups do on the ground and in what has been an extraordinarily challenging year in terms of day to day operations and fundraising, I hope that this funding can offer some relief and allow those involved plan for a better 2021."

The schools in Wicklow that were awarded this funding were: Arklow Cat Rescue, €2,500; Ash Animal Rescue, Cornan, Kiltegan, €36,000; Irish Horse Welfare Trust, Ballinamona, Woodenbridge, Arklow, €82,000; Wicklow SPCA, Sharpeshill

Animal Sanctuary, Rathdrum, €60,000.

Deputy Matthews continued, "We are particularly fortunate in Wicklow to have a strong, active voluntary sector dedicated to animal welfare. The staff and volunteers from the organisations in receipt of funding show incredible commitment to protecting and caring for surrendered, abandoned and at-risk animals.

"I further welcomed the Minister's comments committing to following through on the Programme for Government by carrying out a full review of the funding model and its underlying policy objectives with a view to doubling the funding available within two years.

"Although the funding announced by the Government won't completely negate the impact that the pandemic has had on these organisations, it's very welcome to see this funding go to Wicklow," concluded Deputy Matthews.

Six Wicklow primary schools to benefit from 2021 Summer Works Scheme

Six Wicklow primary schools will receive support through the Summer Works Scheme which amounted to a total of €527,016.

The schools in Wicklow that were awarded this funding were: St. Brigid's NS - Kilbride, Roof Works; St. Laurence O'Toole NS Roundwood, Roof Works; St. Joseph's NS - Arklow, Roof Works; Scoil an Choroin Mhuire - Wicklow Town, Roof Works; St. Kevin's Ballycoog NS - Avoca, Toilet Facilities; An Chroi Ro Naofa NS - Aughrim, Toilet Facilities.

Discussing the news Green Party TD Steven Matthews said "The announcement of funding for these six schools this week was extremely welcome. The funding that has been allocated to deal with specific issues raised by school management that require significant funding to rectify. I have been contacted by several concerned parents and teachers to raise these issues and I am delighted to see the funding becoming available to rectify them.

"Schools across Wicklow have had an incredibly challenging 2020 but I hope that this funding can go some way towards assisting the school principals and management with planning for a better 2021.

"It is my understanding that each school that has been awarded funding will be contacted shortly by the Department of Education to discuss the next steps and how to initiate the projects. I'd like to take this oppor-

tunity to congratulate all the people involved in making applications for this funding in the various school communities. One of the few positives that this pandemic has shown us is the resilience of our schools, the incredible work of teachers and parents, this can never be overlooked.

"Although the funding announced by the Department of Education won't completely negate the impact that the pandemic has had on these school communities, it's very welcome to see this funding go to Wicklow," concluded Deputy Matthews.

Minister Stephen Donnelly said: "It's great to see schools across the county receiving much needed funding to carry out what in many cases are essential works.

"Wicklow's schools much like the rest of the country have been under an unprecedented level of strain over the past year. The announcement of funds at this early stage gives the schools a welcome boost for next year knowing they will be able to improve their facilities.

"I know there is a lot more to be done to improve our schools across the county but it's great to see progress being made. I would encourage any school who is in desperate need of upgrading their facilities to get in touch with my office.

"We are constantly working to try and get our schools the funding and facilities they need to provide the best level of education possible."

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Before Christmas, Bus Éireann held its GEM ("Go the Extra Mile") Awards for its staff, in acknowledgement of the dedication, exceptional service and heroic efforts of its employees across the country. The Wicklow Depot was awarded 'Depot of the Year' in recognition of the outstanding collaboration, hard work and flexibility demonstrated by staff at the depot in adapting to the new operating timetable which was implemented in early 2020.

Donal Ward, Operations Data Performance Manager (AVL) from Wicklow Town, received the 'Forward Thinking Award 2020' for his contribution to progressing various AVL projects required for future data performance improvements. Pictured are Ken MacPherson, Head of Planning and Performance at Bus Éireann; Donal Ward, Operations Data Performance Manager (AVL) at Bus Éireann; Allen Parker, Chief Customer Officer at Bus Éireann.

Busy year for the Coast Guard

In an end of year commentary, the Coast Guard has highlighted, that despite the impact of Covid-19, 2020 was a relatively busy year.

Overall, the Coast Guard coordinated 2643 incidents in comparison with 2490 incidents in 2019. Activity over February, March and April was the lowest recorded for each of those months over recent years but noticeably picked up in May with August and September proving to be exceptionally busy.

464 incidents were recorded in August in comparison with 369 for August of 2019 and 307 incidents recorded in September with a corresponding figure of 239 in 2019.

Coast Guard Director Eugene Clonan said that the key challenge was to ensure the 24/7 delivery of Coast Guard SAR services, as coordinated by the three Rescue Coordination Centres in Malin Valentia and MRCC Dublin and responses delivered primarily by Coast Guard's own volunteer sector, its contracted Helicopter service, RNLI and Community Inshore Rescue services.

"I want to thank all the men and women that make up our SAR community, for the discipline and commitment they have demonstrated in maintaining service availability through the most challenging of times."

The Coast Guard attaches particular attention to what it categorises as Lives Saved i.e. assistance provided that, prevented, loss of life, severe risk to life, or protracted hospitalisation. In 2020, the Coast Guard recorded that 391 individuals were categorised as Lives Saved.

During 2020 the Coast Guard noted an increase in two categories that gave rise to safety concerns; increases in the number of incidents involving persons using inflatable devices (Lilo's / Dinghy's etc) on beaches and inland waterways during summer months, and increased participation in open water swimming in autumn and winter. Coast Guard acknowledges that safety messages regarding open water swimming have been well heeded with most participants adhering with basic safety precautions.

Public safety messaging continues to be promoted via the revamped www.safetyonthewater.gov.ie website and other social media platforms in conjunction with stakeholders from the Marine Safety Communications Sub-Group (Coast Guard, Water Safety Ireland, RNLI, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Commissioners of Irish Lights and Irish Sailing)

Coast Guard recorded a total of 72 drownings in 2020 a reduction on 2019 figures and is working closely with Water Safety Ireland in monitoring drowning risks and trends.

Coast Guard Helicopter services, provided under contract by CHC Ireland, operate day and night services out of Bases at Sligo, Shannon, Dublin and Waterford. In 2020 CHC flew a total of 781 missions. In addition to Search and Rescue services these missions include 24/7 emergency medical support to the island communities. Coast Guard also provides Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) support and inter hospital transfers services to the HSE including emergency paediatric transfers to UK.

Volunteer Coast Guard units provide a combination

of Rescue Boat, Cliff rescue, Shoreline search capabilities, and emergency community support in conjunction with the other emergency services. The 44 units were tasked to a total of 1270 missions in 2020. Services included Covid-19 related transport support to HSE. Further development in the use of Small Unmanned Aircraft drone systems (UAVs) has equipped Coast Guard units to enhance its search capability. By the end of 2021 Coast Guard anticipates that it will have 9 units with UAV search capability.

The RNLI is categorised as a declared resource to the Coast Guard, which means that each individual station can be directly requested to respond to individual incidents. RNLI lifeboats were tasked to 783 missions while Community Inshore Rescue Boats responded to 84 missions. During the year the Coast Guard and RNLI agreed a Memorandum of Understanding that sets out its long-standing arrangements for SAR response and coordination.

Arising from the publication of the 2019 National Search and Rescue Plan (NSP), the National SAR Committee submitted its first annual report on the National SAR Plan (NSP) to the Minister for Transport in July. It details progress on the phased implementation of the NSP as well as the work of the committee itself and other new structures including the National SAR Consultative Committee, the SAR Regulatory Forum and the SAR Health and Safety Forum. It also reviews the SAR related activities of the three designated SAR coordinators i.e. Coast Guard, the Irish Aviation Authority and An Garda Síochána.

In June of 2020 the National Maritime Oil & HNS Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) was published. It establishes a national framework and strategy to coordinate marine pollution preparedness and response. It addresses oil and HNS pollution occurring within the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), whether it originates from ships, harbours, offshore units or oil / HNS handling facilities and land-based sources. It has been developed with due regard to the International Convention, EU Directives, and operational guidelines. The NOSCP includes guidance documents and standard operating procedures and their appendices which address key elements of effective preparedness and response.

MRCC Dublin serves as the national single point of contact for processing of COSPAS-SARSAT 406 MHz Satellite Beacon Alerts generated by Irish registered beacons worldwide (EPIRBs (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon; PLBs (Personal Locator Beacons) and ELTs (Emergency Locator Transmitters), including any beacon alerts from foreign flagged vessels or aircraft operating within the Irish SRR (Search & Rescue Region). During the year a total of 192 satellite beacon alerts were processed, many of which were the result of false alerts due to the mishandling or incorrect disposal of beacons.

In preparation for future developments in VHF Data Exchange systems (VDDES) the Irish Coast Guard Engineering Branch completed equipment updates to several of the VHF hilltop sites around the country. The most noticeable difference to the mariner is the change of working VHF channels. These changes are published in marine notice 61 of 2020.

Funding of €1 million for Tidy Towns groups

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, has today announced funding of €1 million to help Tidy Towns groups to prepare for the 2021 Tidy Towns competition.

