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Thursday 23rd March 2021 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

CALL FOR DONNELLY TO GO

“Minister Donnelly's handling of the pandemic response has been shambolic from the beginning. We have been treated to mishap after mishap,” declared Deputy John Brady last week as he called for Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly “to desist from acting as a block to the national vaccine roll out, and for the Taoiseach Micheal Martin to step in to ensure that the Minister is unable to do any more harm.”

He said: “It is very clear that Minister Donnelly has lost control of the situation and is out of his depth. And as the man responsible for his appointment, the Taoiseach needs to step up and rectify his mistake by taking personal control of the situation.”

“Last week was the date set by the government for getting the

quarantine hotel system up and running. Yet, we now have a Minister who is unable to tell us when this will happen. Ten weeks ago, the government pledged to have this system in place. Three weeks ago, the Dáil passed the necessary legislation for this to happen. We still have no idea when this is going to happen.”

Brady continued

“Micheal Martin appointed Stephen Donnelly. It is time that he stepped in and took responsibility for the current situation by taking personal control of the vaccine roll out. It is not the fault of the people of Ireland that Fianna Fail had to empty the subs bench last year to deal with the raft of government resignations - Donnelly



Pictured enjoying the sunshine on St. Patrick's Day were the Tobin family in Arklow; Derek, Hilary, and Jamie, with their pet Billy. Pic: Michael Kelly

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needs to sit this one out regardless.

“The situation is absolutely unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue. This is not simply a matter of politics, there are lives at stake here. And every day that the risk of re-infection from travellers into Ireland remains, every day that vulnerable people remain unvaccinated, a risk to life remains.”

A spokesman for the Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said: “Ireland has consistently had amongst the fastest roll out vaccine rates in the EU. 95 per cent of all vaccines are administered within seven days of arriving in the country. Most recently we have seen 99 per cent of the over 85s vaccinated within the targeted three week timetable.”

“By the end of next week close to 250,000 over 70s will have been

vaccinated. It has of course been frustrating to see the delays in the delivery of Astra Zeneca but if the future delivery schedules are met we are still on course to see one million vaccines a month being administered in April.

“Also, it's important to note the vaccines are already having an incredible impact.”

“Covid infection rates for hospital workers have fallen by 95 per cent. Staff absenteeism in the nursing home sector relating to Covid has fallen from several thousand to a few hundred. The latest serial testing results from the nursing home sector have a positivity rate of just 0.2 per cent.”

“It is appalling to see some members of the Opposition scaremongering and creating fear just to score cheap political points. Our vaccination programme

is going well, of course there have been some bumps in the road, but

it's important the public know we are making real progress and seeing

astonishingly positive results from the vaccine.”

TRANSFORM
Associate Artists Scheme

Mermaid Arts Centre is currently seeking applications from artists for TRANSFORM - an associate artist scheme to employ four professional artists of various disciplines, part-time for 1 year. Applications close on 2nd April.
Full info at www.mermaidartscentre.ie



Lisa Collins, Bronwyn O'Brien, Maeve Dunne, Jean Evans, Becci Harrison, and Anne Gregory celebrating International Women's Day in Greystones

Age & Opportunity

FitLine Age & Opportunity have announced that they are expanding their FitLine initiative in 2021 to reach more older adults right across the country. They are looking for more volunteer mentors, individuals or groups, to join the FitLine team, to help them deliver this very worthwhile initiative. FitLine, one of their Active programme initiatives, is a volunteer peer led telephone-based motivation line which encourages older adults to introduce physical activity into their daily lives. FitLine is designed to help people who want to feel a bit healthier but just don't have the motivation, confidence or information on where and how to take that first step. FitLine mentor volunteers are required to provide encouragement and ideas about how older adults can do simple physical activities as part of their day to day routine to suit their own lifestyle, and to provide information about clubs, groups and facilities in their own communities. Download and fill in the FitLine mentor volunteer application form at ageandopportunity.ie/about-age-and-opportunity/get-involved/

Art competition

Wicklow teachers in primary and second level schools, whose pupils take part in the annual Texaco Children's Art Competition, are reminded that the closing date for receipt of entries this year is Wednesday, 24th March. Last year over 900 pupils from schools in Co. Wicklow submitted entries to the Competition. Now in its 67th year, the Texaco Children's Art Competition is widely acknowledged as the longest running arts sponsorship in Ireland.

Fundraising campaign to support couple after house fire

A campaign has been set up by Laragh resident Ryan McNeill to raise money for Cahal and Sonia who lost their home in a fire in February. On the night of the 10th February 2021 fire engulfed their home in the village of Laragh. Thankfully they escaped the property unharmed with their three children. The property and all their belongings, however, were destroyed in the fire. Ryan is hoping that friends and others in the community can come together to assist Cahal and Sonia in reconstructing their house and rebuilding their lives. See www.gofundme.com/f/help-cahal-and-sonia-rebuild-their-home

Codling Wind Park

Codling Wind Park is a proposed offshore wind farm. The wind farm would be located approximately 13-22 km off the Wicklow Coast between Greystones and Wicklow Town. Information Clinics are being held from 15th to 27th March.

You may have further questions or topics that you would like to discuss directly. Virtual appointments may be booked via the website or by contacting Liz Dillon, 087 1011473. Each appointment lasts 30 minutes. All bookings and information from www.codlingwindpark.ie.

Lisne Art Group Online Exhibition

The Luisine Art Group's online exhibition can be viewed until Sunday 28th March at signalartscentre.ie/.

The Luisine Art Group is a unique style of class that began 8 years ago in the Luisine Centre in Kilcoole (meaning first blush of light before dawn.) All those participating are encouraged in their freedom to engage with a variety of sources of inspiration and mixed media.

The style of teaching is more of facilitation and calling forth - as opposed to demonstrating methods. In this way each individual has the opportunity to explore and discover what fits their own niche of self-expression. This original approach allows for people being at different levels of fluency with forms. In this way participants also serve to support the unfolding creativity of others in the group.

Visits to different art galleries and exhibitions, both locally and in Dublin, bring a social aspect to the group. The impact of including those events not only supports learning and development, it also gives an added bonus of building a sense of community among the group with humour, light-heartedness and inclusivity. Since 2017 the class has submitted artwork for the "Incognito" Jack & Jill Foundation fundraiser each year. In the last two years the Greystones Library has held an exhibition of work created by the group.

'There are still ways you can help'

Oxfam Bray are appealing to the public to keep making donations during this lockdown. "As we all entered 2021, we also entered our third lockdown. Like so many other local businesses, Oxfam Bray closed its doors to do its part in stopping the spread of Covid-19, save lives and support our health workers," they said.

Oxfam Bray still wants the things you don't! Drop your donations off today at one Oxfam Ireland's textile banks. Save your donations and drop them in the shop when they're back up and running. Any Christmas or birthday gifts lying about that you know you won't use - keep them for donation too! Oxfam want to thank the people of Wicklow for all the ways they've supported them over those 65 years - from donating and shopping to volunteering time and talent. They ask people to stand with them now and continue their support until they can welcome them once again in-store.

Public consultation extended for Glendalough and Wicklow Mountains National Park Masterplan

The Public Consultation period for the Masterplan for Glendalough and Wicklow Mountains National Park has been extended to 26th March.

Cllr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, welcomed the decision to extend the initial stakeholder engagement for the Masterplan for Glendalough and the Wicklow Mountains National Park saying: We want to give the maximum number of people the opportunity to engage with this process because this project has the potential to greatly enhance our tourism offering, while adding to the amenity of the area for local residents. Consultation is particularly challenging given the Level 5 restrictions."

He encouraged members of the community to go on to Wicklow.ie or to pick up an information pack from McCoy's of Laragh in order to familiarise themselves with the issues and said they could complete the online questionnaire or simply respond via email.

Requests for meetings can be

facilitated by contacting Wicklow@paulhogarth.com.

The aim of the Masterplan is to improve the visitor experience in County Wicklow. Following the public consultation, Fáilte Ireland along with the OPW, NPWS, Coillte and National Monuments Service, will review the responses and use them to shape draft proposals. The proposals will then be reviewed with Wicklow County Council and be the focus for a further period of public engagement that will inform refinement prior to finalisation.

Minister Simon Harris TD has welcomed the news that Fáilte Ireland has extended the consultation period for the Wicklow Tourism Masterplan.

Minister Harris said "There has been great engagement to date from the community, businesses, outdoor recreation groups and the hospitality sector to the

consultation being undertaken by Fáilte Ireland regarding how best to develop Wicklow's visitor and tourist amenities in the years ahead.

"Given the large public interest and feedback to date, Fáilte Ireland has now extended their consultation until March 26th. I would like to thank local residents and businesses for their feedback to date.

"I would very much like to hear your feedback in respect of potential improvements that could be made to ensure growth in overnight visitor numbers along with ideas and proposals on heritage and recreational amenities that could be better promoted and enhanced with the right public investment."

The Fáilte Ireland public consultation has now been extended from March 12th until March 26th and a submission portal is on Wicklow.ie.

Wicklow Lions Club's South Quay Project

All the members of Wicklow & District Lions Club are delighted to be involved in a very exciting project at South Quay in Wicklow town.

The totally revamping of the area directly behind the Scout Hall will make it much more welcoming for a chat a rest or a coffee in picturesque surroundings."

Sean continued "we hope to get support from all the businesses in the area as well as the general community."

"Our online fundraising is still very active (ifundraise.ie/wicklow) and any help would be much appreciated."

This is a joint project with and created by Wicklow Tidy Towns and funded by Wicklow Lions. Lions Maurice Corr and Sean Olohan met with Louise Kelly and Leonora Earls representing Tidy Towns to discuss and plan the project at this very popular meeting point by the river.

Sean Olohan President of Wicklow Lions Club said "every single person in the community is aware of and appreciates the work carried out by the Tidy Towns Team and we are extremely excited to be directly involved in this particular project."

It is expected that the work will be completed in April depending on current restrictions.

A second project in conjunction with the Tidy Towns will be announced shortly.



Lions Club members on Wicklow Town's South Quay

WICKLOW
Times

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

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FURY OVER BY-PASS OF BRAY FOR COVID VACCINATION CENTRE

Independent councillor, Joe Behan last week fumed "The news that Bray, the largest town in the county, has been by-passed as a community Covid vaccination centre is astounding. In fact, it is incredible that only two centres in all of County Wicklow have been chosen.

"The decision means that tens of thousands of people in our main population centres will have to travel to be vaccinated. This may be acceptable for people who have private cars but what about the many people with no option except public transport, currently operating at 25% capacity? What about the people with severe mobility problems?"

CLlr Behan continued "Apparently, the Government or its agents couldn't come up with any suitable venues in Bray! What is wrong with The Royal Hotel, the BIFE Complex, The Little Flower Hall? Each of these locations are in the town centre, have excellent parking facilities nearby and are easily accessible. Other ideal locations would be the Ballywaltrim and Little Bray Community Centres at either end of the town.

"The same difficulties will be experienced in Wicklow town, Blessington and

Baltinglass.

"It is clear that the Government has messed up even in the arrangements for one of the venues. Charlesland in Greystones was announced publicly and days later, the venue was changed to Shoreline.

"It is all part of the haphazard and leaderless response by the Government and its agents to the entire Covid pandemic.

"We have been under effective house arrest since Christmas with no end in sight. The reliance on vaccination to get us out of lockdown has proven to be short sighted as the vaccine supply has been disastrously reduced. We are storing up huge problems for the future, including mental health, educational disruption and economic devastation for individual citizens, particularly business owners as well as the entire national economy.

"The inhuman and callous disregard for the

rights of people of all religious faiths to practice their religion is a disgrace. Many people rely on their religious faith for comfort in times of stress and this Government has trampled over those people consistently for the past year. It is clear as crystal that the religious faith of its citizens is of no interest to the powers that be.

"The bypassing of Bray as a vaccine centre is only a symptom of the incompetence, heartlessness and arrogance of a Government which is already well past its sell by date."

Sinn Féin TD John Brady was also scathing in his condemnation of Bray being by-passed: "In Wicklow we have unfortunately seen firsthand how an attempt by Minister Donnelly to get some PR with an announcement of the opening of a vaccination centre in his hometown of Greystones was more important than actually getting the contract to use the Charlesland

Golf Club signed. In the process, Bray, which is the largest town in Wicklow was overlooked. The Minister has informed me that they could not identify a suitable facility. This is despite the fact that there is a newly opened Primary Health Centre, various hotels that are closed and many community centres that could have been used. The use of the Charlesland Golf Club as a vaccination centre ultimately fell through, despite the Minister presenting it as a done deal."

A spokesman for Minister Donnelly said the Minister had no role in the locating of vaccination centres.

Minister Simon Harris told *Wicklow Times*: "The selection of vaccination centres is a decision for the HSE. I had no role, nor should I have a role in the selection of these locations. It seems peculiar that no suitable site for a vaccination centre could be selected in Bray."



Jackie, Clifford and Marcella Kinch with five lambs that were born to one of their ewes on their farm at Moyne. The same ewe gave birth to six lambs in March of last year.

Harris odds drop to 5/1 to replace Varadkar

Minister Simon Harris is now one of the main favourites in the running to replace Leo Varadkar as leader of Fine Gael.

It was confirmed on Sunday 14th March that an initial inquiry into the leak of a confidential health document by Varadkar to a friend when he was Taoiseach has been upgraded to a full criminal investigation.

The Minister for Further and Higher Education has previously spoke out in support of his party leader, saying that Varadkar's apology on the matter was 'good enough' for him. However, the former Health Minister has been increasingly gambled to be the next leader of the party, seeing his odds slashed into 5/1 from 12/1 with BoyleSports.

Harris backed Simon Coveney over Varadkar in the 2017 leadership election and it's Coveney who remains the 4/7 favourite to step up into the hotseat when the vacancy arrives. Paschal Donohoe is also in the frame as the 6/1 third favourite, while Helen McEntee has been eased to 10/1 from 6/1.

Lawrence Lyons, spokesperson for BoyleSports said: "Irish punters are now speculating that Leo Varadkar's days could be numbered. Simon Harris is our new second favourite at 5/1 from 12/1 following recent support as a growing number think a leadership election is coming."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

*From former Wicklow County councillor
Barry Nevin*

Dear Editor,

Having been one of the first victims of Covid back in April 2020 I am all too aware as a frontline worker of the effects of this lethal virus. I spent seven weeks in hospital, three of them in the ICU on a ventilator. I am still suffering with "Long Covid"

I am both astonished and disappointed at the response I received to my reasonable and practical request to both Ministers Stephen Donnelly and Simon Harris that a vaccination hub be set up in Bray. That I didn't even have the courtesy of an acknowledgment in writing from them to me, is at the least quite disrespectful.

