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Monday 19th April 2021 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

DART TO WICKLOW TOWN?

Green Party TD Steven Matthews has drafted a plan for the electrification of the rail line and extension of the DART to Wicklow Town. Deputy Matthews believes that his proposal would hugely benefit the residents of Kilcoole, Newcastle and Wicklow Town, and ultimately pose further opportunities for people in Arklow, Rathdrum, Avoca and Glenealy.

Deputy Matthews told *Wicklow Times*, "I have engaged with the Minister for Transport (Green Party leader, Eamon Ryan) on the proposal and discussed it with Irish Rail and Wicklow County Council. It makes a lot of sense from an engineering, financial and environmental perspective. I have planned and costed this proposal and made a very strong case to expand the DART+ investment programme to include extending DART services to Wicklow Town. "It would benefit Kilcoole, Newcastle and provides the option of a stop to serve the Charlesland area. There is also a possibility of extending the service to Arklow with battery electric trains. I previously raised the possibility of this with the NTA and they have also indicated they would consider the idea." Deputy Matthews claims his proposal would improve the current DART Coastal Plan, and would be less disruptive and make more financial sense. "Now is the time for Wicklow residents to have a proper reliable rail service. I was critical of the original DART+ plan as it neglected Wicklow



Albie Lambert, Anouk Lambert, Lily Sullivan, and Jack Sullivan out for a walk in Kilmacurragh last week. Pic: Michael Kelly



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though it has since been upgraded to include a DART Coastal phase to provide better DART services to Greystones only. My proposal improves on that service and expands it to Wicklow Town.

"DART+ Coastal seeks to increase the frequency of electric trains between Bray and Greystones to six trains per hour by installing a double track section north of Greystones. These engineering works would be considerable, disruptive, slow to deliver, costly, involve bridge works, major embankment works, CPO of lands and extensive signalling alterations.

"My proposal would greatly reduce the need for construction works at Greystones and extend the overhead electrified system to Wicklow Town which would provide a full DART service from Wicklow to the City Centre. This is a

sustainable, economic and efficient transport option. A good rail service will also relieve pressure on the N11 and provide commuters with an alternative to car use."

Deputy Matthews also described how his electrification proposal to Wicklow Town provides an enormous opportunity for Arklow, Rathdrum, Glenealy and Avoca. "I have also discussed the provision of battery electric trains on the Wicklow line. There has been huge progress in the development of battery trains and I would expect that we will see these trains in use in Ireland in the near future. A battery train has a range of about 80km and is charged as it travels through electrified sections. A battery train can easily service Wicklow to Arklow return and recharge when it returns to the electrified section.

"For too many years the Wicklow rail line has

been ignored and under-utilised with little alternative for com-

muters except an over capacity and congested N11. My proposal to

electrify to Wicklow is cost effective, sensible and deliverable."

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One-year old Ali Butterworth out for a walk in Kilmacurragh

Online public meeting

Are you an owner of a small business in Wicklow suffering due to closure during Covid? Are you involved in the events sector and struggling due to the industry shutdown during Covid?

If you would like to input your feedback, discuss your concerns and needs and have a discussion about what is needed to get you back on track, you might be interested in attending one of two online meetings Green Party TD Steven Matthews is hosting on Monday 19th April.

Deputy Matthews would like to collate the needs of the business and events companies in a Wicklow and feed this back to government, seeking the necessary supports.

Please email steven.matthews@oireachtas.ie for a link and state which one of the meetings you would like to attend.

WCC Community Awards Scheme 2021

Grants are available for community groups and local organisations undertaking community projects. Maximum grant of €500 for small projects and group running costs. One application only per group. Applications from www.Wicklow.ie. Queries to Office of Community, Cultural and Social Development at WCC, ccsdadmin@Wicklowcoco.ie. The deadline is Friday, 23rd April at 4pm.

Late applications will not be considered.

Shankill monthly book sale

The monthly book sale run by Shankill Day Care and Shankill Old Folks Association has re-opened as a collection service by email and phone. Readers can place an order for specific titles or authors or genres, and organisers will see if they are in stock. There are also a selection of jigsaws and DVDs.

To place an order, email sofabooks4u@gmail.com. Organisers will then let you know when to collect the item and the price. You can collect it from Shankill Day Care Centre, Lower Road, Shankill, on Wednesdays and Fridays between 9am and 11am.

Free online walking programme

If you'd like support to get started with your own walking routine, why not join the new free online Walking Programme being run by Bray Area Partnership's ASPIRE Social Prescribing team?

The programme started on 29th March and runs for six weeks, but you can join at any time. You'll get all the support you need to get going and keep going with your walking - including a free wrist pedometer at the start of the programme to help you track your progress and keep motivated.

There's also an online walking group that meets weekly for those who want to connect up with others on the same journey to share tips and encouragement.

The Walking Programme is open to anybody living in Bray, Delgany, Enniskerry, Greystones, Kilcoole, Newtownmountkennedy or Newcastle Lower. To find out more or sign up, call the partnership on 01 286 8266 and ask for Alex or Caragh or email alex@brayareapartnership.ie or caraghmun@brayareapartnership.ie. See www.brayareapartnership.ie to find out more about ASPIRE and the partnership's range of other services and supports.

The ASPIRE Social Prescribing programme supports people with their health and well-being by connecting them with a range of services and activities in their local community and is funded by the Sláintecare Integration Fund and Healthy Ireland.

Erasmus+ proposals welcome from education, youth and sports groups in Wicklow

Léargas, Ireland's national agency for the European Union's Erasmus+ programme, is calling on individuals and organisations in Wicklow to submit project proposals for the new 2021 programme. Funding is available to support projects for those in, vocational, school or adult education, youth or sports groups, with the first application deadlines due to close in May.

With a renewed focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life, the newly opened Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme will fund flexible learning and cross-country co-operation projects for over 10 million people, of all ages and backgrounds, throughout the European Union.

While travel restrictions continue to limit mobility for European exchange programmes, Léargas are encouraging organi-

sations in Wicklow to take a flexible approach in exploring opportunities for students and young people, educators and teachers, youth workers and sports coaches to connect with other participating groups across Europe.

Lorraine Gilligan, Executive Director of Léargas, said: "The Erasmus+ programme offers an incredible opportunity for people of all ages and backgrounds to explore Europe through exchange and peer-to-peer learning. We might think of Erasmus+

as a physical exchange - someone going to work or volunteer or study abroad, and that is a fantastic part of the programme we're looking forward to welcoming back in the future - but it is also about cooperation and no one needs to get on a plane to make that possible."

Lisa Downes, a youth worker from St Andrews Youth Resource Centre in Dublin, has been working on an online Erasmus+ project called 'While We Wait' which connects young people in Ireland with peers in

Italy, Spain and Portugal. She said said "We want to support more projects like this across Ireland, so that more people can access these opportunities. Léargas want to hear from organisations and individuals in Wicklow who are interested in applying for Erasmus+ funding either by our first application deadlines on 11 and 20 May, or before our later deadline in October."

Further information about Erasmus+ is available at leargas.ie

Local Government: Force or Farce? *How Can We Fix a Broken System?*

Independent councillors Mags Crean and Tom Fortune will host a free online event this week on Thursday 22nd April at 7pm.



Independent councillors Mags Crean and Tom Fortune

The event is titled 'Local Government: Force or Farce? - How Can We Fix a Broken System'. They will be joined by guest speaker Professor Mary Murphy, author of 'Democracy Works If You Let It'.

They are inviting members of the public to join the event - the topic of which is the decline of local government.

Speaking ahead of the

event, Cllr Fortune said "Is Local Government a force for good where local communities and citizens have strong democratically elected representatives protecting the provision of local services and calling for enhanced local democracy? Or is it slowly becoming a Farce with a rotating political cast who have decreasing powers and functions?"

"Join this talk to learn

more about how vital local services have been privatised and centralised; how bureaucratic power has increased at the expense of political representatives; and how local government has not recovered from the impact of austerity policies that cut funding, staff and reduced the overall number of councils and public representatives."

The event is free but anyone wishing to join in must book their place at eventbrite.ie.

New seating at Wicklow Town's South Quay

There is huge excitement around Wicklow town at the moment especially with the many walkers who visit the South Quay area and see the wonderful new seating, planters, trees and shrubs in one of the most popular meetings spots just behind the Scout Hall.

Wicklow & District Lions Club members are behind this community project in conjunction with Wicklow Tidy Towns and with the full support and help of Wicklow Co. Council.

Last weekend the new weather proof type seating which is manufactured from recycled plastic arrived in Wicklow town. Soon after the installation and the removal of the old seats the planters were filled with topsoil and Juneberry trees were planted along with Cherry Laurel shrubs which should be

blooming in the coming weeks.

The new seating will bring great comfort and joy to the many people who visit the area for a chat and a cup of coffee in picturesque surroundings.

"Lions Wicklow are very proud and delighted to be involved and a second project with the Tidy Towns Team will take place very soon in the town. A special thanks to the business people in the area who have supported this project which benefits everyone."



Wicklow Lions members Ethna Neiland and Sean Olohan with Louise Kelly from Wicklow Tidy Towns at South Quay in Wicklow town

STUDENTS LEFT STRANDED

As secondary school students returned to school last week, many parents reported that multiple buses were passing by the children due to lack of spaces available on the bus when taking into account social distancing measures.

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore and Cllr Jodie Neary last week spoke with Area Managers from Dublin Bus, Go Ahead, Irish Rail and the NTA regarding concerns about public transport capacity during the full reopening of schools. Green Party TD Steven Matthews has written to the area manager for Dublin Bus to request an urgent review of routes in North Wicklow.

Speaking on this issue, Deputy Whitmore said "As schools fully reopened, many parents, students and even school principals have contacted me about children not being able to get a seat on a bus on their way to school and on their way home. In response to our continued engagement with Area Managers and representatives from various transport agencies, myself and Cllr Neary were able to secure additional bus routes for school children as well as a commitment from Irish Rail and the NTA to monitor rail services in the coming days and adjust capacity as needed.

Outlining the changes, Social Democrats councillor for the Greystones Municipal District said "Dublin Bus and Go Ahead have been very open to suggested changes and increasing capacity to meet the needs of school children. I have been filling them in with the range of concerns parents have raised with me and they have assured me they will continue to engage with me until capacity issues are resolved, within reason. I'm delighted to see the following new services and changes being made from last week onwards: an extra 84 bus leaving Newcastle at 7:50am (two in total); an extra 84 leaving at 3:50pm from Bray Station which will lay empty until that time (on Wednesdays this will leave at 1:15pm to cater to the half school day)."

Deputy Whitmore also confirms that Go Ahead have agreed to putting in place double decker buses for the 184 to increase capacity within the 25% limit. "I'm also happy to confirm that from speaking to Go Ahead, there will now be increased

capacity at the following bus times: 0712/0812 (NTMK to Bray); 0833/1505/1535/1605 (Bray - NTKM).

"While this is progress, there is still the overall issue that despite the easing of restrictions and full reopening of schools, the cap of public transport capacity remaining at 25% is simply not working for those relying on buses or rail services. As a result, transport agencies are left having to find novel ways to increase capacity including putting in place double decker buses instead of single decker or doubling up on capacity for school runs. Long term this is not sustainable and a gradual easing of the 25% capacity cap is needed in line with the slow reopening of our economy. I am raising this with the Minister for Transport and hope to engage with him on this issue to ensure public transport reopens in line with easing of COVID restrictions" concluded Deputy Whitmore.

Green Party TD, Steven Matthews has written to the area manager for Dublin Bus to request an

urgent review of routes in North Wicklow, particularly the 84 route, following the teething problems and capacity issues after the school Easter holidays which saw students unable to get on buses both to and from school.

Deputy Matthews said: "I was extremely frustrated to hear about the capacity issues on Dublin Bus. I absolutely accept that the existing 25% capacity limit under Level 5 restrictions adds huge complications to the logistics of organising bus routes but with most people still working from home, the focus needs to be on peak school times and making the return to school as easy as possible for students and parents.