This allocation will provide up to €1,000 for every eligible Tidy Towns group in the country.

The funding announced by the Minister is in addition to €1.4 million allocated to these groups at the end of last year.

Tidy Towns groups across the country have continued to keep their communities in excellent condition in 2020, despite the formal competition being cancelled as a result of COVID-19.

Minister Humphreys has already committed that the 2021 competition will take place and will announce further details in the new year.

Announcing the €1 million in funding, Minister Humphreys said:

"The SuperValu Tidy Towns competition has been in existence since 1958 and continues to grow in popularity, with a record 924 entries received in 2019.

"While the competition did not proceed in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have given a commitment that the 2021 competition will go ahead, under an adapted format, if necessary, to comply with public health guidelines.

"With this in mind I was keen to provide some funding to support the efforts of the Tidy Towns groups in preparing for next year's competition and to say 'thank you' for the way in which they have made all of our

towns and villages better places to live.

"This year, more than ever, we have seen and appreciated the huge contribution the Tidy Towns groups make to our communities. Many of them remobilised their efforts to be part of the volunteer response under the Community Call initiative, helping vulnerable and isolated people to cope with the impact of COVID-19."

Minister Humphreys continued:

"The funding of €1,000 to each eligible group is being provided as a top-up to funding provided at the end of 2019."

"For next year's competition, in particular, I am encouraging groups avail-

ing of the funding to think about projects based around their green spaces and parks, and also projects that are sensitive to our biodiversity and promote sustainable living."

"Tidy Towns groups are already at the forefront in developing wild flower meadows, pollinator-friendly planting, and initiatives to support our wildlife. I hope this funding can help further support such initiatives, such as local community gardens and allotments."

In total, there are 987 eligible Tidy Towns groups registered across the country. All eligible groups will be contacted in the coming weeks with details of how to apply for the extra funding.

Clean Coasts recognise work of Wicklow volunteers

Clean Coasts are recognising the work of some outstanding coastal volunteer groups across Ireland through their Ocean Hero Recognition Awards. Each year, these awards honour the invaluable contribution Clean Coasts volunteers, groups and communities have made towards conserving our spectacular coastline.

The awards, originally called the 'Clean Coasts Merit Awards', were conceived in 2006, consisting then of only one category, 'The Clean Coasts Group of the Year'. Since then, the Clean Coasts' programme has grown to engage over 1,200 Clean Coasts groups on the coast and celebrate many Ocean Heroes nationwide. In a nod to the Ocean Hero Awards that are normally held at this time of year, the work of these dedicated groups and individuals was highlighted in a week of online celebrations from 14th - 20th December. Clean Coasts shared their stories, achievements and advice for how other groups can get back on track in 2021.

2020 was an unusual year and, like everyone, Clean Coasts and their

volunteers had to adapt to the situation. The continued support, engagement and interest from the many Clean Coasts volunteers around the country has been outstanding, showing dedication and resilience through these testing times. Clean Coasts understand that it was not possible for everybody to take part in activities and that for some it was incredibly frustrating not being able to get out to those places that they love and normally care for. Nonetheless, there is great value in sharing examples of the creative solutions that groups have come up with to inspire us all looking ahead to the new year.

Many Clean Coast volunteers around the country made a great effort to carry out beach cleans while

following government guidelines and restrictions, for example, dividing stretches of coastline to be cleaned, setting up online event registration to ensure numbers were capped as well as putting extra measures in place for sanitisation of equipment.

In County Wicklow, Bray Coastcare are being recognised under the 'Long-term Commitment' category. Seamus Connor, chairperson of the group says, "We have been running as a group since 2007 and we are passionate about looking after the coast to keep Bray beautiful for the residents and tourists, but also to look after the local wildlife.

"At a time when we usually celebrate our Ocean Hero Awards, we want to take a moment to recognise those groups and individuals who have gone 'above and beyond' to protect our coast this year and to celebrate our long-standing volunteers," said Sinead McCoy, Coastal Communities Manager.



Bray Coastcare volunteers cleaning up at Bray Harbour



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Congratulations to Zach Cullen, winner of the 2020 Katie Taylor Bursary, awarded by Wicklow County Council. Zach, a member of the Wicklow Senior and U20 football squads, received his award at Wicklow County Buildings on Wednesday December 9th.

As well as his Wicklow County duties, Zach also plays GAA with University of Limerick college team and his club Avondale GAA. He lives in Rathrum and is studying Materials and Architectural Technology with concurrent Teacher Education and is a very worthy recipient.

The award was presented by the Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Pat Kennedy, who commented: "I would like to congratulate Zach on this great achievement and the very best of luck in his college course."

Pictured above, Cathaoirleach Cllr Pat Kenny makes the presentation to Zach Cullen watched by Eamonn Whelan, Chairperson, Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership Committee

Confirmation of public inquiry into Valproate scandal

Green Party TD Steven Matthews has welcomed Health Minister Donnelly's decision to establish a formal inquiry into the historical licensing and use of Sodium Valproate (Epilim) in pregnancy following years of calls from the people impacted.

Discussing the news, Deputy Matthews said

"The campaign was something I was aware of but my eyes were properly opened to this scandal when I was contacted over the summer by a family of a child that suffered extreme complications as a result of his mother taking Sodium Valproate in pregnancy to treat her epilepsy. He was born in 2010 with lifelong disabilities that have been tied directly to his mother's use of Sodium Valproate, through no fault of her own. The victims' groups, who have spent

years campaigning for a public inquiry, deserve huge credit for their bravery and persistence in not letting this go.

"I wrote to Minister Donnelly in September to ask that he meet with the advocacy groups to allow them to outline their concerns. The response, at the time, confirmed that he would facilitate a meeting before Christmas. To get news now that it has progressed in this way is vindication of the efforts of all those involved, and I want to thank the Minister for his swift action following my request. In 2018, the

HSE had established a Valproate Response Group but I know that the advocacy groups felt that not enough action had been taken. However, we seem to be moving in the right direction.

"While nothing can change the incredible challenges faced by those impacted, and I can't presume what any inquiry will outline, I hope that this inquiry will be expansive enough to consider all of the stories of those impacted, all related issues and that adequate measures will be taken to acknowledge the suffering that has

occurred as a direct result of the failure to communicate the dangers of the use of this drug in pregnancy. Now the clear medical advice, as stated on the HSE website, is for pregnant women not to take this medication but this information was not as prevalent at the time.

"I will continue to offer as much support as I can to any people impacted by this issue and work with those who have spent years fighting for answers and I hope that this inquiry can be established as soon as possible," concluded Deputy Matthews.

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"I will continue to offer as much support as I can to any people impacted by this issue and work with those who have spent years fighting for answers and I hope that this inquiry can be established as soon as possible," concluded Deputy Matthews.

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Grant allocations made to Wicklow sports clubs

Seventy-four clubs have shared €52,600 in allocations made by the Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership who announced their first Small Club Grant Scheme early last year consisting of three separate funding streams: Volunteer & Training Education, Women in Sport and General Club Grants.

The funding will support clubs with delivery of workshops for coaches and volunteers, women in sport programmes and purchasing of equipment.

Thirty-three clubs will receive funding from the General Club Grant, 29 clubs will get funding from the Training and Education Grant while 19 clubs will receive funding from the Women in Sport Grant.

Welcoming the allocation of €52,600 to 74 sports clubs, the Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Pat Kennedy, said that, now, more than ever, the myriad of sports clubs throughout the county need all the help they can get as their fund-raising activities have been curtailed during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Director of Services, Michael Nicholson, thanked all his staff in the Wicklow Sports and Recreation Partnership office for administering the grant scheme and for all their work during a challenging year.

€51,290 in COVID-19 supports for community and voluntary groups in Wicklow - Harris

Minister Simon Harris said "Community and voluntary groups across Wicklow are set to benefit from additional Government funding to help them deal with the impact of COVID-19. This is in recognition of the important role played by community and voluntary organisations across the country as we head towards the Christmas period.

"This funding will allow the many groups and organisations doing great work in our communities to continue to adapt to the requirements of dealing with the pandemic. For example it can be used to make changes to premises to provide for social distancing which as we know has placed significant financial demands on local groups. It can also be used to fund on-line activities, as well as the provision of critical social supports.

"The funding will enable groups to embrace the Government's 'Keep Well' campaign which focusses on the themes of staying connected, switching off and being creative, and minding your mood.

"In order to access the funding, groups and organisations should check with the Wicklow Local Community Development Committee who will be administering the funding to groups in each area with the support of

Wicklow County Council", Minister Harris concluded.

Green Party TD Steven Matthews said "The announcement by Minister Joe O'Brien this week was extremely welcome. I was particularly delighted to see that 71 clubs from across Wicklow were awarded funding through Wicklow County Council. The funding being allocated under the COVID-19 Emergency Fund will be used to assist local community and voluntary groups to adapt to Covid-19, for example: To allow them to make changes to premises to provide for social distancing; Funding for on-line activities; As well as the provision of critical social supports.