I have pointed out that Bray has the largest population base in the County, almost 40,000 people, it is by far the largest population centre in Wicklow.

In the context of the roll out of the general vaccination Bray is being ignored once again by the failure of the Department of Health and the HSE to set up a vaccination hub in the town where there are numerous buildings that are perfectly suitable.

Bray is not a third world country, yet is being treated as such. The residents of Bray deserve better from their Government TDs. I am further alarmed at the apparent silence of County Councillors representing the Bray area on this matter.

It's still not too late for the HSE and the Government Ministers Harris and Donnelly to treat the people of Bray as equal citizens of this County and I believe this injustice is also being done to the other major towns and rural areas of the County, some 50 miles from Greystones.

I welcome the setting up of the vaccination centre in Greystones, however there must be no discrimination based on where you live as a citizen. There must be the right to receive vaccinations in time. Access to vaccinations must be transparent, accountable and not be constrained by which towns Government Ministers happen to live.

I want to pay tribute to Deputy John Brady TD for his courtesy and follow up work to my request for a Covid vaccination centre for the people of Bray.

I call on all Public Representatives in Wicklow to lobby for vaccine access centres throughout the County of Wicklow.

Yours,
Barry Nevin,
former County Councillor and recovering Covid patient

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Avon Motors Hyundai Hero Luc Nolan is pictured with Christina 'Tiny' Short, Ray Carter, and Paul Carter at Avon Motors, Rathdrum

Workshops for finding your way around local government

Wicklow County Council has many diverse functions covering areas including housing, infrastructure, community services, financial support for local development and much more. It also has a large role to play in the oversight and coordination of many programmes under the direction of national government policy.

To support community groups and individuals to understand the local government landscape better, Co Wicklow PPN is running 3 workshops that will look at the structures of the local authority, its committees, the policy areas it covers, the work it undertakes, and the roles of its various stakeholders. Social Justice Ireland will provide a brief introduction to social analysis, highlight the benefits of networking and working collaboratively together, as well as giving guidance on how to make effective submissions. The final session will look at local authority finance, where it comes from, what its limitations are and where it is spent.

Helen Howes, Co Wicklow PPN Resource Worker said "These sessions will be of interest to anyone with an interest in local government, particularly if they are involved in local community development activities."

The sessions begin on 8th April and run for three Thursday evenings from 7pm to 9pm. The sessions are being run free of charge and Co Wicklow PPN member groups will have priority booking. Bookings can be made at: <https://lastrucuesandmakingsubmissions.eventbrite.ie>.

For more information contact Co Wicklow PPN using the Email: info@countywicklowppn.ie or calling Helen 087 189 5145 or Grainne 086 048 7434

Wicklow healthcare worker wins Irish Wildlife Trust 'Photo of the Year' competition

Congratulations to Andrea Hunt who has won the Irish Wildlife Trust "Photo of the Year" Andrea from Mayo but now living in Dublin, works as a frontline healthcare worker in Bray and Arklow.



Andrea's award-winning photograph

"The photo was taken in a patch of wildflowers along the Dargle River in Bray. It's a lovely oasis of colour and sounds during the Summer with birds, bees, butterflies to keep me company on my lunch breaks - a welcome break from the hustle bustle of the town," says Andrea.

"I love this picture for how it shows the crashing of a determined little bee into the ragwort plantain and the resulting scattering of pollen from the plant. It's extremely difficult to capture a bee in flight and I'd been practising for months to hone my skills to manage a shot like this!"

"I do love watching and photographing busy little bees - their fat bodies carried around by such delicate little wings and loaded down with pollen all over their bodies and their pollen baskets on their legs - all of these details are just fascinating to see in a close-up image. The world would be in big trouble if these lovely little pollinators were wiped out."

"I've been photographing nature subjects for many years now - it's a lovely way to get some time out from a busy world or a busy brain! I get great joy in watching and learning about the natural world around us and being able to capture and share such images with others is just wonderful."

Wicklow's Hyundai Heroes recognised

Luca Nolan and May Kenna have been announced as Avon Motors' Hyundai Heroes. Luca was diagnosed with lymphoma in October 2020. He just started secondary school in September.

During the summer of 2020, a lump formed on Luca's neck. After trips to doctors and specialists, Luca's diagnosis was finally confirmed.

He was transferred to Crumlin Hospital where he has undergone chemotherapy and a lot of scans and tests. Luca has responded really well to treatment.

He wanted to give something back to Crumlin Hospital so he decided to sell Christmas trees, crafts and goodies. Two weekends in December him and his family embarked on this fundraiser. He raised €12,392.95.

Presentation college in Bray and Roundwood N.S. also did a 'Wear a Christmas Jumper' day and also contributed.

His cousin Piaras Morris, also organised a head shave to help Luca with losing his hair. He along with other cousins, Matt, John, Paul and Eanna, two friends, Eoghan and

Darragh, dad Shay and barber Stephen shaved their heads along with Luca.

May Kenna, aged 89, from Moneystown was named a Hyundai Hero for dancing in her livingroom for the Jerusalem Dance Challenge

which challenged people to have fun at home while staying safe, dancing to the song by South African producer Master KG.

A video of May's dance was posted online and viewed over 400,000 times.



Hyundai Hero May Kenna with Denis Carter at Avon Motors

Bray school takes part in study on alcohol behaviours

Over 13,000 students, including pupils from St. Killian's in Bray, have to date participated in Drinkaware's Junior Cycle Alcohol Education Programme (JC AEP) which was the subject of the three-year longitudinal study carried out by Maynooth University.

This study, for the first time, tracks 1st to 3rd year students' experiences of alcohol education in Ireland in real time. As the national charity working to reduce and prevent alcohol misuse in Ireland, Drinkaware commissioned Maynooth University's Centre for Mental Health and Community Research to investigate the programme's effectiveness and, in particular, its primary prevention goal to delay the age of first drink.

The programme involves 8-10 lessons delivered on a weekly/fortnightly basis by the trained teacher and to date 134 schools have undertaken the programme. 350+ students from 19 schools across the country took part in the evaluation that was conducted over the three-year period (2018 - 2020).

The report found that as the students progressed through the JC AEP, the proportion who expressed no intention or interest in drinking, rose from 30% in 1st year to 54% in 3rd year. The findings also show that participation led to substantial and sustained improvements in students' knowledge and understanding of alcohol when compared with pre-programme delivery data.

Students' knowledge of the impact of alcohol on overall health and wellbeing increased substantially and progressively from 22% pre-programme to 50% in 3rd year. A similar

increase was found regarding students who reported 'knowing a lot' about alcohol's impact on mental health which also doubled from 23% pre-programme to 46% in 3rd year. Furthermore, nearly half (46%) of participating students identified the negative impact of alcohol on physical and mental health as a reason why teenagers do not drink.

As the study followed participating students through their three formative years of secondary school, there was a marked shift across some of the results when comparing 2nd and 3rd year data. For instance, the 60% (approx.) of students who indicated that they had never drunk alcohol remained fairly stable between 1st and 2nd year, but then decreased sharply by 17% as students went from 2nd to 3rd year.

A disturbing result revealed in the study was that 38% of 3rd year participating students who drink, have already experienced one or more negative effects of alcohol consumption, such as physical fights, arguments, accidents/injury, and/or feeling physically sick/vomiting.

A recurring theme identified within the report, was that of parents' role in underage drinking. Parental permissiveness - even if this is only perceived by the student - and the ease with which alcohol can be accessed in the home setting, may either inhibit or enable underage

drinking. For instance, 57% of 3rd year students had first consumed alcohol either in their own or someone else's home, most saying they did so with little difficulty whilst only 1 in 4 said they got into trouble with parents for drinking.

In contrast to the 44% in 3rd year who cited tolerant parental views regarding alcohol, 19% indicated that their parents do not like to see them drinking, and 17% of those in 3rd year who had not started drinking cited concerns over their parents' reaction as a deterrent to drinking.

The findings on the views of teachers, reflected a general consensus that parents/guardians should take primary responsibility for alcohol education (63%) and that they either were not fulfilling this role or needed support to do so.

With regard to the participating students and teachers' views of the JC AEP, the study reveals consistently high proportions of students in each year of the evaluation, rated the JC AEP highly, for example 63% of students in Year 3 rated it as 'excellent', 'very good' or 'good'. 60% also said that they would recommend the programme to other students/schools.

Commenting on the report findings, Sheena Horgan, Drinkaware CEO said: "15 years of age is the average age of the first drink in Ireland. But average doesn't tell the full

story. This study shows how attitudes, and behaviours shift markedly across 13 to 15 year olds (1st to 3rd year), meaning alcohol education before this age is vital. Maynooth University's rigorous and independent evaluation shows how programmes like Drinkaware's JC AEP can make a significant contribution to the prevention/delay of underage drinking."

Lead author of the study, Professor Sinéad McGilloway, Founder Director of the Centre for Mental Health and Community Research at Maynooth University's Dept. of Psychology said: "To date, public policy on alcohol has primarily focused on older teenagers. However, our research clearly indicates that we need to engage with our children at a much earlier age. The collective findings of this study suggest that Drinkaware's Alcohol Education Programme is a useful, feasible and high quality programme that is successfully engaging and empowering young people to develop sustained improvements in knowledge, awareness, understanding, confidence and appropriate decision-making skills around the consumption of alcohol. The results also highlight the important role that parents play in protecting and educating their children on alcohol, and a need to provide better support to them in this regard."

€7.14m funding to regenerate Bray Harbour

Funding of €7.14m has been announced for the Bray Harbour Area Integrated Regeneration Project from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF). Wicklow County Council believes the funding will unlock the great potential of Bray Harbour and surrounding area.

The funding will facilitate an integrated scheme to develop the harbour and associated public realm works to provide a vibrant waterfront area with connectivity between the promenade, the town centre the Dublin Road area and beyond.

The works will include: Review potential for harbour wall extension, dredging of the waterbody; Amenity and Public Realm: Extend amenity areas, improve street lighting, paving, parking, cycle provision and sporting facilities; Promenade Board Walk linking the Promenade with the harbour; Relocation of boat storage to the north of the harbour.

Commenting on the funding Deputy Steven Matthews said "I'm delighted to secure this funding for much needed improvements to our beautiful harbour area. We started working on plans

many years ago when I was Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District. We want to protect and enhance the public harbour area for all residents, visitors and local businesses. The area is loved by the people of Bray but it needs some improvement. Whether you sail, enjoy water sports, go for a walk or just sit and feed the swans this huge funding will improve all those aspects for locals and visitors. The connection to the Victorian promenade will be improved as will pedestrian and cycling links northwards towards Shanganagh.

"The enhancement of our public harbour has always been a priority of mine and this funding will make this a reality. All works to the public area will require consultation and will be carried out with the highest environmental protection for the biodiversity that exists in

our harbour and with full regards for the local residents."

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly also welcomed the €7.14 million funding, saying "For years there has been work on the ground to try and get this project across the line because the harbour area in Bray has been in great need of investment.

"The harbour was in dire need of added protection for the boats mooring there while the redevelopment of the shore area opens up enormous possibilities for things like shops or market stalls to be put in place.

"With the extension of the south harbour wall it will for the first time ever make it possible for a ferry service to operate between Bray and Dun Laoghaire.

"That will be a massive tourism attraction and bring a whole new dimension to what the area has

to offer.

"This is really good news for the town that will have an immensely positive impact both for businesses and the residents."

The Minister added: "We will of course continue to push hard for further funding for the rest of the county but today it's great to be able to celebrate a big win for Bray".

"This funding will unlock the great potential of Bray Harbour area and will add to the amenity and vibrancy of the town and with the development of the promenade, the public transport bridge, the transport interchange at the DART station, the development of Bray Central will be transformative," according to Frank Curran, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council.

Welcoming the funding, the Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Pat Kennedy, compli-



Amanda Szydlo, Erin Tobin, and Viltė Naujokityte enjoying the sunshine in Arklow on St. Patrick's Day

mented Council officials and consultants who he said were working to ensure that the Council has a pipeline of funding applications for Urban and Rural Regeneration development funding.

He added: "This is a great boost for the County and will add to its appeal as a place to live, work, visit and do business in".

A number of studies have highlighted the need for public investment to unlock significant potential for the town and Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District, Cllr Anne Ferris, said: "The

vision for the harbour seeks to protect and significantly enhance the amenity character of Bray Harbour to improve its appeal to existing users, visitors and tourists and to cater for expected population increase in the area".

Also welcoming the funding, Minister Simon Harris said "This new investment will unlock the potential of our urban areas, making the best use of land available, promoting sensible development and compact growth, and ensuring that our urban communities are attractive and vibrant places in

which to live, work and visit.

"The support from the URDF for our communities is more vital than ever with the growth in remote and blended working which means more time spent at home locally, reduced time spent commuting as well as a boost for local businesses," Minister Harris said.

"Launched by the Fine Gael-led government in November 2018 as part of Project Ireland 2040, the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund is about sensible, strategic and sustainable develop-

ment that regenerates and rejuvenates our cities and large towns. By aligning with both the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan, the URDF focuses investment on infrastructure, including transport, housing and recreation, in a way that improves quality of life for all."

Minister Harris concluded "I know the work that has gone into planning and developing these transformative projects and I'm eager to see their implementation which will benefit us all here in Wicklow."

COVID-19 vaccinations are underway, bringing hope to our communities.

As more people are vaccinated, this should help reduce the harm caused by COVID-19.

- GPs are currently vaccinating people aged 80 and over.
- People aged 75 and over, and then 70 and over will be vaccinated next.
- You don't need to register in advance. As soon as your vaccine is available, your GP will let you know.
- We are also making plans to vaccinate people with certain health conditions that put them at very high risk if they get COVID-19. You do not need to register in advance or take any action at this time. Your healthcare team will contact you when it's your turn to be vaccinated.
- All vaccines are tested before they are approved for use in Ireland.
- If you have questions about your COVID-19 vaccine, we have answers you can trust on [hse.ie](https://www.hse.ie) or you can call HSElive on 1850 24 1850.



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Rialtas na hÉireann
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Rathdrum man wins prestigious Hammond House Literary Prize

Rathdrum man Bobby Calloway has won the prestigious Hammond House Literary Prize for his short screenplay 'Fallen', about two soldiers in World War 1 and the belief in the supernatural.

