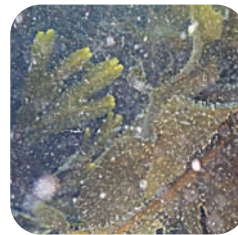




RECYCLING INITIATIVE  
page 2



INVASIVE SEAWEED  
page 6



PURE MILE  
page 12

DELIVERED TO HOMES & BUSINESSES IN: SHANKILL, ENNISKERRY, BRAY, GREYSTONES, DELGANY, KILCOOLE, NEWCASTLE, KILQUADE, ASHFORD, KILPEDDER, NEWTOWNMOUNTKENNEDY, KILMACANOGUE, LARAGH, MONEYSTOWN, ROUNDWOOD, RATHNEW, WICKLOW, GLENEALY, BRITTAS BAY, AVOCA, WOODENBRIDGE, ARKLOW, SHILLELAGH, TINAHELY, REDCROSS, BALLINACLASH, AUGHIRM, RATHDRUM, DONARD, DUNLAVIN, CARNEW, COOLATTIN, BALTINGLASS, BLESSINGTON.

Thursday 1st April 2021 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

# 'HSE APPROVED SCHOOL VACCINATIONS'

## 'SCHOOL WAS SOLD A PUP'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady said that last week's vaccine scandal 'smacks of the privileged looking after the privileged'. Deputy Brady was speaking after twenty Covid-19 vaccines at the private Beacon Hospital intended for frontline healthcare workers were given to staff at St Gerard's private school in Bray. However, new evidence has emerged that the school was 'duped' into believing that not only had the HSE approved the vaccinations but that they were facilitating the non-waste of the precious vaccine.

Following last week's revelations, Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly asked the HSE to suspend vaccine operations at the Beacon.

Minister Donnelly said "Ireland's vaccination

programme is the most important public health programme in living memory. It is essential that the programme is run in accordance with the agreed prioritisation in order to maximise the

benefit of the vaccination programme and the speed with which Ireland can emerge from COVID-19 measures.

"The provision of vaccines by the Beacon Hospital to a school was



Avid Liverpool supporter Maura Burke celebrates her 90th birthday at her home in Arklow.

Jennifer **WHITMORE** TD

Working for Wicklow

# HERE TO HELP

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Social  
Democrats

entirely inappropriate and completely unacceptable. I have considered this matter carefully and have worked with the HSE to assess the operational implications of suspending vaccine operations at the Beacon Hospital in Dublin.

"I have now asked the HSE to suspend vaccine operations at the Beacon Hospital with the exception of those people who have already been scheduled to get their vaccine at the centre. Alternative arrangements are being put in place by the HSE. In addition, I have asked the HSE to appoint a senior official to immediately examine what happened and make recommendations regarding any actions or changes required.

Deputy Brady said: "A private hospital giving vaccines to a private school smacks of the privileged looking after privilege; the well-heeled and well-connected look-

ing after one another, jumping the queue ahead of those who need vaccines the most. Up to 20 teachers and staff at the fee paying St Gerard's school in Bray received the vaccine from the Beacon Hospital which is designated as a vaccination centre for healthcare workers.

"Vaccines intended for frontline healthcare workers instead being administered to staff at a private school is a monumental kick in the teeth to the frontline doctors, nurses and other HSE staff who have put their lives on the line to protect us and our loved ones over the past 12 months.

"It is beyond shocking for any hospital or any facility to be distributing the vaccine without adhering to the strict guidelines that have been laid down by the HSE.

"After the scandals of office workers in HSE being vaccinated outside

of the prioritisation order, and likewise with family members of staff

at the Coombe and Rotunda Hospitals, we were assured that proce-

dures would be put in place to ensure that this

Continued on page 5

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NO MIDDLE MAN, WE SELL, MANUFACTURE AND INSTALL





Dawn Leane of the Wicklow Women's Network makes a donation of €1,500 to CEO of Sunbeam House Services Joe Lynch

## Clothes Bank and Recycling

Give your unwanted clothes to the Brockagh Resource Centre clothes bank, located at the back of the building. All proceeds are in aid of the centre's maintenance. You can also empty your glass and drink cans in the other recycle banks too. If you wish to make a booking call (0404) 45600 or email [brockaghresourcecentre@gmail.com](mailto:brockaghresourcecentre@gmail.com). Check out up to date information on the website at [www.brockaghresourcecentre.ie](http://www.brockaghresourcecentre.ie)

## Community Monuments Fund

Grants are available to support Wicklow's built heritage, local monuments and archaeological sites. Private applicants or community groups who are owners or custodians of monuments can apply. Information on eligible monuments is available from [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie). Application forms available from [www.wicklow.ie/latestnews](http://www.wicklow.ie/latestnews). Application forms to be returned to [wicklowheritage@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:wicklowheritage@wicklowcoco.ie). Or, Community Monument Fund Application, Planning Section, WCC County Buildings, Wicklow. The Deadline is 12th April 2021. Queries to Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer, [dburns@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:dburns@wicklowcoco.ie).

## Wicklow Willow celebrate St. Patrick's Day

Wicklow Willow installed two willow shamrock sculptures in Laragh and Glendalough for St. Patrick's Day to the delight of the local community, celebrating in a unique way for 2021. If you wish to make contact: Aoife Patterson (local

basket maker and artist), on 087-9773622, email [info@wicklowwillow.ie](mailto:info@wicklowwillow.ie) or visit [www.wicklowwillow.ie](http://www.wicklowwillow.ie).

## Wicklow Racing News

It was a day to remember for Tinahely trainer John Walsh, as his son James propelled 10/11 favourite to victory in the concluding Killinick P-To-P INH Flat Race for colts and geldings at Wexford on Saturday 20th March. This was Walsh Snr's first track success and it was a resounding one, as the four-time winner between the flags took up the lead a mile out and galloped his rivals into submission, Flurry Yeats the best of the rest 18 lengths back.

## Review of NPWS

The survey form for the stakeholder engagement strand of the Strategic Review of National Parks and Wildlife Service has been published and is available now at [www.npws.ie/news/review-npws-stakeholder-survey](http://www.npws.ie/news/review-npws-stakeholder-survey). The review will be concluded during summer 2021 and a report will be published (see Terms of Reference on [www.npws.ie/news/terms-reference-review-npws-2021](http://www.npws.ie/news/terms-reference-review-npws-2021)).

## Council helpline

Wicklow County Council's Free Phone Helpline continues (1800 868 399) for those who need assistance during pandemic. Help can be given for deliveries of groceries, medicines and fuels. Helpline is open seven days a week, 8am to 8 pm and [covidsupport@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:covidsupport@wicklowcoco.ie). Volunteers to help with this service are welcome at the Free Phone number.

# Fundraising campaign for Greystones artist after studio fire

A GoFundMe campaign has been set up to support EmmaJane Rushworth, an artist, and sculptress living in Greystones who awoke on the morning of March 10th to find her studio engulfed in flames.

By the time the firefighters extinguished the fire, nothing remained of her studio. Moreover, numerous partially-completed commissioned pieces, all her supplies, equipment, tools, hardware, portfolios, and sketches were destroyed.

By raising money through this platform EmmaJane could continue to create her customers' commissioned artwork and resume her livelihood with the tools and materials to start afresh.

Her husband joined her business a year ago, making the running of her business a real family affair. This fundraiser will help ease the financial burden of rebuilding and fitting-out the studio as well as sustaining her family until she and her husband can

resume work. To make a donation, go to [www.gofundme.com/f/Emma-Jane-Studio-Fire](http://www.gofundme.com/f/Emma-Jane-Studio-Fire)



# Recycle your crisp packets in Tesco Bray!

Transition Year student Ava Hagan has set up a collection box in Tesco Bray where you can drop off crisp packets to be recycled.

The local teenager decided to do her bit for the environment by signing up to the Crisp Packet Recycling Scheme offered by TerraCycle, an international organisation that has been "recycling the non-recyclable" since 2001.

This has enabled Ava to set up a public drop-off location in the entrance to Tesco Bray where local people can drop off their empty crisp packets. The crisp packets can then be shipped for free to TerraCycle, where they will be broken down into plastic pellets and recycled into new products such as park benches and picnic tables.

Crisp packets are an example of single-use plastic waste, meaning they normally have to go in the general waste bin and will either end up in landfill or be incinerated. However, TerraCycle gets sponsorship from big brands such as Walkers in order to run various free recycling programmes. This allows TerraCycle to recycle a wide range of waste that local council recycling centres cannot accept.

As well as diverting waste from landfill, Ava's TerraCycle project helps

points which can be redeemed into a monetary donation for the school.

"It's a great programme," says Ava. "It helps the environment and my school, and it's really easy to get involved. So spread the word! I encour-

age everyone to drop their crisp packets off in the collection box in Tesco Bray, and tell your family and friends to do the same."

For more information, follow Ava's Instagram account @terracycleray. Any queries please contact [brayterracycle@gmail.com](mailto:brayterracycle@gmail.com).



Ava Hagan dropping crisp packets off at the public drop-off location in Tesco Bray.



An Roinn Cosanta  
Department of Defence

## ARMY RIFLE RANGES

### WARNING

If you are walking in the countryside do not walk onto any of the Military Firing Ranges as you could be in **GREAT DANGER** at all times from unexploded shells and other dangerous ammunition **RED FLAGS indicate LIVE FIRING** Watch out for the warning signs **AND TAKE CARE!**



An Roinn Cosanta  
Department of Defence

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Má bhíonn tú ag siúl faoin tuath, ná siúil isteach i gceann ar bith de na Raonta Lámhagh Míleata mar d'fhéadfá a bheith i **nDEARG-BHAOL** i gcónaí de bharr sliogáin neamhphléasctha agus armlón contúirteach eile **Is ionann BRATACHA DEARGA agus BEO-LÁMHACH** Bí ag faire do na comharthaí foláirimh **AGUS BÍ AR d'AIRDEALL!**

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# 'FINAL NAIL IN THE COFFIN'

The Land Development Agency (LDA) Bill that would strip Wicklow County Council of important decision making powers has been strongly opposed by Wicklow councillors.

The LDA was created to increase the State's output of social and affordable housing, however councillors in attendance at a Special Meeting last week were in unanimous agreement to oppose a section of the bill which would remove the powers of Councillors to make decisions about the sale of public land.

The special meeting was called by Independent Councillor Joe Behan who put forward the proposal calling for councillors' powers to be maintained.

The LDA Bill in its current form would remove the legal requirement that Councillors must consent to the sale of all public land in the ownership of the council by way of a Disposal Motion (Section 183) voted for by a majority of councillors in public session.

The motion passed by Wicklow County Council last week calls on the Government to reinstate

this legal requirement.

Speaking at last week's meeting, Cllr Behan said, "This is a bridge too far. What's happening is the removal of the responsibility for the disposal of public land from the council and giving it to this Land Development Agency. The consent of elected representatives will not be required. Effectively we're talking about the creation of a super agency to acquire land across the state. The lack of accountability is astonishing."

"This Agency can acquire land from the council and decide what will happen to it. Effectively the council has no choice but to go along with it and the councillors themselves are by-passed. If the council doesn't agree it doesn't matter. We, the guardians of public interest, will be by-passed. We need to oppose this and to communicate our decision to the powers that be."

Cllr Tom Fortune

agreed, saying: "This is a wake-up call for councillors. There's been a continuous chipping away at our powers over the years, it's been taken away in every section. The overdue day has arrived for the 32 councillors to act as one unit, or we'll be wiped out. The silence from the TDs is deafening, and I don't think they support us at all. This is really really serious. We need to call out the TDs and ask them 'are you with us on this?'"

"The Bill in question, with the stroke of a pen, removes the council's power with regards to disposal of public lands," said Cllr Gerry Walsh. "I have serious concerns. As directly elected representatives we have a mandate to ensure the local authority gets the best value. The Programme for Government talks about the need to grant more power to Local Authorities, this is in contradiction to that. It opens the door for some lands to be transferred to

private developers."

Cllr Shay Cullen said "This will take away the reserved function of councillors across the country. It's another stick to beat us with. I cannot see any positive in supporting this LDA Bill. There's nothing I've heard to date that suggests to me that it's worthwhile supporting."

"I feel that this is another attack on local democracy," said Cllr John Snell. "We had the abolition of town councils in 2014, now this. We're being diminished day by day. If this goes through it's the final nail in the coffin. We must let the Minister know we're not happy in Wicklow. This isn't right. This in my opinion is a step too far."

"This further erodes our powers," said Cllr Edward Timmins. "It's almost as if we can't be trusted to make decisions about our own local areas. The County Development Plan has been undermined by the



8 year old Amira Morgan-Darcy from the Meetings of the Water, Avova, who is the first PURE Mile Wicklow Youth Ambassador

National Planning Framework. We've lost our powers on roads to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). We have no say on water and sewage. It's one cut after another. We're becoming less and less relevant. We should be looking to bring more powers back to local government."

"It's great to hear unified voice on this," said Cllr Lourda Scott. In taking powers away from councillors, by extension they're removing powers from the community.

We're meant to be the voice of the community. More powers need to be given to us, not removed."

Speaking on the issue, Cllr Jodie Neary said "The core objective of the Land Development Agency must be to build houses at prices that people can afford. But the Government's plan to sell homes at full market prices on public land is a slap in the face to the thousands of people currently locked out of buying their own home.

"Councillors are tasked with protecting public land and ensuring developments such as affordable housing are in fact affordable. Instead the Government intends to bypass Councillors and allow the transfer of public lands for the development of housing, including at full market prices. Under these proposals local councillors will be unable to prevent the LDA building private homes at full market prices on public land. We need more pub-

lic scrutiny and accountability of the LDA - not less."

After councillors demonstrated unanimous support for Cllr Behan's proposal, Cllr Behan said: "I'm very heartened with all of the contributions from the members today. What's coming out of this meeting here is a very strong support for local democracy. The people of the county should be encouraged by what we've said today - that we take our responsibilities very seriously."

## Mandatory Hotel Quarantine

Mandatory Hotel Quarantine is now a legal requirement for people entering Ireland from designated states. If you or someone you know needs to travel to Ireland, **please be aware of Ireland's quarantine requirements.**

**For more information**  
Visit [gov.ie/quarantine](https://gov.ie/quarantine)

## Coraintín Óstáin Éigeantach

Is ceangaltas dlíthiúil é Coraintín Óstáin Éigeantach do dhaoine atá ag teacht go hÉirinn ó Stáit ainmnithe. Más gá duitse nó duine a bhfuil aithne agat orthu taisteail go hÉirinn, **bí ar an eolas maidir le riachtanais na hÉireann i leith coraintín.**

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Government of Ireland





Oldcourt Castle in Bray

# Dismay as Oldcourt Castle vandalised again

Oldcourt Castle in Bray has been vandalised again. The vandalism at the castle which dates from the 1430s has seen more of the original external wall destroyed along with all the emergency repair work that was carried out last year.