"I am contacted on a daily basis by members of groups and clubs across Wicklow including managers, parents and volunteers to discuss the hugely damaging impact that the pandemic has had on their club. This hit particularly hard under level 5 restrictions which reduced their activity even further. One of the few positives that have emerged from this pandemic is that it has brought the term 'Community' to the fore. Our community and voluntary groups have played a crucial role during this Pandemic and it's so important that we support them. We have all seen the extraordinary lengths that clubs and groups have gone to in light of this pandemic and I hope that this funding will assist them in their efforts. I hope that if the current restrictions are to be successful and the measures can be eased further, we can see a return to more in person community activities which will have huge benefits for people, particularly who have seen their social circles limited so much this year," concluded Deputy Matthews.

Announcing the COVID-19 Emergency Fund, Minister Humphreys said: "Covid-19 has brought the term 'Community' to the fore. I want the community spirit that we have shown in recent months to remain post Covid.

"The little things like checking in on a neighbour makes such a difference. Our community and voluntary groups have played a crucial role during this Pandemic and it's so important that we support them.

"That's why I'm delighted we are providing this additional funding to support our community and voluntary groups who are in turn assisting significant numbers of vulnerable people to get through this crisis."

The Department of Rural and Community Development has allocated a total of €1.7 million funding to Local Authority areas, and it brings the total funding provided under the COVID-19 Emergency Fund to €4.2 million nationally in 2020.

Wish a farmer a safe new year

The Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with Special Responsibility for Farm Safety, Martin Heydon T.D., has highlighted the significant number of fatalities on Irish farms in 2020 as a result of workplace incidents.

There were 19 fatal incidents on farms in 2020, with three of these being children under the age of 18, and nine being farmers aged 65 or more. This follows 25 fatalities in 2017, 15 in 2018 and 19 in 2019.

Minister Heydon made the following comments, "The level of safety incidents, many of them fatal, we are seeing on farms across the country is unacceptably high. Farming accounts for nearly 50% of all workplace fatal incidents, despite accounting for only 6% of the workforce. That's why today I am appealing to everyone, as they wish farmers a Happy New Year, to also take the time to ask them to be safe on their farm in 2021."

He added, "2021 needs to be the year when farmers put their own safety first; we cannot continue to see the level of fatalities we have seen in recent years. 214 people tragically lost their lives on farms between 2010 and 2019 and this is simply not acceptable. As the first ever Minister to be given specific responsibility for Farm Safety, I am working to ensure that safety is at the heart of everything we do on our farms and I am determined to deliver lasting change that will drive down the current level of safety incidents."

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Two lakes have formed in the area allocated for Greystones Dog Park

Motion proposed to name new park at Greystones Marina

Social Democrats Cllr for Greystones District Jodie Neary has presented a motion calling the new park to be named proposing that schools be involved in the naming process.

Documentation on the Part 8 file currently refers to the park as Greystones Coastal Linear Park and other variations and other names such as Darcy's field and Marina Park have been used over the years.

Speaking on the motion, Cllr Neary says "The idea first came to me when I was talking to people about the park and they didn't have a colloquial name for it. I was also aware that there has been a lot of historical baggage associated with the area and that a naming process for the park would be a good way to start a new chapter for the public.

"I presented a motion to a recent Council meeting at Greystones Municipal District and spoke with Council officials on how best this can be done. The Council have agreed to revisit this issue in the New Year after Councillors have a chance to contribute their ideas as to how a naming process could be facilitated to ensure that the integrity of the process is maintained.

"It was also suggested that we would involve the Heritage Officer in Wicklow County Council to help come up with a selection of names based on the heritage value of the area. I welcome this involvement as it would help us connect with the history of the area. I also proposed the option of getting schools involved in the naming process so that children can have a say and feel a sense of ownership and respect on this new amenity.

"Whatever the process, whatever the name, the fact of the matter is that we have a new public park and it is important that we foster a sense of ownership and kinship with this area" concluded Cllr Neary.

Built heritage funding schemes now open for applications

Historic shopfronts and vernacular buildings have been added to support streams under an expanded Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage funding for the conservation of historic properties.

Owners of eligible buildings in county Wicklow are invited to apply for funding under two grant schemes; the Historic Structures Fund (HSF) and Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS).

Commenting on the announcement, Cllr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach, Wicklow County Council said: "This funding allocation is very welcome news for the owners of historic buildings all over the county and will greatly support them in their efforts to look after this important aspect of our Wicklow heritage."

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structures Fund (HSF) supports labour-intensive projects to repair and conserve our historic built environment. The projects will also provide vital support for local jobs in conservation, traditional skills and construction.

Owners or custodians of historic properties are eligible to apply, whether these are community

groups, public authorities or private individuals. Under the BHIS, grants of between €2500 - €15000 may be allocated to eligible projects. There is also scope under the BHIS to apply for a smaller maintenance grant for works of upkeep to protected structures.

Under the HSF scheme funds are allocated nationally with grants of €15,000 to €50,000 available under Stream 1 and allocations of 50,000 up to €200,000 under Stream 2. New to the HSF this year, is a scheme to fund the conservation of vernacular buildings of heritage interest which may not be included on the Record of Protected Structures, and a new Shop front Fund to allocate grants to support the conservation of historic shopfronts through capital funding for repairs to facades, windows, signage and other associated details.

"Historic buildings, including modest traditional houses and shopfronts, contribute so much to

the character and attractiveness of our towns, villages and countryside. It is in everybody's interests that they are repaired and conserved and offering grant funding is a very practical way of achieving this," stated Wicklow County Council Heritage Officer, Deirdre Burns.

Wicklow County Council operates the schemes on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and is currently inviting applications.

The closing date for applications is 29th January 2021. See www.wicklow.ie for full details and application forms. For paper copies (and to return completed applications) please e mail plandev@wicklowcoco.ie. Postal applications are also accepted to 'HSF/BHIS', Planning Section, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow Town.

For specific queries please email Deirdre Burns Heritage Officer on dburns@wicklowcoco.ie.

'We don't believe this is a proper dog park'

The Campaign for Greystones Dog Park says it is disappointed with the area that's been allocated for the dog park. Following a meeting with the developers in December, the Campaign is now stepping back from this allocated site, saying "we do not believe that it constitutes a proper dog park".

The campaign says it is frustrated with the lack of "significant action" to date. The Campaigners say there are many issues to be resolved to make the park fit for purpose. The campaign group stated "Firstly, the drainage is worse than ever. This is going to be an ongoing issue especially when it rains. Currently two small lakes have formed taking up a lot of the area."

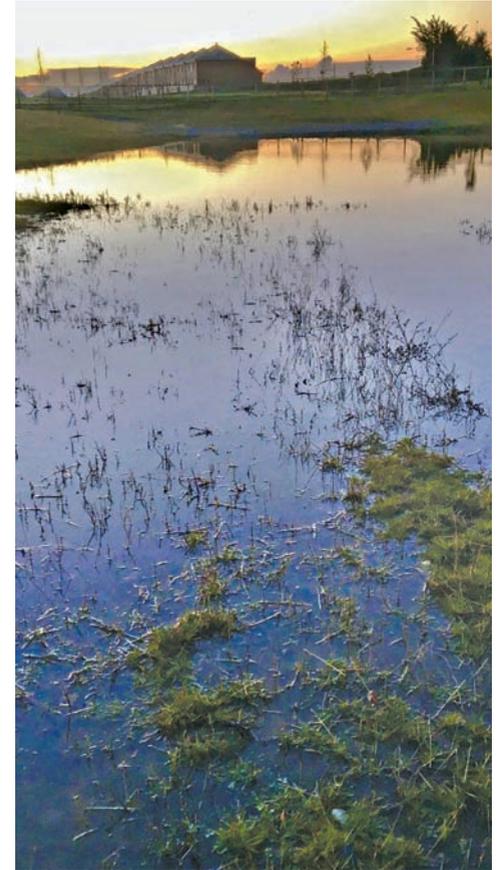
Chairperson, Bernadette Stokes stated: "The Committee has dubbed these as the Upper Lake and Lower Lake. The question remains, what happens if the water turns stagnant, attracting insects such as mosquitoes etc.?"

The campaign also believes that the slopes are too steep and uneven and pose a risk of injury.

"While some work has been done about the small rocks, much remains to be done, with rocks widely scattered around the site. These rocks are a trip hazard. Furthermore, there are a lot of sharp stones separating the two lakes, and a path leading into each lake, also with sharp stones.

"Our concerns over the last two years have been unheeded by the developers. We will now look to work directly with Wicklow County Council to identify and deliver a suitable dog park in another location," they said.

Committee Chairperson, Bernadette Stokes stated: "Having campaigned for 12 years, the Campaign for Greystones Dog Park is still determined to bring a fit for purpose dog park to the Greystones Municipal District."



Mountains Makeover's first native woodland is planted in Ireland's most popular forest

The first native woodland in the Dublin Mountains Makeover was launched recently in Ticknock, Ireland's most popular forest, which saw over 1,100 visits a day in summer 2020.

To celebrate this milestone, Minister of State with responsibility for forestry, Senator Pippa Hackett and Coillte's Chief Executive, Imelda Hurley, completed the planting together.