Bobby is an actor and writer originally from Borehamwood in Hertfordshire but living in Ireland for twenty years now. Speaking to *Wicklow Times* he said, "The Hammond House Literary Prize was one of many screenwriting contests I enter, and I actually forgot about it when they told me I'd won; I entered in September and didn't find out until two days before Christmas. It was for short screenplays, and the theme was 'Survival'."

"I've worked with them many times on my own projects and theirs - and my cinematographer is a Bray man called Bill Stapleton. My costume person is an Arklow based genius called

Ronya Phoenix, and it's being co-produced with my good friends Greg Young (of Leixlip) and Dana Lee Al Qattan (originally of Germany). I'm starring in it as well as directing, and the other roles are filled by my good friends Adam Douglas (of Finglas) and Michele McNally (of Cookstown). This will be my first time getting to both direct and star alongside both of them."

In addition to the contest, I'm working on a horror novel called *Young Blood* that I'm aiming to get published this year. I also have a feature film script that was written in the first lockdown; a coming-of-age drama *Life on Pluto* to be directed by Greg.

Myself, Greg, Adam, Dana and Michele will all be starring too. I also have a feature film due for release this year - a neo-noir thriller called *Spears*, directed by Gerard Lough (I didn't write this one, I'm only involved as cast). Right now, I'm also part of an animated film called *Silicon Docks* by Graham Jones that I have a recording session for tomorrow in fact."

Bobby has already started pre-production to get on the adaption of his screenplay, which is to be filmed in Wicklow - with the help of No WiFi (short for North Wicklow Films), a filmmaking community set up in Bray to give Wicklow-based artists the opportunity to collaborate.

Urgent action demanded on all Greystones/Kilcoole school projects

Minister Simon Harris received an update from the Department of Education's Forward Planning and Building Unit regarding the shortage of local second level school places for autumn 2021.

Minister Harris said "I welcomed the news that the conciliation process in respect of Greystones Community National School is scheduled to end in the next week or so. The dispute over the completion and handover of the new school building has taken a terrible toll on the school community at both Greystones CNS and Greystones Community College."

In respect of Greystones Community College the Department has now issued a Schedule of Accommodation for the permanent school building and a design team has been put in place to deal with the planning application for the school while the completion of the acquisition of the site progresses".

In terms of certainty as regards Greystones Community College's home in autumn 2021, the County Council will make a decision on granting planning permission for a 16 classroom temporary school on the grounds of Eire Og on the week commencing 22nd March, 2021"

Minister Harris thanked

all the Wicklow parents that responded to his school places survey in the past week.

"I am grateful for the feedback I have received from parents thus far in response to my school places survey. The information provided is valuable in assisting me in making the case for much needed added investment in Wicklow schools to address the particular issue we have with school places."

Minister Harris highlighted that the school places survey is still open for submissions: "I want to receive your views and feedback so if you are waiting for a school place for your child or have concerns about school capacity in our community, I would be grateful if parents could take five minutes to share their information and thoughts".

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has called for a centralised system for allocating school places in Greystones district and in other areas in Wicklow where demand for school places is rising.

Deputy Whitmore has written to the Minister for Education on this issue after a meeting was held between Wicklow TDs and the Department of Health on school capacity in the area.

"We're now in March, and many parents and children are still without certainty whether their child has a school place and what school they will go to this September. Progress has been slow to date and the fact that the Department has analysed the number of children in need of a place locally has gone from 494 to 190 and now to 100 reveals a serious lack of knowledge by the Department on overall demand in growing towns and villages," she said.

"The current system is just chaotic to say the least. The amount of time and energy put in by parents and children, and public representatives every year to campaign for a school place is a huge waste of energy for everyone involved. Surely there's a better way to go about this that doesn't cause untold stress and anxiety for families. We need to get to a

place where parents have full confidence in the system to know their child will have a place and where they will be.

"It is time for the necessary reforms of the current system to be flagged and put on the Department's agenda. This can be done by implementing a centralised system for allocating school places, removing waiting lists and providing a clear picture of demand for school places in areas experiencing population growth."

"The Department has carried out a system like this before in other places such as Limerick City where a CAO-style system of allocation was put in place to deal with uncertainty around school places. I believe this can also be applied here in Greystones and in places experiencing rising school demand across Wicklow and have written to the Department requesting this. Parents and children have a right to know where they will end up and need that certainty to be able to prepare for a new school," concluded Deputy Whitmore.

Tinahely student awarded agriculture work placement bursary

Victoria Woods, a past pupil of Kilkenny College, Co Kilkenny is one of two students at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) to be awarded an agriculture work placement bursary, the Seedtech/ASA/IFJ Placement Bursary. The third year student is studying agricultural science. She is a daughter of Robert and Jill Woods and is from Tinahely.

Each year the Agricultural Science Association (ASA) teams up with the Irish Farmers Journal, Glánbia and Seedtech to provide placement bursaries to students in the BSc (Hons) in Agricultural Science and BSc in Agriculture to support costs associated with farm/industrial placement.

Programme leaders Dr Michael Breen and Dr Tony Woodcock, thanked all of the interviewers for giving their time and expertise so generously. "Placement is an integral part of the ag science/agriculture programmes here in WIT and it is great to have the continued support of our industry stakeholders in awarding the placement bursaries," said Dr Woodcock. Dr Breen added that "The interviewers were very impressed with the broad knowledge of the agri food sector that the students displayed as well as their eagerness to learn from their forthcoming placement."

Seedtech's Denise Stuart, said: "Seedtech were delighted to be involved in the WIT Placement Bursary once again this year. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 restrictions, the students cannot travel abroad for their work placements. However, we hope that the bursary will go to good use, either for internal travel expenses or is hived away for when we can all travel abroad again. Seedtech was very impressed with the quality of the candidates again this year and we wish the applicants/winners every success in the coming year."

In the bursary application Victoria outlined: her interest in agriculture as an industry, and how the opportunity of

being offered a placement position at Teagasc Johnstown Castle research centre in Co Wexford, has enabled her to grow her knowledge of the industry, particularly in the area of research.

Victoria explains why she applied for the placement bursary: "it is a great opportunity for all ag students to apply for, it helps to cover some of the expense which may be associated with work placement. Both of the agricultural courses which are offered at WIT offer one semester of work placement. This is a great opportunity for students to get a feel for what areas they would enjoy working in once they graduate."

Her dreams for the future include: the possibility of travelling in a post covid-19 world. America and New Zealand are top of the list.



Victoria Woods

Funding for path to Kilcoole train station

Fianna Fail Cllr Gerry Walsh has welcomed the announcement from the National Transport Authority that €30,000 is being made available to fund the design of a path on Sea Road.

Cllr Walsh also commended Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly on the work he has done in pushing for the funding to be made available.

The funding was released as part of a €240million nationwide sustainable travel scheme of which Wicklow received over €7.6 million to fund 44 projects across the county. To help carry out the works six additional engineers and 12 outdoor operators will be working with Wicklow County Council road section.

The NTA have confirmed they will be using the funding to design both pedestrian and cycling facilities on the Sea Road.

Cllr Gerry Walsh said: "This is real progress and a recognition of how badly this project is needed. The issue of a path being needed for the road to the train station has been running for a number of years because the current situation is dangerous. You have people walking the road in the winter and in the dark with little or no protection. I have been pushing for funding to get this project underway but I'd also like to commend Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly for the immense work he has done to get this ongoing issue resolved."

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Angelika Pyciak skating in the sunshine on St. Patrick's Day in Arklow

'Arklow Flood Relief Scheme must honour local maritime heritage'

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has written to the Minister of State for OPW requesting that the design of the Flood Relief Scheme protect and preserve the local maritime tradition and residents' connection with the Avoca River.

"While the Flood Relief Scheme is a necessary development, it must be constructed in line with the maritime heritage and cultural aspects of the town and the residents' connection with the Avoca River," said Deputy Whitmore.

"The proposal as it currently stands is for huge concrete walls to be constructed, blocking off the view of the river for residents and visitors to Arklow. Many residents feel this will negatively impact on their relationship with the River which has always been traditionally very strong and continues to be during the pandemic as people embrace the outdoors for recreational benefits.

"Arklow is undergoing a number of large infrastructural developments including the Flood Relief Scheme, all with the potential to develop tourism, income for the local economy but also the cultural ties the town has to its maritime heritage. The potential for this development to preserve and promote the maritime history of the area is huge and so I have requested that the Minister consult with community groups in the area with local knowledge of this history and consider aspects of the design that will honour the local maritime heritage. This would include putting in place glass panelling on South Quay instead of huge construction walls, maintaining an access route to the Avoca River from South Quay and the retention of the existing green space for children and wildlife.

"I urge the Minister to make the right choices with regards to this scheme and is both respectful and protective of the wealth of tradition and history associated with Arklow," concluded Deputy Whitmore.

'Arklow North Beach Coastal Protection Scheme needs to be completed'

John Brady TD has expressed dismay at a response he received from the Fianna Fáil Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath, in relation to the need for Coastal erosion work to be carried out in Arklow. The Coastal Protection works that were carried out in Arklow 30 years ago were never completed because funds were not provided.

Speaking after raising the issue of the Arklow Coastal Protection works with the Fianna Fáil Minister Deputy Brady said "Flooding is still a major issue at North Beach in Arklow. In 2017 Storm Ophelia wreaked havoc in the area and the coastal walk was washed away. The existing Coastal Protection works that are in place at Arklow North Beach were installed after a serious storm of December 1989, those works were planned to be phase 1 of a two-part project. It was to be followed up by the installation of a groyne 250 metres from the shore of the beach, this was never done as the necessary funds were never made available by the government to complete the work."

"For the Minister to say it is a matter for Local Authorities in the first instance to assess and address problems of coastal erosion in their areas is completely disingenuous. The Department knows exactly what is required at Arklow North Beach as they have received many applications from the council to complete the project at North Beach. In 1991 a detailed study of the coastal processes in Arklow Bay was carried out by the Danish Hydraulics Institute. This report emphasised the necessity to prevent erosion of sand from the North Beach and confirmed such erosion could be prevented by constructing a groyne at the north end of the beach.

"We now have another report that Irish Rail, in partnership with Wicklow County Council, commissioned. They engaged consultants to undertake an East Coast Erosion Study, which included an assessment at North

Beach in Arklow. In the final report the consultants find that Arklow North Beach requires a detached breakwater system, beach nourishment and terminal groyne to prevent the loss of material and dune regeneration. They also identify that Arklow South Beach needs large-scale nourishment and dune regeneration.

"So, 30 years after the original scheme we have more consul-

tants telling us we need the same work now as we did then. Over those 30 years a number of applications to complete this project have been turned down by successive governments."

Arklow Sinn Féin representative Ciaran Deay said, "We don't need more government Ministers or Councillors from government parties posing for photos at North Beach, we need them to finally provide the funds to complete the

Coastal Protection scheme that commenced 30 years ago."

Deputy Brady concluded "Unbelievably, despite turning down a number of previous applications for funding the Minister is saying Wicklow County Council must again make an application. I will continue to work with the council on this issue to try to progress a new application for funding."



John Brady TD and Arklow Sinn Féin representative Ciaran Deay at North Beach Arklow

'Healthy trees mean a healthy planet' - celebrate National Tree Week this week

Wicklow County Council is giving its support to National Tree Week which runs from Sunday, March 21st to Saturday, 27th March. This year it is a virtual event.

Organised by the Tree Council of Ireland, it will be available through the Council's website because of COVID-19 restrictions around travel and gatherings of people.

This theme of this year's campaign is 'Healthy Trees Mean a Healthy Planet' to promote tree health and the important role trees play in protecting our planet. It also references the health benefits, both physical and mental health that trees and forests provide. Coillte has supported National Tree Week since 1989, providing over half a million trees to the annual campaign. Coillte will donate native tree saplings during National Tree Week 2021

such as oak, birch and alder in co-ordination with the Tree Council of Ireland. Wicklow County Council is distributing 800 trees to local groups.

A Photography Competition is also being run in conjunction with National Tree week with prizes of €100 for the winner; €75 for second place and a third prize of €50. All you have to do is take a picture of your favourite tree and tell why it means something to you.

Then upload it to the Tree Council website: www.treecouncil.ie/nationaltree-week2021.

Over the course of the week, there will have lots of tree related activities and

information on the website.

The President of the Tree Council, Éanna Ní Lamhna, will host a webinar during the week - "Trees in Springtime" giving lots of interesting facts about the blossoming of trees.

Wicklow has a wealth of tree resources. Why not visit a local woodland for a family walk to celebrate the week. It is a great time of year to be in the forest experiencing the vibrant new growth of the understory, the slow awakening of trees with buds preparing to burst open and the sounds of birds busily claiming their territory and starting new families.

A walk in the local woods or exploring the local trees in your community is great for your well-being and health. For more information about National Tree Week visit: www.treecouncil.ie



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Arklow RNLI mechanic retires after 40 years of dedicated service to saving lives at sea

Arklow RNLI marked the end of an era earlier this month when Michael Fitzgerald, the station's full-time mechanic retired after 40 years of dedicated service to the charity.

Michael who grew up on Harbour Road in Arklow, first joined the RNLI in 1980 when he was just 16. At the time, the station had a wooden lifeboat. It was his uncle, also Michael, a second mechanic on the crew, who inspired the then young Michael with a love for all things lifeboating.

While not eligible to officially join the crew until he was 17, Michael's early passion shone through and to his delight, his name was registered a year early when the late Coxswain Michael O'Brien, made a plea on his behalf during a station inspection.

A former electrician, Michael volunteered

for 19 years before being appointed Arklow RNLI's full-time station mechanic, a position he held for the last 21 years.

His role involved a wide range of duties and evolved with time with Michael serving on and maintaining six different classes of lifeboat including the station's current all-weather Trent class lifeboat, the Ger Tighelearr, which arrived in 1997. Michael was also a key member of the team when the call for help came and the lifeboat was put to sea.

Paying tribute to Michael, Peter Harty, RNLI Area Lifesaving Manager said: "Michael is the living embodiment of the RNLI's values. A man of humility, integrity and passion, he has made a significant contribution to saving lives at sea off the Arklow coast for more than four decades and we are extremely grateful to him for his dedication and selfless service throughout that time. Thankfully, Michael will not be lost to us as he will remain on as a volunteer mechanic but we want to wish him every good health and happiness in the next chapter of his life."

John Tyrell, Arklow RNLI Lifeboat Operations Manager added "Over the course of four decades, Michael has worked tirelessly to ensure the operational effectiveness of our station here in Arklow through the operation, maintenance and repair of our lifeboat and its associated machinery and equipment. He always ensured everything was working to the highest standard and he did so with great passion and pride. Michael's passion for his role extended to his ability to impart his knowledge to others.