"The extent of the problem wasn't made clear till that evening after I received a huge number of emails from worried parents whose children had been waiting for over an hour or more after school in the rain. Many of the students impacted have not been in school since Christmas and are understandably anxious about being back and this added



Oisín Byrne out for a walk in Knockananna

issue is not fair on them.

"I was written to separately by a number of concerned school principals who informed me that students, through no fault of their own, were made late on the first 3 days of being back to school due to up to 4 buses passing them due to being at capacity.

"As a Green Party TD, I actively encourage the use of public transport but the full return of schools has been earmarked for sever-

al weeks so these teething problems simply should not have happened and should have been foreseen.

"I welcomed the clarification that following the initial issues, extra buses were added.

"The return to school was a daunting prospect for many students and families and to have this issue be another hurdle is understandably frustrating. In multiple correspon-

dences to Dublin Bus, I have emphasised the need to constantly monitor the situation. If the problem persists, more buses should be allocated to ensure that students can get to and from school quickly and safely. I will continue to engage with both our school communities and Dublin Bus until this matter can be resolved," concluded Deputy Matthews.

Minister Simon Harris

also welcomed the response of Dublin Bus to his requests for increased capacity and frequency following the return of students to Schools. Minister Harris has also contacted Go-Ahead seeking extra capacity on their buses to accommodate students from Bray to Kilcoole and Newcastle and Irish Rail seeking additional morning and afternoon DARTS to and from Greystones.

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The Sugarloaf Lions Club held an online 'Zoom' quiz for Open Door on Thursday, March 25th in aid of Open Door. A great night was had and 23 teams took part in a lively and fun event. All funds raised will go towards activities for adults with physical disabilities at Open Door. Pictured is Niamh O'Mahony, Sugarloaf Lions, presenting a cheque for €1700, to Suzanne Cox, Development Officer with Open Door.

Council to establish new procedure for naming of memorials

Wicklow County Council is to establish a Civic Memorial Policy - a new procedure for the naming of key infrastructure and community memorials.

The new policy will see the setting up of a civic memorial committee that will make decisions on the naming of key infrastructure (bridges, roundabouts, plazas, etc.), and smaller community memorials (benches, trees, etc.).

The new policy was discussed at last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council where councillors were reassured that the Cathaoirleach of the relevant Municipal District will be brought into the committee to be part of the decision making process on the naming of memorials in their districts.

Cllr Anne Ferris, Cathaoirleach of the Bray Municipal District, explained: "A lot of work has gone into this policy document. We get a lot of requests for memorial benches, plaques, trees, etc. If we get requests they will go straight to protocol committee for discussion. The Municipal Districts will still have an input; if a proposal is coming from Bray, the Bray cathaoirleach will be at the meeting when it's being decided on."

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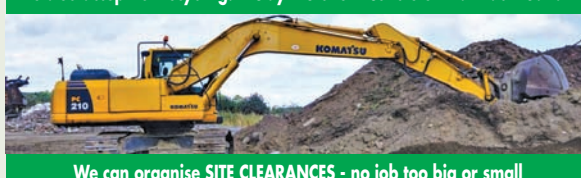
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More time given to Greystones Home Help Services staff

A time extension has been given to staff before Greystones Home Help Services (GHHS) is to be transferred to Home Instead. Greystones Home Help Services is a non-for-profit organisation with a voluntary Board of Management employing professional home carers from the local area. The Services has been in operation for 40 years.

Speaking on the issue Social Democrats councillor Jodie Neary said "Employees contacted me just the other week when it was first flagged to them that GHHS was to be transferred to Home Instead Senior Care, a for-profit company. They were stunned that this was happening and happening so quickly, as they haven't been able to meet with each other to discuss this due to COVID and the nature of their work. There are huge concerns among the staff what moving to a private company will mean for them in terms of work practices, pay and conditions and options of redundancy.

"With all the uncertainty facing

the staff the employee reps did manage to get a letter signed by 80% of its employees calling for more time from the Board of Management and I'm delighted they received this extension. This will give them much-needed time to ask important questions about the transfer and to make informed decisions about their future. It will also help their clients understand more about what this means for them if a different service will be managing their care.

Also speaking on the issue Jennifer Whitmore TD said "These recent events brings into question the issue of privatisation of our professional home help ser-

vices and what it means for future as Ireland experiences an ageing population and where it is well documented that people live longer healthier lives when they can be cared for at home, in their communities. Slaintecare has long flagged the need for legislation to make it a right to home care which is also a commitment in the programme for Government but nothing has come down the line so far. Providing quality home help services means we need to ensure they are delivered at community level with staff who are also from the community and who can provide that quality care" concludes Whitmore.

Alarm at number of Wicklow dentists opting out of treating medical card holders

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has voiced his alarm over the falling rate of Dentists participating in the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS). In Wicklow the number of Dentists participating in the DTSS has reduced by more than 50% since 2017.

Deputy Brady said: "Figures released to me by the HSE indicate an alarming fall off in the rate of Dentists who are signed up to contracts with the HSE under the DTSS.

"All medical card holders in the state are eligible for access to dental treatment under the DTSS. But individuals are finding it increasingly difficult to source a dentist under this scheme. I have been contacted by a number of people from across

Wicklow who have found it near impossible to find a dentist that is participating in the scheme in their local area.

"From 2017 we have witnessed a decrease from 52 to 25 dentists in 2021, who are operating under the scheme in County Wicklow. This is less than half of what it was in 2017.

"This situation is not only leading to delays, it is resulting in patients having to travel further distances, while incurring



John Brady TD

even more costs. This is not acceptable. Medical card holders are entitled to access dental care under this scheme, and the Minister for Health

has a responsibility to make sure that that happens.

"The government is asleep on this issue - it has been flagged to them for a number of years now - and still, there is no resolution in sight.

"In the meantime, medical card holders are facing worry and concern in relation to their dental care. I am calling on Minister Donnelly to do what needs to be done to resolve this situation. If this means he needs to sit down with the Irish Dental Association and sort this mess out, then that's what he will have to do. The current situation cannot be allowed to continue."

Wicklow teenagers speak out as part of YSI nationwide virtual tour

Wicklow teenagers were speaking out last week on the issues impacting them and their innovative ideas for change with the help of a new digital platform created by Young Social Innovators as part of the YSI Speak Out Virtual Tour.

A week-long campaign which ran from 12th - 16th April, the YSI Speak Out Virtual Tour invited young people to upload and share, via video, the creative ways that they have contributed to their communities this year through Young Social Innovators.

Thousands of teenagers in almost every country across Ireland took part in Young Social Innovators this year creating and implementing social innovation projects on issues they care about impacting people,

communities, and the environment.

During the Speak Out Virtual Tour, all of the videos created by YSI teams were shared on a dedicated digital platform, searchable by location and theme, giving a real insight into the social issues most relevant to Ireland's teenage population.

The Speak Out Virtual Tour also saw students reaching out to different audiences to raise awareness and garner support for their projects including among their local communities, political representatives, local media outlets and other key stakeholders.

This new element to the Speak Out Virtual Tour equipped and empowered young people to amplify their voices, providing them with a mechanism to 'speak out' as a collective on the issues that matter to them most.

COUNTY WICKLOW'S VACCINE CENTRES TO FINALLY OPEN?

The vaccine centres in both Shoreline in Greystones and the Arklow Bay Hotel in Arklow are finally scheduled for opening; Shoreline next Monday (26th) and Arklow Bay a few days later.

The vaccine centre in Shoreline is expected to be able to administer 1,500 vaccines a day using its 12 booths.

It is estimated it will vaccinate around six people every ten minutes operating for ten hours a day seven days a week. Currently the Shoreline centre is being used to carry out school vaccinations.

On its first day of operating the HSE's online vaccine portal took in 30,000 registrations from 69-year-olds.

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said "The vaccination centres will play a key part in the vaccination rollout alongside the GPs and pharmacies. It is fantastic to see them up and ready to go because they are a real symbol of hope that we are going to get through this pandemic.

"There's no doubt the rollout has been on a bumpy ride but each time things have changed we have simply readjusted and moved on.

"At the moment we are still on track to offer 80 per cent of the adult population a first dose of their vaccine

by the end of June.

"It has been an incredibly tough year for the entire country. I know there are people who have lost loved ones and friends and haven't been able to mourn them.

"Across Wicklow people have lost their jobs and their livelihoods. It's hard to really quantify the impact the pandemic has had on everyone.

"However, things are getting better the incident rates of Covid are falling and the number of people in hospital with the disease continues to drop.

"As a result, there has been an easing of restrictions which means you can now travel around the county while the phased return of construction work has also begun.

"We hope in a few weeks we will be able to introduce a further loosening of the restrictions as we try to get our lives back to normal.

"We can now see the light at the end of the tunnel", concluded Minister Donnelly.

Sunbeam reject criticism of its vaccine registrations

Sunbeam House Services have refuted reports in the national media that their management instructed staff to abuse the HSE Covid-19 vaccine registration process to get quicker vaccinations for its administrative staff.

It was reported in the Irish Mail on Sunday that some SHS staff were told to pose as frontline workers on the HSE's vaccine portal.

SHS released a statement last week stating that "Two communications were sent to staff on the 7th of February 2021 and on the 9th of February 2021 and both communications were simply to instruct staff to register in accordance with HSE guidelines and to clarify the two separate categories under which frontline and support/administrative staff were to apply. To suggest that management set out to or advised staff to make false registrations and to 'misrepresent themselves' is untrue. All staff were vaccinated in line with the HSE's guidelines for sequencing and registration process."

The HSE guidelines for the sequencing and registration process for how Covid vaccination state that 'HCWs from all staff groupings who work in the units, wards or services, community settings day, residential and respite services, all the time, or who attend occasionally must be included. Examples of these are support staff, agency staff, students, administration staff, volunteers and other healthcare professionals. Healthcare Workers who usually work in these roles but who are currently out of work due to, for example, sick leave, high or higher risk medical status, maternity leave etc. must be included for vaccination in the relevant groups/cohorts.'

The Covid Operations HSE-Umbrella collaborative group later clarified that this meant that: "...all staff working in disability services (including day services, residential, respite, admin, therapy etc) are to be vaccinated as a matter of priority. Whilst the language in the documentation (HSE Guidelines for sequencing and registration process) speaks about 'Health Care Workers', for clarity, it has been confirmed that this refers to all staff working in disability services.'

SHS added that "As it transpired all our staff were called for vaccination at roughly the same time, however, Sunbeam House Services had no role whatsoever in the order of the rollout, our staff simply complied with notifications to attend for vaccinations. Our approach to the registration process was totally in line with HSE guidelines. The recently published article also implied that the vaccination of our staff somehow prevented or delayed our clients receiving their vaccines - this is entirely incorrect. The planned rollout of vaccines to people with disabilities is in line with NIAC guidelines and our staff facilitated as many clients to receive the vaccine as possible at all times. Needless to say this report in a national newspaper on our vaccine take-up has caused unnecessary distress for our clients and their families and for our dedicated and committed staff.

"The vaccination rollout is hugely positive for our clients, families and staff - as it will allow us to return to a normal working environment, where we can achieve all that we have set out to do on behalf of our 387 clients. Our frontline staff worked extremely hard to keep the virus out of our centres and after doing so for almost a year we regrettably had a small number of outbreaks, despite complying fully with all necessary guidelines. Regrettably three of clients died from the effects of Covid-19 earlier this year. This was a matter of great sadness for all of us and our thoughts and prayers remain with the families who have lost loved ones. One recent media report seemed to link

these sad deaths to our testing processes. We wish to firmly state that there was absolutely no connection whatever between serial testing procedures and the covid related deaths in this centre.

All involved with Sunbeam House Services have worked

extremely hard over the past fifteen months to continue providing services while also endeavouring to comply with all necessary Covid-19 guidelines - and remain in full compliance with our statutory obligations to our clients. It has been a challenging at time, however, we have overcome many of those challenges through the commitment of staff and the support of our clients and their families.