Having felled this area during the summer, the winter planting season has seen native tree species including birch, Scots pine, oak, rowan and holly planted on an area the size of three football pitches (3 hectares). This will enhance the biodiverse habitat for nature and bring autumn colour to the hills.

Coillte CEO Imelda Hurley said "Coillte has been delighted with the public response to the long-term makeover of the Dublin Mountains and it shows the importance of this area to the people of Dublin. This planting completes the forest cycle from the felling during the summer to the planting today. Forests play an important role in today's society providing renewable products, habitats and recreation spaces. Coillte will continue to create forests for our future that generate multiple benefits."

Work began on the Dublin Mountains Makeover in summer 2020. Over the coming years, the

project will transform over 900 hectares of forests to enhance and create habitats for wildlife, enrich their recreational appeal to people and improve the wider landscape's aesthetic value.

The Makeover uses a mixture of management approaches including [Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) and Remove and replant (R&R) with native woodland planting to create a mosaic of forest types and increase the species, age and structural diversity of the area. This will ensure beautiful diverse forests for generations to come.

Minister of State with responsibility for forestry, Senator Pippa Hackett, said: "What a wonderful project this is. I want to congratulate Coillte and

recognise their stewardship here. They are responsible for so much of the woodland in this country so it is heartwarming to see them dedicating this part of the Dublin mountains to native woodlands and, in effect to the wellbeing of the Irish people. We need Coillte to lead the way as together we design a new model for Irish trees, woodlands and forestry, and this project is clear evidence of their capacity and indeed willingness to do that."

The Dublin Mountains Makeover will take time and will still involve machinery, felling and lorries on local roads, and diverting or temporarily closing some trails. It will be a slow and careful process, conducted in a way that minimises disruption

to recreational users, while locking in benefits for nature and the landscape that will be enjoyed by generations to come. Coillte is asking everyone who loves the forests to endure some short-term pain for long term gain, so that we can create beautiful, diverse forests for the future.

The Dublin Mountain forests are unique among the Coillte forests as over 600,000 people visit these forests per year, making them some of the most visited outdoor attractions in the country.

Today, these and other privately-owned forests in the area are among the most important recreational sites for a growing urban population seeking fresh air and green space.



Minister of State with responsibility for Forestry, Senator Pippa Hackett and Coillte's Chief Executive, Imelda Hurley

Jog on January - just 5k a day will help it go quicker and keep you mentally and physically fit!

Local gym helps members train together, apart

2020 was the year of Zoom but for many it has long lost its novelty. That's why local gym, Freedom Fitness in Kilcoole are not only offering a full timetable of classes via Zoom during Lockdown V3 but have also developed an extra "Jog On January" programme.

The idea is to have a positive reason to exercise outdoors and as the name implies get January over quicker!

Having already closed twice, the local gym was able to stay open during the initial pre-Christmas lockdown. Then they were suddenly faced with the last-minute announcement of closure for a third time. And at what would traditionally be one of the busiest times of year for

any gym. While it was now quick and easy to return to Zoom, the team felt both their members and themselves needed something a bit more.

Karen Coghlan, owner of Freedom Fitness, commented "We were really disillusioned when we were faced with another closure. As a small local gym, we have amazing support from our members but Zoom just doesn't work for everyone for

lots of reasons. So, we put our thinking hats on and came up with "Jog On January". It means we can train individually while being part of a group with a common goal and fully supported by trained coaches. Our group is for members and you can contact us to get involved. Alternatively, we would just love other groups to get together and support each other under the #jogonjanuary hashtag."

The Jog On January challenge started on 2nd January is an individual challenge to run, jog or walk 2 km - 5km a day for the month of January. The overall target is to cover a distance of up to 150km. You can create a group a support each other and pair up with an accountability partner as we can exercise outdoors with one other. Get involved and let January jog on fairly quickly!

GOAL CEO thanks the people of Wicklow for supporting virtual GOAL Mile

GOAL has thanked the hundreds of people all over Co. Wicklow who turned out over Christmas to do a virtual GOAL Mile to support vulnerable communities all over the world.

Every Christmas for four decades it has been a tradition for family, friends and neighbours in Wicklow to take time out to walk, run or jog a mile for GOAL at various locations to support the agency's work in 14 countries in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

Determined to keep the tradition going, and to give people that chance to connect in a different but meaningful way over the festive season, GOAL announced that the GOAL Mile was going virtual - and thousands of people registered doing their mile at a time and place of their choosing, within the COVID-19 guidelines. Over 5,000 Irish people at home and abroad registered to do a mile. That is 5,000 miles, exceeding the distance from Ireland to

Syria where GOAL supports more than one million displaced people every single day.

GOAL CEO, Siobhan Walsh, said: "I want to extend a world of thanks to each and every person in Wicklow for uniting as one global family this Christmas to make a difference. Thank you for your humanity."

She added: "This year has seen all of our lives upheaved in ways unimaginable just 12 months ago. The impact of COVID-19 has been profound in the 13 countries in which GOAL works, exacerbated by the unresolved humanitarian issues that plague progress including climate change, global hunger, access to clean water, basic medical care, and sustainable livelihoods."



Orlaith O'Loughlin from Wicklow getting in her Christmas GOAL Mile

"Since March, our teams have implemented a wide range of activities to reach over 17 million people with COVID-19 awareness and supports. This would not have been possible without the generous support of the people of Ireland. Whilst this Christmas we were

all asked to keep apart, I am so happy that so many stood together to do a mile in solidarity for GOAL, especially all our friends and supporters in Co. Wicklow. It has been tremendous. The pandemic means the GOAL Mile is more important than ever as we work to

rebuild communities shattered by disease, conflict and climate change."

Apart from COVID-19 in 2020 GOAL reached more than 8 million people in its countries with food, health, livelihoods and emergency response support.



Councillor Rory O'Connor, GOAL's David Wilkins, Mladen and Jelica Ivosevic (from Croatia) and Grace Connor with Sadie the Labrador doing their Christmas GOAL Mile on Bray seafont



Marie Comerford from Wicklow Town (AKA Mrs Higgins), who featured in the recent Woodies Christmas ad

Arklow Bank Wind Park project reaches another milestone

The Arklow Bank Wind Park project (Phase 2), off the coast of county Wicklow, has reached another major milestone with the recent completion of a detailed offshore geomorphology survey.

SSE Renewables appointed local contractor Alpha Marine to undertake the bathymetric survey, which captured seabed conditions in high resolution format, across the site. This is an important component of the ongoing engineering and design works for the Arklow Bank Wind Park project.

In 2019 Wicklow-based company Alpha Marine completed a detailed geophysical campaign for the Arklow Bank Wind Park project. The geophysical investigation involved two vessels working over a three-month period to capture subsurface conditions across the site, allowing a three-dimensional ground model to be created.

"Alpha Marine has demonstrated a strong capability, combined with flexibility and technical agility in the delivery of the surveys and was a natural choice for SSE Renewables when looking for a maritime services partner for the Arklow Bank Wind Park project," said Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase 2 Project Manager, James O'Hara. "As the project develops over the next couple of years, we expect that further opportunities will emerge for localised suppliers of services."

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Institute of Technology, Carlow

Wicklow learner features in new booklet celebrating learner voice from the National FET Learner Forum

A new booklet celebrating the impact of learners sharing their experiences through the National FET Learner Forum has been launched by AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation.

The booklet, entitled *I'm a FET Learner*, features the personal stories of 10 Further Education and Training (FET) learners. From Imani Tutu who attended the first ever National FET Learner Forum event in 2016 to Niamh Becton who took part in a virtual National FET Learner Forum in Spring 2020, each individual story shares the impact that taking part in the Forum has had on the learners.

Officially launching the booklet via video link Minister for Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, said: "This booklet offers a real picture of the impact that adult education makes on people across this country. Many of the featured people faced challenges. By finding the courage to take that first step, these individuals, and countless more, have opened up a world of opportunities. FET is for everyone and it is my absolute priority to support everyone irrespective of their age, background or educational experience to have access to FET."

As one of the largest learner voice projects in Europe, the

National FET Learner Forum has helped to deepen learner voice engagement in FET. The project has become a model learner voice initiative for groups across Europe. Each year over 1,000 FET learners from across Ireland take part. Learners share their experiences of accessing FET courses, and more importantly, offer suggestions on how to improve this process moving forward. Participating in the Forum has helped learners to build their self-confidence, increase their advocacy skills, and build a broader FET learner identity.

Daniel Kenny, who completed a Level 5 in Sports and Recreation in Gorey through a Local Training Initiative, speaks about the importance of the National FET Learner Forum as a vital space for learners to shape future education provision. Daniel attended the Forum National Event in 2019. Speaking about his experience he said: "I had never done an interview or anything like that, so it was a new experience but it was good to get a start. I plan to do more things like that in the future. I love doing things like that and I love trying to get my voice out there for Further

Education and Training, because school wasn't for me, but since I've been in the ETB, I've just excelled."

The launch event was led entirely by the learners who took part in this booklet. Hosting the event, introducing speakers, interviewing the CEO of SOLAS, Andrew Brownlee, and facilitating the stakeholder panel, learners were at the heart of all the activities that supported the day's events.