Expressing his dismay, John Brady TD said "Last year I worked with Wicklow County Council and the National Monuments Service to have emergency work carried out to Oldcourt Castle in Bray, this work was unfortunately necessary due to a number of acts of vandalism on the castle. Regrettably, the castle has been vandalised again, the emergency work has all been undone and further sections of the original walls have also been destroyed.

"A number of individuals have been seen tampering with the castle and removing sections of the walls and I have passed all this information onto the Gardaí.

Damaging a recorded monument is a specific offence under the National Monuments Acts and is subject to severe penalties on conviction. The Monuments Service have told me that they are available to assist An Garda Síochána in the event that sufficient evidence is secured to support a prosecution of the offenders who are causing the damage. I urge the Gardaí to take immediate action on this vandalism and ensure that those destroying our heritage are held to account.

"I have a number of concerns due to the ongoing acts of vandalism; the structural integrity of the castle has been repeatedly undermined and I fear for the future of

the castle which has stood for 600 years if these mindless acts of vandalism continue. There is also a concern for public safety as children have been seen on top of the castle having accessed entry through the damaged walls."

Cllr Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien added "I would much rather have people experiencing the thrill of appreciating the stories and monuments of our heritage and history than the thrill of actively destroying a structure with no consideration for the risk or consequence of their actions."

Deputy Brady continued, "I have been in contact with the National Monuments Service and Wicklow County Council again

with a view of getting the castle immediately secured. I also think that there needs to be a broader conversation about what can be done to ensure the castle is permanently secured and that the people of Bray can go and have a look at this fantastic piece of our heritage. The castle is on private property, I think that providing public access to the castle will provide a level of passive surveillance that will help protect the castle.

"It will also give people a greater appreciation of the heritage we have on our own doorstep. In the meantime, I urge people to contact the Gardaí immediately if they see anyone engaged in vandalising the Castle."

## 'Revamped department TV ad on sheep worrying needs to be backed by a budget'

Reacting to the Department of Agriculture's launch of its re-worked TV ad from the 1980s on sheep worrying, IFA Sheep Chairman Sean Dennehy said that while it is a welcome first step, the Minister for Agriculture must provide funding to drive awareness of the advert.

He said, "IFA has been campaigning to #BringBackBonzo since 2019. The new advert is excellent, but it's disappointing that there's no reference to a budget to ensure that the public will see the advert.

"It's the equivalent of giving someone a brand new car, with an empty tank of petrol, which is pointless."

The original TV advert, which ran in the 1980s, was shown on primetime television.

"While we all know viewing habits have changed, at the very least, we would expect a budget for an effective digital media campaign. I would appeal to the Minister not to waste the good work already done in restoring this ad. He must fund this campaign to ensure it has impact," said the IFA Sheep Chairman.

Sean Dennehy said the lack of ambition around the revamped ad is indicative of the overall approach to dog attacks. "We need serious resources and effective enforcement if we are going to tackle this issue," he said.

## Shortlisting process commences for five Wicklow secondary school building projects

The shortlisting process has commenced for the following five Wicklow Secondary Schools: Coláiste Chraobh Abhann, Kilcoole; St. Kevin's Community College, Dunlavin; Avondale Community College; Arklow CBS; Wicklow Coláiste Bhríde, Carnew.

Welcoming the news, Minister Simon Harris said: "I know these schools are anxious to progress their extensions and refurbishment and the commencement of the shortlisting process is a step towards these schools being able to plan their expansion and enrolment in the years ahead.

"I am working with school communities across County Wicklow to deliver better school facilities and I have an online school places survey and I would welcome feedback from parents across County Wicklow regarding their experience of securing a school place for their children".

The National Development Finance Agency (NDFA), which is supporting the Department of Education by delivering an element of the Department's school building programme on its behalf, will shortly be issuing a Suitability Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) to the market. This marks the beginning of the tender process for the appointment of contractors for that programme.

Potential contractors will be invited to complete the SAQ with a view



Minister Simon Harris

to being included on the shortlist of contractors for these appointments.

The shortlisted contractors will subsequently

be invited to tender for individual project bundles.

The NDFA previously delivered a programme of 16 schools on the Department's behalf, the last of which has recently been completed.

The current programme, entitled the Devolved Schools Building Programme 2, will comprise of 20 individual school building projects ranging from new builds to extensions/refurbishment projects for works at both primary and post primary level.

## New RSA campaign discourages careless parking

Green Party TDs Brian Leddin and Steven Matthews have welcomed correspondence that outlining a new public information campaign by the Road Safety Authority, titled 'If you don't move, neither can we', designed to encourage people not to park their cars on footpaths and cycle lanes.

The joint campaign between the Road Safety Authority and the National Roads Policing Unit of An Garda Síochána highlights the effect that illegal parking can have on vulnerable road users.

This includes wheelchair users, people with buggies and cyclists who are forced into the main road by careless drivers, where they are put at unnecessary risk from passing traffic.

The campaign is being launched following correspondence between Deputies Steven Matthews and Brian Leddin with the Road Safety Authority, following Deputy Matthews' remarks to RSA chair Liz O'Donnell at the Oireachtas Transport committee before Christmas.

Discussing the news, Deputy Matthews said "With a greater number of people walking and cycling than ever before and some great work being done by our local authorities in providing new cycleways and walking routes, I suggested that a publicity campaign would help to highlight how parking on footpaths can undo that good work and put vulnerable road users at risk.

"I am delighted that the RSA have acknowledged the problem and are willing to engage in a publicity campaign to highlight the road safety hazards created by cars blocking footpaths and cycle lanes. I'm looking forward to the campaign launch by the RSA and would like to thank Liz O'Donnell and all those involved in

working to make this awareness campaign happen. This isn't about vilifying drivers; it's about encouraging a simple change in behaviour that will make the roads safer for all users", concluded Deputy Matthews.

"It is appropriate that this information comes on World Wheelchair Day because parking on footpaths particularly affects wheelchair users. Since being elected to the Dáil I have been working with Steven on this and I'm delighted that we're seeing some progress.", said Brian Leddin, TD for Limerick City. "It is always better to park fully on the roadway, rather than restricting the space for pedestrians, people with impaired mobility and other vulnerable road users. This also has the benefit of slowing down traffic, especially in residential areas. I'm hopeful this campaign will have a positive effect on behaviour, and we will see our footpaths and cycle lanes free for people to use, concluded Deputy Leddin.

**Benville Robinson**  
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# 'HSE APPROVED SCHOOL VACCINATIONS'

Continued from page 1...

would not happen again. Well, here we are again, except this latest incident is even more insulting to our frontline workers and the most vulnerable in our society, and further underlines the calamitous nature of the vaccine rollout.

"Public confidence in the vaccine rollout is fast-eroding. If there is a risk of vaccination waste, it is frontline workers and at-risk groups who must be fast-tracked. There is no justification for staff at a private school skipping the queue to receive so-called 'excess' vaccines.

"Is imperative that hospitals adhere to the Vaccination Allocation Sequencing laid out in the National Covid-19 Vaccination Programme. The rollout of the vaccine has encountered many problems. We still do not have detail on staffing for mass vaccination centres, and there is no plan for preventing further delays to healthcare from redeployments. "There are persistent problems with deliveries to GPs - missed and late deliveries with no warning, while some GPs still have received little to no vaccines. It is unacceptable that vulnerable groups such as family carers are being left behind, and this latest scandal only serves to add insult to injury."

However, in a letter (seen by *Wicklow Times*) to teachers in St Gerard's school, the Board claim that they were assured on a number of occasions that the HSE was fully aware of where the vaccines were going to. The letter sets out the

sequence of events that happened on the day.

It says: "It is important to state that no person acting on behalf of the school sought early access to vaccines under the vaccination programme being run by the Beacon Hospital or by any other hospital.

"On the contrary, the school received unsolicited contact from the CEO of the Beacon Hospital at approximately 4.15pm on Tuesday last (23rd March), to see whether 5 members of staff would be available at short notice to receive vaccines which would go to waste if not used by 6.00pm that evening. It was explained to the school that these doses were left over as a result of a scheduling error involving a vaccination clinic at the hospital which had run that day. The Principal of the Junior School, who received this contact, was assured on this call - and subsequently - that the use of vaccines in this manner, which would otherwise go to waste, was appropriate and had HSE permission. The need for urgency was emphasised.

"Over the following 45 minutes, a further text and phone call were received from the Hospital to explain that first an additional 5 and, then (at 5pm) a further 10 doses had been identified bringing the number of doses which would go to waste, if not used within the next hour, to 20.

"The school employs over 100 staff and with limited time available, the Principal of the Junior School and the Headmaster of the Secondary School each contacted

a number of staff and organised for 10 from each school to travel to the Hospital to receive the vaccines.

"We are satisfied that the individuals in the school who dealt with this matter and those who received the vaccines did so in good faith, having had a number of assurances that using the vaccines in this manner in order to avoid waste had HSE permission. The fact that the Board of the Beacon hospital has now confirmed that the decision to offer the vaccines 'was not in line with the sequencing guidelines in place from the HSE' is deeply concerning.

"The Board sincerely apologies for the school's involvement in this incident and appreciates the hurt and anger that has been caused within the school and in the wider community."

In a statement the Beacon Hospital said "The Board of Beacon Hospital unreservedly apologises to our patients, staff and the wider community for the upset caused by the vaccination of teachers in the Beacon Vaccination Centre. In order to ascertain all of the facts associated with the operation of the Vaccination Centre and in line with our responsibility to ensure due process, the Board is appointing Mr Eugene McCague, former Managing Partner and Chairman of Arthur Cox and Board member of the HSE to conduct an independent review on behalf of the non-executive Directors."



*Saint Joseph's Shankill was delighted to be invited to take part in a Virgin Media One documentary about dementia which aired on Sunday 28th March. The programme followed the presenter Martin King's personal story of his mother's experience with living with dementia. Martin took the viewers on an emotional journey as he spoke with others who were both living with dementia or caring for someone they loved with the illness. He came to Saint Joseph's to witness the person centred care emotional care that Saint Joseph's is renowned for himself. Martin chatted with Director of Nursing Norma Sheehan and person centred lead Ann Bolger about why people living with dementia deserve to receive care that is focused on them as a person and not the symptoms of their illness, ensuring that can live the best quality of life they supported by people who truly know them. The documentary was a part of a weeklong fundraising drive for the Alzheimer Society of Ireland on Virgin Media One, and raised over E800k for ASI but also raised awareness about dementia.*

## Funding announced for Blueway from Bray to Wexford

Wicklow's ambition to become the outdoors capital of the country took a further step closer with the latest round of funding under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) which saw an allocation of almost €500,000 for a proposed Blueway running the length of the County from north Bray to south Arklow.

The announcement of this latest funding came in the same week that the new Outdoor Recreation Strategy (2020 -2025) for the county was launched. One of the key projects in the strategy is the development of the Blueway.

This significant pot of money will be spent on: Improved water access; Trailheads and trail links; Marketing and signage.

The Blueway projects overall budget is €554,820 with Wicklow County Council providing match funding of €55,482 and a grant of €499,338.

This funding announcement comes close on the heels of a recent allocation of almost €2.5m euros for the second phase of the Celtic Routes Interreg project in collaboration with Irish and Welsh partners.

Welcoming this latest round of funding, Chief

Executive of Wicklow County Council, Mr Frank Curran, expressed his thanks to Minister Humphries and her officials for this significant investment in Wicklow which, he said, would greatly enhance the tourism offering in the county in the post Covid period.

Director of Services and Chairman of the Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee, Mr Michael Nicholson, stated that this funding announcement, together with the Celtic Routes funding in recent weeks, was a great vote of confidence in the county's ambition to be the outdoors capital of the country. He thanked all the agencies involved in the committee for their support with the ORIS application.

The Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Pat Kennedy, thanked everyone involved with this project which he said

would lead to increased footfall to the County and especially those tourists seeking an alternative type of holiday experience. In total, €6 million has been announced for 14 major adventure tourism projects across the country. These projects will support increased interest in outdoor pursuits & adventure tourism post-COVID.

Social Democrats Jennifer Whitmore has welcomed the announcement saying "Wicklow's coastline is a huge resource full of potential but which has been underutilised. Since COVID there has been a renewed interest in our outdoors and recreational spaces and many people engaging in sea swimming. Under Level 5, people have had an opportunity to really explore the potential that our coastline can offer.

"The Council have put in a huge amount of work into this project

and the significant amount of funding awarded to their application for a Blueway in this area is a testament to the work and planning the Council officials have put into this project.

"The funding will go a long way towards establishing a network of multi-activity recreational trails and sites linked with the Irish sea. I hope the funding will look at improving facilities along the coastline and facilitate access to activities and experiences which our coastal heritage can bring.

"Any future works to be carried out must however, take into consideration the biodiversity and wildlife along the coast. It is essential that development of the Blueway is done in a sustainable manner and I hope to work with Wicklow County Council on this development" concluded Deputy Whitmore.

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An Roinn Breisoidreachais agus Ardoidreachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta  
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science







Green Party councillor Erika Doyle on Bray beach

## Councillor wants changing shelter for Bray sea swimmers

Green Party Councillor Erika Doyle is working to get a changing shelter installed on Bray beach, for the ever-increasing number of sea swimmers that enjoy a dip at this location.

Cllr Doyle has a notice of motion submitted to Bray Municipal District for their April meeting and is hopeful it will get support from the council.

"Sea swimming is such an integral part of life in Bray. Even those who don't or can't swim themselves enjoy watching other brave souls enter the water for a rejuvenating dip. Swimmers have enjoyed the water a Bray for years, but the reintroduction of the Blue Flag in recent years and more recently the change in lifestyle due to Covid, has seen swimmers flock to Bray's shore.

"I understand there are certain important issues to consider around the placement of a shelter, such as the flood protection aspect of the shingle, and encouraging swimmers to stay within the Blue Flag areas, but I think with imagination and willing, these can be overcome."