"Over the years Michael has experienced all sorts of call outs and braved all sorts of weather and challenges at sea to help bring those in difficulty to safety. A humble man and a friend to all, Michael has always been at the core of our lifesaving team, working to keep our lifeboats and our crews safe and we are so thankful to him for that."



Michael Fitzgerald, Arklow RNLI's full-time mechanic who retired after 40 years

Applications sought for Mermaid's associate artists' scheme

Mermaid Arts Centre is currently seeking applications from artists for TRANSFORM - an associate artists scheme that will see Mermaid employ four professional artists of varying practices and disciplines on a part time basis for one year.

Applications close on 2nd April. Artists will be employed, not on a project or commission basis, but rather to proceed with their work in a self-directed fashion except with less economic precarity. Mermaid is interested in artists whose work is forward-looking and who may be struggling to find viable employment right now.

So many artists are vulnerable just now, but there are some for whom that vulnerability might ultimately result in a cessation of practice - to their personal detriment, but also to the detriment of wider Irish society. Mermaid believes that one of the ways to mitigate against this potential loss is to provide solid, consistent employment for artists and in so doing, acknowledge their value and the value of their continuous creative work. Mermaid Arts Centre has secured Arts Council funding to support this scheme.

Applicants must have an inter-

est in contributing to Mermaid's strategy and helping them imagine new possibilities. It is hoped that by including the voices of artists on elements of their work such as audience development, programme, artist supports and inclusion, Mermaid can improve the systems, processes and culture of the organisation beyond their artistic activity alone. TRANSFORM is a pilot scheme. Mermaid will commission a report on this process and will endeavour to share this information with the Arts Council, arts centres nationwide, strategically funded companies and other stakeholders.

Artistic Director at Mermaid Arts Centre, Julie Kelleher, says: "Mermaid is determined to put the voices of communities and artists at the heart of our work, to be a home where everyone can be creative, where everyone can belong. We want to embed artistic thinking and energy into our systems and processes, for artists

to help shape the future of the organisation, and to have the opportunity to invest in their own practice. It's a crucial element of our mission to be a creative hub and artistic resource for artists and companies in Wicklow and beyond, providing employment opportunities, advocacy and practical supports for the creative process. We're looking for brilliant individuals who aren't necessarily already connected with Mermaid, as well as those we already know. In particular, we want to hear voices and perspectives from the margins."

Like many other businesses, Mermaid Arts Centre has been significantly impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic, having shut their doors in March 2020, with only a short re-opening in September and October 2020 possible since then. Mermaid has secured an increase in Arts Council Arts Centre Funding this year and are grateful for a continuation of support from Wicklow County Council. While they are limited in delivering a public programme for now, they are working hard behind closed doors to sustain artists and artistic practice. The auditorium and

gallery remain shut in the short term, but the team are hopeful that they will reopen in the not-too-distant future and be able to return to gathering artists and audiences together in person again.

In addition to the TRANSFORM Associate Artist scheme, Mermaid has secured support from the Arts Council to roll out a range of other artist supports and development initiatives. They're thrilled to confirm that the GAP DAY scheme will run again in 2021 and will expand to host 50% more gap days as well as provide a dedicated fund for participants with additional needs such as parenting/caring responsibilities or physical access needs.

They look forward to partnering with arts centres and arts organisations nationwide to host artist colleagues for their gap days. They have also secured funds to support artists through residencies, commissions and bursaries.

For more information, and to read a full job description and information on how to apply for the TRANSFORM scheme, visit mermaidartscentre.ie.



A plumbing apprentice from Redcross is through to the semi-finals of the Screwfix Trade Apprentice 2021 competition. Aaron Jackson, 24, is studying towards a plumbing and bathroom fitting qualification at Waterford Institute of Technology. He has been selected following an initial application outlining how he demonstrates a real passion for the trade, determination to succeed and explaining how he is already going above and beyond the call of duty for his college, employer and customers. Aaron, who is thrilled to have reached this stage, says: "I'm delighted to be in the semi-final of this competition. I hope to make it through to the national final in April so I can show the judges how dedicated I am to my career in the trade. The prize bundle would be an amazing way to help set me up for my future." The top 10 finalists will be revealed in April.



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY MONUMENTS FUND 2021

Wicklow County Council invites applications to the Community Monuments Fund 2021, as operated by the Department of Housing Heritage and Local Government.

The closing date for applications is 5pm on 12th April.

The core aims of this fund are the conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of local monuments and archaeological sites. Local authorities, private owners, community groups and custodians of monuments are eligible to apply under the following 3 streams;

1. **Stream 1** will offer grants up to €85,000 aimed at essential repairs and capital works for the conservation and repair of archaeological monuments.
2. **Stream 2** will offer grants of up to €30,000 for development of Conservation Management Plans/Reports that are aimed at identifying measures for conservation of archaeological monuments and improving public access.
3. **Stream 3** will offer grants of up to €30,000 for enhancement of access infrastructure and interpretation (including virtual/online) at archaeological monuments (including COVID 19 public health measures).

The application form and further information is available at www.wicklow.ie/Living/News-Events.

Applicants should read the CMF guidance circular carefully and ensure that method statements and relevant consents are included with the application. Applications should be returned by e mail to wicklowheritage@wicklowcoco.ie or by post, clearly marked 'Community Monument Fund Application' c/o Planning Section, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow Town by no later than 5pm on 12th April.

Hard copy application forms are available by request to above e mail or by Tel: 0404 20100. Queries to Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer, Wicklow County Council via dburns@wicklowcoco.ie.



Bray's Serendipity Chorus feature in Lyric FM series

Once again, Serendipity the Bray-based women's chorus is making headlines - they were selected to feature in a new Lyric FM series called Sing! The nine-part series, produced by Grey Heron Media, featured during the interval of the Lyric FM Concert on Friday evenings which commenced on Friday March 5th. The programme featuring Serendipity was broadcast on Friday March 19th.

Sing! is an uplifting series which takes listeners on an immersive journey to nine choirs and choruses across Ireland. It captures the fun, solace and laughter of singing together. It featured choirs from across Ireland, including Gloria, Dublin's Lesbian & Gay Choir, The Munster Rugby Supporters Choir, The Forget-me-Nots Choir and our very own Serendipity Chorus Bray.

Serendipity were selected from a diverse range of choirs and choruses across Ireland, and in 2018 the production team from Grey Heron Media visited Bray and environs to interview chorus members for the programme, and the recording was finally completed during rehearsals in Bray's Epworth Hall in February of that year.

Pauline Edmondson, Serendipity's Musical Director, said "We were honoured and delighted to be selected for this. This chorus sings a cappella in four parts and produces a beautifully full, warm harmonic sound, as delightful to hear as it is to sing. Serendipity's success is the result of hard work and a passion for singing, and it is a tribute to their dedication and commitment that they have been chosen to take part in this prestigious broadcast."

Serendipity's enthusiasm for harmony singing has not been diminished by the Covid-19 lockdowns, and the chorus has continued to meet on Zoom every week over the past year, for the pure pleasure of singing together, as well as to practice for their next foray into national competition - by which time they fully intend to take yet another medal back to Bray.

'Government needs a new plan to tackle gorse fires in Wicklow'

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore raised the issue of illegal gorse fires in the Dáil which she says disproportionately affects county Wicklow over any other part of the country.

Outlining the destruction it causes for the environment and for wildlife in Wicklow National Park, Deputy Whitmore told the Dáil: "Gorse fires are illegal from the 1st of March but already we've had a huge fire on Scarr Mountain in our National Park which has marked the start of illegal fire season. This is a cycling experience that causes untold environmental, human and economic damage, not to mention putting firefighters, air corps crew and other emergency workers at risk each time."

"The National Parks and Wildlife Service and fire service have done considerable work on fire prevention but these services are stretched to

capacity and need more resources. People want to see tangible plans from the Government, put in place to stop the cycling nature of illegal fires."

Deputy Whitmore added "Raising this in the Dáil, I asked the Minister for Heritage to implement a comprehensive management plan to provide the framework for the management of these special areas of conversation and national parks which places biodiversity and conservation at its core. These management plans will also need to address agricultural use of the land and facilitate the State to work closely with farmers to encourage more sustainable use of the land. Farmers are excellent at putting their



Jennifer Whitmore TD

shoulder to the wheel and doing the job that's being asked of them, unfortunately Government policy to date has been asking farmers to intensify the production of their land, incentivising damaging practices such as burning fires to get rid of so-called unproductive scrub and gorse land.

"The Minister for

Heritage referenced the need for more penalties and more investigations but looking at this from a criminal justice point of view will not address the problem of illegal burning, as they haven't worked before. Fundamentally the problem comes down to the fact that there is no management plan in place that puts biodiversity protection as its central goal.

"We need more land designated for protection purposes and this will lead to greater protection of environmentally vulnerable areas like Wicklow Mountains. However, right now there are no management plans for any of our national parks and this needs to change urgently."

Council to commission Community Audit of Delgany and Greystones

Wicklow County Council is to commission a Community Audit for the Greystones and Delgany Area.

Welcoming the news, Minister Harris said "I very much welcome Wicklow County Council's response to the impact of An Bord Pleanála's recent decisions for further residential development in Delgany and Greystones. I was disappointed that An Bord Pleanála did not take on board the community's constructive suggestions in respect of the proposed Strategic Housing Development at the Convent site in Delgany."

"We all appreciate the need for housing, but that cannot come without the necessary services, schools and amenities for families. I had written to the Chief Executive of the County Council requesting such an

audit and I am delighted that it is now to proceed".

The Minister added "I now intend to do everything I can to assist in making sure the key issues we highlighted are addressed in terms of school places, traffic, playground and community facilities, etc."

"I have sought a meeting with the Chief Executive of the Council to discuss this and ensure that other agencies such as the Department of Education and Transport Providers are left in no doubt as to their obligations to provide essential facilities and services"

"The first draft of the Wicklow County Development Plan is to be published at the end of this month. A Community Audit of Delgany's needs will allow local residents make more informed submissions as part of the County Development plan to inform the Council's Planners in their work".

Bray's Woodbrook College to receive funding for 25 new classrooms

Woodbrook College in Bray is to receive an investment injection that will transform the school and allow it to cater to the growing population needs of the surrounding areas, a Fine Gael TD has said.

Under the Additional Accommodation Scheme 2021, the school has been granted funding for works that will include 13 general classrooms, two Special Education Teacher rooms, two Science labs, as well as Music, Art and DCG rooms, Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill said.

Speaking following the approval from the Department of Education, the Dún Laoghaire TD said: "Today's announcement of funding for Woodbrook College will allow the school to grow and cater for the expanding demographic needs of Bray, Shankill

and surrounding areas."

"There are a number of new housing developments in these areas, with more families putting a high demand on school places and infrastructure. An increase in secondary school places is urgently required and this funding will go towards meeting current and future demand."

"While I welcome the funding for general, special education and subject specific classrooms, from working with the Principal of Woodbrook and local Councillor Jim Gildea, I know there is also a need for investment in the

school's sports facilities."

"An investment in a gym and sports club would be a fantastic asset to the community as it would facilitate integration between Woodbrook and local sports clubs."

"I look forward to following the progress of Woodbrook's development and working closely with the Principal, local Councillors and the Department of Education to ensure the necessary supports are put in place to allow the school to cater to the demographic and community needs of the area."



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Zero pesticide exceedances in Wicklow drinking water in 2019 and 2020

There were no exceedances for pesticides in the public drinking water supplies in Co Wicklow in 2019 and 2020, Irish Water has confirmed. However, the utility is urging domestic gardeners, farmers, grounds keepers and other users of pesticide products to consider the environment and whether pesticide use is necessary in the first instance.

MCPA is an active substance present in many commonly used herbicide products used to control the growth of thistles, docks and rushes and remains the most commonly detected pesticide in Ireland.

However it often ends up in drinking water supplies. Irish Water is asking users of any herbicide or pesticide products in Co Wicklow to consider the vulnerability of the water supplies to pesticide contamination and the importance of these supplies to the local homes and businesses in

the community.

Irish Water, working in partnership with a range of organisations involved in the National Pesticides and Drinking Water Action Group (NPDWAG), is asking the farming community, greens keepers, grounds keepers, and domestic users, to consider in each case whether they need to use pesticides at all. Minimising pesticide use helps to protect water quality and has wider environmental benefits. Leaving areas unsprayed can help native flowering plant species to grow and support a range of insects

including bees and other pollinators.

Where pesticide use is considered necessary, the NPDWAG is working with the community to ensure that best practice measures to protect drinking water sources and biodiversity are always followed. Farmers and other landholders dealing with the challenge of tackling rushes should note that the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) has developed new guidance on the sustainable management of rushes. The new approach is based on

the concepts of containment or suppression, and aims to minimise the use of pesticides. The efforts to reduce the incidence and level of these detections are being coordinated by the NPDWAG. This group is chaired by the DAFM. All of the key stakeholders are represented in this group and include other Government departments and agencies; local authorities; industry representative bodies; farming organisations; water sector organisations; and amenity sector organisations.

Andrew Boylan, Irish

Water's Regional Drinking Water Compliance Specialist said: "In Co Wicklow, there have been no exceedances for pesticides in the past two years which is good news. While our consultation with the HSE has concluded that the levels of pesticides that are being detected in drinking water supplies across the country do not represent a threat to public health, it is however undesirable and therefore imperative that users of pesticides are mindful of best practice when using herbicides or pesticides and seek out alternatives."

Whitmore meets with NTA to highlight Wicklow transport priorities

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has met with the National Transport Authority to highlight transport priorities in county Wicklow.

Having met with the NTA Deputy Whitmore welcomed the opportunity to raise the need for greater connectivity between towns and villages across Wicklow, public transport for the region and solutions to help reduce car dependency.

"I welcomed the opportunity to meet with the NTA and discuss to reiterate the importance of filling the transport gaps in our county and increasing connectivity between towns and villages. It's important that this remains high on the NTA's agenda as they work through some significant proposals and changes ahead. It's also vital that we get it

right and that transport plans are done so with the particular needs of Wicklow in mind.

"I welcomed the NTA's move towards Connecting Ireland Plan which should deliver on the need for interconnectivity not only to reduce car dependency overall but to help stimulate our towns and villages. NTA have initiated work on this and will be consulting with Wicklow County Council and the public later this year.

"This plan will be carried out on a county by county basis and should include a greater role for Local Link services, which is very

welcome. I outlined the need for a much greater investment in Local Link service across County Wicklow. There are many much needed routes, including one I highlighted between Wicklow Town and Greystones, which they confirmed would be put on their agenda for consideration.