"We regrettably had to close our day and respite services in mid-March 2020 due to Covid-19, but with the immense efforts and cooperation of our staff we began to reopen the services in June and thankfully all have been available since then. We also opened five new centres during the lockdown - the Student Learning Centre and DCB day centres in Bray, Aubrey Respite Centre in Shankill and two residential centres in Bray.

"With the rollout of the vaccine we will be in a stronger position to drive and maximise our services at all 44 locations. Our 560 staff, most of whom live in the local area, work continually towards ensuring that our clients are equal citizens within this the community. Our services include; Day Services, Training, Residential and Respite Services."

Reacting to SHS's statement, the Sunbeam House Services Family Advocacy Group (SHSFAG) told *Wicklow Times*, "SHSFAG are delighted to see the Covid Vaccine rollout for the service users is underway with all the service users having received their first vaccine.

"SHSFAG are unaware of how the prioritisation for Care Staff, Management and Admin Staff within SHS was rolled out and this is a matter for the HSE to monitor. SHSFAG are looking forward to service users receiving their 2nd vaccine so that they can get back to their normal activities with full services, day trips, socialising within the community and visiting family/friends which they will have missed whilst cocooning with restricted services over the past 13 months."

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Irish Olympic athlete David Gillick and World Boxing Champion Kellie Harrington have joined the Fyffes Fit Squad to bring the message of fitness, healthy eating and an active lifestyle to children, parents, and teachers between now and the summer holidays. Their 12-week fitness programme will be broadcast in a series of videos to be viewed free online at fyffesfitsquad.ie

Progress made on Colaiste Croabh Abhainn extension

A design team has been appointed for the Colaiste Croabh Abhainn extension which went to tender earlier this month.

Welcoming the announcement, Minister Simon Harris said "I welcome that WS Atkins Ireland Ltd. has been appointed to deliver Colaiste Croabh Abhainn's building project.

"Colaiste Croabh Abhainn is a very popular school locally and this is evidenced by the school's ever growing enrolment. The school is to further expand and these new buildings cannot come a moment too soon.

"I would like to pay tribute to Oliver Stack and all the team at CCA for the wonderful work they do and the school can be assured of my continued wholehearted support.

"Atkins will now begin the Stage 1 process of design for Colaiste Croabh Abhainn. The design team will also be responsible for the design of the additional temporary accommodation to be put in place at CCA for autumn 2021."

The National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) is supporting the Department of Education by delivering an element of the Department's school building programme on its behalf.

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

The current programme, entitled the Devolved Schools Building Programme 2, will comprise of 20 individual school building projects ranging from new builds to extensions/refurbishment projects for works at both primary and post primary level. These projects will be delivered as three distinct project bundles: Project Nore; Project Boyne and Project Dargle.

A framework of project management and design team consultants has been appointed for the programme and the process to appoint teams to specific project bundles is now underway

Households asked to conserve water as Irish Water progress with essential works at Vartry

Irish Water working in partnership with Dublin City Council is carrying out essential works at Vartry water treatment plant this week as part of the upgrade of the 150 year old Vartry Water Supply scheme.

The works involve the installation of pipework that will facilitate the connection of the new Vartry Treatment Plant to the existing water distribution network. In order to safely facilitate these works, a plant shut down is required. These essential works are being delivered in adherence with current HSE and government Covid-19 advice.

The works are scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 21st April between 8am and 6pm.

Irish Water in collaboration with Wicklow County Council and the Dublin Local Authorities have reconfigured the network to maintain normal supply to as many customers as possible and treated drinking water reservoirs will be filled to their maximum in advance of the works starting.

Irish Water is appealing to all customers in the following areas to conserve water as their drinking water supply is dependent on reservoir storage for the duration of the works; Callowhill: Newtownmountkennedy; Cronroe; Rathnew; Broomhall; Priestnewtown; Kilcoole; Drummin; Kilmurray; Enniskerry; Bray; Greystones; and surrounding areas in Wicklow and the following locations in South Dublin; Rathmichael; Kilbogetty; Shankill; Shanganagh; Cabinteely; Kill Lane; Cornel Court and surrounding areas.

While handwashing remains a priority, simple water conservation efforts can have a big impact on reducing demand on the supply. Turning off the tap while brushing your teeth and shaving can save up to 6 litres of water per minute. Taking a shower instead of a bath or using a watering can rather than a hose when gardening can also make a big difference in water use. There are lots more tips on how to conserve water in your home on

www.water.ie/conservation/

Some customers in the following locations may be impacted by low water pressure and outages for the duration of the works; Monolin Roundwood Road Newtownmountkennedy; Pallamero; Fassaroe; St Valeries; Callowhill; Timmore Lane; Killisley Ashford; Newtown Mount Kennedy and surrounding areas on higher ground in Wicklow and the following areas around Ballyman in South Dublin; Corke Abbey; Woodbrook Glen; Old Connaught; Thornhill Road; Ballyman Road; Allies River Road and the Dublin Road from Corke Abbey Avenue to Crinken Lane as well as areas off the Dublin Road.

Following these works it may take a number of hours for normal water supply to return to all impacted properties. Given the size of the network some impacted customers may continue to experience disruption to their supply until the early hours of Thursday April 22nd.

Speaking about the works, John O' Donoghue, Regional Operations Manager, Irish Water said, "We understand that this type of work can be inconvenient and working in

partnership with Wicklow County Council and the Dublin Local Authorities we will make every effort to minimise any disruption that these necessary works may cause. The delivery of this work is an essential part of Irish Water's upgrade of the 150 year old Vartry Water Supply scheme. The new Vartry treatment plant is scheduled to be completed later this year and will help to safeguard the water supply to homes and businesses in the GDA ensuring a safer more sustainable water supply into the future."

Irish Water started construction work on a new Vartry water treatment plant in September 2018. The construction of the new water treatment plant is part of an investment of over €150 million in the upgrade of the Vartry Water Supply Scheme to ensure a safe and sustainable water supply for the North Wicklow and South Dublin areas. Works are at an advanced stage and are currently on track for completion later this year.

Irish Water's customer care helpline is open 24/7 on 1850 278 278 and customers can also contact them on Twitter @IWCare with any queries. For updates visit water.ie/water-supply/supply-and-service-update/



Wicklow overlooked for water-based activity funding

John Brady TD has expressed his disappointment with the news that Wicklow hasn't received any of the €19 million funding announced by the Minister for Tourism and Fáilte Ireland to develop state-of-the-art facilities for outdoor water-based activities.

Deputy Brady said "It is bitterly disappointing that Wicklow has not received any of the €19m funding that was announced by the Minister for Tourism and Fáilte Ireland to develop state-of-the-art facilities for outdoor water-based activities.

"This is despite the fact that Wicklow has a vastly untapped natural amenity which is its coastline. We have witnessed a significant increase in the numbers of people reconnecting with water-based activities over the last few years, with many people enjoying open water swimming on a daily basis, all year round. They can be seen swimming in the sea daily at Bray, Greystones, Wicklow Town,

Arklow and everywhere in between.

"The allocation of €19 million is welcome; but this represents a missed opportunity for Wicklow to help unlock the potential we possess. I have worked with many groups in recent years, who have been seeking facilities for people to engage in outdoor water-based activities. Myself, and my colleagues Councillors Dermot O'Brien and Grace McManus have been working with the sea swimmers in Bray and have been attempting to source changing facilities for them. This funding would have made such a positive impact for them and the area.

"I have also been working with

a local business which specialises in outdoor adventures, including paddle boarding, canoeing and kayaking. They are a fantastic business that have brought so much to Wicklow in terms of tourism and recreation. Unfortunately, they are currently without a base to operate from, and have received little or no support from the local authority.

"A fraction of this funding would have allowed the council to develop all-weather changing facilities, secure storage and bathrooms at beaches. All of which would have significantly enhanced attempts to develop Wicklow by putting in place a world-class facility, helping Wicklow to position itself as the primary water-based activities centre on the east coast of Ireland."

Bray Sinn Féin councillor Grace McManus added "We

recently passed a Sinn Féin motion at Bray Municipal District to review our strategy for the Seafront. I believe this review process will be the structure within which to examine the provision of facilities like long sought changing places for sea swimmers, community and sport spaces, and ensuring the beach is accessible to all. It's disappointing to see Wicklow miss out on this round of funding, but I hope our updated strategy will provide a good basis for future funding applications.

"It is expected that a second phase of funding will commence in 2023 under Fáilte Ireland's Platforms for Growth capital investment programme, I encourage Wicklow County Council to seriously look at the potential we have and position ourselves in a prime position to access funds when they become available."



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'We have to put our own stamp on the Development Plan'

Councillors will vote on the draft County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027 at next month's meeting before it goes on public display, however some feel that the Plan is already out of date.

At the April meeting of Wicklow County Council, councillors voiced concerns that the population targets set out in the plan are unrealistic and based on outdated figures; that the CDP is biased against rural Wicklow; and that the CDP is unfairly curtailed by the National Planning Framework.

West Wicklow councillor Edward Timmins said, "I'm concerned about the plan promoting development in the larger towns at the expense of the smaller towns and villages. I understand that a lot of this is being dictated to us - by restrictions based on the National Planning Guidelines. The plan allows for very little growth outside of the main towns. The guidelines the plan are based on are over three years old and a lot has happened since then, and I would question whether the guidelines are relevant anymore."

Cllr Timmins went on to advocate the Council taking a strong stance that contradicts the National Plan if necessary: "I think the mood has changed as regards the trust in the original guidelines

which have been imposed on us. I think we need to take a position on this and put in what we think is right and what's best for Wicklow, and not feel that our hands are tied. We have to put our stamp on this."

He added that 'the Covid effect' also meant the Plan was out of date and that "all bets are off": "If the ground rules change you have to react. Things have fundamentally changed and we need to recognise that and amend our plan accordingly, albeit in contradiction with the national plan, but the national plan is out of date."

Cllr John Mullen said "Covid changes the context of everything. Working from home is a new reality that won't go away. The current framework is not a framework, it's a set of instructions that favours north wicklow at the expense of the rest of the county. At the moment the CDP has extremely serious consequences for rural Wicklow."

Cllr Derek Mitchell pointed out that "The population figures in the plan are based on a census from a few years ago. By the time this

Development Plan is published it will be well out of date. I've asked that some means be put into the plan to illustrate the growth that's happening. Greystones, for instance, will exceed its allocated population target by 500-1,000 people based on current planning developments."

While Greystones will exceed its targets, Cllr Irene Winters observed that Bray would likely fall short of its population target, yet Senior Planner Sorcha Walsh informed councillors that the Council would be curtailed from redistributing population figures around the county in the event of this.

Healthy Placemaking, Economic Opportunity, and Climate Change will be the three main overarching themes of the CDP and will influence the plan from the start of the process. A new chapter will also be included on the regeneration of towns and villages. The Plan will go on public display at the end of May for a period of 12 weeks.

Councillors welcome Migrant Integration Strategy

Migrants in Co. Wicklow are employed at similar rates to non-migrants but are more likely to have lost their job as a result of Covid restrictions. Migrants in Wicklow are also less likely to be involved in groups and activities outside of work.

These were some of the findings of a survey carried out last year which fed into Wicklow's Migrant Integration Strategy.

Councillors last week welcomed Wicklow's Migrant Integration Strategy which has been developed by freelance researcher and consultant Hannah Grene. The survey was open to everyone living and working in Co. Wicklow.

"We had a fantastic response to the survey with 670 responses," Ms Grene explained at last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council.

Currently 14% of Wicklow's population do not identify as white Irish, and 15% of Wicklow's population were born abroad. 9.2% of Wicklow's residents are non-Irish national.

The survey results highlighted a number of concerns including the need for more diversity training for Gardaí, better public transport, and the need to address racist graffiti.

The Integration Strategy proposes a number of actions including: the designation of an official in the Council to assist new arrivals in accessing services; considering a scheme where citizens might provide a room as an alternative to direct provision; reviewing the strategy in light of Government's commitment to ending direct provision by 2024. The strategy also recommends holding a voter registration drive among migrants and promoting a migrant internship scheme as ways to improve active community engagement among migrants.