Speaking at the launch, Niamh O'Reilly, CEO of AONTAS said: "The National FET Learner Forum has evolved since 2016, as a one-day national event where learners could share their voice and reflect on ways to improve the Further Education and Training (FET) sector to the largest mixed methods learner voice project in Europe in 2020."

"This booklet demonstrates, whilst learner informed policy is vitally important, in AONTAS our approach to learner voice is more than just about gaining feedback. Through facilitated discussions and deep engagement, we strive for a transformative learner voice experience which builds learners' confidence, and capacity to shape their education journey."

Also speaking at the launch was Andrew Brownlee, CEO of SOLAS said: "SOLAS is delighted to support this exciting new publication which highlights the voice of learners across FET. Since SOLAS and the ETBs were formed in 2013, we have worked closely with AONTAS in ensuring that the learner voice influences strategy and the nature of provision across FET."

"The learner voice has played a central role in shaping the next ambitious FET strategy, 'Transforming Learning'. Its central ethos is that FET should be for everyone and be available in every community across Ireland. Its learners reflect the diverse and vibrant society in Ireland, and we have to use their incredible experience to inspire others to join in a FET journey which can take you as far as you want to go."

Students who 'overcame significant personal and financial obstacles' awarded 1916 Bursaries

Seven Institute of Technology Carlow students have been awarded 1916 Bursaries to assist them in reaching their full educational potential.

Each of the seven awardees have overcome significant barriers to attend college, including two recipients from the institute's linked provider An Cosán, based in Dublin. The remainder of the awardees are currently undertaking programmes of study at the Carlow and Wexford campuses.

The 1916 bursary will provide each student with €5,000 per academic year to support them in their studies.

The 1916 Bursary Fund was announced by the Minister for Education and Skills on 30 December 2017. It is open to socio economic groups that typically have low participation in higher education due to facing significant barriers. These include lone parents; ethnic minorities; students with a disability; Irish travellers; first-time mature student entrants and further education award holders.

Bursary applicants were asked to outline their aspirations for the future, identify the financial and social impediments that stood in their

way, and to provide examples of how they had already shown leadership in their homes, schools or communities.

Following confirmation of the award, one of the successful applicants from An Cosán said, "This bursary will greatly benefit my life and my family's. I am a traveller and have really struggled to secure funding to complete my college degree and this bursary will now give me the chance to better my opportunities in life. It will open doors for me and show my children that education leads to advancement. I'd like to thank Institute of Technology Carlow for this magnificent opportunity".

A second awardee commented, "I am overwhelmed with relief and happiness. You do not know how much this means to me and my children. I want to build a good life for us through getting my degree and show my girls how to shine, not just survive, after everything we have been through. I can do this now without worry-

ing how I was going to get the money together. From the bottom of my heart, thank you".

Dr. Joseph Collins, who is head of the faculty of lifelong learning at Institute of Technology Carlow commented, "I've been lucky enough to meet and hear the inspiring stories of students who have benefited from bursaries, and whose lives are being transformed by this support. These bursaries have been absolutely crucial in giving those with huge potential, who might otherwise miss out, the opportunity to succeed in higher education"

Speaking at the announcement of the awardees, David Denieffe, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Institute of Technology Carlow said, "The 1916 bursaries reflect the educational vision of those who fought for Irish independence and their aspiration for a New Ireland of equal rights and opportunities. 100 years later, we are still working towards this vision and the 1916 Bursaries reflect the

commitment of the Department of Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority to greater access to education. The bursaries will make a crucial difference in the lives of its awardees, many of whom are overcoming significant personal and financial obstacles to attend Institute of Technology Carlow. I congratulate each and every one of them."

The 1916 Bursary scheme is funded by the Department of Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority under the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Fund in recognition of the strong focus on education and equality taken by the leaders of the 1916 Rising.

Institute of Technology Carlow, along with its Southern Cluster partners, is allocated seven 1916 Bursaries for first year undergraduate students. The overall fund will support 600 students over the course of three years.

Budding entrepreneurs in Wicklow urged to take part in Student Enterprise Programme

Young entrepreneurs in Wicklow should apply for the Student Enterprise Programme which is good experience for getting started in the world of business, Minister Simon Harris TD said.

Minister Harris said, "I am pleased that the Local Enterprise Office's Student Enterprise Programme will take place this year and I would encourage all budding Second Level entrepreneurs in Wicklow to take part in the competition."

"Students will compete across three categories, Junior, Intermediate and Senior and judging takes place virtually via electronic submissions. Each student enterprise is challenged with creating, setting up and running their own business, which must show sales of their service or product."

"The programme will also include two additional categories that students can enter. These are the "Most Creative Business Idea" video competition for the Senior category and the "My Entrepreneurial Journey" category for the Junior and Intermediate categories."

"Students from 1st year to 6th year can get set up and run their own business in the Local Enterprise Office led competition, finding out what it's really like to be an entrepreneur."

"The Final usually takes place in Croke Park, but as with the 2020 Final earlier this year, the event will

take place again online on Friday 14th May 2021.

"The Student Enterprise Programme also has new range of online resources for 2020 / 2021 at www.StudentEnterprise.ie, which will feature regular blogs and houses a full range of Student Enterprise resources that students and teachers in Wicklow can avail of, Minister Harris said."

The enterprise education initiative, funded by the Government of Ireland through Enterprise Ireland and delivered by the 31 Local Enterprise Offices in local authorities throughout the country, saw over 25,000 students from almost 500 secondary schools across the country take part in 2019 / 2020.

Launching this year's Student Enterprise Programme Damien English, T.D., Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail, said; "The Student Enterprise Programme has been one of the most successful initiatives in helping students foster a passion for entrepreneurship. Many of the students that have taken part have gone on to set up their own fully fledged businesses, some before they have even left school."

"Ireland has always had a proud tradition of entrepreneurship and hopefully these students will bring that passion with them as they figure out how they want to make an impact in the world. While not everyone can take home the top prize, what the students learn in taking part will be invaluable to them in the years to come."



Funding to help Wicklow towns and villages respond to Covid-19

€567,083 has been granted for projects in Wicklow which will help towns and villages adapt to Covid-19.

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, has announced details of a further 147 towns and villages that will benefit from funding of over €15.4 million to help them adjust to Covid-19 restrictions.

Minister Simon Harris said "I am delighted that my colleague, Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, has made this funding available through the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

"This funding has always been vitally important to help towns and villages in Wicklow thrive, and it is even more beneficial as communities respond to the challenges presented by Covid-19.

"Towns and villages will be able to implement immediate measures that will encourage people into towns and villages to shop and socialise, while

adhering to public health guidelines. It is important we generate economic activity while keeping the people of Wicklow safe."

Funding for projects in Wicklow include: Footpaths linking key sites in Annamoe Village, improvements to the street scape, village centre and traffic safety measures (€100,000); Development of a walking track around Rooster Park in Avoca, improvements to a local picnic area and viewing area for local games (€68,445); Provision of a community shop, cafe, remote working space, meeting spaces, a housing unit and a playground for Stratford on Slaney (€199,800); The adaptation of Brockagh Resource Centre in Laragh to facilitate a Digital Hub and remote working space (€100,000); In Enniskerry Public realm works, including pedestrian access, development of a community garden

and remedial works to the village clock tower (€98,838).

"The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and administered through Wicklow County Council in consultation with local communities.

"The amount is in addition to €10.4 million allocated by Minister Humphreys to 363 towns and villages since August 2020 for COVID response measures."

Minister Harris concluded, "Covid-19 has highlighted the huge opportunities that remote working presents for regional development. Funding has also been provided for the development of a number of remote working facilities in towns and villages.

"Successful projects will see the renovation and conversion of vacant buildings into digital hubs as well as adaptations to local community cen-

tres to provide for remote working and eLearning facilities."

Announcing the funding, Minister Humphreys said, "The funding I am announcing today is about helping communities get back on their feet and adapt to the ongoing challenges Covid-19 presents - it will help make our towns and villages safer places to live, work and do business.

"The pandemic has made us all appreciate the importance of getting outdoors for a little exercise and fresh air. I am delighted that a wide range of projects being funded today will support the development of recreational amenities such as walkways, cycleways, dog parks, community parks, playgrounds and more.

"There is also significant investment to regenerate old buildings and enhancement works at areas of natural beauty - helping make our towns and villages more attractive places to visit and enjoy."



Wicklow Aontu rep Ciaran Hogan, right, with Gleen O'Flaherty, in Wicklow Town. On Sunday 6th December, Co. Wicklow representative for Aontu Ciaran Hogan opened a folding table on Abbey Street in Wicklow town and sat down to talk with the passing locals. This was the start of a tour of Wicklow towns, including Arklow, Blessington, Baltinglas, Bray, and Roundwood. He said "We have to run these stalls, because Aontú is often ignored or maligned on the national broadcaster and larger print media. Aontú is a very new party and support is growing rapidly." Among the issues raised with locals were housing, the current lockdown measures, and the pay for student nurses.

Bray local awarded Irish Research Council award

Bray native, Dr. Colin Keogh, has been awarded a prestigious Irish Research Council (IRC) award, as part of their annual Researcher of the Year awards.