"However, I did note the concern that this project will take 3-4 years and with so little time to address climate change facilitating change in this area is undoubtedly slow and will be a huge challenge. I will continue to work with the NTA and in my role as a Member of the Oireachtas Climate Action Committee to push for more progress in the need to provide sustainable transport solutions for Wicklow" says Whitmore.

Do Not Consume Notice remains for Barndarrig Public Water Supply customers

Following consultation with the Health Service Executive (HSE), Irish Water issued a Do Not Consume Notice for customers supplied by Barndarrig Public Water Supply, Co. Wicklow on 9th February 2021. The notice was issued to protect 213 customers following elevated levels of nitrite in the water supply.

The water is not safe for consumption or the preparation of foods, but is safe for hygiene and use in washing machines and dishwashers. It is especially important that mains drinking water is not given to bottle fed infants. Irish Water would like to

remind the public to continue to follow public health advice on handwashing and hygiene.

Irish Water stated "We would like to reassure our customers that Irish Water's drinking water and operational experts are working with our colleagues in

Wicklow County Council and in consultation with the HSE to lift the Do Not Consume Notice as quickly and as safely as possible. Further sampling and monitoring is ongoing to support continued investigations to resolve the issue.

Please note this is not a Boil Water Notice. Boiling the water will not reduce Nitrite levels and is therefore not a suitable measure to make the water safe to consume. This notice does not apply to other areas or water schemes in Co. Wicklow.

An alternative water supply is in place to support impacted customers. Bottled Water is available at the car park opposite Barndarrig church and is being provided in accordance with current Level 5 COVID-19 restrictions. Customers are reminded to continue to follow the HSE guidance on social distancing, face coverings and hand hygiene when collecting water.

Impacted customers have been directly notified and bottled water has been arranged for vulnerable customers who are registered on this supply, in adherence

with current HSE advice. Vulnerable customers or those who have concerns about leaving their homes during the current pandemic should contact our customer care team, open 24/7, on 1850 278 278.

Peter Thornton, Regional Operations Lead with Irish Water, said "Irish Water acknowledges the impact of this notice on the local community in Barndarrig and we would like to reassure impacted customers that our drinking water compliance and operational experts are working to resolve this issue as quickly and as safely as possible. We would ask customers who have concerns to contact our customer care team on 1850 278 278. The water is safe to use for hand washing and personal hygiene and all customers on this water supply scheme should continue to follow public health advice on handwashing at this time."

Updates are available on the Water Supply Updates section of the Irish Water website, on Twitter @IWCare and via the customer care helpline, open 24/7 on 1850 278 278.



13-year-old, Craig Armstrong, loves to help out on his Uncle's farm in Glenealy. Due to lockdown and remote school learning he's had more time this year to help out which is fortunate because his Uncle, Noel Armstrong, broke his hand just a couple of weeks before lambing season! On a normal Monday morning for Craig, he went to check on the sheep in the field behind his house before starting into his school work... he saw one ewe lying down separate from the rest of the flock and he rushed over to her only to find that the ewe was lambing early. He assisted her and delivered the healthy big ram lamb by himself there in the field before having a chance to call on his Uncle with the good news. Mum and baby were later moved into the sheds and are both doing well!



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY AWARDS SCHEME 2021

As part of its commitment to supporting local community development, Wicklow County Council operates an annual Community Award Scheme. The fund for 2021 will be available as grant aid to successful community groups and local organisations wishing to undertake community projects in their area.

COMMUNITY GRANTS (Maximum grant €500 per organisation) for small projects and group running costs. Only one application per organisation will be considered.

The application form is available on Wicklow County Council's website www.Wicklow.ie.

Any queries should be made to the Office of Community, Cultural & Social Development, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow at 0404/20208 or ccsadmin@wicklowcoco.ie.

The closing date for submission of applications is **4.00 p.m. on Friday 23rd April, 2021.**

Late applications will not be considered.





Members of the EcoTrails Pure Mile group after a cleanup.

2021 Pure Mile is now closed for entries

Due to an unprecedented number of groups entering the 2021 Pure Mile, applications of interest are now closed.

The Pure Mile encourages communities and groups living in rural areas to adopt a mile, or miles of road, and work together to keep these areas litter and rubbish free. Groups also research information about their local wildflowers, plants, trees, and animals. Other projects focus on the history and folklore, or the built, cultural, and social heritage of the area.

Special interest groups such as, walking groups, cycling groups, scout groups, businesses, and organisations, can adopt a mile, or miles of road, in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands and help Pure to Clean Up The 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.

Ian Davis, Pure Project Manager, stated "The Pure Mile has been a great success and all credit goes to the thousands of Pure Mile Volunteers involved in the project.

There are so many beautiful areas in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands, and each one has something unique and interesting to offer. I would like to thank all of groups involved in the Pure Mile, they really do make a difference to the areas they live in, or recreate in, and the number of applications and interest this year has been amazing."

Pure received an unprecedented number of entries this year, and now there are over 800 miles or roads, mountains, woodlands, valleys, and

upland amenities, signed up to the 2021 Pure Mile Project. However, due to this high number, the project is unfortunately unable to accept any further applications.

Over 500 litter picks (individuals and family units, as per Covid-19 guidelines) have already taken place, with over 1,000 bags of litter, rubbish, and dumping, removed from the Wicklow/Dublin environment, all by thousands of Pure Mile Volunteers. Further clean-ups, anti-dumping initiatives, com-

munity projects, and heritage projects, are currently being organised for the remainder of the year.

All groups who enter the Pure Mile are invited to the Pure Mile Gala Event, and all will receive a Certificate of Participation, a selection of Native Irish Trees, and all groups feature in the Pure Mile Calendar.

Registration for the 2022 Pure Mile will open again in November 2021. Further information on Pure can be found on www.pureproject.ie.

Wicklow's woodlands, bats and birds get important boost

Wicklow projects and volunteers working to protect woodlands, bats and birds are receiving significant support from local biodiversity grants announced by The Community Foundation for Ireland. The Foundation with support from the National Park and Wildlife Service is backing projects which involve communities in protecting biodiversity.

In addition to two grants for Wicklow, the county will also benefit from national projects which will see citizen scientists mobilised in a ground-breaking national survey of bats as well as efforts to support native birds.

The local projects are:

Leave No Trace Ireland, €50,000: Love This Place, Leave No Trace' restoration project will focus on Knocksink Wood Nature Reserve in Co. Wicklow. The programme focuses on restoring a site that is in poor environmental

condition or that has been negatively impacted by increased recreational activities. Working with the local community the aim is to facilitate biodiversity and education to repair a site which has been impacted by overcrowding, littering and increased visitation.

The Native Woodland Trust €25,000: Establish and run tree and wildflower nurseries in counties Wicklow, Roscommon and Clare. The Wicklow nursery will focus on rare trees not otherwise available for tree planting in Ireland from native sources - such as Bird Cherry, Wild Cherry, Irish Whitebeam and Ash & Wych Elm selected for natural disease resistance.

Nationally €300,000 is being provided in grants. Wicklow citizen scientists will also be invited by experts at UCD to collect bat dropping samples to assist in a national species identification map. This represents a novel way to efficiently, cheaply and non-invasively, estimate the presence and biodiversity of Irish arthropod species.

While Wicklow's birdwatchers will be encouraged by BirdWatch Ireland to take part in surveys and to use new online 'How to Guides' to encourage and support local bird species.

Commenting on the grants, Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of The Community Foundation for Ireland said:

"Climate action only works if it is connected to and relevant to local communities. We are delighted to partner with Government to support eight biodiversity projects nationally, many of which have a direct impact for Co Wicklow. We recognise the uniqueness of the county as 'The Garden of Ireland' and are delighted to be able to provide support for people committed to protecting our native species as well as the improvements to Knocksink Wood."

Malcolm Noonan, TD Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform added:

"It's fantastic to see such worthwhile projects delivered by some of Ireland's finest environmental NGOs benefit from this fund. I know from my own hands-on experience that local action on species conservation, habitat creation and restoration, coupled with community engagement and education, has the power to unlock transformative change for nature in Ireland. This is my Department's second year collaborating with the Community Foundation for Ireland, and I'm delighted with the selection of such strategic and impactful projects. I look forward to visiting them when it is safe to do so."



Denise Charlton, new CEO of The Community Foundation for Ireland



Applications are invited for Community Monument Fund

Groups and individuals throughout Wicklow are invited to apply for grants under the Community Monuments Fund (CMF). The Community Monuments Fund was first established by the Department of Housing Heritage and Local Government in 2020 to provide investment in Ireland's archaeological heritage.

Part of the funding is prioritised for local authorities, private owners and custodians and community groups for the care, conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of archaeological monuments and the provision of any required measures to ensure safe access during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The total funding available nationally for projects under the CMF 2021 will be €2m. Closing date for applications is 12th April.

The core aims of the fund are the conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of local monuments and archaeological sites. There are three funding streams aimed at enabling conservation works to be carried out on monuments which are deemed to be significant and in need of urgent support, encouraging access to monuments and improve their presentation and also to build resilience in monuments to enable them to withstand the effects of climate change.

The Department encourages project promoters to incorporate a traditional skills training element in projects.

The Community Monuments Fund three streams are:

1.) Stream 1 will offer grants up to €85,000 aimed at essential repairs and capital works for the conservation and repair of archaeological monuments. (Total €1,000,000 available).

2.) Stream 2 will offer grants of up to €30,000 for development of Conservation Management Plans/Reports that are aimed at identifying measures for conservation of archaeological monuments and improving public access. (Total €550,000 available).

3.) Stream 3 will offer grants of up to €30,000 for enhancement of access infrastructure and interpretation (including virtual/online) at archaeological monuments (including COVID 19 public health measures). (Total €450,000 available).

Private applicants or community groups who are the owners or custodians of monuments may apply for help under the Fund.

Applications should read the CMF guidance circular carefully and ensure that method statements and landowner or other consents are included as relevant with the application.

Applications should be returned by e-mail to wicklowheritage@wicklowcoco.ie or by post, clearly marked 'Community Monument Fund Application' c/o Planning Section, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow Town by no later than 5 pm on 12th April.

Application forms and information can be downloaded at www.wicklow.ie/latestnews

For more information on eligible monuments visit www.archaeology.ie. All queries may be directed to Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer, Wicklow County Council via dburns@wicklowcoco.ie.

St. Patrick's Day greening of World Heritage sites puts Glendalough in the shade

Ireland's efforts to green global historic sites such as the Sydney Opera House, the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Pyramids of Giza for St Patrick's Day is in marked contrast to "lacklustre efforts to win recognition for Glendalough and other historic sites in our own country", according to Deputy Michael McNamara.

The Clare Independent TD's comments come ahead of a June 30th deadline for local authorities, community organisations and State bodies to submit applications for Ireland's Tentative List for future World Heritage nominations to UNESCO.

The Irish list was last updated in 2010 and includes Georgian Dublin, the Burren, and groups of related Early Monastic Sites, comprising Glendalough (Wicklow), Clonmacnoise (Offaly), Inis Cealtra (Clare), Kells (Meath) and Durrow (Laois), Royal Sites of Ireland such as Cashel (Tipperary), Tara (Meath), Dún Ailinne (Kildare), Hill of Uisneach (Westmeath) and the Rathcroghan Complex (Roscommon), and Western Stone Forts, including Dun Aonghusa (Aran Island, Galway), Cahercommaun in north Clare and the Kerry forts of Benagh, Caherconree and Staigue.

Deputy McNamara said, "Tourism Ireland's Global Greening project comes about as a result of much effort and some cost to the State (€48,583 in 2019), but I accept that it results in a benefit, not limited to direct income, to our State. We have, however, neglected to progress various sites in Ireland to UNESCO world heritage

status over the past decade.

"We currently only have two sites on the UNESCO world heritage list, Skellig Michael and Newgrange," he explained. "By comparison, Austria and Denmark have ten world heritage sites, the latter having advanced five sites to des-

ignation in the past decade. "In 2014, I met with UNESCO representatives and learned that there had been little or no communication from the Irish government on the matter for some time and little effort had been made to advance the Irish tentative list since it was handed over in 2010.



ignation in the past decade.

"When I raised the matter with the then Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in 2015, I was informed that Kerry County Council had informed the Department that it did not wish to be

involved in progressing the potential Western Stone Forts nomination.

This was also the case in Clonmacnoise, which had obvious implications both for the potential nomination of the site in its own right, as well as for its status as a crucial element of the potential group nomination of the Early Medieval Monastic Sites. "Since then, successive governments have failed to progress the designation of this tentative list despite the fact that it would bring worldwide attention to our unique patrimony and to the natural and built heritage sites themselves. As well as a requirement to ensure any development is sympathetic to and protects the integrity of the sites, which may explain the reluctance of some, more cavalier local authorities, designation also typically results in an increase in tourism, with associated economic benefits.

In response to a recent parliamentary question, Deputy McNamara was informed that a new tentative list is being developed by the National Monuments Service, with a June 30th deadline for applications from local authorities, State bodies, community organisations and individuals, for sites or properties of natural and/or cultural heritage to be included.

He continued, "Given the increase in tourism typically generated by World Heritage site designation, and the unprecedented challenges that will face the domestic and international tourism sector when we open up to world again, every effort must be made to advance built and natural heritage sites across Ireland to the World Heritage list."

"Unless the government prioritises the list that will be developed and puts the same effort into obtaining world heritage status for our own sites as it puts into "greening" other states' world heritage sites, I fear the list will be as useless an exercise in bureaucracy as its predecessor. Our annual celebration of international World Heritage sites being lit up in green must be matched by a similar enthusiasm for securing similar designation for our own world class heritage sites," concluded Deputy McNamara.



Philip Rothwell gained a welcome winner when Siberian Star scored in the Equine Products UK Handicap Hurdle at Leopardstown last Monday. James O'Sullivan kept the heavily-backed 4/1 favourite in rear early on before making smooth progress to take the lead approaching the last and the six-year-old stayed on well to land the spoils by two and three-quarter lengths from the Lorna Fowler-trained Bronson In Blue. Prunella Dobbs bagged the Irish Stallion Farms EBF (Mares') INH Flat Race on Premier Queen (3/1) for Prunella Dobbs. Tom Hamilton took up the lead six furlongs from home and though headed, had plenty in the tank, pushing the five-year-old Presenting filly to the head of affairs again a furlong out and scoring by two and three-quarter lengths from Ministers Hill. Pictured are Siberian Star (right) and James O'Sullivan win for Philip Rothwell at Leopardstown on Monday. Photo: Patrick McCann/Racing Post

Study approved to reduce trucks and traffic on Kilcoole Main Street

A study has been approved to reduce trucks and traffic on Kilcoole Main Street and facilitate better access to the N11.