Councillors welcomed the strategy and many also thanked Ian McGahon for incorporating the 'Anti Rumours' campaign strategy into the document. The anti-rumours campaign aims to dispel the widespread myths and misconceptions around the topic of immigration and migrant integration. According to the Council of Europe, "the

Anti-Rumours strategy, is composed of a number of elements: identifying major rumours existing in a city; collecting objective data and also emotional arguments to dismantle false rumours; creating an anti-rumour network of local actors from civil society; empowering and training "anti-rumour agents"; and designing and implementing anti-rumour campaigns to raise awareness, including by creating and disseminating new tools and resources, both creative and rigorous."

Ms Grene explained that more efforts are needed to make sure migrants don't 'fall through the cracks' in the system.

"When women come over with their partner they can be left at home with the baby, sometimes they are hard to get to because they are somewhat invisible in the community. There are also migrants who get on okay when everything's going well and then fall through the cracks when some-

thing goes wrong, such as a workplace accident. It's important to reach these people too."

Joe O'Brien TD, Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development recently launched a report which explores the role that SICAP (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme) plays in addressing the barriers to social inclusion that are experienced by members of new communities in Ireland, as well as how the programme contributes to integration of members of new communities in Ireland.

The finding of the report, titled The Role of SICAP in Supporting New Communities, indicate that SICAP is strongly aligned with national and international integration frameworks and includes strong examples of good practice specifically contributing to five key factors of integration; employment, education, access to services, social connection and political



Nathan Byrne plays with his Spider-Man action figures in Tinahely

Bray Area Partnership welcomes study on supports for new communities

Bray Area Partnership has welcomed the recommendations of a Pobal study on the important role of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) in supporting new communities – including migrants experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, asylum seekers and refugees.

Bray Area Partnership is one of the local development companies across the country delivering the SICAP programme, along with other member companies of the Irish Local Development Network. The report details how 14% of people benefiting from the SICAP programme nationwide come from new communities – with 5,430 disadvantaged migrants, 1,168 asylum seekers and 851 refugees engaging in the programme. Bray Area Partnership welcomes the report's recognition of the multiple barriers to social inclusion experienced by new communities and the finding that SICAP and local development companies contribute strongly to five areas of integration: employment, education, access to services, social connection and political participation.

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Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of The Community Foundation for Ireland

Wicklow groups invited to work with Northern Partners: The Community Foundation for Ireland

Wicklow volunteers, communities and charitable groups are being invited to partner with similar groups in Northern Ireland with the support of a new All-Island Fund which will provide grants of up to €20,000 to support such work.

The new fund by The Community Foundation for Ireland has been launched by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, TD. The aim is to invite Wicklow groups to share experiences, campaigns and research with similar groups in the North.

The Community Foundation wants to ensure that every voice is heard in deciding the future of relationships on the island. It says that the views of young people, women and ethnic communities which were neglected, brushed aside or ignored before must be heard.

The new fund is being established on a pilot basis with private donors providing €500,000 for distribution to communities across the island.

Applications are being invited across three strands, up to €5,000, up to €10,000 and up to €20,000 in an approach aimed at ensuring a broad range of groups are covered - in terms of size, work which may already be underway as well as new partnerships.

The Fund invites proposals from those working on a range of issues - including gender-based violence, children's rights and protections as well as climate change. Communities can also seek support in responding to the impact of Covid-19 as well as the implications of Brexit.

Announcing the fund, Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of The Community Foundation for Ireland said: "No matter what part of our island you live and work in, the events of the past 12-months have shown us that the biggest social issues of our time will have the same impact on your life.

"Whether it is Covid-19, the fall-out of Brexit or the continuing impact of Climate Change we must work harder to ensure that we are all better able to respond and ensure a thriving future for our communities.

"I would encourage Wicklow groups and communities to look to this fund as an opportunity to come together with those in Northern Ireland and see how the shared experiences can ensure a stronger civil society voice on both sides of the border.

"In addition we are encouraging Wicklow donors who share the vision of those who have already come forward to contact us so we can build this fund. By doing so you can help ensure that as we plan the next important chapter in our Island's history that no community is isolated, ignored or left behind."

Full details of the Fund including application forms and a donors guide are available at www.communityfoundation.ie

Arklow chosen as county's first 'Decarbonisation Zone'

Wicklow's Climate Action Strategic Policy Committee has selected Arklow to be Wicklow's first 'Decarbonisation Zone'.

The Government's Climate Action Plan 2019 requires Local Authorities to identify and develop plans for one Decarbonising Zone.

A briefing report for Local Authorities prepared last year by the Dublin Metropolitan Climate Action Regional Office (CARO), stated: "A Decarbonising Zone is an area spatially identified by the local authority, in which a range of climate mitigation measures can co-exist to address local low carbon energy, greenhouse gas emissions and climate needs.

"The range of policies and projects developed are specific to the energy and climate characteristics of the spatial area covered by the DZ. This can include a range of technologies and measures addressing electricity, heat, transport, building energy efficiency, carbon sequestration, energy storage, grid frequency/inertia etc.

"A Decarbonising Zone should also address the wider co-benefits of air quality, improved health, biodiversity, embodied carbon, agricultural practices, sustainable land management, lower noise levels, waste, water, circular economy etc., and should integrate with smart data and 'smart cities' initiatives (as relevant).

"A Decarbonising Zone can also explore the co-benefits of climate adaptation, and examine a range of local measures such as climate proofing, afforestation, green and blue infrastructure, reducing heat island effects, citizen awareness and behavioural change."

Director of Services at Wicklow County Council, Brid Kilkenny, explained

to councillors at last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council that a range of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures would be employed in Arklow, and that the engagement of the Council and the local business community would be needed. The aim for the Decarbonisation Zone is to achieve a minimum 51% reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2030, and

Municipal District, he was delighted that Arklow has been chosen as Wicklow first decarbonisation zone.

"We now have clarity on the path ahead towards tackling the climate change issue and it sets out unambiguously the choices for our community over the next decade. We are grateful to have the active support of the Arklow Town Team, Arklow Tidy Towns and a very active community network. Wicklow County Council will continue its engagement with the public on how to meet the government's target of 50% reduction in CO2 for Arklow and the rest of County Wicklow," he stated.

Cllr Rory O'Connor, Chair of Wicklow County Council's Climate Change & Biodiversity SPC, stated: Cllr Rory O'Connor, Chairman of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action SPC speaking on the matter said: "This is a massive step forward to making Wicklow carbon neutral. As the garden county of Ireland, we have a responsibility as a Council to ensure that this name makes sense in generations to come. Ensuring that we play our part to fight climate change and keep Wicklow green. We believe that the plan to turn Arklow into a decarbonisation zone will not only be the gold standard to implement across Wicklow but also across the country."

Chief Executive, Mr Frank Curran, said that in selecting a zone Wicklow County Council wanted to pick a location that provided a wide base for innovation and demonstration projects, a town that would facilitate ambition in exploring the opportu-



nities and challenges of decarbonisation.

He said each local authority in the country must select a decarbonisation zone, which can be either urban or rural but must cover either a population of 5,000 or a land area of five square kilometres. In the chosen zone Wicklow County Council will be required to identify projects for decarbonisation, work with the community on an implementation plan to be finalised by the end of 2021, establish baseline carbon emission and measure progress on

are significant areas and estates where retrofitting of both local authority and private housing stock is needed.

Arklow has a large and diverse industrial and enterprise activity and it is hoped there will be good opportunities to work with this sector. Wicklow County Council will explore opportunities to work with high energy users. As the home of the first offshore wind farm, Arklow is located at heart of significant generation of renewable energy and well-placed to lead on renewables.

Arklow like many towns in Wicklow suffers from traffic congestion and has high levels of long-distance commuters. As part of the decarbonisation process Wicklow County Council will work to explore with the community opportunities to reduce unnecessary car journeys by making active travel easier, looking at better commuting and remote working methods.

Citizen engagement will be pivotal to success in rolling out decarbonisation. A strong Town team, Tidy Towns, the local Chamber and the Municipal District will be key partners for development of the project.



Cllr Pat Kennedy

projects must now be put in place to work towards achieving this.

The Climate Action team shortlisted a number of locations before selecting Arklow. Bray, Greystones, Wicklow Town, Blessington, Laragh & Glenmalur, and the cluster of four villages (Newtown, Kilpedder, Kilcoole & Newcastle) were also considered. It's understood that the Arklow Bank Wind Park Project helped tip the balance in favour of Arklow.

A Decarbonisation Zone implementation plan will now be prepared for the fourth quarter of this year.

Cllr Pat Kennedy said that as Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council and a member of Arklow



Cllr Rory O'Connor, Chair of the Council's Climate Change & Biodiversity SPC

decarbonisation.

Decarbonisation will require a focus on energy consumption. Studies of housing stock in Arklow demonstrated that there

Almost a quarter of Wicklow premises without high-speed broadband

Co. Wicklow is about to see significant activity from National Broadband Ireland (NBI) and subcontractors in terms of planning applications. However while some areas of Co. Wicklow will be connected to high-speed broadband by the end of this year, others will have to wait until 2023.

Peter Hendrick, CEO of National Broadband Ireland and Fergal Mulligan, Programme Director for Ireland's National Broadband Plan with the Department for Communications, joined Wicklow County Council's monthly meeting via Zoom last week to provide an update on the rollout of high-speed broadband across Wicklow.

There are currently 15,350

premises earlier," said Mr. Hendrick.

NBI are currently carrying out works in Kilcoole, which will be ready for connection between September and November of this year, and also in Blessington which will be ready for connection between October and December of this year.

In Enniskerry, NBI are carrying out a survey and it's expected the area will be connected to high-speed broadband between January and March 2023.

Local Independent councillor Rory O'Connor expressed disappointment at this news: "2023 is too late for Enniskerry to get

good internet, especially considering how close we are to Dublin," he said.

A survey is also currently underway in Redcross, which will be connected between November 2022 and January 2023. At Curragh Camp, a survey is being planned and the area will be connected between January 2023 and December 2023.

More surveys are being planned for Baltinglass, Glendalough, Aughrim, Coolkenno, and Hollyfort.

10 Broadband Connection Point locations and 20 schools are in also scope to connect to high-speed broadband.

Survey reveals local opinions about maternity care in the community

A report on maternity care provided in the community, as part of the National Maternity Experience Survey 2020, has revealed a geographic disparity.

Most respondents were positive about the care and support they received, saying they were treated with respect and dignity, were spoken to in a clear, understandable way and had confidence and trust in their healthcare professional.

For Wicklow respondents to the survey, the average score for 'care while pregnant' was 7.2 out of 10.

The survey also asked women if their decision about feeding her baby was respected. 2,391 women (74.9%) said that their decisions were always respected. The lowest-scoring question for this stage related to the support and encouragement received with feeding. 444 women (15.1%) said that while they were in hospital they did not receive sufficient support with feeding their baby from healthcare professionals. The response from Wicklow women to this question was 7.4, which was the second lowest in the country, behind Clare.

Green Party councillor Erika Doyle is supporting a campaign asking Health Minister Stephen Donnelly to ensure adequate breastfeeding supports are put in place to support new mothers.

The Bainne Beatha campaign has been seeking to have the HSE Action Plan and National Maternity Strategy fully

implemented to supply all the appropriate support for breastfeeding mothers.

Cllr Doyle, a breastfeeding advocate, wrote to Minister Donnelly recently asking him to review the situation and this was followed by a petition of support sent to him by the campaign.

Cllr Doyle said, "It's vital that we address our breastfeeding rates in this country, one of the lowest in Europe. With the proven health benefits for both mum and baby it makes sense to help mums find breastfeeding solutions to breastfeeding problems. Many new mums have told of hiring private consultants to help, and this creates a two-tier system, those that can afford to seek help and continue to feed through difficulties, and those who can't. That's why the State must be resourced to provide support, so that income does not stand as a barrier to successful feeding. Women make their own decisions about how to feed their babies, but they must be supported in their efforts."