Dr. Keogh, a researcher at University College Dublin, was awarded the 'Impact Award'. This award is given to a current or former IRC awardee who is making a highly significant impact outside of academia.

Dr. Keogh is an engineer, working in the innovation space. His research and work focuses on applying technology and innovation

to solve problems in sectors such as healthcare, climate and business. This year alone, Dr. Keogh built out a team to design and develop open-source ventilators to assist with the fight against Covid-19.

He is also the cofounder of Sapien Innovation, an innovation consultancy specialising in applied innovation, creativity and design thinking services and of The Rapid

Foundation, a social enterprise which aims to disperse 3D printing technology. His work with the Rapid Foundation has included the design of 3D printed prosthetics for children with missing or 'non-standard' limbs.

Dr. Keogh has also previously been named as one of Forbes 30 Under 30 in Science, as Junior Chamber International's Ten Outstanding Young People and as the 2017 IT and Tech Professional of the Year at the Irish Early Career Awards.

Commenting on the awards, Director of the Irish Research Council, Peter Brown said: "I would like to congratulate Dr. Colin Keogh on winning this award. Our annual Researcher of the Year awards are about recognising the very best and brightest of the Council's current and former awardees.

"We launched our five-year strategic plan this year and supporting excellent ideas and talent across all disciplines is at the heart of the Council's mandate. Having a vibrant research community, and fostering public support for research is vital, as we continue to see the positive impact it has on society, the environment, and the economy.

"We are very proud of Colin and I look forward to seeing what comes next for him."

The winners of the awards were announced online, via the IRC's social media channels, in place of an official event.



Harris 16/1 from 25/1 to replace Varadkar as Fine Gael Leader

Punters are getting behind Minister Simon Harris to become a future leader of Fine Gael.

Bets have already started to arrive for Simon Harris to replace Leo Varadkar with his odds shortening into 16/1 from 25/1 with BoyleSports to take over leadership of the party. The Minister for Further and Higher Education was regarded by many publications as one of the 'winners' in their round-up of 2020 politics, after he survived a no confidence vote as Health Minister last January.

This is not the first time BoyleSports have reported support for Harris following his role as Minister for Health during the coronavirus pandemic outbreak.

Simon Coveney has been deputy leader since losing out to Varadkar in the leadership election in 2017 and remains the 8/13 favourite to be the next leader of the party.

Sarah Kinsella, Spokesperson for BoyleSports commented: "Many believe that Simon Harris played a blinder in helping the country during the pandemic. He has posted many positive messages to his followers on Twitter and Instagram and has now began picking up momentum as a potential replacement for Leo Varadkar as Fine Gael leader. Those odds have been trimmed this week into 16/1 from 25/1.

Wicklow property prices rise by €5,000 in Q4

Property prices in Wicklow have risen by €5,000 during the quarter, according to the latest MyHome.ie Property Report.

The report for Q4 2020 shows that the median asking price for a property in the county is now €335,000. This means prices are unchanged compared to this time last year.

Asking prices for a 3-bed semi-detached house in the county remained unchanged over the course of the quarter at €330,000. Prices for this house type are up by €10,000 compared to this time last year.

Meanwhile, the asking price for a 4-bed semi-detached house in Wicklow rose by €5,000 over the quarter to €432,500. This means prices in the segment were down €2,500 compared to this time last year.

The number of properties for sale in Wicklow on MyHome.ie fell by 7% in the last quarter and was down 20% on this time last year.

The average time for a property to go sale agreed in the county after being placed up for sale now stands at five months.

The author of the report, Conall MacCoille, Chief Economist at Davy, said that house price increases were now likely in 2021. "This quarter's MyHome

report points to an acceleration in annual asking price inflation to 6%, the fastest pace in almost three years. This pressure has not yet turned up in transaction prices, although the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Residential Property Price Index (RPPI) rose by 0.5% in October, the sharpest monthly increase in over one year. It is probably only a matter of time before the official measure of house price inflation accelerates.

"As we head into 2021, homebuyers have saved additional funds to purchase homes, with sentiment helped by the likely recovery in the economy as vaccines are disbursed. Given that homebuilding will remain impaired, with banks seeking lending opportunities, too much cash is chasing too few homes - which can only push prices higher."

Angela Keegan, Managing Director of MyHome.ie, said: "The property market mirrors the overall economy, and we are in a much better place now than we may have expected to be earlier in the year when the virus emerged. Government Covid-19 supports, increased mortgage lending, and the concentration of job losses among mostly lower-paid workers have ensured the property market has remained buoyant, while the ongoing issue of supply has exacerbated demand leading to a rise in house price inflation."



Art's artwork is Texaco calendar choice

A prizewinning artwork, entered by Wicklow student Art Oakes, is one of 13 artworks selected from the archives to illustrate the 2021 Texaco Children's Art Competition Calendar just published.

Amongst artworks drawn from the past 16 years of the Competition, Art submitted his entry entitled 'Summer On The Beach' in the 58th year of the Competition, held in 2012, as a pupil at Newcourt Special School, Bray.

Winning third prize in Category G, reserved for entries from young artists of all ages with special needs, his piece appears during the month of July in the Calendar where it will be seen in thousands of homes throughout Ireland during the coming year.

Commenting at the time, a Competition adjudicator said that Art's piece was "one of a number that perfectly reflects the artistic talent and creativity that many young people in Ireland possess and the essential role schools play by encouraging and inspiring their students through art education".

Inspired by visits to his nearby beach, Art says the idea for his work came to him from a combination of "the crunch of the stones underfoot, seagulls, blue skies and when the wind is just right, the paragliders out at sea". Now studying College Foundation in Roslyn Park College, Art still enjoys working with colour and incorporates it often into his graphic design module.

Calendars are currently available through a select number of Texaco service stations and Texaco branded distributors countrywide and through Texoil, Valero's own home heating oil division.

Trauma: An exhibition by Carol Jordan

Signal Arts Centre, Monday 18th January, to Sunday 31st January

An expressive artist, Carol Jordan works across numerous disciplines including ceramics, weaving, sculpture, painting, printmaking with photography often being a prominent part of her installations. A searing poet and a storyteller, Jordan is no stranger to performing in Bray and includes projections of her artworks as companion pieces to her poems.



Equipped with a background in psychology, Jordan is drawn to exploring and expressing difficult emotional states and does not shy away from themes such as anxiety, dementia and death. Arising from her political activism, Jordan's art has a socio-political dimension - as in her Tuam babies installation, a savage yet poignant indictment of the Mother and Baby Home.

This exhibition addresses the experience of cancer and its devastating impact on the emotions. Arising from the breast-cancer journey of Carol Jordan's close friend and artist, Trish Cavanagh, the stark black and white photographs are co-creations and testify to her courage and artistry in embodying her emotions for the camera.

Jordan likes to work ritually, choosing hairs, shorn at the onset of chemotherapy to oversee her image of Trish's mastectomy scar.

The more recent large-scale sculptural works address states of associated anxiety, terror and dark-night -of -the-soul in an immersive way. This is a highly charged exhibition and aims to evoke a strong emotional response.

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DIAS calls on Wicklow's astronomy and photography fans

Astronomy and photography fans from Wicklow and across Ireland, have a chance to win a behind-the-scenes tour of one of Europe's best-known observatories as part of a prize package on offer for a new astrophotography competition.

The 'Reach for the Stars' competition is organised by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS), and is now open for entries. The competition is seeking the best astro-photographs taken in Ireland over the period 1st January 2020 to 31st March 2021.

Launching the competition, Professor Peter Gallagher, Head of DIAS Astrophysics, said: "We all love looking up at the night sky and admiring how spectacular it can be. With recent advances in cameras and indeed in phone cameras, astrophotography has grown in popularity in recent years."

"2020 has been a great year for astronomy fans, featuring supermoons, sunspots appearing for the first time in years, and soon, Jupiter and Saturn coming together in the evening sky on the winter

solstice. People across the country are capturing breath-taking images of such events. With the 'Reach for the Stars' competition, we are asking for people to submit their images - we want to see what Ireland's astro-photographers can offer!"

Professor Gallagher stressed that entrants do not need to be astronomy or photography professionals.

"Anyone with an interest in astronomy and photography - whether as a hobby, a burning passion or a fulltime career - can enter," he said. "Our only stipulations are that entrants must be over 18; they must have taken their photograph on the island of Ireland during the time period specified; and - obviously - their photograph must depict something of astro-

nomical interest."

Entries to the 'Reach for the Stars' competition will be judged by Professor Gallagher, along with Brenda Fitzsimons, Picture Editor of The Irish Times; John Flannery, Vice-President of the Irish Astronomical Society; and Martina Quinn, Managing Director of Alice PR & Events.

Entrants may submit up to three images to the competition, and the deadline for entries is 5pm on Friday, 2nd April 2021.

DIAS also intends to stage an exhibition of the winning and highly commended images during 2021, if circumstances allow.

Further information, including the competition guidelines and entry form, is available at <https://dias.ie/reachforthestars>.