## Ballymore Homes meet with Little Bray residents regarding development on former Golf Club lands

The development of the former Bray Golf Club lands is once again under the spotlight. New owners, Ballymore Homes are about to submit plans for their first phase of building on the c21 hectare site, located on the northern bank of the River Dargle.

Ballymore Homes recently met with Little Bray residents over zoom to discuss the plans in advance of submitting them.

Plans will be submitted under the 'fast track' scheme introduced in 2017, which allows the developments of 100 houses or more to bypass County Council approval and go directly to An Bord Pleanála.

The first phase, Ballymore's 'Coastal Quarter', proposes 591 housing units, straddling the Co. Wicklow and Dargle is vital as an Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown border, 300 of these within Wicklow. Former members of SWAP's Save Our Floodplain campaign, who met with Ballymore via Zoom on March 15th, said they were not concerned about any building on this upper ground, but emphasised they were not speaking for other

community groups.

What worried the local residents was the remaining 700 units now required to meet Bray's Local Area Development Plan's target for the old golf links. This 'River Quarter' - located on the southern side of the schools' road leading to the harbour - encompasses the 3.5 hectare floodplain that SWAP have fought to preserve for fifteen years.

Their contention that this narrow strip of low-land alongside the River Dargle is vital as an escape route for flooding from their homes has been upheld by two separate Bord Pleanála inspections so far, along with expert international advice to 'make room for the river'. A Council vote taken on the issue in 2018 garnered the support of five out of eight Bray councillors to keep the floodplain clear of building.

Ballymore personnel were shown a video of how this floodplain functioned in 1986, and in all the previous major floods, when the river burst its banks up stream. This was followed by photographs of the same floodplain in 2015 and 2016 when failures of the flood defence wall at Ravenswell Road resulted in almost the same level of inundation, despite the defences holding upstream.

Local residents at the meeting pointed out that if a failure now occurs upriver of their homes the flood protection will work against them, as flood waters will be trapped on the residential side of the defence walls. They say that an empty floodplain downstream is then their only hope of flooding evacuating from their homes.

They also pointed out that the flood defence wall between

Ravenswell Road and the former golf links has cut off the floodplain from the river at this crucial point. Consequently, they say high tides meeting flooded river here will now force any overflow up to the undefended bridge, and downhill into Little Bray.

Ballymore's General Manager, Michael Prenty, said they have no plans developed yet for this area, and encouraged local groups and/or individuals who have an interest in the development to engage with them.

Former SWAP members emphasised that residents in Little Bray believe as strongly as ever that the floodplain must be prioritised in any plan, and suggested that it could be utilised as green space, parkland or playing pitches, benefiting the community as a whole.

## Watch out for invasive seaweed in Wicklow waters!

Scientists from NUI Galway and Seasearch Ireland are asking divers and marina users to keep an eye out for *Undaria pinnatifida*, commonly known as Wakame or Japanese kelp.

This species was first recorded in from Belfast Lough in 2012. Wakame has subsequently been recorded at Carlingford Lough in 2014 and Kilmore Quay in Wexford in 2016. Since then it has been recorded by Seasearch diver Frances O'Sullivan of the Dalkey Sub Aqua club recorded it in Dun Laoghaire Harbour in 2017 and by Seasearch Ireland and KelpRes divers at Greystones Harbour in 2020.

Given the widespread nature of the records on the east coast it is thought that the species is likely to occur in suitable habitats between these areas and may have spread to other areas of the coast.

Wakame can be distinguished from other species of kelp found in Ireland by the undulate margins of the blade, distinctive midrib, and belt like stipe that often has reproductive sori at the margins. The distinctive midrib in a large blade distinguishes this species from other kelp species in Irish waters (e.g. dabberlocks - *Alaria esculenta* - which has a distinctive midrib but thin blade).

Seasearch Ireland and the KelpRes team at NUI Galway are asking any marine users who see a kelp species matching the description below to send a photo to SeasearchIreland@gmail.com to confirm the identification and then our colleagues from the KelpRes team in NUI Galway intend to collect samples of the seaweed for genetic analysis.

Kathryn Schoenrock-Rossiter explains the rationale for the sampling: "Studying the genetics of invasive species is important in terms of identifying vectors for introduction and spread. For example, in the invasive freshwater Zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) a study combining genetic analysis with field work revealed leisure boats from the United Kingdom as the most likely source (vec-

tor) of introduction. By using genetic tools to investigate Wakame populations we can estimate whether a single introduction event or multiple have occurred and potentially determine where from (e.g. Europe)."

Rory O'Callaghan, Seasearch Ireland said, "International experience with wakame would indicate it is much more likely to occur in marinas and on other man-made structures. From here it can attach to boats and be carried to other parts of the country when boats are moved. As divers, we are particular conscious of the need for good biosecurity practices such as cleaning or drying out their boat



*Undaria pinnatifida*, aka Japanese Kelp

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# Council refuses permission for West Wicklow wind farm

**Wicklow County Council has decided to deny permission on a planning application for a wind farm in West Wicklow.**

ABO Wind were seeking permission for the construction of up to five wind turbines with a maximum overall blade top height of 165m.

Numerous elected representatives and campaign groups including Save West Wicklow highlighted the potential negative impact development could have on the Baltinglass Hill Fort Complex and surrounding archaeological heritage.

The Council's Planners Report recommended refusing permission due to; the location of the proposed development in an area of archaeological remains and monuments of national, regional and local importance; the stated Objectives of the Council in the County Development Plan 2016 (in particular, 'No development in the vicinity of a feature included in the Record of Monuments & Places (RMP) will be permitted which seriously detracts from the setting of the feature or which is seriously injurious to its cultural or educational value'; The identification in the County Development Plan of Baltinglass Hills Megalithic Hillfort Complex as an Area of Archaeological Potential and Significance.

The Planners Report stated "It is considered that the proposed development would result in significant direct physical and visual impacts on the heritage and archaeology of the area, would materially contravene the objectives of the County Development Plan and would therefore be contrary to proper planning and sustainable development of the area [...] Having

regard to the insufficient information contained within the Natura Impact Statement submitted with respect to Drainage Monitoring and Water Quality Monitoring, it cannot be determined that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site. Therefore the Planning Authority is unable to carry out an Appropriate Assessment and to permit this development in the absence of an Appropriate Assessment would be contrary to the provisions of the EU Habitats Directive and contrary to proper planning and sustainable development."

Speaking on the decision, Jennifer Whitmore TD, who submitted an observation on the application, said "While wind energy production is very important to meet our climate action obligations it must be done sustainably and in the right areas. I believe this was the right decision by Wicklow County Council as such a large scale development could negatively impact on the archaeological and natural heritage of the Kilranelagh Hill and the Baltinglass Hillfort Complex, an integral part of Ireland's most unique and ancient landscapes.

"I have met some great campaigners as part of Save West Wicklow who highlighted the fact that to date, very little protection or promotion of this archaeologically rich area in West Wicklow has been provided for despite its reference in the County Development Plan. There is also huge potential for further excavation and

other archaeological finds as well which was not adequately referenced in the planning application.

"Now it is important that greater consideration and greater supports for protection and promotion of the Hill Fort complex is given by the Minister for Heritage. I will continue to request that adequate funding and resources are pro-

vided to ensure that the future of this area is sustainably managed for the benefit for the surrounding environment and residents in the area.

"As we continue to enjoy our outdoor heritage for recreational purposes it's important that we acknowledge the huge work required to preserve the Hill Fort complex area

for generations to come. Until such protections are in place, and further research is carried out to study this extensive area, it is important that any development carried out is done so sustainably. However, as this project involved large scale infrastructure, this would not have been sustainable for the area," concluded Deputy Whitmore.



Denise Holland and Johanna Butler on Bray Seafront

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### GoFundMe Campaign for Carnew Community Care

A GoFundMe campaign has been set up by Carnew Emmets GAA Club to raise funds for Carnew Community Care, an organisation nationally recognised for delivering essential services to elderly people in the community and the surrounding area.

Carnew Community Care has long relied on the generosity of the local community who support their fundraising efforts, however in these unusual times that we find ourselves in, every organisation dependent on donations are finding it difficult.

The Annual Summer Bazaar, one of their major fundraisers now due to the current COVID restrictions cannot take place. Both of their Boutique Charity Shops, in the Centre and on the Main Street have had to remain closed, these are their most important source of funding.

Carnew Emmets GAA Club, with the help of the local community, are committing to continue their support and want to raise much needed funds for Carnew Community Care.

Their goal is to run, walk or cycle at least 2,000 km between Saturday 3rd - Sunday 4th of April.





# Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin Wicklow County Council



Cllr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach, Wicklow County Council

**Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Pat Kennedy,** said 'the last year has been very difficult; the people of Wicklow have made great efforts to keep safe during the pandemic. The Community Call Responses forum, which was launched a year ago, continues to offer vital support and assistance to our most vulnerable, along with the 'Keep Well' Campaign which provides many innovative online programmes to help support physical and mental health and general wellbeing of our communities.'



Frank Curran, Chief Executive Wicklow County Council

**Chief Executive, Mr Frank Curran,** stated: 'Wicklow County Council recognise the challenges faced by Businesses throughout Wicklow, we will continue to support businesses throughout the recovery by providing a range of economic, digital and information supports, including Business advice clinics; online training in IT skills; a range of grants to enhance Business trading online capabilities. We have established Town Re-Opening Committees along with our Shop Local Campaign to encourage members of our community to support local business. Substantial funding has been received under the NTA grants scheme and has been allocated to mobility projects across the County which will transform street layouts, address physical distancing and revised travel patterns and making the towns and villages safer to navigate and enjoy.'





# 'THERE IS HOPE! HOLD FIRM... WE ARE IN THE END GAME'

Last week, Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly sent out a message of hope to the people of County Wicklow. "The past year has been extremely tough for everyone in our county. It is hard to fully encapsulate the emotional and physical toll the Lockdown has had on us," he said.

"It was the residents of nursing homes and our exhausted healthcare workers who have borne the brunt of this relentless disease.

"It's entirely understandable people are feeling like they have little left to give but there is most definitely a shining light at the end of the tunnel.

"Each week that light is getting brighter as the vaccine rollout gathers pace. Our rollout has consistently been amongst the fastest in the EU-95 per cent of our vaccines are administered within seven days. We have now administered over 800,000 vaccines but that number will soon be dwarfed as the programme expands in the coming weeks.

"In fact, over the next three months between April and the end of July we expect to receive over

month from April.

"Also, Johnson & Johnson has said it will make its first delivery of its single shot vaccine to Europe on April 19th. Ireland is set to receive 2.2million doses of the J&J vaccine.

"However, we are already seeing the roll-out have a meaningful impact. Just last week we saw visits being allowed in nursing homes again. Infection rates amongst nursing home staff have plummeted to just 0.2 per cent.

"Staff absenteeism in the nursing home sector relating to Covid has similarly fallen from several thousand to just a few hundred.

"And in another sign of real progress the number of Covid cases amongst the over 65s has dropped by two thirds-doctors say it will fall



Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly

for the better happening which does give us some room to ease restrictions but we still have to be cautious.

"The problem is the so-called UK variant of Covid is far more infectious and deadly than anything we have seen before. We need to continue to follow the guidelines to try and limit it spreading as much as possible.

"This pandemic is heading towards its end game. We are winning the fight but we need to remain holding firm for now."

Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal Council Cllr. Anne Ferris echoed these sentiments saying "As Cathaoirleach of the Bray Municipal Council, I would urge everyone to comply with the Covid-19 restrictions that are currently in place. It is extremely tough for all of us and I know many people are struggling to cope with the loss of a family member or neighbour or the loss of their jobs. Living with isolation and anxiety has been a challenge but with the days getting longer and warmer there are many reasons to be hopeful for the coming year.

"The stop and start of the vaccine rollout has not been easy to digest or understand but there are signs now that things are improving. Protecting our most vulnerable groups will reduce pressure on hospitals and hopefully will allow the government to ease restrictions.

"No-one could claim that 2020 was a great year but we cannot deny the

many organisations and individuals that rose to the challenge to help others in their time of need. Wicklow County Council set up a Community Call Helpline (Freephone 1800 868 399) which is still operating from 8am to 8pm each day to help the elderly and vulnerable in



Cllr Anne Ferris

our county. There are also great ideas on how to eat well and stay active on the Council website.

"It is my greatest wish to see every citizen in County Wicklow getting a date for their vaccine but having said that I realise that not everyone is a fan of the vaccine. Hopefully by the end of the summer the majority of people will be vaccinated against Covid and will be free to carry on with their lives as before."

"If ever we need hope

it is now" said Independent Councillor Joe Behan, adding: "We have suffered tragic Covid deaths, cruel funeral restrictions, enormous damage to mental health, savage house arrest, devastating losses for small businesses, locked church doors, deep educational disadvantage, delayed vaccinations and human loneliness on an epic scale."

"We have been ordered around by the most incompetent, cowardly and visionless Government in our history, whose leading members are more ambitious for themselves and their careers than they are for the people they are supposed to serve.

"So how can we have hope? We can have hope because despite the anger, upset, fear and worry, we have worked together to come through this. We have adapted to the many restrictions imposed on us and our families and we have worked to help one another in our time of need. We have done all

"Hope is a two-way street," says Social Democrat TD Jennifer Whitmore and continues: "They say the last part of a difficult journey can feel the longest, which rings true for many people during this third lockdown.

"All the trappings of an intense and long year under a global pandemic are taking their toll: hours of daily zoom calls, bored children on screens, take-away dinners to mark the weekend's arrival, the same four walls staring back at you - when will it end?"

"Hope has gotten us this far, but will it see us through to the end? That depends. Throughout this pandemic, the Government has taken for granted people's ability to remain hopeful and abide by new restrictions. But hope is not infinite. It's a two-way street that requires not just people to engage in hope, but also the Government to inspire it.

"It's time the Government plays their part by giving people something to be hopeful for. We need to have a clear picture of what we are aiming for as a country. Contradictions and confusing Government messaging, people absconding from mandatory hotel quarantining and small local businesses struggling to pay rents doesn't quite inspire hope. Restoring people's faith and public confidence at this time will, however. How about a fully resourced and staffed vaccine schedule, targets for daily cases, properly managed mandatory hotel quarantine, sector-



Jennifer Whitmore TD

specific plans for businesses and a contingency plan to avoid a fourth lockdown? All this is possible. We just need a

bit of inspiration which can go a very long way. Never underestimate how far a hopeful public can take us."



Cllr Joe Behan

three times the amount of vaccine we received in the first three months of the year. If the supplier can meet their promises we are going to receive one million vaccines a

still further as more are vaccinated.