"A short link road is needed to take traffic from the Garden Village N11 roundabout to the Kilcoole Road. This would allow good truck access to Kilcoole Industrial Estates and houses on the South side of Kilcoole," Cathaoirleach of Greystones Municipal District Cllr Derek Mitchell.

"Currently this traffic uses the narrow Main Street or unsuitable minor roads. Also it would help access to Druids Glen Resort and start providing a footpath to join Kilcoole and Newtown. This has been listed since 2004, with nothing happening.

"I have been pressing since Christmas to get this started and am pleased that €100k has now been allocated for a feasibility study of the road and €20k to see about a cycle path and footpath from Kilcoole to Newtown. This will also help replace the Garden Village old sewerage works by providing a pipeline.

"A path has also been needed to Kilcoole Station for years and €30k has been now been provided to study how to do this. I welcome this progress on things which have been needed for years."

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Almost €2m secured for Ireland-Wales tourist project

Funding of €1,917,770 for the second phase of the Celtic Routes tourism project has been welcomed by the Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Pat Kennedy.

He said: "It is more important than ever, in a COVID-ravaged tourism industry, that we do everything in our power to entice more visitors to Wicklow and our partner counties and try to recover some of the lost ground. The Celtic Routes project is an example of the kind of stimulus that we need right now."

Celtic Routes is a partnership project between Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire County Councils and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority in Wales and Wicklow, Wexford and Waterford City and County Councils in Ireland.

It's a branded collection of tourism experiences encouraging travellers to visit Ireland and Wales to discover the Celtic spirit by sug-

gesting immersive and authentic experiences in West Wales and South East Ireland.

Phase 2 will focus on developing the legacy of Celtic Routes by further enhancing the visitor experience working closely with the tourism sector. Already businesses from Wales have been visiting Ireland to learn and share best practice with their Irish counterparts.

A toolkit is available for businesses and destinations with guidance and ideas about how they can create their own Celtic experiences and contribute to the success of the project.

The successful bid for the second phase was made on behalf of the Celtic Routes partnership to the

Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) which will take the project through to 2023. The contract is partly funded via the European Regional Development Fund through the Ireland Wales Cooperation programme 2014-2020.

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath, TD said: "I want to congratulate the Celtic Routes project for its success in securing additional funding under the Ireland Wales Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. As the tourism industry seeks to recover from the impact of COVID-19, the extension of this project, which promotes ongoing cooperation between West Wales and the sunny South East of Ireland, reminds us of the wealth of natural beauty, heritage and tourist amenities that are so important in contributing to regional development in both economies."

Commercial Vacancy Rate in Wicklow falls to 11.8%

The commercial vacancy rate in Wicklow decreased by 0.3 percentage points (pp) to 11.8% in Q4 2020 according to the latest GeoView Commercial Property Report published by GeoDirectory and EY-DKM today. This was lower than the national average of 13.5%.

Wicklow accounted for 2.8% of the State's total commercial stock of 211,677.

Of the towns in Wicklow sampled, Arklow (15.9%) had the highest commercial vacancy rate, while Greystones (7.2%) had the lowest in the country. 12.9% of commercial units in Wicklow were classified as providing Accommodation and Food Services.

The findings of the report suggest that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the commercial property landscape in Ireland has not yet been fully realised. However, key trends and indicators are beginning to emerge.

An increase in commercial vacancy rates was recorded in 19 counties in Q4 2020 when compared to the corresponding period in 2019. This included every county in Munster, Ulster and Connacht. Of the five counties to record a decline, all were located in the Leinster region.

Previous GeoView Commercial Property Reports have highlighted a growing regional disparity in commercial occupancy rates and this trend appears to be accelerating. The commercial vacancy rates in Connacht and Ulster were above the national average of 13.5%, while Munster was equal to the national average. In comparison, Leinster (12.3%) and

Leinster, excluding Dublin, (12.7%) recorded vacancy rates below the national average.

The seven counties with the highest commercial vacancy rates were all located along the west coast of Ireland, with almost one-in-five commercial properties vacant in Sligo (19.9%), the highest in the country.

With the exception of Kildare (14.4%), all counties in the Greater Dublin Area registered commercial vacancy rates lower than the national average, with Meath (10.1%) recording the lowest rate. In the capital itself, the vacancy rate fell marginally by 0.1pp to 11.9%.

Using the classification of commercial property which are allocated a NACE code, GeoDirectory can provide an analysis of broad economic sectors to identify trends in property usage. The data shows that in Q4 2020 there were 2,011 fewer Retail and Wholesale address points in Ireland when compared to the previous year. This represents a decline of 5.3%.

Looking specifically at the Accommodation and Food Services sector, GeoDirectory figures show that in Wicklow there was a total of 630 units classified in this sector in Q4 2020.

Kerry (24.3%), Clare (20.6%), Donegal

(19.3%), Leitrim (18.7%) and Mayo (17.9%) were the counties with the highest proportion of Accommodation and Food Service units, relative to the overall county commercial stock.

Town and Dublin District Analysis

The latest GeoView Commercial Property Report has analysed the commercial vacancy rates in selected towns across the country. Of the towns in Wicklow sampled, Arklow (15.9%) had the highest commercial vacancy rate, while Greystones (7.2%) had the lowest.

The analysis has found that Ballybofey in Co. Donegal, at 29.2%, was the town with the highest commercial vacancy rate amongst 80 towns sampled, followed by Edenderry in Co. Offaly (27.5%) and Edgeworthstown in Co. Longford (26.9%).

Greystones at 7.2%, continued to have the lowest commercial vacancy rate across the 80 towns, while Gorey in Co. Wexford (8.1%) and Carrigaline in Co. Cork (8.3%) also posted noticeably low vacancy rates.

In Dublin, the highest commercial vacancy rate was found in Dublin 9 (16.4%), representing a 1.9 pp increase on Q4 2019 figures. Dublin 15 was the postcode with the lowest vacancy rate at just 6.2%.

Speaking about the launch of the GeoView Commercial Property Report, Dara Keogh, CEO of GeoDirectory said, "It has been an extremely turbulent twelve months for commercial sectors in Ireland with restrictions and lockdowns causing much uncertainty for businesses. We have yet to see the full impact of this on the commercial property sector, but some trends are beginning to emerge. The number of retail and wholesale units fell sharply in 2020. This may be as a result of Covid-19 restrictions, but also could point to the changing face of retail with businesses moving towards an online model."

Commenting on the findings of the report, Annette Hughes, Director, EY-DKM Economic Advisory said, "Previous GeoView Commercial Property reports have highlighted an east-west divide in terms of economic activity and this appears to be increasing. Outside of Leinster, no province recorded a commercial vacancy rate below the national average, while stubbornly high rates of commercial vacancy are recorded along the west coast. These are also areas with the highest proportion of tourism and hospitality units, which have been severely impacted by Covid-19 restrictions."

Wicklow's businesses encouraged to go green with new programme

Small businesses are being encouraged to become more sustainable this year following the launch of a new programme to green your business was launched recently by the Local Enterprise Offices as part of Local Enterprise Week.

The Green for Micro programme is an initiative from the Local Enterprise Offices, with support from Enterprise Ireland, being rolled-out nationwide to help prepare small businesses for the low carbon, more resource efficient economy of the future. It now available to businesses across Wicklow via the Local Enterprise Office.

With the help of a Green Consultant, small businesses with up to ten employees can get free advice and technical support on resource efficiency, how to better understand their carbon footprint and how to implement an environmental management system to reduce costs and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

An Tánaiste Leo Varadkar T.D. officially launched Green for Micro on the opening day of Local

Enterprise Week as part of a 'Spotlight' event on the new programme. He said: "I'm really happy to launch this year's Local Enterprise Week. I know this past year has felt like constant firefighting for many businesses. I hope this week is an opportunity to take a bit of time out, to reflect, network and grow. This year's theme is 'Making It Happen'. Our Local Enterprise Offices across the country are always there to help no matter what challenge a business is facing. I'm also launching a new 'Green for Micro' initiative to help small businesses decarbonise and become more sustainable. Making your business more sustainable, is not just the right thing to do from an environmental point of view, it also makes good business sense."

Head of Enterprise at Wicklow's

Local Enterprise Office, Vibeke Delahunst stated "The new programme is an opportunity for small companies to change the way they do business and to benefit significantly from those changes. Companies becoming more sustainable is very much the future of how we will do business and if businesses can make those changes now then they will see the benefits down the road. It is becoming more and more prominent within business that companies want to work with companies that have sustainability at the core of what they do and that is the same with customers. This new programme will put companies on the right track and in many cases will significantly improve their bottom line, so green for business is definitely good for business."

To find out more about the new Green for Micro programme go to www.LocalEnterprise.ie/Green for more information and to apply.



Pictured is Kathleen Kiely who is taking on a StepIn2Tech course to expand her digital skills.

Harris joins Microsoft to launch StepIn2Tech

Microsoft was recently joined by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD to launch StepIn2Tech, a training programme that aims to equip 10,000 people in Wicklow and across the country with the digital skills required to transfer to emerging and in-demand roles within the digital economy.

Developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, StepIn2Tech is designed to support anyone who is interested in developing their digital skills. It's particularly focused on supporting those who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic and are now looking to reset their plans by pursuing new career opportunities in the digital economy. It will also support people who have either recently left school or college or are mid-career in an industry that is digitally transforming. The StepIn2Tech programme has been developed in partnership with Fastrack to IT and is supported by Prodigy Learning.

Microsoft is encouraging anyone in Wicklow interested in taking part in the online #StepIn2Tech programme to visit: www.fit.ie/stepin2tech.

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD, said: "I'm delighted to join Microsoft today as the company launches StepIn2Tech. From remote learning and working from home to staying connected with friends and family, we all know how vital digital skills have become. My Department has put a focus on providing the supports required to help people to retrain and upskill so they can grow and succeed. The support of industry in this regard is exactly what we need."

"This innovative initiative by Microsoft will help support thousands most adversely affected by COVID-19 and offer them new opportunities to reskill and find employment within growing areas of the economy. I look forward to seeing its positive impact over the coming months."

New online learning platform launched to support pre-retirees in Wicklow

The Retirement Planning Council of Ireland (RPC) has announced the launch of a new online learning platform to facilitate the delivery of online pre-retirement courses.

The new platform 'RPC Learn', which has been developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, will ensure pre-retirees can access holistic retirement supports remotely. Prior to this, all pre-retirement courses were delivered exclusively through in-person classroom sessions.

The learning platform 'RPC Learn' was developed in partnership with Aurion, the RPC's e-learning and development specialist partner. 'RPC Learn' will be hosted on the LearnUpon platform and the RPC's flagship two-day retirement programme will now be offered over four half days online.

Speaking of the development of the platform, RPC's CEO Laura Farrell said "We were determined to develop an experience that was as close to our face to face offering, as is possible in an online capacity."

"We understand the importance of interaction and engagement in the online space, it is harder to sustain people's attention and buy in when we are all

struggling with endless Zoom meetings. We are confident that our platform sets us apart with respect to the individual experience our participants can anticipate".

Course participants will have access to a step-by-step Retirement Planning Programme that will be delivered fully online. RPC Learn will guide the course participants through their journey of self-reflection, discovery and planning by providing access to pre-course materials and activities. Participants can also engage with the expert instructors and other course participants through live interactive online sessions."

Laura Farrell added: "Covid-19 has undoubtedly been a difficult time, but it has also presented additional challenges to those approaching retirement."

"The transition from working life to retirement is difficult at the best of times, and this is amplified by the absence of a support system in the workplace, which can be difficult for employers to deliver remotely."

"The RPC Learn platform aims to bridge this gap and ensure that soon to be retirees are prepared for changes that come with this next stage of living."

Seal Rescue Ireland and SSE Renewables launch free virtual youth education programme

Seal-welfare charity Seal Rescue Ireland and renewable energy developer, owner and operator SSE Renewables have teamed up to develop an exciting new free virtual education programme for young people.

In response to the growing demand for virtual engagement and learning opportunities since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Seal Rescue Ireland which is headquartered in Courtown, Co. Wexford, has partnered with SSE Renewables to produce an educational video and activity series available for free download on the charity's website sealrescueireland.org.

The eight-part mini-series is targeted for people of all ages 6 and up. Alongside the videos, there are free downloadable activity workbooks, designed for two different age groups, to encourage and cement learning. Seal Rescue Ireland and SSE Renewables hope that this educational content will become a useful tool

in engaging people of all ages, but schools in particular, about marine conservation.

Seal Rescue Ireland Executive Director Melanie Croce said: "Education is a huge focus of Seal Rescue Ireland's marine conservation work, and we want to give students every opportunity to continue to learn and grow during this challenging time. Since the Covid-19 lockdown began, we haven't been able to host our regular school tours, or carry out our Marine Conservation Roadshows, as we normally would. This virtual programme has been adapted to continue reaching and inspiring students from afar, with our cherished seals serving as ambassadors to highlight larger environ-

mental issues."

Seal Rescue Ireland's goal is to get as many communities across Ireland to get active in protecting the environment in their own patch, and is calling for schools to become "Earth Heroes"! Schools and community groups looking to take the learning one step further have the chance to partake in the more comprehensive Earth Heroes Programme, in which they are encouraged to implement a conservation project of their choice within their local community, as well as carry out a fundraiser to aid Seal Rescue Ireland's work. For going that extra mile, Earth Heroes participants are rewarded with a live, virtual tour of Seal Rescue Ireland's seal rehabilitation centre with the opportunity to meet

the seal pups in care. They will also receive a free Seal Adoption for ongoing engagement!

Seal Rescue Ireland's new virtual education programme was funded by the Arklow Bank Wind Park (Phase 2) Sponsorship Fund which is available to local groups in Wicklow and Wexford during the development phase of the project. The offshore wind farm's project team was heartened to see the charity's stellar efforts to promote the importance of marine conservation, sustainability and environmental protection to the next generation in an engaging and fun way.

Arklow Bank Wind Park (Phase 2) Project Manager James O'Hara said "SSE Renewables and the wider Arklow Bank Wind Park project team are delighted to support the work of Seal Rescue Ireland in producing this new virtual education programme that can be delivered to primary school students throughout Counties Wicklow and Wexford and beyond. The environmental impact of climate change is something that we are acutely aware of and it is wonderful to see such a programme being adapted and rolled out virtually, despite the impacts of Covid-19."