Bray Camera Club's 2021 Photography Exhibition

2021 marks the 50th anniversary of Bray Camera Club and they have a lot to celebrate. "The covid-19 pandemic restrictions of 2020 have served to strengthened us as a club," the members stated.

"While the restrictions put pay to our in-person, weekly meetings in the Mermaid Arts Centre, technology has enabled us to continue our activities online with the usual camaraderie and engagement. Despite the restrictions since March 2020, our members have been even busier capturing beautiful images with everything from mobile phones to digital SLRs.

"At our online weekly meetings, we review

our images and those of invited guests in an easy-going, friendly atmosphere. We tutor each other willingly and engage in lively, inclusive debate. However, the real fun comes with the sharing and we invite everyone with an interest in the photographic image to visit our forthcoming exhibition at the Signal Arts Gallery. Take some time out to see life and our locality as seen through the lens by the members of the Bray Camera Club and if you are interested in joining our club or would like further information about what we do, PLEASE contact us at info@bray-cameraclub.ie."

Opening Reception: Friday, 5th February 7pm - 9pm



Young Filmmaker of the Year competition extends closing date for entries

Due to unprecedented demand, the closing date for the call for entries for Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year 2021, Ireland's festival celebrating the best in young filmmaking has been extended to Monday February 22, 2021.

Fresh Film is an advocate for young filmmakers and encourages young people to make films by hosting the annual Fresh International Film Festival and Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year Awards. Fresh International Film Festival 2021 takes place from March 22 - 28, 2021 and is open to young people from 7-18 years of age.

This year Fresh celebrates its 25th year and continues to provide an opportunity for young filmmakers to see their work on the big screen and to compete for the title of Ireland's Young Filmmaker

of the Year and to win €1000 towards their next film. All submissions are also considered for a range of Specialist Awards including the Radharc Trust Award for documentaries, the Cartoon Saloon Animation Award, the RTE 60 Second Award, the Film in the Irish Language award and the RTE Factual Award, in addition to the International and Audience awards.

The Festival has Junior (7-12 years), Senior (12-18 years) and International categories for individual and group projects. Young filmmakers can enter as independents, as part of

their school or in a group. Films must be original and can be up to 15 minutes duration for Seniors or 10 minutes duration for Juniors.

As part of its Fresh International strand, it distributes Irish films made by young people to festivals all over the world and seeks opportunities for young people to participate in international exchanges.

Speaking about the final call for entries, Festival Director and Founder Jayne Foley said, "We are extending our closing date for entries to Monday, February 22 to

give filmmakers more time to put together their films for this year's Festival this means you'll have an extra month to put the finishing touches to your films or even start making one now! It's incredible to be celebrating our 25th birthday this year and we are going to have a really exciting event at this year's Festival looking back at the many young filmmakers that 'got their start' at Fresh."

Closing date for entries is Monday, February 22, 2021. The full festival programme will be available shortly.



Jayne Foley, Festival founder (third from left), with young filmmakers from around Ireland (photo taken before social distancing). Pic: Dermot Culhane

€248,200 awarded to performing groups and musicians

Music Network has announced the results of the Music Capital Scheme 2020. A total of €248,200 in funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media has been awarded to 29 performing groups and 21 individual musicians across Ireland. Wicklow based musicians Colm Ó Snódaigh and Eamon Sweeney were among the awardees announced.

Established in 2008, the Music Capital Scheme is supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and managed by Music Network. The Scheme provides funding for the purchase of musical instruments in two discrete categories of support, to both non-professional performing groups and individual professional performing musicians.

The Music Capital Scheme has enabled many thousands of musicians across Ireland to develop their musical potential and participate in the performance of live music.

Commenting on the initiative, Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Catherine Martin TD said: "I am delighted to have provided support to The Music Capital Scheme this year. It is important to enable musicians develop their craft and by helping them to buy their instruments we are ensuring they continue to grow and develop their skills. This scheme supports a very wide range of musicians including youth bands, ensembles, orchestras, community initiatives and resource organisations in every corner of the State."

Music Network's CEO Sharon Rollston said: "The Music Capital Scheme was established in 2008 and 413 awards have been made to date. Music Network's mission is to make high quality live music

accessible to communities throughout Ireland, as well as to support musicians to excel in the performance and creation of music.

"The range of instruments provided through the scheme continues to make a significant impact on the quality of, and access to, music making and live music performance across Ireland. We greatly appreciate the continued support of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in funding this valuable Scheme."

In Award 1, funding was awarded across the non-professional music sector. 29 concert/marching/pipes bands, orchestras, schools, festivals and other music organisations were awarded a total of €162,500 for the purchase of musical instruments and equipment across a wide range of genres including Irish Traditional, Classical, Rock, Early Music/Baroque, Popular, Musical Theatre and Contemporary.

'Love what you give'

Design & Crafts Council Ireland (DCCI) has launched the winter edition of its #MadeLocal campaign, with the message 'Love What You Give'. Made Local highlights the work of talented craft makers nationwide. The campaign shines a light on the quality and variety of authentic Irish products crafted by Irish makers and retailers.

As part of the campaign, DCCI launched MadeLocal.ie, to help consumers buy that special gift. Currently, 952 makers and 235 retailers across the country are listed on the website. The DCCI have also created a directory resource for shoppers to locate their local makers at: directory.dccoi.ie/

Recent DCCI research, conducted with Amárach, shows that 70% of Irish adults are interested in Irish designed and made crafts. 61% of these con-

sumers intend to buy online this year. All age groups are proving comfortable with online purchasing from local sites. The research also shows that the majority buy Irish craft to give as a gift.

The Made Local campaign was first launched in July 2020 in time for the late summer staycation period, by An Tánaiste Leo Varadkar TD and actor and writer Amy Huberman. The campaign was a huge success with high levels of sales nationwide. The

winter edition of #MadeLocal is being launched for the festive season, with the aim of growing awareness this Christmas.

Commenting on the support for local makers, Alanna Plekkenpol, Alanna Plekkenpol Tiles, Wicklow, said, "I am delighted to be involved in the Made Local campaign. The design and crafts industry has been seriously affected by the pandemic and seeing the determination of small businesses across Ireland

who have pivoted their working model and ensured availability online is inspiring. I hope this campaign encourages consumers to get out there and to support their community this Christmas, shop local and above all 'Love What You Give'."

The Irish craft and design sector is a significant contributor to regional economies. DCCI has over 3,000 registered client enterprises and engages with over 230 retailers across Ireland.

The Wicklow man who made the first ever political protest at modern Olympic Games featured in documentary

Laochra Thar Lear (Heroes Abroad) celebrates Ireland's significant Olympic achievements in the first sixty years of the modern games, from almost accidental wins in tennis in 1896 to an Olympic record-breaking run in 1956. But Ireland's Olympic story is about more than just sport. It is a story of politics, colonialism and partition. It is also a story of lifelong friendships, national pride and victory against all the odds.

Featured in this recently aired TG4 documentary is Peter O'Connor who grew up in Wicklow and who was the first person to make a political protest at the Olympic Games.

He won many Irish and international titles in the 'hop step and jump' (which was the fore runner of the triple jump), the high jump and the long jump. He was invited to represent Britain at the 1900 Olympics games but refused on political grounds. He broke the world record unofficially for the long jump on many occasions, but recognition finally came in 1901 when he set a new world record. He is credited with re-inventing the long jump by adding a 'scissor kick' mid jump which is now standard.

By the time of the 1906 Olympic games O'Connor was 34 years old and considering retirement, yet he decided to delay his retirement to compete in the 1906 games in Athens. O'Connor and two other Irish athletes, Con Leahy from Limerick and John Daly from Galway, travelled to the games wearing green caps and green blazers with a gold shamrock stitched on them. They also carried with them a green flag with a harp and the words 'Erin go Bragh' written on it. On arrival in Athens they were horrified to learn that they had been registered as British athletes. O'Connor and the others strongly protested and made their case to Prince George of Greece. They were told that when Ireland had its own parliament it could compete as a nation but as Ireland was officially still part of the United Kingdom, they would be competing as part of the British team.

Tom Hunt explains what happened after O'Connor won silver in the long jump; "The presentation ceremony, when the national flags of the three leading jumpers were hoisted to signify the placings, provided the occasion for the first political protest in Olympic history. The tipping point for O'Connor occurred when the Union Jack was hoisted as his national flag. The incensed athlete intervened to renounce his identity as a British competitor and publicly asserted his Irish nationality. O'Connor climbed the flagpole, unfurled his green Irish flag with the words 'Erin go Bragh' embroidered beneath they symbol of a harp and fold branch and waved it vigorously while Con Leahy, John Daly and many other Irishmen who were on the American team stood guard beneath.

O'Connor recovered from his long-jump exasperations to win the triple jump and final got the gold medal his superb jumping career so richly deserved. Once again, he produced his best jump with his last effort and secured the title with a leap

of 14.075m and shunted Con Leahy to second place. The victory provided O'Connor with another opportunity to display his Irish identity. 'O'Connor', the New York Sun reported, 'although the British flag was hoisted when he won, walked about the stadium waving his Irish flag to show the assemblage where he hailed from'. The Irish Independent reported that O'Connor presented two Irish flags to Prince George and asked to have them hoisted instead of the Union Jack. This was refused, and in what the Irish Independent referred to as a 'stirring incident', 'all the Irishmen present produced green flags and waved them victorious in the air'.