For 'care at home after birth', Wicklow scored an 8.2. In terms of 'overall experience, 15% of Wicklow women ranked Wicklow as 'fair to poor', 41% ranked Wicklow as 'good', and 44% ranked Wicklow as 'very good'.

The survey also revealed that some women

felt that more information was needed on changes they would experience to their mental and physical health, as well as their nutritional needs during pregnancy.

The survey identified significant variation in attendance at the 2-week postnatal check-up. Most women attend this check-up but the numbers were notably lower for women living in counties in the north-west of Ireland.

For almost 90% of women who responded to the survey, their GP was the first point of contact once they became pregnant.

Respondents also provided detailed information on their experiences with their GPs, practice nurses and midwives. These comments identified the caring and helpful attitudes of GPs, but also highlighted the requirement for more personalised care, particularly in the postnatal period.

Speaking about the report, HIQA's Director of Health Information and Standards Rachel Flynn said: "Care begins in the community and to that end, it is crucial that pregnant women can trust and have confidence in the treatment and advice they receive from their GP or family doctor. It is hugely encouraging to see that a majority of women have reported positive experiences as

they prepare for one of life's major milestones.

"More concerning however, is the correlation between geographical location and the provision of post-natal services. It is important that women in Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo are afforded the same opportunities and can have the same expectation of care provision those in Ireland's urban centres. It is clear that there is still work to be done to ensure women and babies across Ireland have access to the care and support they need."

Most women said that their GP, practice nurse or midwife answered their postnatal questions in a way they could understand. However, it was evident that a significant number felt that insufficient time was spent discussing their physical and mental health at the 6-week postnatal check-up.

Ms. Flynn said: "Pregnancy is a demanding experience, both physically and mentally. It is concerning that a significant number of women who took part in this survey felt that they did not receive enough information about potential changes to their mental health during pregnancy."

Greater care must be taken by medical practitioners to make sure that women are made aware of the mental health supports that are available to them while expecting."



Revive Active raised over €50,000 for Breast Cancer Ireland. Pictured are Daithi O'Connor, Founfder and MD of Revive Active, and Andra Rooney, Area Manager, presenting a cheque for €53,000 to Aisling Hurley (centre), CEO of Breast Cancer Ireland, following a very successful fundraising drive over the festive period. The funds were raised through the sales of limited edition Revive Active Immunity Support Gift Packs.



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'We must remove hospital parking charges for cancer patients'

Green Party TD Steven Matthews has written to Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, calling for the removal of parking charges for cancer patients and other frequent visitors to public hospitals.

This letter followed a meeting between Deputy Matthews and a Wicklow Representative from the Irish Cancer Society who is targeting this as a key goal.

Discussing the issue, Deputy Matthews said: "The existing situation is not fair to those with cancer or their friends and families who may accompany them to various hospital visits. The existing cost of parking is extremely high, something else that needs to be addressed, but for those that may have to visit hospital more than once a week and often for a significant amount of time, this puts an undue financial burden on them. This is at a time when a patient's focus should be on their health and not on whether they can afford to drive to their appointment. "Having met with a representative from the Irish Cancer society in recent weeks, it was eye opening to learn of the cost implications for patients and their families, particularly if their treatment lasts for a significant period. The Programme for Government includes a commitment to introduce a capped daily rate for patients and their families and

this was welcome progress but in the cases of patients who require frequent and long stays in hospitals such as many cancer patients, I believe it needs to go one step further and have parking fees removed entirely.

"I accept that the introduction of such a system may be complicated by the private ownership of carparks in hospitals but what I have suggested in my letter to Minister Donnelly is a badge system, similar to the blue disabled persons' parking permit but that would only be useable in public hospital carparks. These badges would only be made available with the written support of a doctor and only for the patient or their immediate family who bring them for their appointments.

"The pandemic has brought this issue to the forefront as public transport options are not advisable for those with medical conditions that categorise them as high risk and medical appointments must be attended alone. As a result, people are often forced to drive themselves while incurring significant parking charges. People in this situation are facing enough difficulty in their health struggle without facing substantial payments for parking and I have called on Minister Donnelly to engage with groups like the Irish Cancer Society and work towards a solution that treats people and their families fairly," concluded Deputy Matthews.



Steffen Petersen working in his garden in Aughrim

Farmers reminded to take advantage of the Organic Farming Scheme

Wicklow farmers considering an application to the Organic Farming Scheme have until the 30th of April to do so, following the re-opening of the scheme earlier this month with an additional budget of €4 million for 2021.

This additional funding was confirmed by Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Senator Pippa Hackett when she confirmed the continuation of the scheme last month.

1,460 farmers participated in the last scheme, and it is envisaged that approximately 500 more may be successful in their application this Spring.

Philip O'Connor, Head of Farm Supports at Ifac said: "Applications for the scheme must be made online through the Department's online system at agfood.ie. I would encourage every farmer to inform themselves of the opportunities that the Organic Farming Scheme offers and give it full consideration."

Payments of up to €220 per hectare are available for farms undergoing conversion to full organic status, a process that takes two years, or €170 per hectare for farms that have obtained that status.

Higher payment rates are available for organic horticulture and tillage farmers.

The minimum farm area allocated is three hectares for dairy, dry stock and tillage, or one hectare for horticulture, with rates of payment decreasing for horticulture farms over six hectares, tillage farms over 20 hectares and all farms over 60 hectares. All applications must be processed through agfood.ie, and to be eligible, farmers must submit an annual Basic Payment Scheme application and must be registered with one of the two Organic Control Bodies that certify land-based organic operators; The Irish Organic Association and Organic Trust CLG.

Looking for Wicklow's swift champions

Wicklow is playing its part in arresting the worrying decline in the swift population and now Wicklow County Council wants to recruit 'Swift Champions' to help the project.

As May approaches, we get ready to welcome back one of our most iconic and intriguing urban bird species, the swift. Swifts are a small migratory bird that visit Ireland each year to nest and raise young.

They travel from southern Africa where they have spent nine months of the year and arrive on these shores in early May.

The alarming decline in swift populations globally, due to loss of nesting sites and suitable feeding habitats has been the impetus behind the Wicklow Swift Project, an initiative of the Heritage & Biodiversity office of Wicklow County Council, in partnership with Birdwatch Ireland.

"A lot can be done to halt the decline in Wicklow's swift population", says Deirdre Burns, Heritage & Biodiversity Officer Wicklow County Council, adding: "Following on from recent surveys, we now know where Swifts occur in the county and which towns and villages host the biggest numbers."

Going forward, she said, the support and active engagement of

local communities was critical to building greater awareness of this unique bird species and in undertaking conservation action, locally where it is needed. The project has supported the installation of nesting boxes and caller systems in council owned building, including branch libraries and offices.

Additionally, interested groups have been supported to install nesting boxes in churches, schools and other suitable buildings in towns and villages across county Wicklow.

In the last two years, towns such as Arklow, Bray, Greystones, Rathdrum and Wicklow town have all come on board to provide nest-boxes designed specifically for Swifts. In west Wicklow, communities have similarly embraced the challenge, with Swift nestbox projects underway in Baltinglass, Blessington, Dunlavin and Grangecon.

This year the Project is expanding and is seeking 'Swift Champions' to get involved. Members of the public, tidy towns groups, sports clubs, householders,

schools and businesses are invited to become 'Swift Champions' for their local town, village or local area.

One of the most practical conservation actions that can be undertaken is to provide suitable nesting sites near existing colonies. Reporting sightings and building awareness in localities about the lifecycle and requirements of this species are also really valuable roles.

The council is allocating a number of free nest boxes to communities throughout county Wicklow, to be distributed through our Swift Project Officer, Oran O'Sullivan.

Anyone who would like to learn more about the County Wicklow Swift Project and how you can get involved, there is an upcoming talk, 'Saving Wicklow's Swifts', on Tuesday 20th April at 7pm on Zoom (to book go to wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Libraries/Events).

For more information and advice contact the Wicklow Coordinator, Oran O'Sullivan, by email: oran@irishgardenbirds.ie and for a copy of 'Saving Swifts' a publication from Birdwatch Ireland and the Local Authorities Network, contact Deirdre Burns at wick-

A quarter of Irish bird species now on 'red list'

The latest review of the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland provides alarming reading, with a 46% increase in the number of Red-listed species, those of highest conservation concern.

A paper in the latest issue of Irish Birds, BirdWatch Ireland's annual scientific journal, which was published last week, reveals that more birds than ever before are now Red-listed on the island of Ireland.

A total of 54 Irish bird species (26%) are now on the Red List, indicating the highest status of concern for their populations, the most recent 'Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland' review has found.

This review uses a traffic light system to indicate the conservation status of bird species by placing bird species onto three lists - Red, Amber or Green, indicating whether a particular species of is high, medium or low conservation concern. The review is carried out across the island of Ireland, by BirdWatch Ireland in the Republic of Ireland and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in Northern Ireland.

Since the previous assessment in 2013, 23 species have moved onto the Red List and only six species have left it. New entries to the Red List include the much-loved Puffin, fellow seabirds Razorbill and Kittiwake, wading birds Knot and Snipe, and the Kestrel, a bird of prey. These species join others such as Curlew, Ring Ouzel and Corncrake which have been declining for many years and which are now at risk of extinction in Ireland. An additional 79 species (37%) are now 'Amber-listed', and 78 are on the Green List (i.e. not currently considered at



The fate of the Curlew is uncertain. Pic: Neal Warnock

risk).

The assessment is based on the most up-to-date information available, and the criteria mainly follow previous assessments of conservation status at global, European and national levels. Within Ireland, historical decline, trends in population and range and other criteria were assessed.

Many breeding birds of farmland and bog habitats continue to fare very poorly. Almost 40% of the Red-listed breeding birds are associated with farmland, including Corncrake, Curlew, Lapwing, Barn Owl, Stock Dove and Grey Partridge. Breeding Snipe, which were Amber-listed in the previous assessment, are now on the Red List, with small-scale ongoing drainage and reclamation of marginal farmland and bog habitats likely to be a key factor in their continued decline.

Two of our most iconic

seabirds, namely Puffin and Kittiwake, are globally threatened and have declined significantly in Ireland, resulting in their Red-listed status. With declining populations across their range, there are even fears that these two species may become extinct within the next 100 years. The reasons for this are complex, but climate change is a significant factor, with warming seas impacting upon the marine food web and overfishing also playing a part.

When grouped by habitat preferences, wading birds are giving the greatest cause for concern. The plight of our breeding Curlews is well documented and, with only 150 pairs remaining, their fate is uncertain, despite concerted conservation efforts. Lapwing and Snipe, once so familiar and widespread across Ireland, have also suffered great declines.

The Kestrel, once the most common and well-known bird of prey in our countryside due to its characteristic and conspicuous hovering flight, also now finds itself on the Red List. Changes in land use and in farming practices have affected their prey, and illegal shooting and poisoning, as well as secondary poisoning via the use of rodenticides to control rats and mice, have all taken their toll.

Co-author of the paper, Lesley Lewis of BirdWatch Ireland, said: "Sadly the results of this review only go to further show how great the biodiversity crisis is. We really are at a tipping point for our birds and we need to realise that, and to act now. We need a combined multilateral approach from all sectors including agri-

culture, forestry and fisheries, with a strong lead from government. We know from many small locally-led projects that habitat protection, restoration and creation can make huge differences, so there is hope that the current trends can be reversed; if not, what will the next assessment in five years show?"

Gillian Gilbert, RSPB NI Principal Conservation Scientist, said: "It is extremely alarming to see a quarter of bird species on the island of Ireland now on the Red List.

"It's sad to see Swifts and Kestrels, among other species, facing such declines, while anyone who has visited the Rathlin West Light Seabird centre will know and love the Puffins, Kittiwakes and Razorbills on the stacks and should rightly be concerned that they are in decline.

"Because these seabirds are doing poorly across Europe and indeed across the world, this makes the birds we have across the island of Ireland crucially important, and we need to do everything we can to protect them."