SSE Renewables is investing between €1bn and €2bn to develop this offshore wind project and are targeting an operational date of 2025. Approximately 80 jobs will be sustained throughout the lifespan of the wind farm at an Operations and Maintenance Facility proposed for Arklow Harbour. A multi-million annual Community Fund will also be launched once the wind farm is generating power.

Committed to being a driving force for decarbonisation, SSE Renewables is a Principal Partner at this year's COP26, the United Nations Climate Change Conference which takes place later this year.

The educational videos and workbooks are available now on Seal Rescue Ireland's website at the following link: www.sealrescueireland.org/education-series/



One of the many seals at the Irish Seal Rescue centre in Courtown

Green councillor welcomes €1.15m for social housing retrofits

Green Party Councillor Erika Doyle has welcomed the announcement that €1.15m will be allocated under the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme for Social Housing, with a target of 42 of social homes to be retrofitted.

Cllr Doyle welcomed the investment to improve social housing in Wicklow as a key commitment in the Programme for Government: "This is just the beginning of the commitment the Green Party made to retrofit 500,000 homes across Ireland. Retrofitting will reduce fuel costs and increase energy efficiency in homes," said Cllr Doyle.

"The Programme for Government has set a target of retrofitting reaching over 500,000 homes by 2030, of which it is expected that approximately 36,500 of those will be local authority owned homes. Approximately 40% of Ireland's energy-related carbon emissions come from buildings alone, making retrofitting key to achieving Ireland's objective of reducing its carbon emissions by more than half. Retrofitting ensures these homes will be easier and cheaper to heat, allowing for more comfort and better air quality.

Announcing the allocations, Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform Malcolm Noonan said: "Since the original scheme began in 2013, over 73,500 local authority homes have undergone energy efficiency works, but this was, for the most part, wall and attic insulation works.

"This revised programme focuses on a much deeper retrofitting, ensuring that the fabric of the home is upgraded and an energy efficient heating system is provided. This will greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the residential sector and help Ireland reach its greenhouse gas emissions. Importantly, it will result in warmer, more comfortable homes which will benefit the health of all those living in them."

Gardening for wildlife in the Garden County

Making space for nature in the garden is not only good for the planet but is good for our health too!

A new publication from the Heritage Office of Wicklow County Council invites people to make their gardens more wildlife friendly.

'Garden Wildlife of Wicklow' has lots of tips for suitable plants to encourage birds and pollinating insects and folds out to a full colour poster to help us identify some of our more common visitors.

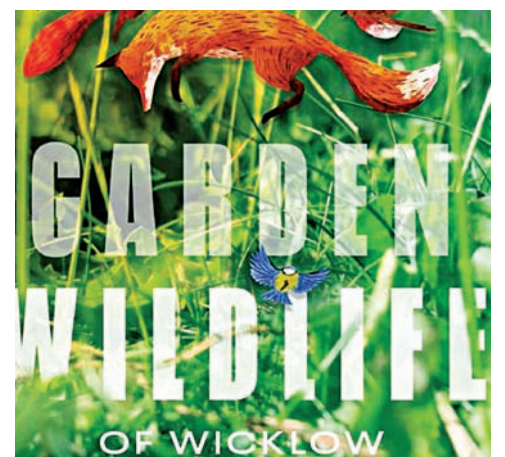
"As part of Wicklow County Council's 'Keep Well' campaign we are encouraging everyone to spend time outdoors and to connect with nature. Inviting nature into our gardens is a great way to do this", said Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer with Wicklow County Council.

No matter how big or small your garden is, whether it is a balcony or a large green space, inviting wildlife to share it is good for biodiversity and is good for us. This fold out poster is designed to complement the 'Gardening for Biodiversity' booklet produced by the Local Authority Heritage Officer Network in 2020.

Copies of both are available to download as pdfs on www.wicklow.ie or hard copies can be posted free-

of charge courtesy of Wicklow County Council. Email wicklowheritage@wicklowcoco.ie to request your free copy.

This project is one of the biodiversity actions of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan and is co-funded by the Heritage Council and Wicklow County Council.



Seal Rescue Ireland Education Manager Krysten Maier is pictured with Atina at the charity's rescue centre in Courtown to mark the launch of a new virtual education programme for young people in partnership with SSE Renewables.



Molly in the Mermaid

Mermaid Arts Centre is delighted to have Set and Costume Designer Molly O'Cathain in residence in Mermaid for the Spring.

Molly works across Theatre, Dance and Opera and will be using her residency in Mermaid to explore design-led performance creation, exploring costume or wearable art as the prompt of text for performance. Molly is interested in contemporary adaptations, new writing and devised work. She likes to collaborate on vibrant, expressionistic work, using colour, form and object as visual metaphor and dramaturgy, rather than (or as well as) as backdrop or decoration.

Molly will be collaborating with Costume Maker Sorcha Flynn and speaking to lighting designer Sinead Wallace to develop costumes. She then hopes to invite Sound Designers and Performers to react to the pieces once it is safe to do so.

Signal Arts Centre submission call for 2022

Signal Arts Centre is currently accepting submissions for exhibitions in 2022. The deadline for applications is Friday 26th March 2021.



A submission proposal should include title of the proposed exhibition and should cover what you would hope to exhibit if your application is successful.

A minimum of six images are required in digital format clearly marked with your name and the title of the pictures. All images should be suitable for print reproduction and accompanied by their dimensions.

Also needed in the application is an artist's CV (art related only).

There is an exhibition fee of €250 to be paid by the artist if selected.

Submit by post or email directly to: Exhibition Co-Ordinator, Signal Arts Centre, 1A Albert Avenue, Bray, Co. Wicklow. Tel: 01-2762039. Email: exhibitions@signalartscentre.ie.

Children's artwork in aid of Jack & Jill on view to public in Wicklow Town

Beware of the promises you make ! At the beginning of this lockdown, Wicklow Town artist and gallery owner, Louise Cherry launched a primary school art competition in aid of the Jack and Jill Foundation. Not only were there a great selection of prizes donated by local businesses but Louise promised to exhibit all the entries in her gallery on Mortons Lane in the town.

Well, managing the competition has become a full time job for Louise over the past few weeks. Receiving attention from nationwide press, both the Irish Times and RTE, Louise received nearly 400 entries to the competition from primary school children from over 150 schools nationwide and so far has raised nearly €4,500 for the foundation.

"The response to the competition has been overwhelming!! In the past few weeks we have received an enormous amount of post everyday, on a personal level it has been just so nice getting so much post. My son who has helped me with the project, has eaten his breakfast every morning, sitting in the window waiting for the postman. We had to put a big waterproof box at our gate for all the entries, it has been such an amazing lockdown project and has certainly kept us busy".

Louise's gallery, the Louise Cherry Gallery opened in December and had a super first month in business, but obviously is not currently open due to the restrictions. "I wanted to do something with the gallery during lockdown that everyone could benefit from, that lots of families could get involved in, I wanted a 'feel good' project that would unite children and by making it a fund raiser for children who have a more difficult

journey in life, I hoped it might make us remember that lockdown is hard, but really, in the main, we are all so fortunate in life."

As an artist, Louise is only too aware that a blank canvas can be daunting and so to encourage as many children to participate as possible she designed two project briefs that they could follow. One of the project briefs, the 'imaginary world' seems to have particularly ignited imaginations and it is fascinating to see, through the images into the minds of these children. "The entries are incredible, visually, technically and conceptually; the children have put so much effort into their drawings, I feel honoured to have them in my possession and I have kept true to my word, every single entry I received is currently hanging on the wall in my gallery, it is a breathtaking display of imagination, design and colour. Covid has taught us to do things differently and so as an artist and gallery owner, I present to the people of Wicklow Town the 'look in the window' children's art exhibition."

Louise will be leaving the lights on in the gallery till 9pm every evening for local people to take a peek and it is well worth the visit. To follow the exhibition, competition, short listing and winners online follow Louise Cherry on fb or



Louise Cherry Studio on Instagram. Louise is excited to announce a super judging panel; Award winning Irish children's author Sarah Webb, Award winning Irish designer Eoin Shanley from Copperfish Lighting and Arts facilitator and children's gallery coordinator, Mathilde Murray-Veldt. "I have become so involved with all the entries that I have decided not to judge the competition myself. I am so relieved that it is not me who has to choose the winners" said Louise. There are some amazing prizes generously donated by local Wicklow businesses, Ronan Rose-Roberts Architects, Hopkins ToyMaster, Bridge Street Books, Sorrel and Eve, The Sports Room, Squirrel Scramble and The Coffee Shop. There are 4 age categories and 4 prizes in each category, as well as an overall school prize

for the school with the most entries. The school prize was won by local Ashford school, Nun Cross National School, however as this is the school Louise's son goes to, she has created a second school prize for the runner up, GlenBrien National School in Enniscorthy. When Covid is under control both schools will get a day of art workshops for the kids given by Louise herself.

There was no entry fee for the competition, however people were asked to donate to the Jack and Jill Foundation. 100% of all donations are going to the Foundation, €16 provides a family with 1 hour of trained nurse care. So far, €4,210 has been raised. It's not too late to donate, donations can be made through Louise's just giving page, the link can be accessed through www.louisecherry.com



Young Wicklow filmmaker's global pandemic story gets him through to finals of Ireland's Young Filmmaker

A Wicklow teenager has made it through to Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year competition with a film about the global pandemic. Fourteen-year-old Eric Peterson from Kilbride was named as a Leinster finalist in the competition as part of Fresh International Film Festival.

The Leinster, Independent regional heats took place online this year due to the global pandemic and Eric's short film 'Monotony' was selected for the national finals in the Junior category.

The impact of the current global pandemic on young people was a recurring theme for the films entered in this year's Festival and this year's crop of entries shine a light on how young people have been affected, directly and indirectly, by the pandemic. Every film entered proved to be unique in its own way, but they all shared a common message - the need to protect and keep their loved ones safe. This year's submissions were as always creative and diverse, with many young filmmakers involving their family members as cast and crew in their films.

Eric's film 'Monotony' explores the Covid existence of a 14 year old, who is driven mad by online school and endless lockdown. Eric commented, "I'm bored and tired of online school and I'm

missing my friends, so I thought that was the best thing to talk about - what online school and the typical Covid teenager day looks like and how I am dealing with life."

He added, "I wanted to enter a film, but because of lockdown I wasn't able to make the film that I'd originally planned. I had to think outside the box for a theme that I could shoot and act in myself. I have always had an interest in film making and spent hours on YouTube during lockdown, doing research on different methods. I wanted to show the teenage perspective and I was a bit worried that the more serious side to it wouldn't come across, so I tried to use the music to create an atmosphere of stress. I still wanted the film to have some humour in it though and to entertain people, so I hope it's a good balance between serious and funny. Fresh Film has been a great environment for me to showcase my films, network, learn, and most importantly get inspired and I am thrilled my film

is through to the finals."

Jayne Foley, Founder and Artistic Director of Fresh Film said, "The films entered this year in the Festival are a glimpse into how young people in Ireland are dealing with the challenges of the pandemic. Films are a powerful form of expression and an effective way to educate, create awareness, improve understanding and encourage action. Lockdowns during the pandemic have forced young people to come to terms with a new way of living life. What surprised me about this year's crop of pandemic themed films was how positive the films were and how resourceful young people can be. This year's Festival is introducing the world to a new generation of young film innovators highlighting how they are living and coping with global health issues."

Fresh Film encourages young people to make films by hosting an annual international film festival for young people, presenting Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year Awards, acting as an

advocate for young filmmakers and promoting their work worldwide.

Fresh International Film Festival invites young people from Ireland and overseas, aged 7 to 18 years, to create, exhibit and share films.

The festival provides an opportunity for these young filmmakers to have their work seen on a cinema screen for the first time and to compete for the title of Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year. All films submitted are also considered for a range of Specialist Awards.

Fresh International Film Festival 2021 takes place Monday, March 22 to Sunday, March 28 and features an alumni showcase and a week of film screenings and workshops with the Junior Finals taking place on Thursday, March 25th and the Seniors Finals on March 26th via a YouTube live stream with presenter and documentary filmmaker Stephen Byrne and comedian and social creative Justine Stafford hosting this year's awards.



Eric Peterson, age 14 has reached the finals for Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year Junior category with his film 'Monotony'. The film explores the Covid existence of a 14 year old, who is driven mad by online school and endless lockdown.

Funding for live entertainment sector

Following a funding announcement from his Green Party colleague, Minister Catherine Martin, Deputy Steven Matthews highlighted the €14 million ringfenced for grants for businesses who operate in the live entertainment that have been unable to qualify for other Government supports.



Steven Matthews TD

Self-employed businesses whether sole traders, partnerships and incorporated entities operating exclusively within the commercial live entertainment sector are eligible to apply. The scheme is expected to open next month.

The main features of this new Music Entertainment Business Assistance Scheme (MEBAS) will see support offered by way of two levels of flat payments: €2,500 for businesses with a VAT-exclusive turnover of €20,000 - €100,000; €5,000 for businesses with a VAT-exclusive turnover in excess of €100,000

Discussing the announcement, Deputy Matthews said: "I've been working with groups representing musicians, sound engineers and stage companies since the start of the pandemic and unfortunately, while they have qualified for individual supports such as the PUP payment, it has been the case that many have fallen through the cracks in terms of other business supports. In fairness to the various Departments involved, there was no intent in leaving these groups out but for various reasons, many companies involved in live entertainment did not meet the criteria of previous Government supports.

"The impact that this pandemic has had on live entertainment and those who rely on events and shows for a living has been unprecedented. I know from speaking to people who work in the sector both from Wicklow and further afield that many in the industry will struggle even when the economy reopens so any assistance must be welcomed. This grant funding can be used to alleviate some of the fixed costs that have built up over the past year and I know it has broadly been welcomed by the industry. It's really important that the Department engages further with the industry in terms of the rollout of this grant funding and I will be offering assistance in that regard to any of the individual people/ companies who contacted me in recent months," concluded Deputy Matthews.

Screendance Laboratory returns

Wicklow Screendance Laboratory returns on March 29th to April 3rd with an exciting online programme of workshops, discussion and performance celebrating dance and dance on screen.

The festival is an experimental space that encourages artists and audiences to engage with movement in new and unexpected ways and offers rich opportunities for training and connection.

This year's event gives dancers a unique chance to study the repertoire of modernist icon Martha Graham with former company members Jean-Baptiste Ferreira and Rafael Molina, and welcomes back screendance experts Marisa Hayes, Franck Boulègue and Blas Payri to facilitate world-class training in the art of merging choreography and cinematography.

Also, in response to this difficult time of loneliness and isolation, dancer & neuroscientist Bianca Paige Smith introduces the meditative dance practice Two Can Do to explore the strength in vulnerability and the search for connectedness.