"Covid cases for hospital workers have also fallen by an astonishing 95 per cent. It is clear we are seeing a real change

**CLLR Gerry O'Neill**  
INDEPENDENT

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**LABOUR**





Pictured at the launch of MentorsWork were Paul Healy, Skillnet Ireland Chief Executive, Sven Spollen-Behrens, SFA Director and Sonya Murphy-Lyons, founder and director, Mezzo Music Academy at the Mezzo Music Academy in Dublin.

# New 'MentorsWork' online competency tool allows SMEs to identify key skills gaps

Skillnet Ireland in partnership with the Small Firms Association (SFA), has today announced the expansion of 'MentorsWork,' an initiative aimed at helping Irish SME business owners and managers to navigate current business challenges and plan for growth.

A key new addition is the MentorsWork Competency Assessment, an online diagnostic tool which will help business owners and managers to identify skills and development needs. Developed through extensive collaboration with the industry and current MentorsWork participants, this innovative tool guides users through a comprehensive list of questions and generates a bespoke report that contains insights and recommended next steps. The insights and areas of development are then addressed through a programme of mentoring, masterclasses and workshops provided by Skillnet Ireland in partnership with the SFA.

Last week's announcement also unveiled a significantly expanded programme of support to tackle skills gaps and development needs in small firms. MentorsWork will expand from 8 to 12 weeks in duration and offer unlimited masterclasses and peer-to-peer workshops as well as one-to-one mentoring.

Skillnet Ireland Chief Executive Paul Healy said: "Building business success is at the heart of what Skillnet Ireland does. We are pleased to announce this expansion of the MentorsWork programme

which has already supported hundreds of Irish businesses nationwide with the challenges presented by the pandemic. The online Competency Assessment diagnostic tool is an innovative new feature which we developed in close partnership with businesses and is the first of its kind in Ireland. It will make a big difference for small businesses by providing an opportunity for owners and managers to identify areas for development and avail of expert mentoring to bridge the gaps identified."

Sven Spollen-Behrens, SFA Director, said: "MentorsWork offers Irish businesses a comprehensive and engaging connection with experienced mentors to support real change and growth. MentorsWork now features a new online competency assessment tool, peer-focused workshops, expert-led masterclasses and access to a self-paced learning portal. We are calling on SMEs across Ireland to sign up and avail of this structured, free of charge 12-week business support programme and receive expert advice at this critically important time to succeed."

Trudie Power, founder and CEO of Trudies Kitchen in New Ross, Wexford signed up for the

programme in 2020. Trudies Kitchen is a small family business employing 20 people which provides homemade sandwiches and salads for catering and retail outlets. The business has been significantly impacted by Covid-19, especially with college closures in Munster and Leinster.

Speaking about the programme Trudie said "I engaged with MentorsWork to address the business lost during lockdown and explore ways to future-proof the business going forward. Through the programme we upskilled in key areas including business management, processes and accounts, and waste and sustainability, and ultimately pivoted to new food products for the company."

The programme allowed us to develop and create contingency plans to ensure supports and strategies are in place to deal with both Covid 19 and Brexit. The programme really boosted my confidence and helped me to grow my business. I even hired one additional person during lockdown. I'd really encourage others to take part in the programme and benefit from the experience and exper-

tise of your mentor."

MentorsWork is a flexible programme designed to provide the skills and supports that small business owner-managers need to improve and grow their business. The programme is fully subsidised by the Government of Ireland and offers integrated learning supports across four key pillars; People, Finance and Growth, Digitalisation and Automation and Business Processes. The programme connects business owners and managers with dedicated expert business mentors to address specific issues on a one-to-one basis. MentorsWork also supports businesses to develop a six-month Strategic Business Improvement Plan.

First introduced in April 2020, MentorsWork has supported 600 businesses to date and this new phase of the programme aims to support a further 600 SME owners/managers. Developed in partnership with industry to boost SME productivity, the programme is available free of charge to SME owners and managers operating across all sectors in Ireland.

Business owners and managers can apply to participate in MentorsWork at [www.mentorswork.ie](http://www.mentorswork.ie)

## Free training courses at BIFE for employees

**Bray Institute of Further Education (BIFE) has announced that they are offering free training courses to local employees under the 'Skills to Advance' programme.**

Skills to Advance is a national initiative that provides upskilling and reskilling opportunities to employees in jobs undergoing change and to those currently employed in vulnerable sectors.

Skills to Advance aims to equip employees with the skills they need to progress in their current role or to adapt to the changing job market.

Working closely with small and medium-sized enterprises, Skills to Advance helps employers identify skills needs and invest in their workforce

by providing subsidised education and training to staff.

BIFE are offering training courses in the following areas:

- \* Start Your Own Business
- \* Payroll - Manual & Computerised
- \* Digital Marketing
- \* CompTIA A+

Training courses will run for 12 weeks, one day a week, either in the morning or the evening.

For further information or to apply for one of these free courses, go to [www.bife.ie](http://www.bife.ie) (Click on the "Part Time" Tab and choose "Skills to Advance"). Alternatively you could ring BIFE at 01-28296698.

## Kildare-Wicklow Education & Training Board adopt Motion on Period Poverty

**A motion on Period Poverty tabled at a meeting of the Kildare-Wicklow Education and Training Board in the names of Cllr Anne Ferris (Labour Wicklow), Cllr Lourda Scott (Green Party Wicklow), Cllr Angela Feeney (Labour Kildare), Cllr. Paul O'Brien (Labour Wicklow) and Cllr Peter Hamilton (Green Party Kildare) was unanimously adopted by the members at their March meeting.**

The motion stated that the Kildare-Wicklow ETB recognises that: For many of our learners, particularly younger women, we know that period poverty or the inability to afford period products that meet their needs in an issue. Using period products for longer periods of time than is recommended or using unsuitable alternatives can lead to infections and health issues. We recognise that this is both a health and justice issue; Period injustice has huge knock-on effects for women, girls and transpeople who may feel they have no choice but to miss out on educational activities, work, or recreation due to not having appropriate products; The KWETB commends the Scottish Government in making available period products free of charge in their schools, educational institutions, and public buildings.

Proposing the motion, Cllr. Anne Ferris said "Period poverty can interfere with access to education for young women. This is particularly relevant for younger women and teenagers who may not have access to their own incomes. No law in Ireland deals with the free provision of period products, despite the passing of a cross-party motion in 2019. The objective of this motion is that all who menstruate should be able to access period products, at no cost, as and when they are required. Ease of access and choice is at its heart."

Cllr. Lourda Scott, who was recently successful in getting a similar motion adopted in Wicklow County Council, stated "A recent study of Irish teens showed that almost 50% of girls struggle to afford period products and 61% miss school on their period for the same reason. Imagine so many girls missing school for another reason; there would be a national outcry. As the Chairperson of Greystones Community College and a board member of Coláiste Chraobh Abhann, Kilcoole I am delighted that the KWETB has agreed to take positive steps to address this inequality. It's an important step on the way to restoring support and dignity to those who need it and reducing the shame around menstruation."

Cllr. Angela Feeney supporting the motion said "Periods are a natural part of a girl's life and as a former teacher in a mixed school I was always keenly aware of this. I know teachers can be very helpful, but teenagers should not have to rely on the kindness of a teacher as sometimes that can be even more embarrassing, and the student ends up heading home. Without access to sanitary products at school, many girls are missing out on their education and often times missing days at school can lead to girls dropping out altogether. We need to ensure that girls do not have to fear the embarrassment of stains on their clothes or have to suffer from being bullied which can stop them from going to school. Free period products in schools will ensure that every child can learn and be their best without periods holding them back."

The five KWETB Councillors thanked the other members for supporting their motion and said they were really pleased that the Executive of the KWETB would examine ways to ensure the period products would be provided in all their schools and educational facilities.

## Additional capital funding for Further Education and Training sector

**Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, has announced €8 million funding in further education capital grants for the country's 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs).**

The investment announced of just over €8 million forms part of Project Ireland 2040 and will be provided via SOLAS for the delivery of small-scale and necessary infrastructure and improvement works, and for the purchase of equipment.

Under this funding programme, ETBs will be in a position to make decisions around small-scale FET investment priorities locally, and to ensure that projects can be advanced quickly and efficiently.

The grant also allows ETBs an opportunity to consider future accommodation needs and to pro-

vide professional expertise to conduct condition surveys of existing buildings, with a view to a strategic approach to estate planning and development.

In addition, funding has been provided for the introduction of an emergency health and safety works programme and further detail will be announced in the coming days.

In announcing the programmes, Minister Harris said: "This funding will support ETBs in progressing their plans for further education and training, while also addressing smaller scale improve-

ment works in the near term.

"The funding of €8 million announced today represents a 45% increase on the 2020 Devolved Capital Allocation and is a direct response to the significant needs of the sector.

"The funding will also allow for the procurement of professional building surveys to inform longer term plans.

"In addition, with the introduction of the Emergency Health and Safety Works programme, ETBs can apply for funding to address immediate health and safety concerns arising in FET buildings.

"It is also, I hope, a signal of intent of the importance of this sector for my new Department and a sign of the focus we intend to place on further education.



# Delgany Community Council seek donations for judicial review of Carmelite site development

**Delgany Community Council is seeking donations to help towards a Judicial Review to challenge An Bord Pleanála's decision with regards to a housing development on the Carmelite site.**

On the 15th of February, An Bord Pleanála granted planning permission for a Strategic Housing Development of 230 units at the Carmelite site in Delgany village. 167 objections were lodged by local residents. Delgany Community Council made a substantial submission with input from a range of locals who had relevant expertise.

Delgany Community Council said "All of those submissions were largely ignored. The good news is that we can still stop the Delgany SHD from proceeding as planned, but we need to act now! Our only option is to seek a Judicial Review of the planning decision in the High Court. A group of 12 Delgany residents have already funded a written legal opinion and has been advised that there are strong legal grounds on which our community can challenge An Bord Pleanála's decision. Are you willing to support this action to fight for a better future for Delgany village? If you have already made a donation we would like to say thank you.

The reaction from the community has been incredible and people are really rallying together to Take a Stand for Delgany village.

"The first milestone of €19,000 was achieved on the 17th of March thanks to the kind donations already provided by just over 200 supporters."

Outlining the reasons for a Judicial Review, Delgany Community Council state: "This development contravenes the approved Local Area Plan of a maximum of 22 dwellings per hectare by allowing 38 dwellings per hectare - a 74% increase! Delgany village does not have the local infrastructure such as roads, village amenities, public transport etc. to support a development like this.

Building hours are allowed from 7am to 7pm, six days per week. Construction traffic on local roads is already chronic. When will it be safe for our children to walk or cycle to school? Currently over 100 children in the

area do not have a secondary school place for Sept 2021. Primary Schools are also full. This development will add significantly to this issue.

"Delgany does not have a playground, there is no open space in which our new and established residents can enjoy nature. Wicklow County Council Chief Executive's report cited fundamental issues with this development and recommended to An Bord Pleanála that planning permission be refused. It is time to say 'stop' and to allow our village to catch up through providing better infrastructure and good facilities for all of our residents.

"If you have any questions, DelganyJR group can be contacted by email (delganyjr@gmail.com). The first stage of this action will begin in April when the group will seek Leave to Appeal in the High Court."

If you would like to make a donation, go to [www.ifundraise.ie/6112\\_save-delgany.html](http://www.ifundraise.ie/6112_save-delgany.html)



*Rob Donnelly from Avonmore Musical Society was returned to the top position as National President of AIMS (Association of Irish Musical Societies) following the National AGM held virtually via Zoom.*

## Irish Water progressing plans to upgrade Blessington Wastewater Treatment Plant

**Irish Water, working in partnership with Wicklow County Council, is progressing plans to upgrade Blessington Wastewater Treatment Plant to safeguard the environment and support social and economic development in the area.**

The works will involve the construction of a new primary treatment system including a pump station and upgrades to the existing aeration tanks as well as the installation of a new odour control system. When completed, the project will increase the capacity of the plant to serve a population equivalent (PE) of up to 9,000, enabling future growth and safeguarding

the environment by ensuring compliance with national and EU legislation. These essential works will be delivered in adherence with the current HSE and government guidance on COVID-19.

Speaking about the project Dawid Wozniak, Regional Lead with Irish Water, said "Irish Water is committed to providing a safe and reliable water

supply, protecting the environment and supporting the growth of homes and businesses across Ireland.

"We are working in partnership with Wicklow County Council to continually improve wastewater treatment throughout Wicklow and are delighted to progress with plans to upgrade Blessington Wastewater Treatment Plant. The upgrade works will provide Blessington and the surrounding areas with the infrastructure needed to support future growth by increasing the capacity of the plant as well as safeguarding the

environment. We look forward to providing further updates as the project progresses."

The project will be carried out on behalf of Irish Water by Veolia Water Ireland and is expected to commence in the coming weeks. Irish Water will provide further communications as the project progresses.

This project forms part of Irish Water's investment plan where works have been prioritised to address the most critical issues in line with commitments outlined in Irish Water's business plan. Delivery of the business plan will involve a €5.5bn investment in capital spending on drinking water and wastewater quality and capacity and new infrastructure up to the end of 2021.

Irish Water continues to work at this time with our Local Authority partners, contractors and others to safeguard the health and well-being of both staff and the public and to ensure the continuity of critical drinking water and wastewater services.

Speaking on the announcement, Jennifer Whitmore TD said "I'm delighted to see progress on this important piece of infrastructure. I had met with Irish Water recently where I welcomed the focus on Blessington and develop-

ment of the area. I particularly welcome the recognition by Irish Water of the need to support the environment, social and economic development of the area as Blessington has been experiencing growth in recent years. It is also an area which is rich in natural and archaeological heritage which must be preserved and protected in a sustainable manner as growth continues.

"Ensuring we have safe and reliable water supplies not only benefits the residents from a health perspective, but also the local environment. We have seen the damage wastewater can cause such as to the Avoca River in Arklow. Maintaining and upgrading existing infrastructure will be key to making sure the rich natural heritage of Blessington is maintained.

"This project also represents forward planning as it is to provide Blessington and surrounding area by increasing capacity in existing wastewater infrastructure to sustain continued growth. There is a sense that not all areas across Wicklow are growing in tandem with the necessary infrastructure, something which needs to change as towns and villages across Wicklow continue to experience population increases."