Upland birds are also in serious trouble. The Ring Ouzel, a close relative of the Blackbird, is now only known from a handful of sites. It is a similar story for the Twite, a small finch now confined to the coastal bogs of Donegal and Mayo. Even the once-widespread Meadow Pipit is now Red-listed.

Despite all the bad news, there are some positives, with 64 species remaining on the Green List and the status of both the Robin and the Mistle Thrush improving. In addition, the Great Spotted Woodpecker, which first colonised Ireland about 15 years ago, has expanded its range.



Many breeding birds of farmland and bog habitats continue to fare very poorly, including the barn owl. Pic: Ben Andrew

Arklow Community First Responders return

John Summers of the Arklow First Responders has announced that the lifesaving group are back to help the local community.

Speaking to the *Wicklow Times* John said: "After more than a year of us being unable to respond to our community due to the pandemic, we're happy to announce that as of midnight on April 12th we've again been responding to cardiac emergencies in our community.

"Unfortunately, we are unable to attend all our emergency categories as we did pre Covid-19. For the foreseeable future we will only be dispatched to Cardiac Arrest and Choking calls by the National Ambulance Service. We hope to

return to full service again when NAS and Government guidelines permit.

"For us to return we needed to be upskilled in the use of extra PPE protocols to protect our Volunteers and You the patient. We'd like to express sincere Thanks to our CEO Iam Stewart for all his guidance and support in getting us responding again.

"Understandably it is not feasible for all our volunteers to return at this time due family commitments and other personal reasons, however our smaller team of respon-

ders will endeavour to be available when needed.

"We'd like Thank You our community for your continued support and over the past year especially."



Keith Byrne, Alexandra Doyle-Weston, Denise Guilfoyle, Claire Monohan, Karen Russell (co-ordinator), and Carol Long of the Arklow Community First Responders

'Eleven Years and still no plan' - Winters asks Court Service to make up its mind

Wicklow Town Fine Gael Councillor Irene Winters has outlined her frustration with the Courts Service regarding the refurbishment and return of a court to Wicklow Town



Cllr Irene Winters

Cllr Winters said: "2010 saw the 'temporary' closure of Wicklow Court House to allow scheduled works to be undertaken. Eleven years on and broken promise follows broken promise.

"The Court Service and Department of Justice need to come clean - either they are committed to the refurbishment and return of a court to Wicklow Town or they are not.

"Will they refurbish the building or allow someone else to use it? Eleven years of just leaving it as an unoccupied building in poor repair is an insult to all the businesses and residents of the town and an insult to all the people waiting for justice in an overcrowded legal diary.

"The backlog of cases in family courts, inquests, district courts, and circuit courts is clear to see; money can be found to pay

legal teams to appear in court for constant rescheduling of cases. In the eleven years that Wicklow Court House has been closed, those legal fees have accumulated into a substantial amount of money.

"The courts in Bray are packed - it is sometimes like a two-ring circus. Covid regulations have seen cases from Co. Wicklow being heard in Trim Co. Meath due to lack of suitable accommodation in Co. Wicklow. The dual aspect of the two courts in Wicklow Town with their beautiful sash windows would mean adequate ventilation could be easily obtained the old-fashioned way".

Minister Simon Harris TD has contacted the Court Service looking for an updated and clear timeline as to when the Wicklow Town Courthouse is to be refurbished.

Minister Harris said "It is important that in the review of these projects in the National Development Plan that the refurbishment of Wicklow Court House is given added priority and I have made representations to this effect to both the CEO of the Court Service and the Minister for Justice."

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Roy Keane launching Guide Dog Day for Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind

Roy Keane launches Guide Dog Day for Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind

Roy Keane has helped to launch Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind's national fundraising campaign Guide Dog Day which takes place on Friday 7th May. This year the charity is asking everyone to get active by walking, running or swimming at 100km in May for Guide Dog Day (#100k4GDD) or to donate at guidedogs.ie.

Despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the charity successfully matched 60 Guide Dog and Assistance Dog partnerships in 2020. This year the charity's resilient community of Clients, Volunteers and Supporters are determined to change the lives of 80 people and are calling on the public to help.

Currently the Breeding Programme continues to grow with 3 litters successfully born so far this year. 105 puppies are currently being puppy raised. These pups will be the dogs who start formal training later in 2021 and during 2022. 39 pups are currently undergoing formal training who will hopefully be successfully matched in the coming months. The Assistance Dog Programme waiting list is due to open later this year or early 2022 (Subject to Covid).

Charity Ambassador Roy Keane said, "Having spoken to so many Guide and Assistance Dogs Owners over the years it is amazing to see what the dogs do - the impact they have on individuals and their families. These dogs are giving people back their lives. I'm would encourage everyone to do the #100k4GDD Challenge - I'll be doing it here in Manchester!"

Assistance Dog Owner, Gillian O'Connor Lynch talks about the impact Assistance Dog Toby had on her son's Conor: "Before we got Toby, Conor was a flight



Assistance Dog Owner, Gillian O'Connor Lynch with her son Conor and Assistance Dog Toby.



Guide dog owner Christina Kelly and her dog Effie

risk. He had no safety awareness at all so we originally applied for an Assistance Dog from a safety point of view. What we got was so much more. Toby is Conor's best friend. He keeps him safe and has such a calming influence over him. I often find them both lying on the floor together and Conor rubs Toby's fur with his feet. We can visit supermarkets and restaurants a lot more freely now because he makes Conor feel safe, grounds him and gives him a sense of purpose in strange and new environments. Toby has had such a positive impact on the whole family. He is the best thing that has ever happened to us!"

Guide Dog Owner, Christina Kelly explains how she put her trust in Guide Dog Effie: "In the year or so since I've gotten Effie, a lot has changed; Effie and I have both adjusted to working from home. Effie has grown in confidence, and I have found my feet with a new way of getting around - I really never thought I'd say this, but I can't imagine life without my cheeky, clever and funny little lady by my side. The word 'life-changing' means different things to us all - but my life has definitely changed for the better since I got this cheeky pup."

Both Gillian and Christina will be doing the Challenge. Tim O'Mahony, General Manager of Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind said, "Our Guide and Assistance Dogs enable people to lead independent lives and to actively participate in their communities; Guide Dog Day is a celebration of that. The funds raised in May will mean 80 people's lives will be changed before the end of the year." The #100k4GDD Challenge asks people to: Walk, run or swim 100km during the month of May; Sign up at guidedogs.ie; Fundraising packs for the first 3,000 entries; Anyone raising over €50 through the Raisely fundraising platform will be entered into a prize draw for a number of PAWsome prizes including hotel breaks.

ALONE highlights importance of physical movement as older people re-emerge into society

ALONE, the organisation which supports older people, recently highlighted the importance of physical movement for joint health in older people during National Arthritis Week, which took place from 12th - 18th of April.

ALONE is concerned about the physical, mental and social challenges that older people will face as they break their period of social isolation and readjust to a new normal, and has previously emphasised the need for a plan for Older Adults to be established as older people receive their vaccines and begin to return to society.

Global experts have highlighted the need to increase or maintain physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to maintain good physical health. According to a study conducted by TILDA, 21.5% of adults aged 65 and over experience frailty, with 40% experiencing pre-frailty symptoms.

ALONE has stated that while frailty is not a universal experience among all older people, many individuals are currently experiencing frailty in some form as a result of prolonged periods of cocooning in order to protect themselves from COVID-19. The organisation has cited this ongoing issue as one of the reasons that the Government must urgently establish a re-emergence plan for older people, with input from a stakeholder group for older adults.

The HSE interim report on the impact of cocooning measures on older people found that cocooning and social isolation had a marked impact on physical health, stating that Government restrictions on social activity and participation of older people may contribute to the development of a number of long-term health risks and increase the risk of COVID-19 infection and severity. In addition to the physical impact of increased frailty, individuals may also experience reduced independence and increased levels of social isolation, which can in turn have a detrimental impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE said, "This year on National Arthritis Week, we are highlighting the physical impacts of this pandemic on older people, particularly the impact of cocooning on their physical health. Long periods of physical inactivity while cocooning may result in deconditioning and loss of muscle mass, leading to frailty and an increased fall risk among older people. Each year, one in every three adults age 65 and older falls, mostly at home, and falls are the leading cause of injury,



Seán Moynihan, CEO of ALONE

disability and admission to nursing homes for this group."

He continued, "It is clear that the pandemic will have a detrimental effect on the physical and mental health of vulnerable groups such as older people, and it is up to us to ensure that steps are taken now to develop a re-emergence plan for vulnerable adults. In order to do this, we are seeking to establish a stakeholder group for Older Adults composed of representatives from Civil Society, Healthcare,

Age Organisations, supportive groups for Vulnerable Adults and the relevant Government Departments in order to address the issues arising as older and more vulnerable individuals begin to re-emerge into society.

Contact ALONE if you have concerns about your own wellbeing, or the wellbeing of an older person you know. Their National Support Line is available seven days a week from 8am - 8pm on 0818 222 024. Further information can be found on www.alone.ie.

Sinn Féin calls for Council to become 'trauma informed'

Sinn Féin councillors Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien and Grace McManus have put forward a motion calling for the Council to become 'trauma enforced'.

Speaking about the motion, Cllr O'Brien said "As our understanding of trauma and its devastating impact increases, we must make a commitment across the whole structure of Wicklow County Council to become trauma informed. This will ensure that our responses are consciously compassionate, and it will reduce the risk of re-traumatising people who present to us across all of the services. I have no doubt that both elected members and staff in the districts have found themselves in situations where someone is extremely vulnerable in a particular moment and while we all do our absolute best, at times we wonder if we could have done more? When we recognise the possibility that there might be a trauma context, we should be equipped to respond accordingly and without the appropriate training we run the risk of not responding in an informed way. I really believe that a process of becoming 'trauma informed' among Councillors and Officials will bring Wicklow County

Council to the next level in terms of how it operates both internally and with the public. There is a common expression that "you never know what people are going through" and if we accept that truth in our work as a County Council then becoming 'trauma informed' represents a real commitment to being responsive and respectful in particular to those who are the most vulnerable in our communities. I am very aware that community development, youth work, addiction services, domestic violence services etc are already ahead of us in this regard and as such if we are to work collaboratively in the best interest of those who present themselves to us in need of support, we should be on the same page in how we respond.

"Trauma is a widespread, harmful public health problem that impacts on every facet of society. Trauma can result from events and circumstances people experience throughout the course of their lives that are physically or emotionally harmful

and have lasting adverse effects on an individual's mental, physical, social, or emotional well-being. When we talk about trauma-informed services, we mean systems that recognise not just the signs and symptoms of trauma, but the widespread impact of trauma in our society and respond by addressing trauma through policies and practices. Services should be delivered in a way that address people's experiences of trauma and actively seek to prevent re-traumatising people who use services."

Cllr Grace McManus said, "There have been many calls from mental health organisations saying how important a trauma informed response is, and I think we should listen to them as experts by experience. Trauma informed response includes principles and practices that require training and resources, which would no doubt result in a confidence in anyone coming into contact with people where trauma may be present. As an elected representative, I would certainly welcome a chance to learn these knowledge and skills in order to respond better to people who may need it."

Show solidarity with people with dementia and family carers to celebrate Alzheimer's Tea Day

Wicklow people are being called on to show solidarity with people with dementia and their family carers and virtually have Tea in Every Town with their friends and loved ones to mark Alzheimer's Tea Day which takes place across Ireland on Thursday, 6th May.

It is estimated that there are 1838 people living with dementia in Wicklow and for every one person with dementia three others are directly affected. The number of people with the condition will more than double in the next 25 years to over 150,000 by 2045.

This year The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is inviting the public to brew the most important and powerful cup of tea this year and invite your family and friends to join you online. The ASI wants people to now come together virtually to celebrate, remember and show solidarity with people with dementia, their carers and the 500,000 people who are impacted by dementia in Ireland.