WSL 2021 features a number of discussion platforms including a full-day symposium to look at the art of screendance and the work of Martha Graham, and the ever-popular Artist's Salon - an informal and interactive show-and-tell sharing of new work and work in progress. Screenings of local, national & international dance film and performance will take place throughout the week, culminating in a showing of the

Graham masterpiece, Helios.

Located in Bray, an area of Ireland known for filmmaking, Wicklow

Screendance Laboratory is the only screendance festival in the East of the country and one of just two film festivals in Ireland that focus exclusively on dance. WSL is designed to incorporate the disciplines of dance and film under laboratory conditions, and to develop this model within the growing field of dance activity in Ireland and abroad. Its programmes are arts-based & experimental - 'learning-by-doing' - and

this year will feature virtual and live-stream events for dancers, filmmakers and the general public. WSL strives to connect established and emerging artists and encourage conversations among practitioners and the public. Fostering a spirit of collaboration, it embraces local arts and community initiatives as well as the educational sector, inviting submissions from and showing the work of dance students, school-goers and community arts projects.

See the full programme for WSL 2021 at www.screendance.ie



Róisín Whelan performing at Artists Salon, 2019



Pictured is Georgia Gallagher from Greystones Language School celebrating eight years in business. Eight years ago this month, Georgia set up the first out of school French classes for local children in Greystones & Delgany. A small room at the local Parish Centre was the venue where a handful of children, as young as 5 years old, wanted to see what it was all about.

Fast forward to today and Georgia's language school, Greystones Languages for Children, is thriving! Not even the Pandemic has stopped her teaching and her students from continuing with their bilingual journey.

Georgia says, "When the first lockdown happened, schools and venues closed, and all classes ceased. Against all the odds stacked against her, Georgia was determined to keep her students bilingual journey moving, so instead of cancelling classes, she simply took them online.

"Although nothing beats face to face teaching, my online classes are working really well. As well as benefiting from continued learning, my students have really enjoyed working together and seeing their classmates on screen. This week we all celebrated Greystones 8-year birthday virtually, we played fun games and sang songs plus, we even had a cake!"

Contracts extended to July for eligible Community Employment and TÚS scheme participants in Wicklow

Participants of Community Employment (CE) and TÚS schemes in Wicklow whose contracts were due to finish over the period since last October will now benefit from a further extension up to the 2nd July, Wicklow Fine Gael Minister Simon Harris TD has confirmed.

Minister Harris said: "The work that CE and TÚS workers carry out is absolutely vital to local communities right across Wicklow. It is this Government's priority is to ensure that there's continuity and certainty for CE and TÚS schemes throughout the current restrictions. I absolutely value the contribution that CE and TÚS schemes make on a daily basis in our towns, villages and parishes throughout Wicklow.

"Community Employment needs to be viewed not just as an important employment and development support but also as an integral community service particularly in rural areas. The changes announced today by my Fine Gael colleague, Minister Heather Humphreys and her Department colleague Minister of State Joe O'Brien, are an important first step and I am confident that through increased engagement with stakeholders, we can ensure that the important work carried out by CE and TUS schemes deliver maximum benefits both for workers and communities."

Minister Harris continued: "Under the Government's July Stimulus Programme last year, approval was secured for 3,000 additional places to support CE and TÚS schemes.

"These additional places underline the Government's commitment to CE and TUS and will provide opportunities for new schemes as well as facilitating more people on the existing schemes.

"Filling these additional places, as well as those arising from existing vacancies will be an absolute priority for Government, once the economy and society begins to move beyond Covid and public health restrictions ease.

"It is intended to significantly scale up the numbers of referrals from local Intreo offices to CE and TUS once the country begins to reopen."

Minister Harris continued: "All of these measures will provide further certainty to CE schemes, participants and the important community services they provide, while supporting long term unemployed people during this challenging Covid environment.

"I would also like to re-assure participants of CE and TÚS projects that contracts due to end post 2nd July 2021, will be done on a planned and phased basis."

At a meeting hosted by Ministers Humphreys and O'Brien with CE and TÚS project sponsors in January, the CE sponsors sought clarification regarding a change to the conditions relating to the participation on CE schemes that was introduced in July 2017. This change limited participation to a maximum period of 3 consecutive years.

The Ministers asked officials in the Department of Social Protection to review this issue and today confirmed that participants who were 55 years or older, at the time of the July 2017 rule change and who were already on a CE scheme at that time, are not affected by the change and have the option of remaining on CE for up to six consecutive years.

It was also announced today that a new CE and TÚS Forum comprising representatives of CE and TÚS schemes and officials from the Department of Social Protection will be established shortly. The purpose of the Forum is to discuss and exchange views on operational issues impacting on both schemes.

Minister Harris concluded: "In order to deliver maximum benefits for participants and communities, I believe it is vital that there is regular and ongoing engagement between the Department and those delivering these vital services on the ground.

"This new forum will be dedicated to sharing information with and hearing the views across both CE and TÚS sponsors on operational matters that impact on both schemes. This new forum will be very useful in informing future service developments for the longer term as we emerge from COVID-19."

Council extends waiver of application fee for outdoor seating and use of public spaces

Application fees for use of public footpaths or spaces by local businesses during COVID-19 are being waived by Wicklow County Council for a further period. The Council says it is anxious to assist and support businesses in the recovery period arising out of the Pandemic, and that one of the measures is the use of public footpaths and/or public space for local businesses which may require the use of these spaces, particularly as outdoor seating areas while restrictions are ongoing.

The Council is advising businesses that such activity can be permitted by our Planning Department under a Section 254 licence. The application form and further information is available on the Council's website.

To support businesses, Wicklow County Council has extended the temporary waiver of the application fee in light of the current crises to the end of August 2021.

Each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, it is broadly envisaged that the following considerations will apply: The licence application must include drawings with dimensions and

proposed seating/partitions; Applicants must demonstrate 2m of unobstructed shared space remaining on the footpath. It will be the applicant's responsibility to maintain this at all times that any furniture is in place; No fixed structures will be permitted; Applicants must indicate times the seating/structures will be on the pavement. Everything must be removed every night; Applicants must ensure they have public liability insurance for the area in question and indemnify Wicklow County Council; All applications will be examined and decided upon on its own merits taking into consideration

all other road users and their health and safety; We must remember the primary function of the footpath is for pedestrian and wheelchair movement and this will be determined as part of the licence process; Any business without a valid licence will be requested to remove all obstructions from the pavement.

Applicants should bear in mind that any semi-permanent (or permanent) structures may require planning permission. In addition, the requirements of pedestrians, particularly those who may be vulnerable or impaired, will clearly have to be taken into account.

Where it is intended to

use the space for the sale of alcohol, a separate licence is required.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Pat Kennedy, said: "It is more important than ever, in a COVID-ravaged tourism industry that we do everything in our power to support our local business and endeavour to entice more visitors to our towns and villages."

Chief Executive, Mr Frank Curran, stated: "Wicklow County Council will be proactive in supporting businesses at this time of continued restrictions and continue to support our communities and businesses throughout Wicklow".

Wicklow businesses encouraged to apply to the new Small Business Assistance Scheme

Minister Simon Harris has urged Wicklow businesses to apply for the new Small Business Assistance Scheme (SBASC) which is now open for applications.

Minister Harris said "The new Small Business Assistance Scheme provides grants to self-employed, sole traders, partnerships and companies with a minimum annual turnover of €50,000. In order to qualify for CBAS, you must be ineligible for CRSS or Fáilte Ireland Business Continuity Scheme and have a reduction in turnover of at least 75%."

The Tánaiste Leo Varadkar TD said: "As the pandemic goes on, more and more businesses are struggling

to keep up with payroll and fixed costs. My objective is to ensure that as many businesses as possible get through this period and are able to re-open successfully. This new payment will help businesses with fixed costs like rent, insurance, utilities and security. The scheme should help around 7,500 mainly small businesses and although the grant is modest, it will go a long way for the smallest businesses.

"While things remain very chal-

lenging for businesses, there is reason to hope. The latest public health numbers are going in the right direction, the vaccines work and there is light at the end of the tunnel."

Eligible businesses will receive a payment of €4,000 for Quarter 1 of 2021. There will be a second payment of €4,000 for businesses continuing to meet the criteria.

The 31 Local Authorities in every county are taking applications today with a closing date of 21st April, 2021 for the first round of the scheme. Interested businesses should contact Wicklow County Council and further information is available at Wicklow.ie.

Wicklow one of six counties where disposable income exceeded state average in 2018

According to the latest release from the Central Statistics Office, Wicklow was one of only six counties where per capita disposable income exceeded the state average of €21,270 in 2018.

The disposable income per person in Wicklow was €21,883. Disposable household income in Wicklow was €3,165. While the county figures involve uncertainty, they do provide a useful indication of the degree of variability at county level. Dublin, Kildare, Limerick, Wicklow, Meath and Cork, in that order, are the only counties where per capita disposable income exceeded the state average in 2018.

At the other end of the spectrum, some counties have never had per capita disposable income greater than the state average during the entire period 2004 to 2018.

Commenting on the release, John Milne, Statistician, said: "Dublin incomes continued to rise above the average in 2018. People in Dublin earned 17% more than the average state income and 6% more than those in Kildare which had the second highest income level at 10% above the average. Dublin, Kildare, Limerick, Wicklow, Meath and Cork in that order, are the only counties where per capita disposable income exceeded the state average of €21,270 in 2018.

The gap between the maximum and minimum value of per capita disposable income, on a regional basis, increased from €6,430 in 2017 to €7,578 in 2018, due to Dublin regional incomes increasing by €1,348 (5.7%) while those of the lowest region, Border, increased by only €199 (1.2%) to €17,391. Incomes in the Midland region dropped by €420 between 2017 and 2018 to €17,389."

Wicklow company offers tech solution to quarantine

Wicklow telecommunications company Hubbcatt has announced that it plans to pitch its 'geofencing' quarantine solution to the Irish Government, as the company believes it could play a major role in the introduction of mandatory quarantine for arrivals into Ireland.

The Hubbcatt App is downloaded by the person arriving into Ireland and an operative uses geofencing technology to establish an

invisible perimeter around the hotel or property they will be self-isolating in.

If the person breaches the perimeter before their

14-day isolation period ends, an alarm is automatically triggered, their phone becomes a walkie talkie and an operative can

immediately talk to the patient. The entire process of downloading the app and geofencing the property takes around 3 minutes.

The Hubbcatt App was used successfully to enforce mandatory quarantine in the Bahamas, with a compliance rate of well over 90%.

According to Hubbcatt's Chief Commercial Officer, Niall O'Toole, the system is also about the

care and wellbeing of the patient in isolation; "The advantage of the Hubbcatt system is that it allows an operative to immediately reach out to someone in isolation and talk directly to them. While this could mean asking them why they have left the property, it also means regularly checking in on them, seeing if they are ok, if they have any symptoms or if they need medical assistance."

Niall went on to say; "Our system is currently being used by the Government in the Bahamas for the last 8 months. It allows people to self-isolate in houses, as well as hotels, which will make mandatory quarantining much safer and cheaper. It is extremely efficient and cost effective, and it only takes around 3 minutes for a person to be set up and their location to be geofenced. Much of this could even be done in advance of arriving into



Hubbcatt CEO Alan Bates and CTO Niall O'Toole

the country."

In the coming days, Hubbcatt is hoping to make an extensive pitch to the Irish Government with a view to the system being rolled out as soon as possible.

Hubbcatt was founded in 2019 by a group of telecommunications professionals with a huge level of international experience in the sector. Based in Wicklow, it currently provides communications and business critical solutions to large businesses and organisations in six countries worldwide.

PLANNING • PLANNING • PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Alphaplan Design (Tel: 086 2461269, Email: eugene@alphaplandesign.com) Seeks planning permission for relocation of entrance to previously approved dwelling (ref. no. 20/894) and associated works at Ballinastoe, Roundwood, Co. Wicklow for H. Fitzmaurice. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Stephen McCabe seek permission for alterations to McCabe's Coffee LTD, Unit 1, Newtown Business and Enterprise Centre, NewtownMountKennedy, Co. Wicklow. The development will consist of a material alteration to existing Unit 1. The alteration includes a new mezzanine floor circa 190 square meters for use as storage and production. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Alphaplan Design (Tel: 086 2461269, Email: eugene@alphaplandesign.com) Seeks planning permission for retention of home office / private studio and associated works at Magheramore, Coast Road, Co. Wicklow for L. and C. Dunne. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Alphaplan Design (Tel: 086 2461269, Email: eugene@alphaplandesign.com) Seeks planning permission for single access gate to side garden wall for access to rear garden of dwelling and associated works at 78Saunders Lane, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow for S. Butler. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Permission is sought by Damh Entertainment Ltd, for the change of use from Restaurant / Café to Restaurant/ Take away at: Unit 4 Castle Street Shopping Centre, Bray, County Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding a reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of planning authority during its public opening hours. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the Planning Authority on payment of a prescribed fee (€20) within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the Authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the Planning Authority in making a decision on the application. The Planning Authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, David and Frances Donnelly intend to apply for Retention Permission for a single storey breakfast bay extension to a previously extended detached two storey dwelling house at Eyrie, Templecarrig Upper, Bray, Co. Wicklow, A98 K2C5. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of Wicklow County Council Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Niall Esmonde seeks planning permission for a rear, first-floor extension to Unit D, as granted permission Reg Ref 20/959 at The Rectory Field, Brickfield Lane, Church Hill, Wicklow Town, Co Wicklow. The development consists of a 36 Msq rear, first floor extension together with all associated site development works. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

M.D.; E.C.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Waste Management Act, 1996

AFF Logistics, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow.

We are required to accept on these premises, free of charge, for the purpose of recovery, packaging waste (Cardboard/Plastic) similar in nature to that supplied at our premises. The products or packaging in question need not necessarily have been purchased from AFF Logistics.

Mark 10:17-27 Gospel

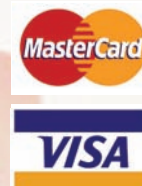
Jesus was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this question to him, 'Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You must not kill; You must not commit adultery; You must not steal; You must not bring false witness: You must not defraud: Honour your father and mother.' And he said to him, 'Master, I have kept all these from my earliest days.' Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him, and he said, 'There is one thing you lack. Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come follow me.' But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' The disciples were astounded by these words, but Jesus insisted, 'My children, he said to them 'how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' They were more astonished than ever. 'In that case' they said to one another 'who can be saved?' Jesus gazed at them. 'For men' he said 'it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God.'

C.J.

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