## New library for Aughrim

**Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Pat Kennedy, has welcomed the decision to include a new library for Aughrim in the Draft Wicklow County Council Library Development Plan 2021-2025 which was passed at Monday's Community, Cultural & Social Development meeting.**

It will now go forward to the full Wicklow County Council Meeting for adoption.

Cllr Kennedy said "I particularly welcome that, under the capital budget programme, a new library for Aughrim has been prioritised. I have been working with Director Michael Nicholson and Senior Librarian, Mr. Brendan Martin, for the last five years to try and bring this forward and I am delighted that the Draft plan has been accepted. I look forward to getting full support of my colleagues in the Council chamber to ensure that this library is delivered for the community of Aughrim. I will also be ensuring that Sacred Heart National School and the students are fully involved in the process."

It is envisaged that the new library will be constructed on the site of the current Aughrim library, but will be a modern facility, which will include a number of study spaces, IT and WIFI facilities and an "easy reading area". At 150 - 180 square meters in size, it will be four times the size of the current Aughrim library, and have increased opening hours.

Subject to the Library Development Plan being adopted by Wicklow County Council, it will be prioritised for immediate implementation.

With the new Wicklow and Rathdrum libraries currently under construction and due to open in Summer 2021, this will be a further addition to Wicklow County Council's library network.

Cllr Kennedy concluded by saying "I am determined that this new library is delivered, with all its modern facilities, for Aughrim. The current library in Aughrim was opened by the late Cllr. Tom Keenan on 17th June 1986, who was chairman of Wicklow County Council at the time and I have fond memories of Tom visiting my home when I was a child. This library has served Aughrim well over the years but, with modern technology, it is now time for a new, modern library."



*Cathaoirleach Pat Kennedy at the library in Aughrim*





# 140,000kg OF ILLEGALLY DUMPED WASTE REMOVED FROM UPLANDS IN 2020

**In 2020 the Pure Project removed over 750 individual dumping sites, with the collection of over 140,000kg (140 tonnes) of illegally dumped waste from the remote, beautiful, and scenic Wicklow/Dublin Uplands, which was a 50% reduction compared to ten years previous, when in 2010 Pure removed 282,000kg (282 tonnes).**

The Pure Truck is on the road every day, and since the project was established, Pure has collected over 3,500,000kg (3,500 tonnes) of rubbish from over 12,500 illegal dumping sites in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands with the project processing over 13,500 reports. If you were to put all the rubbish that Pure has removed from the uplands into standard household

Wicklow/Dublin uplands, however, while most regions in Ireland are currently reporting an increase in illegal dumping, the Pure Project is seeing a decrease'.

The environmental project has been recording and mapping every location and incident of illegal dumping in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands since 2007 and have built up a base-line-data of all

scale incidents of illegal dumping in the uplands, which may be an indication of a return to the bad old days, when Pure was removing over 400 tonnes of rubbish annually.

Ian Davis, further added,

'The Pure Project has made huge progress in reducing illegal dumping in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands. If you compare the amount of dumping

ness campaigns, regional/national media campaigns, enforcement and preventative measures, GPS/GIS data-base to record all illegal dumping sites, covert CCTV operations, and a dedicated vehicle - The Pure Truck, that removes all illegal dumping from the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands.

The Pure Project Partnership approach, incorporating statutory, non-statutory organisations, and members of the public, has proven extremely successful in combating illegal dumping in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands and over the past four years they have recorded an annual reduction in illegal dumping activity. This reduction in dumping coincides with the huge increase of Pure Mile groups and areas, with hundreds of miles of roads, mountains, woodlands, valleys, forestries, upland amenities, car parks, and beaches, currently being adopted.

The Pure Mile Project is an environmental, community, heritage initiative, that encourages communities and groups living in rural areas of Wicklow, South Dublin, and Dun-Laoghaire, to adopt a mile of road, or miles of road, in their local area, or in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands and organise litter picks, clean-ups, anti-dumping campaigns, research information about their local wildflowers, plants, trees, ani-

Pure utilises a multi-disciplined approach in combating illegal dumping, incorporating a number of educational initiatives, environment/community projects - The Pure Mile, public aware-

rubbish bags, they would fill over 400,000 bags. If you lined up all these bags on the road, they would stretch all the way from Dublin to Dingle.

The start of 2021 was a busy period for the Pure Project, with the Pure Truck removing 3,000kg (3 tonnes) of waste on a weekly basis, resulting in the collection of 12,000kg (12 tonnes) of illegal dumping from the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands for the month of January.

Ian Davis, Pure Manager, commented,

'Illegal dumping is not unique to the

illegal dumping activity in this region, the location of dumping, type of dumping, landowner, and amount of dumping, and for a number of years now they have been recording an annual reduction. The data that Pure collect is valuable information providing indicators into the nature and extent of illegal dumping in Wicklow/Dublin Uplands, and statistical evidence for all illegal dumping incidents in this region.

Although Pure are recording a reduction in dumping, they are concerned about recent large-



scouts, beavers, businesses, and organisations, have removed hundreds of tonnes of illegally dumped waste and thousands of bags of litter and rubbish from the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands. Pure provide all groups with Pure Mile signage, Pure Mile bags, gloves, litter pickers and Pure Mile high-vis vests, and they also remove all of the rubbish collected by the groups.

In 2020, the introduction of Covid-19 travel restrictions and guidelines, prohibited the Pure Mile from organising their numerous clean ups and litter picks of the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands, which resulted in a visible increase of litter in this scenic area. Past clean-up events carried out by Pure Mile Groups resulted in the removal of hundreds of bags of litter and rubbish, and it further

demonstrates the necessity and importance of The Pure Mile Project, and the need for continued collaboration and engagement to protect the Wicklow/Dublin upland environment. 2020 also saw a large increase of visitors to the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands, with day-trippers attracted to remote, secluded, scenic, mountainous, and wooded areas. Unfortunately, abandoned campaign sites were prevalent and the material removed by Pure, included, hundreds of tents, sleeping bags, blankets, chairs, tables, food items, bottles, cans, and barbeques, all discarded on the landscape.

Another initiative attributed to the annual

decline in illegal dumping activity is the success of the Pure Covert CCTV Operations, which involved the deployment and installation of a number of covert CCTV units at several problematic upland dumping sites which were continually affected by illegal dumping. A number of illegal dumping incidents caught on covert CCTV are currently under investigation by Wicklow County Council, and South

Dublin County Council, and Pure are confident that both of the local authorities will proceed with court prosecutions.

Pure is the first project of its kind in Ireland and works with a number of statutory and non-statutory organisations and stakeholders, including, The Department of Environment, Climate, and Communications, Wicklow County Council, South Dublin County Council, Dun Laoghaire

Rathdown County Council, Coillte, National Parks & Wildlife Service, and the Wicklow Uplands Council. This unique partnership project was established to combat illegal dumping in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands and was officially launched in September 2006.

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# Dental treatment for medical card holders in Wicklow under grave threat

The Irish Dental Association (IDA) has said that dental treatment in Wicklow for medical card holders is in "complete chaos", warning that the unprecedented number of dentists withdrawing from the outdated Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) is having serious repercussions for patients.

Between 2017 and 2020, State spending on dental care for medical card patients in Wicklow decreased by 38%, from €1,551,841.26 to €957,327.09. Between 2017 and 2020, State spending on dental care for medical card patients in the Kildare / West Wicklow local health office area decreased by 39%, from €2,283,275.94 to €1,397,594.02.

Concurrently, the number of DTSS contracts held by dentists in Wicklow fell by 43%, from 56 to 32 between March 2017 and January 2021. This represents the second-biggest drop in participating dentists in the country between 2017 and 2021. The number of DTSS contracts held by dentists in Kildare/West Wicklow fell by 10%,

from 68 to 61 between March 2017 and January 2021.

The DTSS provides access to limited dental treatment for adult medical card holders. The IDA believes members should individually consider courses of action that are open to them.

Local dentist Dr Gillian Smith said that the fall in funding and participating dentists in Wicklow was hugely damaging for patients and reflected a nationwide trend. "In 2020, almost one quarter of participating dentists nationwide left the scheme which is utterly unfit for purpose. Dentists simply cannot afford to participate."

She said that the nature of the medical card crisis in dentistry was unprecedented in scale and den-

tists were disillusioned with the Government's lack of action on the matter. "We have sought to engage with the Department of Health to modify this scheme over many years to no avail. Increasingly, our members believe that the refusal to acknowledge this reality and the general approach of the Department of Health suggests a level of disrespect, if not contempt, for medical card patients in Wicklow and the dentists contracted to care for them. It also shows scant regard or understanding of the impact of this crisis on vulnerable patients who are unable to afford access to vital dental care."

Dr Smith said that significant extra costs being incurred by general dental practices during the Covid-19 pandemic are

making the existing DTSS contracted service completely unviable. "Dentists want to be able to provide care for medical card patients, but the Government is leaving them with little choice but to minimise their involvement or withdraw."

Because of the drop-off in funding and dentists' participation, she said that medical card patients were now faced with: Delays while seeking treatment; Increased travel times while seeking that treatment; and possible reliance on the already underfunded public dental service to provide care in areas where DTSS contracts are not in place.

The IDA is the representative body for 2,000 dentists (public and private) practising in Ireland.

## Rentokil attributes 33% increase in ant callouts to climate change

Pest control provider Rentokil has recorded an 33% increase in callouts for ants between January and February 2021, when compared with the same period last year.

Notably, this is the third year in a row that the company has recorded an increase in ant callouts during this period. Rentokil recorded a 74% increase in these months in 2020 when compared to 2019, and a 35% increase for 2019 compared to 2018.

The company attributes these rising callout figures to the effects of climate change, with resulting milder conditions allowing the insects to thrive and multiply. Rentokil expects insect callout figures to continue to rise in the years to come as a result.

Richard Faulkner, Advanced Technical Field Consultant for Rentokil said: "Rentokil is experiencing higher and higher callout numbers for ants at the start of the year. While ants are traditionally thought of as

summertime insects, the effects of climate change have made some insects a year-round problem for home and business owners due to progressively milder winter, spring and autumn periods."

Ants will most likely enter a premises in search of food. While ant infestations don't present a danger to inhabitants, the insects can be a nuisance, and a small problem can quickly become a large one. If they find a food source, ants lay down a pheromone trail which attracts other ants to the area.

Some tips to prevent the presence of ants on your premises include: Clear up food and liquid spillages immediately; Sweep up any food crumbs from under your kitchen appliances and units; Store your food in airtight containers wherever possible; If you have a pet, clear away any food that isn't eaten straight away; Block off entry points for ants by sealing all cracks and crevices around your doors and window frames; In the garden, keep your compost enclosed and make sure all rubbish bins have tightly



Wicklow native Aine O'Gorman

## Soccer Sisters Virtual Skills Hub will now feature skills videos inclusive of children with additional needs

Aviva Ireland and the Football Association of Ireland have launched the Aviva Soccer Sisters Virtual Skills Hub programme for 2021, specially designed for girls to take part in during the upcoming Easter break. The free online initiative was launched last week by Republic of Ireland Women's National Team player Áine O'Gorman, as part of Aviva's Safe To Dream Team campaign.

Aware of the impact the pandemic is having on children with additional needs in particular, Aviva's Soccer Sisters Camp will work alongside the FAI's Football For All programme for the first time, providing skills videos inclusive of children with additional needs to develop as footballers. The skills videos include adaptations developed by FAI Football for All development officers to ensure the online hub is inclusive for all.

The Aviva Soccer Sisters Virtual Skills Hub will offer a range of in-depth videos and walkthroughs of key skills and drills during the Easter Break from Monday March 29th to Friday April 2nd. To take part in and be in with a chance to win prizes, and receive discounts on car and home insurance, families and clubs across Ireland are invited to sign up at [www.aviva.ie/safetodreamteam](http://www.aviva.ie/safetodreamteam). Once parents register for the Safe To Dream team and upload a video of their child partaking in the virtual skills hub, they will receive a free Aviva Soccer Sisters backpack.

The Safe To Dream Team is

an online hub which aims to improve access for young people on their sporting journey within clubs or at home, through online skills videos, and advice and support from leading sports ambassadors.

Research commissioned by Aviva in February of this year highlighted that while 53% of Leinster children don't mention any distinction between male and female sports, only 48% of children in the province have a female sporting role model. Only 31% of adults in Leinster have brought their children to a women's game, compared to 54% for a men's game. It is similar for watching sport on TV with 61% of adults in the province agreeing that their children watch men's sport on tv but only 43% saying the same for women's sport. With over one third of Irish parents concerned their daughter will drop out of sport as they enter their teenage years, the research highlights the need for increased support for women's sport, particularly during adolescence in Ireland.

Republic of Ireland Women's National Team star, Áine

O'Gorman, said: "It has never been more important to provide a platform for young girls to learn and develop new skills. It has been a very difficult period for everyone, and I know children across the country cannot wait to return to training and enjoy their football. With the launch of the Aviva Safe To Dream team Soccer Sisters new skills videos, I am really looking forward to seeing young girls all over the country getting involved and sharing their own videos."

Republic of Ireland Women's National Team Manager Vera Pauw said: "It is fantastic to have the AVIVA Soccer Sisters Virtual Skills Hub back again this year as it helps so many children to practice their skills whilst still being at home and respecting the HSE guidelines during this period. It is very important that children, especially young girls, continue to challenge themselves during these times to stay fit and active. Taking part in sport is a great way to maintain fitness and to feel good. Football should be fun and that is what this programme is all about. It was great to see so many videos last year of those who took part in the Skills Hub and I'm sure they will once again make the most of this exciting opportunity to further develop their skills and play with a smile on their face."

## Irish Rail address flooding under arch at Greystones South Beach



Cllr Jodie Neary under the arch at Greystones South Beach

Social Democrats Cllr for Greystones District Jodie Neary has said Irish Rail have confirmed they have addressed flooding under the second arch by South Beach in Greystones. Cllr Neary raised the issue as frequent flooding was restricting access to dog walkers, sea swimmers and beach users.

Cllr Neary confirmed "In correspondence to me, Irish Rail have addressed the issue. There was a build up of sand under the bridge that created a dam effect resulting in water ponding under the arch.

"They have also confirmed that this will be checked every few weeks and they are in discussions with the local Council about a longer term fix. I will continue to liaise with them on this and other issues as well as with the Council to ensure flooding is addressed in the area.

"Ongoing flooding remains a concern at South Beach playground which I've also been in touch with the Council about and hope to see a resolution to this in the near future. I will update the public once I receive more information" concluded Cllr Neary.