Laochra Thar Lear is a Macha Media production for TG4 made with support from Northern Ireland Screen's Irish Language Broadcast Fund.



Peter O'Connor with his wife in Athens 1906



SSE Airtricity supported Simon Community at Christmas with a donation of over €40,000 on behalf of its employees. Pictured last year during a donation were Jennifer Kitson, National Partnerships Manager at Simon, Stuart Hobbs, Head of SSE Airtricity Energy Services Ireland, and Klair Neenan, Managing Director of SSE Airtricity. Pic: Fennell Photography

PREM group invests €7.4 million at Tulfarris Hotel

International hospitality company PREM Group is well into the second phase of its renovation plans at Tulfarris Hotel and Golf Resort in Blessington. The group purchased the 90-bedroom hotel in 2016 and by the end of 2019 had already spent over €6 million on the property in a bid to return the luxury hotel, golf course and 18th century Manor House to its former glory.

Initial works included the addition of a contemporary clubhouse, all the bunkers were refurbished, two new championship tee boxes were added to the 1st and 16th holes and all of the greens were reseeded. In addition, 16 bedrooms were added to the hotel and all of the original bedrooms were upgraded. Meanwhile, a new lobby and new hotel bar were added while several grand reception rooms in the original Manor House were sympathetically restored.

The second phase of the renovation project continued throughout 2020 bringing the total investment figure in the property to €7.4 million. In spring of 2020 the new restaurant, 'Fia Rua,' was created. The work on the restaurant was completed by interior designer, Julie Goggin in March before PREM Group commenced the redesign and renovation of the 'Russborough Suite', the ballroom at the hotel.

Jim Murphy, CEO of PREM Group said, "Although 2020 has been a challenging year for our industry we are committed to our plans to redevelop and add to the facilities at Tulfarris. In 2021 we plan to add a light filled atrium lounge which will connect the original Manor House to the banqueting and conference areas."

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Network Ireland Wicklow welcome newly appointed president for 2021

2020 saw Network Ireland Wicklow overcome many challenges from moving all operations and events online, running their first-ever Facebook live, and, most recently, a silent auction to raise vital funds for Sunbeam House Services.

On Friday 4th December the AGM took place online, where the 2020 committee were officially elected and the 2020 president Dawn Leane handed over her role to incoming 2021 President Jean Evans.

Reflecting on her year as 2020 president, Dawn Leane said "2020 has been a year like no other and our members, like all businesspeople, have faced very difficult decisions. The network provided an invaluable source of support, information and advice to us all during these challenging times. But with challenge comes opportunity and relationships

deepened among our members as they shared knowledge, made valuable introductions and collaborated on projects. New members joined, as women in business recognised the value of belonging to an organisation such as Network Ireland Wicklow. There is an incredible dynamic within the group and a palpable energy and excitement for the year ahead. I was privileged to hold the office of President this year, and I thank all our members, the committee, sponsors and partners for their support. The partnership with Jean Evans, Vice-President 2020, made everything possible and I wish her continued success as President 2021."

Newly appointed President, Jean Evans continued: "I'm truly honoured to follow in Dawn Leane's footsteps to take on the Presidency of Network Ireland Wicklow. I've watched and learned from a true leader, and I look forward to bringing our amazing tribe forward, to help them

both survive and thrive in 2021. I want to thank Dawn for her trojan work throughout 2020, for her ambition, for her vision and strength in keeping us going, month on month, even when times have been tough. "With that in mind, my theme for 2021 is #DreamBig. 2020 has been a difficult year; the year that kept on giving. I hope that, together, we will face 2021 with hope, clarity, ambition and aspiration. I hope that we will close this year out with gratitude for what we have achieved, be it pivoting a business or keeping our businesses going, despite the extremely challenging times.

"Our resilience has been tested time and time again this year when childcare was no longer an option when we had to move our offices to our kitchen tables or to makeshift home offices. When we couldn't connect with our friends and family due to lockdowns and travel restrictions...but we got through it with the help

of our tribe and the immense support and goodwill that is out there to help lift each other up, each and every day.

"I am so thankful to be a part of this amazing group. I would urge any female business owner, ambitious professional, a woman running a side hustle alongside a day job, or the woman who has been made redundant and doesn't know what the future holds. I say to you, come connect with us. Come join us and let us rally round to support you and help you #DreamBig. We are better together.

"As the African proverb says: If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."



Dawn Leane and Jean Evans pictured at the official handover

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PLANNING

New car registrations down 12.5%

Total new car registrations for 2020 in Co. Wicklow, finished at 2,062, 12.5% down on 2019 (2,349), according to the official new vehicle registrations statistics for 2020 released by the Society of the Irish Motor Industry (SIMI) last week. Brian Cooke, SIMI Director General commenting: "Like many other sectors, 2020 proved to be a very difficult year for the Irish Motor Industry."

CLASSIFIED ADS

THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

Dear Heart of Jesus in the past I have asked for many favours. This time I ask you this very special one. (Mention request) Take it, dear Heart of Jesus and place it within your broken Heart where your Father sees it. Then, in his merciful eyes it will become your favour not mine. St Anthony and St Jude, helper of the hopeless, aid me in my distress. Amen. Say this prayer for three days. Promise publication and favour will be granted. Never known to fail.

B.D.

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-18

After the wise men had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.' So, Joseph got up and taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I called my son out of Egypt. Herod was furious when he realised that he had been outwitted by the wise men, and in Bethlehem and its surrounding district he had all the male children killed who were two years old or under, reckoning by the date he had been careful to ask the wise men. It was then that the words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah were fulfilled. A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loudly lamenting: it was Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they were no more.

C.J.

"New car sales, already hampered in recent years due to Brexit, were down a further 25% due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and are now at recession levels.

"Looking to January, the key month for new car sales, the dramatic deterioration in the public health situation over the last few weeks and the implementation of Level 5 restrictions will make it another difficult period for the sector. Dealerships remain open for service, repair and testing, which

are essential services, and the Industry will continue to play an important role in assisting emergency and essential services. Car sales will operate on a click and collect service with retailers increasing investment in their digital platforms to facilitate customers. In the current challenged business environment, it is vital that the

current restrictions succeed in driving down the incidence of COVID so business and society can return to some level of normality."

Nationally, 4,013 new electric cars were registered in 2020 in comparison to 3,444 in 2019.

Other stats of note show a changing market place in 2020. Diesel

accounted for 43.29%, Petrol 36.91%, Hybrid 11.86%, Electric 4.54%, and Plug-In Hybrid 2.78%. Diesel remains the most popular engine type, while hybrid, electric and plug-in hybrid gained market share in 2020.

The hatchback remains Ireland's top selling car body type of 2020.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, William Kirwan seek Planning Permission for Single Storey Bedroom and Porch Extension to Front of House at Skylark Cottage, 103 Blacklion, Greystones, Co Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County 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

We, Joseph & Christina Murphy seek permission for extension to the existing dwelling and garage, alterations to entrance walls and associated site works at Sea Island, Ardinary, Brittas Bay, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I hereby give notice of the submission of significant further information to Wicklow County Council in relation to planning application ref no: 20/952 for Noel Heatley who is applying for permission at Newrath, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow for provision of a new agricultural entrance to include works to the existing stone wall. Significant further information / revised plans have been furnished to the planning authority in respect of the proposed development and are available for inspection or purchase at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council during its public opening hours. A submission or observations in relation to the further information or revised plans may be made in writing to the planning authority within the period of 2 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the revised notices. A submission or observation must be accompanied by the prescribed fee except in the case of a person or body who has already made a submission or observation.

THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

Dear Heart of Jesus in the past I have asked for many favours. This time I ask you this very special one. (Mention request) Take it, dear Heart of Jesus and place it within your broken Heart where your Father sees it. Then, in his merciful eyes it will become your favour not mine. St Anthony and St Jude, helper of the hopeless, aid me in my distress. Amen. Say this prayer for three days. Promise publication and favour will be granted. Never known to fail.

M.D.

RECRUITMENT

PART-TIME RECEPTIONIST

required for 2 1/2 -3 days maternity cover for Jan-Sept in a busy Dental practice in Bray

Please send CV to jonathandentalfisher@gmail.com or call 01-2862137



ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER

Wicklow Times are seeking a talented and experienced Advertising Sales Manager to lead our sales team in 2021; Experience in advertising sales would be desirable but not essential, however candidates should be able to demonstrate energy and enthusiasm for the sales role. A past career that proves their initiative and work ethic would be beneficial.

On offer is an attractive package that includes generous basic salary, on target bonuses, and commission.

TELESALES EXECUTIVE

We are also seeking to recruit a telesales executive. Ideal candidate will have experience of sales, (not necessary in advertising sales), have a pleasant telephone manner and a welcoming personality and a good work ethic.

The positions are based in our Bray office but there will be a opportunity to work from home also. Initial interviews will be done over the telephone for both positions. Send CVs and letter of application to shay@localtimes.ie

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