Although people can't gather in groups for Tea Day, people can still connect and reach out to friends and loved ones across their communities, around Ireland and abroad - on the phone, on screen, Skype, Zoom and any other socially-distanced way people may choose.

There are 64,000 people living with dementia in Ireland today and every day, another 30 people are diagnosed. However, there is one simple and magical thing you can do to help - put the kettle on and connect with friends online over a simple cuppa!

The ASI has listened to concerns of people with dementia and family carers who have been feeling isolated in their own homes lately and many people have contacted The ASI about Tea Day - and thanks to the wonders of modern technology we are delighted that Tea Day can take place.

This year, it's more important

than ever before that people put the kettle on, pick up the phone and reach out to a loved one or someone in your community to say hello and share a virtual cup of tea and to show people with dementia and carers who are at home, often confused, isolated and struggling without access to usual daily supports that we haven't forgotten them.

The ASI needs to raise €3.5 million every year just to keep services running and while the public has been so generous over recent months, the reality is that more funds are needed to plug the gap in funding due to the impact of Covid-19 to support the 64,000 living with dementia in Ireland.

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland CEO Pat McLoughlin said: "Alzheimer's Tea Day has been our biggest fundraising event over the last 27 years and the organisation is so dependent on the funds that it brings in each and every year. However, the Covid-19 health crisis means that Alzheimer's Tea Day has to move online, but I am delighted that we can still celebrate the community spirit that makes Tea Day such a great national event through modern technology. This year we can't gather in each other's homes to share Tea Day. But there is still something that you can do.

"You can invite friends and family from all over Ireland - and even all over the world - to join you online or on social media to share some memories and a cuppa. Every person who joins you will be helping to support vital dementia services all over Ireland."

Fujitsu Ireland CEO Tony O'Malley said: "We are incredibly

proud to support this vital campaign alongside The Alzheimer Society of Ireland. People with dementia and their families, carers and supporters have felt the challenges of lockdown and the associated restrictions on travel, household visitors and daily social interactions most keenly and Fujitsu Ireland is committed to helping The ASI continue to deliver its vital support to this amazing community. We invite our staff, clients, partners and the Irish public to sign up on teaday.ie, put the kettle on, and raise much-needed funds for this incredible organisation."

HOW TO TAKE PART IN TEA DAY 2021 - FOUR EASY STEPS:

1. **SIGN UP** - Join the nation for the most memorable cuppa ever. All you have to do is sign up on teaday.ie and you'll be helping to support people in your area living with dementia.

2. **HOST** - Share the magic of a cup of tea - online - with the ones you love. Invite family, friends, colleagues, neighbours and loved ones - from home and from all over the world - to join you to share some precious memories over a wonderful cup of tea.

3. **CELEBRATE** your Tea Day by sharing it on social media. Post your photos, videos, messages and don't forget to use our hashtags #TeaInEveryTown #TeaDay2021

4. **DONATE** - Send back your special Tea Day donation on teaday.ie. Remember, every extra euro you raise funds vital services for people living with dementia and their families.



Dáithí Ó Sé launching this year's Alzheimer's Tea Day

Inland Fisheries Ireland launches responsible outdoor recreation guide for anglers in Wicklow

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) in collaboration with Leave No Trace Ireland has launched an outdoor recreational guide for angling in Wicklow and nationwide based on the 7 Principles of Leave No Trace.

Anglers are custodians of our natural fisheries resource and this leaflet is a short guide for anglers on how they can minimise the impact their fishing trip can have on the environment. The guide is also a useful checklist for anyone enjoying the outdoors with the Principles being key reminders of how to reduce the effects we have on the natural world.

The 7 Principles of Leave No Trace are:

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Be Considerate of Others
3. Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife
4. Travel and Camp on Durable Ground
5. Leave What You Find
6. Dispose of Waste Properly
7. Minimise the Effects of Fire

Suzanne Campion, Head of Business Development at Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "320,000 Irish people enjoy fishing in Ireland and this guide will help

The angling community have a role in protecting the environment they fish in and to help nurture it for future generations to enjoy our fisheries resource."

Maura Kiely, CEO of Leave No Trace Ireland said: "We are delighted to team up with Inland Fisheries Ireland to launch this outdoor recreation guide for angling. We have tailored the 7 Principles of Leave No Trace to work as a checklist for anglers when they are embark-

ing on a fishing trip. Anglers are caretakers over the environment they fish in and they understand the need for healthy aquatic systems for fish populations to thrive. The guide will help anglers to make decisions that will minimise any impacts on nature when fishing."

The guide is available here and on the Leave No Trace Ireland website.

For more information on angling in Ireland visit fishinginireland.info.



'Local development companies ideal partners for government in delivery of our rural future'

The Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) have acknowledged the publication of the Government's Rural Development Strategy - 'Our Rural Future'. Representing Ireland's 49 Local Development Companies (LDCs), the ILDN welcome the ambition of today's policy announcement.

Commenting on the launch of 'Our Rural Future', ILDN Chairman Jim Finn said: "our Local Development Companies have been pillars of Rural Development for over 30 years. Covid-19 and the roll-out of the National Broadband plan provides an opportunity for a reimagining of the potential of Rural areas. This Strategy identifies the creation of 'Local Master Plans' to meet the long term needs of Rural areas. Local Development Companies, with their track record in Rural Development and strategic planning will be central to this process."

Referring to the role of LEADER in the Strategy, Mr Finn continued: "The LEADER Programme has been identified as a key measure in this plan. As the

providers of LEADER across the Country we welcome the continued commitment to this critical programme and call on the Government to fully support LEADER through maximising EU funding and Exchequer co-funding in the years ahead. LEADER can provide the required development capacity and finance needed to deliver measures identified in the strategy. Furthermore LDCs have been at the forefront of the emerging Smart Village concept which will be a major element of the next round of EU programming and an important element of any successful Rural Development approach."

Concluding Mr Finn noted: "The role of Local Development Companies is interwoven throughout the strategy. As providers of employment support measures such as the Rural Social Scheme, Tús and Community Employment and the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, as well as Outdoor Recreational and Walks measures, our LDCs will be vital partners in ensuring that the ambition of this plan is realised. We look forward to working positively with Government in this endeavour."



John Brady TD and Sinn Féin Rep Muireann Dalton at the Newtown site zoned for education

'Plans for Newtown secondary school must be immediately progressed'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has called on the Minister for Education, Norma Foley and the School Planning Unit within the Department of Education to immediately start planning for the future educational needs in Newtownmountkennedy and progress plans to develop a new secondary school there.

Deputy Brady made the call as the ongoing crisis regarding secondary school places in the catchment area moves slowly towards a resolution.

Deputy Brady said, "As the school places debate in Kilcoole and Greystones moves slowly towards a resolution for September serious questions still remain unanswered as to how this crisis wasn't planned for before it got to crisis point.

"The main failure of the School Planning Unit within the Department of Education was to plan for the future. Now is the time to start planning for the additional future pressures that there will be for school places. A number of new primary schools have opened in the Newtown catchment area and all these children will require a secondary school place in 8 years' time."

"A number of years ago Wicklow County Council zoned 4.718 Hectares at Moneycarroll in Newtown for Community/Education. This was done to cater for the planned population growth in the area. The

Department for Education must now start the process of progressing plans to develop a new secondary school on this site to meet the future educational needs within the community.

"The immediate focus needs to be getting the permanent school for Greystones Community College and the extension for Colaiste Chraobh Abhann built to address the short and midterm needs of the area. In tandem to that it's imperative that the School Planning Unit starts looking at the needs of the area into the future and not leave it until we have another situation like we do at the moment.

"An enquiry is needed to investigate how exactly the situation arose in the Greystones/Kilcoole that resulted in up to 100 students without a school place in September and lessons need to be learned from for the future."

Wicklow Sinn Féin Local Area Rep Muireann Dalton said "The lack of a secondary school in the Newtownmountkennedy area has been an ongoing concern for some years now. The ever-growing population of the Newtownmountkennedy and Ashford areas with no definite plans in places for secondary school places has parents extremely anxious.

"Now is the time for the department of education to act, the land is there, plans and action need to be put in place now or we will find ourselves in an unpredictable situation in a few years' time."

Harris opens Wicklow Model United Nations

Minister Simon Harris last week opened the first Wicklow Model United Nations. The Model UN is hosted by Educate Together Secondary School Wicklow.

Minister Harris said "The Model UN this year is taking place online and it is great to see that despite the disruption of the Covid-19 lockdown it has been able to go ahead. I want to thank all the team involved in setting up and hosting this event - ETSSW principal Colm Kehoe, Sonny Anderson, Hannah O'Callaghan, Ava Warrington and Lenna Smith.

"The last year has shown how vital international co-operation is. The need to stop the spread of Coronavirus, fund research into getting a vaccine for this awful illness and tackle the massive economic shock all required massive international co-operation on a scale not seen since World War Two".

Eight schools participated in the

Wicklow Model UN including local schools ETSS Wicklow, Coláiste Chill Mhantáin and Woodbrook College Bray. The agenda for the students participating in the General Assembly Committees included:

- Reducing Carbon Emissions
- The effect of tourism on Climate Change
- Upholding the rights of media & journalism
- Safeguarding the rights of women globally
- Nuclear disarmament on a global scale
- The question of combatting terrorism

Minister Harris said: "While I was proud to support both and lead the Government's work on repeal,

these campaigns were driven by the young people of Ireland. They started in the grassroots and the energy, ideas and innovation of young people were key to their success.

"Another big part of the drive for progressive social change was the UN. Long before we had open discussions in Ireland, activists were sharing the Irish experience at UN Committees, the UN Human Rights Council and by taking legal cases to the UN. This safe space for respectful dialogue with human rights and equality at its core, enabled activists and advocates to engage with the Irish government and to make the case for change. The UN had a huge impact on those conversations took place at home during the referendum campaigns."

Wicklow Model United Nations is hosted by ETSS Wicklow and more information is available at www.munwicklow.eu

Progress on Greystones school places crisis

Greystones Community College has been sanctioned an additional classroom to address demand for school places in the area. The Department of Education has said that the extra classroom has been approved to facilitate more places, with temporary accommodation to be provided at the Rugby Club until the new school is built in Charlesland.

In respect of Greystones Community College's permanent accommodation, the Department is working with the developer owning the site to submit a planning application for the permanent school buildings during Quarter 2 in 2021.

Discussions are also ongoing for further capacity at Coláiste Chraobh Abhann (CCA), St. David's and Templecarrig in Greystones.

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore said "The additional classroom for GCC is welcome news and is a positive step towards addressing overall demand for school places in the area. It's also good news for the school community which has had to curtail the number of subjects due to lack of available space and adequate accommodation. The Dept

have also indicated that there is also additional capacity for a second classroom if needed.

"I'm also encouraged to hear that discussions are underway with CCA, St. David's and Templecarrig for additional capacity and it is very welcome to hear of progress being made with CCA and I have asked that the Department work as quickly as possible to enable schools to be able to offer to places for their students. The Department believes the schools should be in the capacity to offer school places very shortly.

"In relation to the conciliation process for Greystones Community National School, the Department believes this should be completed by 10th April. The Department has also confirmed that they are engaging with the plan-

ning permission process for the new site for Greystones Community College and with the developers to progress this which is also welcome," concluded Deputy Whitmore.

Minister Simon Harris TD has welcomed the progress in the providing additional secondary school places in Greystones and Kilcoole for autumn 2021.

Minister Simon Harris said: "I welcome the news the Department of Education's Building Unit has agreed to provide accommodation for an additional an extra first year class in Greystones Community College, Colaiste Croabh Abhainn and Templecarrig. All these school boards are willing to expand their autumn 2021 enrolment subject to the Department of Education providing the

necessary guarantees in respect of extensions and additional accommodation".

"The Department of Education have also confirmed that the modular temporary buildings for Greystones Community College are being ordered and are first priority nationally in terms of delivery of temporary school accommodation for autumn 2021."

Minister Harris added "The news that additional places are being offered in Greystones Community College is welcome and will provide relief for anxious families.