Ann Fitzpatrick, Conservation Ranger, NPWS

## Wicklow Tourism and Hospitality Skills Initiative begins

Wicklow Fine Gael Minister Simon Harris TD has welcomed the rollout of two new skills programmes to assist hospitality and tourism sectors.

Minister Harris said "As a major employer in Wicklow, the hospitality and tourism sector have identified the need to retain key talent and develop leadership capability to rejuvenate businesses for recovery and growth".

Due to the pandemic the sector has temporarily had to close, and I want to ensure we use this time to support the sector in preparing for when they can resume business. The hospitality and tourism sectors are vital to the Irish economy and we must support it to recover and grow."

Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board recently commenced with the rollout of two programmes from the 8th March, the first programme at level 5 has 30 participants and the second programme at level 6 has 20 participants with representatives from 12 hotels across the region.

The Developing Leaders for Hospitality and Tourism programmes will upskill team leaders and supervisory staff in critical areas including finance and people management. Employees will be trained in customer care, digital skills, communications, strategic planning and management and will learn green and sustainability skills".

Six other Education and Training Boards plan to commence delivery of programmes in March with a further seven ETBs commencing in April.

## €55 million business continuity scheme for the tourism sector

Wicklow Hotelier and Senator Pat Casey has welcomed the new €55 million Tourism Business Continuity Scheme.

Casey said "I have asked for these supports for quite some time and the allocation in Budget 2021 and Fáilte Ireland is responsible for developing and administering the scheme.

The scheme will support those tourism businesses that were not eligible for the Covid Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS) payment or previous Fáilte Ireland continuity grant schemes."

"Nationally this has been the most disastrous year tourism has ever faced. The sector's revenue has declined by a massive €6 billion and tens of thousands of jobs have been lost."

The first phase of the €55 million Tourism Business Continuity Scheme was launched on February 11th, providing those tourism businesses who have not received support through the Covid Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS) or previous Fáilte Ireland business continuity schemes, with direct financial assistance.

"Domestic tourism will be the first to return and Fáilte Ireland plan to invest significantly in domestic marketing once domestic tourism can restart. Our research tells us that the 'Keep Discovering' campaign we launched prior to the COVID-19 pandemic resonates even more strongly with people now and we will be rolling the campaign out at both a national and county level to drive domestic tourism when the country re-opens.

"Wicklow is one of the hardest hit counties in Ireland as it is a vital tourism based economy and hundreds of businesses have been closed and thousands of people in the Garden county have been made unemployed. I am working closely with Minister Michael McGrath to ensure that further supports can be provided to allow this crucial industry to survive."

The minimum grant is €3,750 and the maximum grant is €200,000.

The first phase of the Tourism Business Continuity Scheme was opened to businesses who meet the eligibility criteria including: Outdoor activity providers (e.g. Bike tours, Surf Schools, Kayaking tours, Angling, walking tours, instructor led/guided tourism equestrian experiences); Golf courses with a tourism offering; Tourist boat tour operators; Hop on Hop off Bus tours with onboard tourism experiences; Visitor attractions not eligible for CRSS (e.g. attractions with charity/not for profit status or that are primarily outdoor attractions); Caravan and camping providers registered with Fáilte Ireland; Cruise Hire companies.

To be eligible for the scheme: a business' monthly turnover from October 2020 to January 2021 must be less than 25% of its average monthly turnover in 2019; the business must have a minimum annual turnover of €50,000 and minimum fixed costs of 10% of turnover; the business must not be eligible to apply for the Covid Restrictions Support Scheme (CRSS) or have received funding through the Fáilte Ireland Coach Tourism Business Continuity Scheme or Ireland Based Inbound Agents Business Continuity Scheme.

# Wicklow features in TG4 nature documentary

Co. Wicklow features in *Cumhacht an Náduir*, a new two-part documentary for TG4 that looks at the solace nature has offered during this pandemic and how it may fuel the debate for a broader range of wildlife habitat and land management.

TG4 stated, "A positive consequence of the coronavirus is the way in which it has led many of us to value and explore our natural surroundings. Access to wilderness areas, coastlines and parklands has provided much needed solace during this pandemic. In this two-part documentary, *Cumhacht an Náduir*, we find out if this greater awareness has been of any benefit to wildlife, and whether a greater natural balance can emerge from the lockdown experience.

"What happens when sites fall strangely and beautifully silent, when nature is given a chance to breathe and to revive? Has this twelve-month period implanted a greater need to protect and expand our wilderness areas?"

"In the hands of presenter Darach Ó Murchú, an environmental educator who was given permission to travel outside of his own restricted area, we visit some of Ireland's most celebrated destinations and tourist sites: Malin Head, the Blaskets, Glendalough, and Garnish Island, as well as community spaces and local areas of beauty. We capture these locations during a near total absence of visitors and we consider how wildlife has behaved in their absence.

"Post-lockdown, we return to evaluate how these landscapes could be better managed in the crucial years ahead."

The first episode was broadcast on 24th March and featured Ann Fitzpatrick, Conservation Ranger, NPWS (Laragh, Wicklow). She talked about how habitat loss is detrimental to the survival of some

of our native species. She also commented on how the absence of mass tourism has given some of the raptors in the National Park a chance to breed in peace, with a greater number of chicks as a result. She also discussed illegal wildfires and the tagging of falcons.

"We also meet with Jason

Monaghan NPWS Conservation Ranger, Co. Wicklow. Monitors the Little Terns, in Kilcoole. Also featured is Seamus O'Brien, Head Gardener at the OPW's Kilmacurragh Botanic Gardens, in Wicklow. In 2018, the Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland awarded him their gold Medal of Honour."



Jason Monaghan NPWS Conservation Ranger

## Wicklow features on the new travel series launched on American television

Co. Wicklow features in a recently launched 'Ireland - County by County' travel series which will be extensively aired throughout the US television network.

Featuring 10 counties - this exciting new television showcase will reveal the best of Ireland county by county to television audiences right across the United States.

Each episode will be packed with content: a travelogue and historical, culinary tour, with music and history, culture and heritage thrown in.

The Wicklow episode follows Ciara Whelan as she discovers the incredible paintings at Russborough House;

takes some unusual furry

friends for a walk; hikes in the spectacular Glendalough National Park; enjoys some Wicklow Naturally produce at the stunning Killruddery House, and much more. Ciara will also become a Wicklow Ambassador as she collects the various stamps for her Wicklow Passport.

This episode was made possible thanks to the support from Wicklow County Council.

"The Ireland County by County show offers a

tremendous opportunity to reconnect with our overseas market" says Frank Curran, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council and Chair of Wicklow Tourism Alliance. "Following the various broadcasts, we will make sure that the production will be made available online for everyone to enjoy, hoping to attract more visitors to our County", he added.

The show will be carried by 244 stations across the United States making it available in 86 per cent of US households. The network specialises in programming on lifestyle topics like food,

travel, and home and garden.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Pat Kennedy, is encouraging all Wicklow residents to become 'Wicklow Ambassadors' by reaching out to family and friends in the United States to tell them about this showcase of the best of Ireland and in particular the Wicklow episode.

Transmission of the first series begins on the PBS Create Channel in March. The initial broadcast schedule is very attractive starting with a "Marathon" (ie all 10 programmes shown back-to-back) that aired on Friday, March 12th.



# 'Action on climate change must focus on people and work'

Two Wicklow based academics will lead on a new research theme 'People, Work and Society', at the Earth Institute, UCD. Prof. Donna Marshall and Dr. Mags Crean join Dr. Penelope Muzanehamo as co-leads on the new research endeavour.

Founded on the links between social justice and action on climate change as we transition to a sustainable system, Mags Crean, who is also a



Cllr Mags Crean

Wicklow County Councillor, explains the importance of the new research area: "There needs to be a renewed focus on social justice as part of a just transition. Those most negatively impacted by climate change are also those least able to afford green taxes or to be green consumers."

"To date, politicians and corporations are more prone to place environmental responsibility solely on the consumer. This leads to division among people and can result in opposition to ini-



Prof. Donna Marshall

tiatives that are critical for environmental justice. To address this issue, we have to drive research that calls for a more inclusive

and progressive approach to changing policy and practice in the interests of our environment".

In addition, Professor Marshall stated that the new research theme can help to tackle these challenges.

"By placing emphasis on people, work and society we can progress towards a just transition that not only helps the environment but also allows people, especially those most vulnerable groups in society, to flourish in a more inclusive and socially just society."

## 'Project Woodland' to tackle issues in forestry

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Charlie McConalogue T.D. and the Minister of State Senator Pippa Hackett have announced 'Project Woodland', an initiative to tackle issues in forestry in Ireland and drive forward the planting of trees. The Ministers accepted a report on reforming the Irish Forestry Licensing system, and committed to its immediate implementation.

Welcoming the announcement, Minister Charlie McConalogue stated, "I am delighted to help launch the new strategy for our forestry sector and I give my support to Project Woodland. The new initiative is aimed at solving many of the issues which has mired the forestry sector in recent times. Working alongside my colleague in the Department of Agriculture Minister of State Pippa Hackett, we are focussed on delivering solutions for the sector. As Minister with responsibility for the forestry sector, Minister Hackett will lead the implementation of Project Woodland and I am confident that it can be a success."

"Challenges remain in dealing with issues in the sector but I am hopeful that the report Minister Hackett is launching today can overcome many of these challenges. Having a vibrant forestry sector is crucial to the overall strategy of the Agri Food Sector as well as ensuring we have a stable, balanced economy. We have the potential to deliver a brighter future for this great sector but all stakeholders must work together in order to make that happen."

Acknowledging the work of Jo O'Hara, the former Chief Executive of Scottish Forestry, who prepared the report for her on the implementation of the Mackinnon report on Forestry Licences, Minister Hackett said, "Jo O'Hara has confirmed my own belief that while of course the issues with licencing - of afforestation, roads, and felling - must be addressed, bigger questions about forestry also need to be considered. Timber production is important, but trees are about more than timber."

They are also about beauty, biodiversity, the environment, carbon capture, community enjoyment and enterprise, and social good, and it's time to find the space to say that, and to value that. That is why I am delighted today to announce the immediate setting up of Project Woodland."

Project Woodland is being established by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, under the leadership of Minister Hackett. It involves four different workstreams working to her through a Project Manager and Project Board. The project Board will be chaired by the Secretary General, Brendan Gleeson.

The workstreams will work concurrently, focusing on different areas. The first one will concentrate on the backlog, the second on a vision for forestry, the third on devising a fit for purpose organisational structure, and the fourth on streamlining the licensing process for the future.

Each workstream will be supported by a working group made up of stakeholders drawn from the Minister's existing Forestry Policy Group and will be chaired by an independent, experienced outsider.

Referring to those workstreams the Minister Hackett continued, "When you're dealing with a difficult situation, fire-fighting in effect, it can be difficult to see the bigger picture.... to see the wood for the trees you could say."

"That is why I expect the distinction between the workstreams to be so helpful. I also expect the involvement of the members of my stakeholder Forestry Policy Group in the

working groups to make a big difference because we need everyone's input. Final decisions will always have to be taken by me, but we simply must find better ways of listening to, and taking into account the views of those who are involved in, and affected by, woodlands. And they must commit to listening to the views of each other too."

The Minister also thanked the incoming members of the Project Group and chairs of the Working Groups saying, "An outside perspective always helps so I want to thank the six people who have agreed to help us out with Project Woodland. They bring with them great experience from different walks of life, experience which I know will benefit us hugely. I also want to thank Jo O'Hara for agreeing to continue working with us through her membership of the Project Board."

Acknowledging Jo O'Hara's finding that issues exist which were beyond the scope of her report, the Minister added, "I expect the working groups to be wide-ranging. And I also expect that there will be interaction between the working groups and other areas in the department so that, for example, CAP measures, or perhaps eco-schemes for farmers who would be prepared to plant smaller areas are aligned with Project Woodland, rather than in any sense, in competition with it."

The Minister also announced an initiative involving communities, explaining that she had asked Irish Rural Link to undertake a study on the effect of forests on communities, she said, "I am asking Irish Rural Link to build up on the work done by Aine Ní Dhubháin in UCD a few years ago, to engage with communities, to look at the up and downsides of forests for them as they exist at the moment, and come up with recommendations for the future, which can then be fed into the 'Shared National Approach' workstream."



Carol Coad, Rural Recreation Officer, Michael Nicholson, Director of Service, Cllr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach, Brian Carty, CEO of County Wicklow Partnership, Caroline Fox, Administrative Officer - Community, Cultural and Social Development, Cllr Gail Dunne, and Frank Curran, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, at the launch of the five-year Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Co. Wicklow

## Council launch five-year outdoor recreation plan for Wicklow

A major new strategy for the county's outdoor recreational resources was launched on Thursday 25th March by Wicklow County Council and the Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee.

The County Wicklow Outdoor Strategy 2020 to 2025 is a blueprint for realising the county's outdoor recreation potential. The strategy will guide the future direction and actions for the Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee.

The four pillars to deliver the goals and actions set out in the Strategy are: Planning and Collaboration - all agencies on board, all respected and all contributing; Increased awareness - educating about environmental responsibility and making sure everything carried out under this strategy protects or enhances our natural environment; Resources - planning, financial resources and Human Resources that are required to succeed in rollout; Animating the outdoors - this is telling Wicklow's recreation story - bringing it to life - crossing social media, marketing and public relations.

During the next five years, the goals and actions of this Strategy are about consolidating the recreation resources in County Wicklow and making sure it is working efficiently to deliver economically to the locality, in recreation terms for users and in an environmentally responsible way.

Mr Frank Curran, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council, said: "The Outdoor Recreation Strategy acknowledges the tremendous value in our county's outdoor recreation resources. It recognises that continuing to work in partnership with all the stakeholders is the most effective way for all to benefit from these resources, which are particular valuable resources during these times."

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Pat Kennedy, stated: "Implementing this Strategy will demonstrate what can happen when we all work together. Different stakeholders will have different roles to play, supporting and engaging, development, marketing and promotion, sharing with visitors and developing our recreation amenities."

For further information please contact Carol Coad, Outdoor Recreation Officer: ccoad@wicklowpartnership.ie

## Burnt lands ineligible for Basic Payment Scheme

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has issued a statement saying that lands burnt since the March 1st deadline are ineligible for the Basic Payment Scheme.

In a statement, the Department said "The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine takes note of reports of fires since the closing date for such activities commenced on March 1st, particularly in Counties Kerry, Laois and Wicklow."

The Department, by means of satellite imagery, can identify lands that have been burnt.

Analysis of the relevant imagery indicates that at least 130 hectares has been burnt in these counties since 1st March. The Terms and Conditions for the Basic Payment Scheme and other area-based schemes makes clear that such lands are ineligible for payment.

"Where land has been burned between the 1 March and the 31 August, it is not in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation and therefore is not

eligible for the remainder of the year".

The Department will contact those applicants who apply on burnt lands in 2021, informing them of the consequence of the burning on their eligible area for payment.

The Department will also shortly commence ground inspections in areas identified through satellite imagery to carry out further checks in these areas.

The burning of vegetation is controlled by the Wildlife Acts. It is an offence under Section 40 of the Wildlife Act, 1976 (amended by Section 46 of the Wildlife Act, 2000) to burn, from 1 March to 31 August in any year, any vegetation growing on any land not then cultivated.

Individuals who are found to burn vegetation within that prohibited period are liable to prosecution by An Garda Síochána or by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has no role in regard to prosecutions.





In Catherine Celebrates Easter, Catherine Fulvio will show us how to celebrate friends and family as she creates an Easter Basket stuffed full with tasty homemade treats, as well as using delicious products supplied by Irish artisan producers. Catherine Celebrates Easter will air on Friday 2nd April at 8.30pm on RTE ONE.

In the show, Catherine stops off at Brockagh in the glacial valley of Glendalough in County Wicklow to meet with husband and wife, Aoife Patterson and Pat Reid (pictured) of Wicklow Willow, a small company which offers a range of traditional basketry products and willow weaving courses. Aoife and Pat show Catherine their wonderful and varied baskets which look fabulous but have real uses and as well as some of Pat's stunning willow garden decorations both making 'eggscent' easter gifts. Catherine is shown the intricacies of the wonderful art of willow basket weaving and Aoife takes Catherine thru all the steps she too when creating Catherine's Wicklow willow hand woven Easter basket.

## Creative Ireland Programme and RTÉ announce This Is Art! Winning Entries

RTÉ and the Creative Ireland Programme have announced the category winners of the This Is Art! Competition which was a great success.

Almost 9,000 young people from around the country responded with creativity, enthusiasm and great thoughtfulness to the theme of This Is Now. What emerged is a visual representation of our young people's perspective

on the health crisis and how it has impacted their lives and the lives of those they love.

Edward O'Meara, aged 10, from Arklow, came 3rd in the Age 8-11 category, which was won by Sean Hoban from Galway.

All artworks are now showcased in an online art gallery on [www.rte.ie/thisisart](http://www.rte.ie/thisisart) that will be available for generations to come.

The Creative Ireland Programme is a culture-based, all of Government initiative which places cre-

ativity at the centre of public policy, and is designed to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. The core proposition is that participation in cultural activity drives personal and collective creativity, with significant

implications for individual and societal wellbeing and achievement. It is built around five pillars: Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child; Enabling Creativity in Every Community; Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure; Ireland as a Centre of Excellence in Media Production; Unifying our Global reputation. The Creative Ireland Programme is a culture-based, all of Government initiative which places creativity at the centre of public policy, and is designed to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. The core proposition is that participation in cultural activity drives personal and collective creativity, with significant implications for individual and societal wellbeing and achievement.

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Artwork by Edward O'Meara from Arklow which won the 3rd place prize in the age 8-11 category.

## Signal Arts Centre celebrates 30 years with exhibition

Signal Arts Centre is celebrating over 30 years in existence with an exhibition in both Signal and Mermaid Arts Centres. The exhibition, entitled "Signal Arts Centre - 30 Years of Making" opened on Monday 29th March and will run until 24th April. Although the work will be hung in both galleries, the exhibition will be made available to view online due to the current restrictions.

First opened in June 1990 by a group of recently graduated artists, Signal is now entering its 31st year. It was set up to provide an opportunity for other emerging artists to exhibit their work and to be a place of welcome and production for the many communities of Bray and North Wicklow. Their aim was to establish an artist run centre that would be a permanent part of the arts and local infrastructure.

Since then, Signal has gone on to provide over 600 artists with a chance to exhibit their first solo show, to work with a number of resource centres, schools and communities of interest; to buy its own building and to run a community employment programme specifically for those wishing to develop a career in the arts. It's been some journey and it has been a privilege seeing many of those young artists become nationally recognised.

The exhibition will show works by 30 artists selected from the 600 artists who have previously exhibited in Signal.

Eleanor Phillips, Director of Signal Arts Centre, said: "In 2021 the



Board of Signal is taking time to reflect on work done, plan for the future and develop the centre in order to provide better facilities and opportunities for artists and art makers/lovers. Part of that reflection is celebrating the work done and to do so with friends and fellow arts professionals. We are delighted to be honouring these achievements with the fantastic support of Mermaid Arts Centre in this group show".

Speaking about the exhibition, Julie Kelleher, Director of Mermaid Arts Centre, said: "Mermaid and Signal Arts Centres have had a long and fruitful association. Mermaid is so pleased to partner with Signal to mark this very special anniversary and celebrate the achievements of

the artists involved, and of Signal itself over the last three decades. In a time when there is enormous uncertainty for artists and the organisations that support them, it is a joyful and hopeful thing to be able to present this work, albeit online by necessity, as a reminder of the enduring positivity that art can bring to the lives of so many. We look forward to welcoming visitors through our virtual doors to enjoy this wonderful exhibition."

Signal Arts Centre is looking forward to building new partnerships and refreshing old ones on their journey through the next 30 years and seeing their big dream: a purpose built visual arts centre, come to fruition.

*The Exhibition runs until Saturday 24th April*

## Anu Productions has Mermaid residency

Mermaid is delighted to have ANU in residence at Mermaid in 2021. ANU will spend this period researching utopian fantasies through the lens and vision demonstrated by Victorian seaside towns (in particular, Bray).

Contemporary Bray is littered with the spectres of a glorious, frivolous past informed from the ideologies of its Victorian birth.

From a Tesco Express on the site of a former Turkish Baths, to the seaside bandstand, to the remnants of the Bray Head Chairlift, ANU will explore the skeletal archaeological markers of a former seaside utopia.

ANU will partner with a number of local organisations to investigate the links between the Victorian seaside resort and utopian fantasies; seeking to question and learn as we currently isolate and socially distance as a result of a world pandemic. When we return to the fresh air coming off the sea front and walk along wide promenades decorated by joviality, thrill seeking and recreation what lessons (or signatures) of the past will signpost our ideologies and dreams for the future?





# Good vibes for Wicklow as GOAL launches Wellness Week with Ireland's top experts

Humanitarian aid agency, GOAL, has rounded up top experts from the worlds of sport, nutrition, health and science, to lead on its virtual 'Good Vibes' Wellness Week from April 26th - 30th.

The motivational wellness initiative - which will include online sessions from immunologist Professor Luke O'Neill, Ballymaloe chef Rory O'Connell, and Olympian Ciara Mageean - is aimed at giving people a much-needed boost during these challenging times.

Companies across Wicklow are being encouraged to get their employees signed up to help them connect, stay healthy and boost morale. The event will culminate with a raffle, with each participating organisation awarding an extra day's annual leave and wellness prizes to one lucky winner.

Event participants will gain access to a weeklong calendar of pre-recorded virtual wellness events, which can be accessed anytime during the week, and hosted by top experts in their fields. They

experts include:

- Immunologist Professor Luke O'Neill: Chair of Biochemistry at Trinity College Dublin and much-loved and high-profile commentator on Covid-19, he will share his advice on staying protected from the virus.

- Chef Rory O'Connell: Founder of The Ballymaloe Cookery School with his sister Darina Allen he will reveal his top tips for creating delicious healthy meals during lockdown.

- Olympian Ciara Mageean: A GOAL ambassador and Irish middle-distance runner and Olympian she will bring employees through their paces on running for health and pleasure.

- Personal trainer Niamh Cullen: Founder of The Monday Club, she will deliver a fun and uplifting workout

designed to give a much-needed energy shot to those working from home.

- Sleep expert Deirdre McSwiney: This sleep and cognitive behaviour therapist will give valuable tips on getting the all-important good night's sleep, key to general wellbeing.

- Yoga teacher Sarah Jordan: With expertise in enhancing employee wellbeing through yoga, she will let employees hearts lead the way with some great zen moves.

- Surfer Dr Easkey Britton: This professional surfer will explore the relationship between people and the sea, using her passion for the ocean to create social change and connection.

- Author and Speaker Pat Divilly: This motivational and wellness speaker will use high performance coaching to help people reach new levels of purpose, passion and

fulfilment.

Irish Olympian and GOAL Ambassador, Ciara Mageean, said she was delighted to be part of the wellness event which will benefit thousands of people all over Ireland. "Covid-19 has been very challenging for everybody, but for those working from home it has been especially difficult. It is so important to take time from the daily routine to look after your mental and physical health. I am looking forward to sharing tips on running to stay fit, and how to incorporate it into your daily or weekly routines and to make it fun."

"The GOAL Good Vibes Wellness Week has all aspects of health covered. From fitness to sleep to yoga to nutrition it offers an excellent menu of wellness advice."

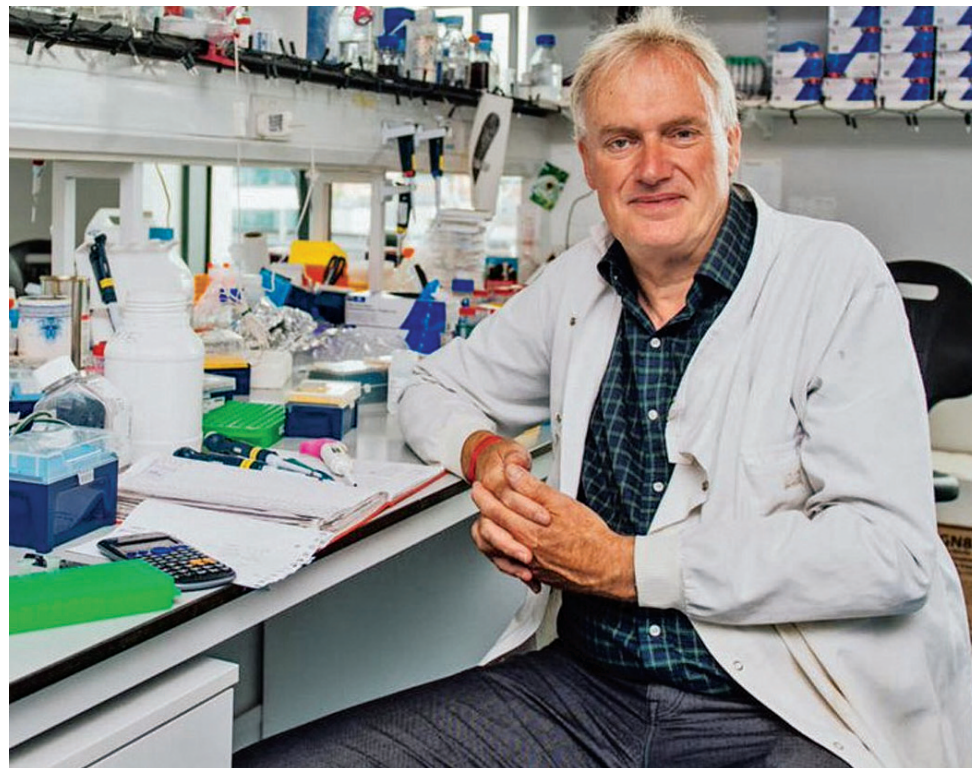
GOAL's Director of Fundraising and Marketing, Eamon Sharkey, said: "This is the perfect opportunity for companies and colleagues to connect and enjoy some time-out, boost morale and stay healthy while raising funds for some of the world's most vulnerable communities at the same time."

"The event is the perfect opportunity for people working at home to connect with their colleagues. The events are pre-recorded and can be accessed at any time during the wellness week. We are honoured to have so many of Ireland's top experts in various wellness fields leading on this initiative."

"Like many other NGOs, GOAL has had to adjust its fundraising campaigns to go online, and this is structured in a way that people can dip in and out at any time during wellness week to take part. Individuals can also register and take part you do not have to get involved through a company."

Since the onset of Covid-19, GOAL has adapted its programmes and reached over 17 million people in 14 countries with Covid related supports and messaging in 2020.

Registration is €15 per person however GOAL also provide bespoke pricing options for organisations. For more information visit [goalglobal.org/good-vibes-by-goal](http://goalglobal.org/good-vibes-by-goal) or email [events@goal.ie](mailto:events@goal.ie).



Professor Luke O'Neill, professor of biochemistry and immunology

## Anam Cara expand their support for bereaved parents with no surviving children in Leinster

While sadly so many support services are being cut back and reduced due to the global pandemic, Dublin based charity Anam Cara have expanded their support services for bereaved parents living with no surviving children.

Whilst this group had been operating in Munster, there is now a dedicated group for those living in the Leinster area.

CEO and Founder of Anam Cara, Sharon Vard said "it is heart-breaking that there is a demand for this support group and those living with no surviving children require this lifeline". She continued "as a bereaved mother I know the intense grief, loneliness, pain and loss we feel, however the death of your only child is something I cannot imagine, to me it's the cruellest loss of all. It is vital that we expand and offer these specific groups".

A bereaved parent recently acknowledged the support from the group: "I can honestly say that I never felt more at ease than in the company of this group of parents who have also experienced the death of their only child. There was no judgement and no one was afraid to talk of their children's lives and deaths for fear of upsetting the other."

To find out more about this group and other services Anam Cara offer free of charge, visit their website [www.anamcara.ie](http://www.anamcara.ie) or email [info@anamcara.ie](mailto:info@anamcara.ie)

## Council to receive funding of €1.5m for housing adaptation grants

Wicklow County Council will receive funding to provide home adaptations for older people and those living with disability and mobility issues, Minister Simon Harris TD has said.

Minister Harris said "I am delighted that my colleagues, Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, Peter Burke TD, and Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien TD have announced a €75m fund for Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability."

"These grants are important as they help our older citizens and those with disabilities and mobility issues in Wicklow to remain living independently in their own homes for longer should they wish and will also facilitate early return from hospital."

"The grants are 80%

funded from the exchequer by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, with 20% funding from the relevant local authority.

Wicklow County Council will receive a combined total of €1,562,160 to support people in Wicklow with the repairs and other adaptations they need to live in their homes, which is most welcome.

Grants of up to €30,000 are available to help people with a disability in carrying out works required to make a house more suitable for their needs, up to €8,000 to assist older people to have necessary repairs or improvements

carried out and up to €6,000 for mobility aids.

Minister Harris concluded "These grants can help create employment opportunities for builders and businesses in Wicklow and help reduce the dependency on our health services by supporting independent living for as long as possible."

"Minister O'Brien also stated that while the current shutdown in construction activity remains in place, people should know that housing adaptation works can continue with the consent of the homeowner and once public health guidelines are adhered to."

Announcing the funding, Minister Burke said, "I am pleased that funding for our Local Authorities to administer this scheme has been increasing year on year since 2014. This

shows the importance that is attached to the scheme and the Government's commitment to older people and those with a disability."

"These grants have a huge impact on the quality of life of the many beneficiaries and play a vitally important role in helping people with a disability and people who are reaching an age in life when they are less mobile, to continue to live independently in their own homes."

"As Minister of State with responsibility for housing for older people and people with a disability, I am fully committed to assisting individuals to stay in their own homes and within their own communities for as long as possible and these allocations today will facilitate this goal for many," he concluded.



Irish Olympian and GOAL Ambassador Ciara Mageean





Social entrepreneur Alma Jordan, founder of AgriKids, and her son Eamon. Siobhan O'Keeffe, SEI's Director of Impact and Donal Murphy, Chief Executive of DCC plc, are on the laptop screen.

## Social entrepreneurs invited to apply for funding from SEI

**Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (SEI) is making €50,000 seed funding available through its Ideas Academy to individuals who have an innovative idea to solve a particular social problem and are looking to take the first steps from idea to action.**

A further €100,000 will be awarded through its Impact Programme. The funding is part of a suite of supports on offer to social entrepreneurs on its Ideas Academy and Impact Programme, which are both currently accepting applications. Participants on the Ideas Academy will have the opportunity to pitch for a portion of the €50,000 seed fund to pilot their idea at the end of the programme. Awardees on the Impact Programme will receive €20,000 in direct funding each to grow their impact in addition to bespoke non-financial support.

SEI, which is dedicated to supporting social entrepreneurs in Ireland, is encouraging people from Wicklow to "see the challenge, be the change," by applying to the Ideas Academy - aimed at those with an early-stage idea to solve a social problem, or the Impact Programme - aimed at high-potential social entrepreneurs looking to grow their impact. The closing date for applications is Wednesday, 7th April. Some of SEI's Leinster based alumni include AgriKids, FoodCloud, AsIAm and Dabbledoo Music.

Commenting, SEI Interim Director of Impact, Siobhán O'Keeffe said: "All across Ireland there are people with ideas to solve social problems - people with direct experience of a problem and the courage and insight to put forward to a solution, and act on it. It is often in the depths of real challenge that innovation is inspired and we are seeing that now in the responses to Covid-19. We're calling on people from all backgrounds who need support to realise their vision to apply to SEI. We know that the first step of the journey is often the hardest one to take. We hope that the

supports we have available on both of our programmes, along with the availability of €50,000 in seed funding on the Ideas Academy and €20,000 in unrestricted funding for each of our Impact Programme Awardees will further support our participants to pilot their idea and grow their impact."

Up to 60 places on the Ideas Academy are available for early-stage social entrepreneurs. The three-month programme will provide participants with the support and direction they need as they take the first steps from idea to action. In addition to having the opportunity to pitch for seed funding, participants on the Ideas Academy will be supported to clearly articulate, refine and progress their solution, to build skills and accelerate learning in core areas of importance to social entrepreneurs, and to move from idea to action. In response to current public health restrictions, the 2021 programme will be delivered online.

Up to five places are available on Social Entrepreneurs Ireland's prestigious Impact Programme, aimed at high-potential social entrepreneurs. In addition to €20,000 in unrestricted funding to grow their impact, Awardees will receive mentorship, training, and consultancy in areas such as leadership development, fundraising, governance, strategic planning, and communications. They will also have access to pro-bono support from partner organisations throughout the nine-month programme. The Impact Programme will be delivered primarily online in 2021-22, with in-person elements included when, and if, it safe to do so. DCC plc, the international sales, marketing and support services group, is the flagship supporter of SEI's national call for applications.

Applications for the Ideas Academy and Impact Programme are open until midnight on Wednesday, 7th April. Interested candidates can apply or find out more at [www.socialentrepreneurs.ie](http://www.socialentrepreneurs.ie).

# Wicklow students set for national entrepreneurship final

Local Enterprise Office Wicklow have announced that winning teenage entrepreneurs from Coláiste Chraobh Abhann and East Glendalough School will represent Wicklow at this year's Student Enterprise Programme National Final on Friday 14th May. As with last year's event the Final will take place virtually with approximately 80 finalist teams logging in all over the country.

The students all took part in the Wicklow Final on 23rd of March which was broadcast live on Facebook and Youtube. An estimated 962 students from 16 schools took part in the annual programme locally.

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 29,000 students from just under 500 secondary schools across the country take part in 2019 / 2020. The programme supports students to create, design and market their own business, all with the hope of reaching the National Final.

In the Junior Category, the students representing Wicklow at the National Final are: Oisín Reynolds, Cian O'Brien, Rosie Davies from "Sugar Shack" at Coláiste Chraobh Abhann.

In the Senior Category of the competition, Wicklow will be represented on May 14th by Nadia Finnan, Heidi Zeig, Hillary Hollingsworth from



"Simple Signs" at East Glendalough School.

Special guests at the Wicklow Final included Cllr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Frank Curran, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council and Kevin Ward of Reward Catering. There were also special messages of support from Olympic Athlete and European Champion Fionnula McCormack and none other than musician Hozier who both were very generous with their time.

Speaking at the county final, Vibeke Delahunt Head of Enterprise of Local Enterprise Office Wicklow congratulated the students, saying "We have a very successful

student enterprise programme here in Wicklow, with over 960 students from 16 local schools taking part this year. Our national finalists are excellent ambassadors for the programme and we wish them the very best of luck on Friday 14th, we'll all be logged on to support them. In what has been a particularly challenging year for students the programme has offered them an outlet outside of the usual school demands. What our students are learning from the programme is that with the right supports and encouragement, they can take an idea from the classroom and develop it into a real-life business. The skills they learn along

the way, such as business planning, market research, selling and team-work, will help them become more entrepreneurial throughout their future careers".

The local students will be competing against hundreds of other student entrepreneurs from all over Ireland at the Student Enterprise Programme National Final, taking place virtually on the 14th May.

Since the Student Enterprise Programme began in 2003, over 220,000 students have taken part, learning key skills on how to create a business idea, start a business and grow a business. The Student Enterprise Programme also has new range of online resources for 2020 / 2021 at [www.StudentEnterprise.ie](http://www.StudentEnterprise.ie), which will feature regular blogs and houses a full range of Student Enterprise resources for students and teachers.

Further information around the Student Enterprise Programme is available from [www.studententerprise.ie](http://www.studententerprise.ie) and by searching #studententerprise on social media.

The Student Enterprise Programme is co-ordinated by the Local Enterprise Offices and involves approximately 29,000 students from 500 secondary schools every year.

It runs from September to May and the 2020/2021 National Final takes place online on the 14th May.

## Winning enterprises

### Junior Category

Winner Junior Category - Coláiste Chraobh Abhann  
 Runner up Junior category - Greystones Community College  
 Runner up Junior category - Coláiste Chraobh Abhann  
 Special Commendation - Coláiste Chraobh Abhann  
 Special Commendation - Greystones Community College  
 Special Commendation - Coláiste Chraobh Abhann  
 Special Commendation - Greystones Community College

### Senior Category

Winner Senior Category - East Glendalough School  
 Runner Up Senior Category - Coláiste Bhríde  
 Runner Up Senior Category - CBS Arklow  
 Special Commendation Senior Category - Loreto Secondary School, Bray  
 Innovation Award - North Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School  
 Best Video Presentation Award - Coláiste Chraobh Abhann  
 Excellent Product/Service - St Kevin's Community College  
 Innovative Sales Award - Coláiste Bhríde  
 Social Media Award - Loreto secondary School, Bray  
 Intellectual Property Awareness Award - St Kevin's Community College



# Time to dream - the new Mercedes-Benz S-Class arrives

During Level 5 Lockdown, what is there to do? While there may not be a lot we can do practically, we can at least imagine and speculate. If one won the lotto, sold a site, married well or otherwise came across a "windfall" as accountants might call it, what would one do?

For some, the answer is go straight out and buy the best car available. Since 1886 when Messers Daimler and Benz built the first viable motor car, their top of the range vehicle has almost

By Martin McCarthy

always been the ultimate technical tour de force. What appears first on the S class appears in later months and years on other cars, as the laws of

reduced cost due to mass production, kicks in. Previous examples are ABS (1978), Airbag (1981) and ESP (1995).

The new generation S-Class has now just arrived in Ireland in stan-



The new Mercedes-Benz S-Class

dard and long wheelbase versions. Showcasing technology that, in time, will likely appear in future Mercedes-Benz vehicles.

Designed with what Mercedes calls 'a high-status grille' highlighting its 200 sq. cms larger front, its classically elegant and more contoured body shape has been given a subtle dash of sportiness - they are dominating F1 like never before, after all - evident in its imposing presence and posture.

Two petrol and three diesels are available initially. A plug-in hybrid

follows. Powerplants are V8 or 6-cylinder in-line engines and 9G-TRONIC automatic transmission.

Petrol models are an S450 and S500, both with 2999cc engines, 4-MATIC all-wheel drive, a top speed of 250km/h and 0-100km/h acceleration of 5.1 secs and 4.9 secs and torque of 500 and 520Nm respectively. Diesels are a S350d, S350d 4MATIC and S400d 4MATIC with top speeds of 250km/h, 0-

100km/h acceleration from 6.4 to 5.4 seconds and torque of 600, 600 and 700Nm respectively.

Commenting, Ciaran Allen, sales manager for Mercedes-Benz in Ireland said: "demand is expected to focus on the standard wheelbase 350d launching at €121,865. Beyond that, most models are likely to be bought by special order, fitted with features according to individual preference".

The car is on view for

Wicklow motorists at MSL Pottery Road, just off the N11 at Cabinteely, Covid 19 regulations permitting.

In the 1960s the 280SE was the top of the line Mercedes and it cost about 50% of the price of the average house. Today, the 450S costs 20% of the price of the average house - with vastly more functionality. Such is the power of mass production.

The other item to keep in keep in mind is that

the new S Class will be the safest car on the road - with innumerable collision avoidance mechanisms - but if there is a crash, its deformation sequence with give the driver and passengers the best chance of survival.

At least we can have the reasons for buying the best, lined up, in case the windfall arrives!

## CLASSIFIED ADS

### John 13:1-15 Gospel

It was before the festival of the Passover, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the father. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was. They were at supper, and the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas Iscariot son of Simon, to betray him. Jesus knew that the father had put everything into his hands and that he had come from God and was returning to God, and he got up from table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist: he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing. He came to Simon Peter who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.' 'Never!' said Peter. 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus replied, 'If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me.' 'then, Lord,' said Simon Peter 'not only my feet but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus said, 'No one who has taken a bath needs washing, he is clean all over. You too are clean, though not all of you are.' He knew who was going to betray him, that was why he said, 'though not all of you are.' When he had washed their feet and put on his clothes again, he went back to the table. 'Do you understand,' he said, 'what I have done to you? you call me Master and Lord, and rightly so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.'

#### Reflection

Once more we are invited to enter into the once-for-all-time saving event of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit, who makes the entire Paschal Mystery present at every celebration of the Mass, summons us and calls us to understand, to appreciate and to love this Mystery more deeply than before. And the heart of the Mystery is the limitless Love of God in Jesus Christ which reveals itself in his giving himself wholly to us, pouring out his merciful love as the water is poured over the Apostles' feet. How can we respond except by pouring out our lives to him and to one another.

C.J.

### 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. Thank You. P.R.D.



BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA  
**CHILL DARA AND CHILL MHANTÁIN**  
KILDARE AND WICKLOW  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board  
invites applications for the following posts:

**YOUTHREACH COORDINATOR**

Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow (maternity leave)

**BTEI ADULT EDUCATOR**

Mid Kildare, County Kildare

Full details are available on [www.kwetb.ie](http://www.kwetb.ie) and click on 'vacancies'.

Closing date for receipt of completed applications:

**12 noon on Monday 12th April 2021**

**Dr Deirdre Keyes, Chief Executive**



### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

#### Significant Information/ Revised Plans

I hereby give notice of the submission of significant further information to Wicklow County Council in relation to planning application ref no: 2117 for Joseph & Christina Murphy who are applying for permission at Sea Island, Ardara, Brittas Bay, Co. Wicklow for extension to the existing dwelling and garage, alterations to entrance walls and associated site works.

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.

## LOCAL BUSINESS | CLASSIFIEDS | PLANNING | APPOINTMENTS

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For details of our amazing deals please call 01 286 9111





**Cllr. Joe**

**BEHAN**

**INDEPENDENT**



**'WE DESERVE BETTER LEADERSHIP'  
WE DESERVE BETTER GOVERNMENT!'**

*We have been ordered around by the most incompetent, cowardly and visionless Government in our history, whose leading Ministers & members are more ambitious for themselves and their careers than they are for the people they are supposed to serve. We get message and counter message on a daily basis as the unholy alliance of Government parties vie for soundbites and media attention.*

***We have no leadership, no direction and no confidence!***

**WE HAVE SUFFERED**

- *Tragic Covid deaths, many needlessly in Nursing Homes*
- *Cruel funeral restrictions, no farewells to our loved ones*
- *Restrictions on our Faith with locked church doors,*
- *Savage house arrest,*
- *Devastating losses for small businesses,*
- *Deep educational disadvantage,*
- *Delayed vaccinations*
- *Enormous damage to mental health,  
and human loneliness on an epic scale.*

***MOST OF THE RESTRICTIONS DON'T MAKE SENSE:***

*Why can only 10 people go to a funeral, yet 300 can go to a supermarket?  
Why are churches, the biggest buildings in most towns with the highest ceilings and best ventilation locked up?  
For our elderly their Faith is a cornerstone of their existence.  
Why are elite sports permitted but children can't exercise and play games?  
Why can't 36 people play golf in a hundred acres yet 400 can be in a smaller park. The list goes on.*

***The Government must trust people; we live in communities that are social and interdependent. The Irish way of life is cherished and admired the world over for its 'people centred' approach.***

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