"Other local secondary schools will offer additional first year places once the Department of Education can guarantee that their accommodation will be in place for autumn 2021."

Extra facilities for Temple Carrig School

Temple Carrig School in Greystones has been approved for new classroom facilities following a lengthy engagement process with the Department of Education.

Templecarrig have been approved for 1 General classroom, 1 Music room, 1 Textiles room, 1 Graphics room, 1 Multimedia room, 1 Science lab, 1 Science prep area, 2 Tech and shared prep area, and 3 Classroom SEN bases.

Minister Harris said: "I welcome today's news. This is another positive step in terms of solving the shortage of secondary school places across the Greystones/Kilcoole area for autumn 2021.

"Templecarrig will now enrol additional students in first year for 2021-22 and this will provide much

needed relief for families anxious about securing a place in first year for autumn 2021.

"The school's new extension will be by means of a devolved grant which will allow the school to manage the buildings project directly. I would like to pay tribute to Alan Cox, Garrett Fennell and all the team at Templecarrig for the work they have undertaken. This is a further significant investment in local education in Greystones.

"I am continuing to work with the families of St Andrews National School who do not have a feeder school of the same ethos at present and the expansion of Templecarrig will allow greater flexibility in the years ahead for Templecarrig to act as a feeder school for St Andrews NS," concluded Minister Harris.



Principal Alan Cox, Chair of the Board of Management Garrett Fennell and Minister Simon Harris at the site of the new extension for Templecarrig Secondary School

Concerns about 'short notice' with recommencement of Primary School Immunisation Programme

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has welcomed the recommencement of the Primary School Immunisation Programme (SIP). The roll out of the programme to administer MMR vaccinations and the 4 in 1 booster to Junior Infants in primary school was suspended in January.

Administering vaccinations to Wicklow Junior Infants recommenced last week. Deputy Brady said "This follows the suspension of the programme in January to allow the HSE concentrate on the COVID vaccination programme."

"Whilst it was fully understandable that the focus would be on the roll out of the Covid vaccination, parents were concerned about the lack of

clarity as to when their children would receive the very important MMR vaccine and the 4 in 1 booster.

"Since January I have been consistently trying to get clarity from the HSE on the issue, so I welcome the confirmation of the recommencement of the programme."

The HSE started contacting parents/guardians to inform them that their children would be vacci-

nated in the vaccination centres in Greystones and Arklow.

"There are concerns from some parents regarding the short notice they have been given to attend and also the fact that they must travel for the vaccinations. These issues must be looked at by the HSE," Deputy Brady continued.

"The 4 in 1 booster is given to protect against diphtheria, polio, tetanus

and whooping cough and a second dose of the MMR vaccine is administered to protect against measles, mumps and rubella.

"The MMR and 4 in 1 booster are really important vaccinations so it's really positive news that the School Immunisation Programme can operate in tandem with the Covid vaccination programme from next week."

New programme aims to enhance wellbeing of students within and beyond classroom

A wellbeing programme designed by teachers for teachers, and the new-look/rebranded products launched last week, aims to better support student wellbeing within and beyond the classroom as the new school term begins.

Co-founded by teachers at St. Angela's College Cork, Sanchia Connolly, Aran O'Driscoll and Holly Peters, the Nurture 4 Wellbeing Programme responds to the nationwide introduction of Wellbeing to the Junior Cycle curriculum which began in 2017 and will be fully implemented by the now extended date of 2021.

Comprising 138 lessons across three years of Junior Cycle, the programme supports teachers in delivering their Wellbeing lessons, and ensures that schools meet the Department of Education and Skills requirement that 400 hours of Wellbeing are taught during Junior Cycle by Sept 2021. It is drawn from the three co-founders' experience of teaching Wellbeing in their own classrooms.

Commenting, co-founder of Nurture 4 Wellbeing Sanchia Connolly said: "Through our collective classroom experience, we have witnessed first-hand the hugely positive and far-reaching impact that teaching Wellbeing has had, both on our students and ourselves. As teachers, parents and students return to in-person teaching and learning, it is crucial that students' wellbeing needs are met. With our combined skill-set and teaching experience, as well as the hundreds of hours we've spent designing and teaching Wellbeing courses over the last four years, we believe the Nurture 4 Wellbeing Programme will ensure teachers and students are supported."

To optimise teachers' valuable time, while ensuring peak performance in the classroom and high levels of student engagement and learning, the three co-founders have developed a method of delivering Wellbeing in

schools that they know works effectively.

Co-founder Aran O'Driscoll added: "Each Teaching Pack contains carefully planned, easy-to-follow Lesson Plans, minimising teachers' preparation time. Teachers will also see that the Student Journals are packed full of classroom activities and homework assignments. We also wanted Gaelcholáistí to have access to these resources, as Irish-language schools often struggle to find suitable resources in Irish, so the programme is also available as Gaelige. Parents will be able to purchase 'Cothaigh' Bliain a hAon, a Dó & a Trí in store or online."

Responding to requests from schools, the authors have also designed a new collection of TY/Senior Cycle Wellbeing Modules. With three 7-week Modules to choose from, 'Preparing for Senior Cycle', 'Cultivating Connection' and 'Living My Best Life' have already had a very positive response from TY Co-ordinators who have had to cancel so many activities due to the current restrictions.

The co-founders note that the recent challenges of moving to online teaching and learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have further highlighted the need to support student wellbeing.

Co-founder Holly Peters said: "The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need to better support student wellbeing within and beyond the classroom. Irish teenagers have been through so much over the last year, alongside the usual stresses of growing up. Our teacher-friendly, digital resources are incredibly easy to deliver, in a classroom setting or remotely, and significantly ease the stress on students by providing them with a skill-set to cope with challenges. Never before has there been a more urgent need to cultivate student wellbeing."

"We provide teachers with all that they need to get on with the business of teaching. Moreover, we don't just want young people to be able to cope with difficulties - we also want them to flourish and thrive."



Co-founders of the Nurture 4 Wellbeing Programme, Sanchia Connolly, Aran O'Driscoll, and Holly Peters



Pictured is Adam Harris, CEO of AsIAM. To mark Autism Awareness Month this April SuperValu and AsIAM have launched a national colouring competition as part of their "Say Yes to Autism Acceptance" campaign. Autistic people often face invisible barriers because of how the world works and the judgment and attitudes of others, they are used to hearing 'No'. This World Autism Month SuperValu and AsIAM are encouraging people to say 'Yes' for a change: Yes to employment, Yes to education and Yes to community inclusion. To support this, a guide on how to "Say Yes to Autism Acceptance" is now available in all SuperValu stores and the colouring competition can be found at the back of the guide. All entrants will be in with the chance to win a fantastic colouring gift pack packed full of arts and craft fun. Winners will be selected from three categories Junior Infants- 2nd Class, 3rd Class- 6th Class and Post Primary school. Once the Say Yes To Autism Colouring creation has been completed by children taking part, a picture or scan of the finished piece should be sent to sayyes@supervalu.ie.

Olympic Federation launches 'Road To Tokyo' schools challenge

The Olympic Federation of Ireland has launched their new Olympic Schools Challenge, 'Road to Tokyo'. The challenge is part of the Olympic Federation of Ireland's 'Dare to Believe' schools programme and sees Team Ireland calling on schools and families across the country to join them on an interactive journey from Ireland to Tokyo from May 4th to May 31st.

The Olympic Schools Challenge 'Road to Tokyo' offers schools across the country the opportunity to take part in a fun, interactive and educational journey with a host of Team Ireland athletes, as they begin preparations for the final months on the road to this year's Olympic Games. Schools and families can get involved by logging their physical activity and workouts, which convert to kilometres and move them closer to Tokyo each step of the way. There will be four stopovers en route for all involved, where students will learn about the Olympics, Tokyo, and get some insights and pro tips from Team Ireland athletes. There will be spot prizes, art challenges, and quizzes to make sure that all interests are catered for!

The new Olympic Schools Challenge 'Road to Tokyo' will focus on exploring the joy of effort and the wider benefits of sport and staying active, with topics like teamwork, visualisation, motivation and goal setting discussed on the way.

Róisín McGettigan-Dumas was looking forward to the new schools challenge: "We are really excited to be launching this new Olympic Schools Challenge for pupils, teachers, schools and families across the country, and to be inviting them to join us on the Road to Tokyo. This is a hugely exciting way to bring the Olympics and, in particular, this



Irish athlete Sarah Lavin, pictured following the launch of the Olympic Federation of Ireland's new Olympic Schools Challenge, 'Road to Tokyo'

year's Olympic Games, into the classroom for children across the country, and held build excitement for our athletes as the countdown to Tokyo continues. Through this programme, we are really looking forward to showing children across Ireland that they can dare to believe, and we hope that this challenge will not only inspire children to follow their dreams, but will also help to motivate them to get out there and get active with their classmates and families. We are extremely grateful for the support from both Olympic Solidarity and FBD Insurance, which allows this programme to continue to grow."

Team Ireland athlete Sarah Lavin stated: "I am absolutely

delighted to be a part of such a special launch today with the Olympic Federation of Ireland and FBD Insurance as part of their 'Dare to Believe' programme. The Olympic Schools Challenge 'Road to Tokyo' is one I would have loved to have taken part in myself when I was younger, and I know there are many pupils around the country who are already counting down to Day One of the challenge on May 4th. When I was young, my dream was to represent Ireland and to compete at an Olympic Games and hopefully, through this challenge and the 'Dare to Believe' programme overall, we can inspire the next generation of Olympic athletes and start them off on their own sporting journeys."

What's on at Signal Arts Centre...

30 Years of Making



Signal Arts Centre is celebrating over 30 years in existence with an exhibition in both Signal and Mermaid Arts Centres.

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

First opened in June 1990 by a group of recently graduated artists, Signal has gone on to provide over 600 artists with a chance to exhibit their first solo show, to work with a number of resource centres, schools and communities of interest; to buy its own building and to run a community employment programme specifically for those wishing to develop a career in the arts. It's been some journey and it has been a privilege seeing many of those young artists become nationally recognised.

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

Above the Horizon: An exhibition by Anna Hryniewicz

Tuesday, 8th June - Sunday, 20 June

Anna Hryniewicz is an abstract painter working primarily in acrylics. She draws her inspiration from both music, which is an integral part of her life and from nature with its majestic landscapes and seascapes.

Hryniewicz's work focuses on the power of colour and the interaction of shapes and lines. She transforms materials into a strong artistic expression, which seem to emanate with colour creating intriguing compositions. Each painting represents the thought, the feeling, the sense of place rather than the traditional look of the world.

In her work she refers to her childhood memories, the passage of time and how it forms her sense of being. She creates a window into colourful realms that are around us and in us but they also lie beyond our worldly affairs. Her work is a vision of imaginary worlds, undiscovered planets, unknown places in the Universe. For Anna a painting is a mystery which she explores and brings closer to us. Looking at her compositions reminds us of our own childhood, it requires relying on intuition and going beyond our ordinary perceptions.

Anna graduated from Czestochowa University (Poland) in Painting and Teaching Art in 2004. She is a professional member of VAI and her works are in public and private collections in Europe, the UK and the USA. She was the recipient of Incubate Residency Award in Draiocht in 2019.



Following the Stream: An exhibition by Anne McLeod

Monday, 21st June - Sunday, 4th July

Anne McLeod's exceptional attachment to the landscapes she knows and loves provides the motivation and the themes for her rich, fresh watercolours.



Visiting and revisiting places off the beaten track where she feels she belongs, she is familiar with their changing moods and seasons.

For her, completing a painting is a way of consummating that sense of belonging, of giving due acknowledgement to her identification with the place.

A thoughtful painter, she relishes particularly the process of developing lively contrasts between light and dark, which, in watercolours, involves the judicious layering of washes and the production of lighter shapes negatively within the later, darker layers. The challenge is to paint enough, but not too much.

McLeod is a multiple award-winning member of the Irish Watercolour Society and has work in state and corporate collections.

She teaches regular watercolour classes in Wexford and gives occasional workshops elsewhere. See www.annemcleod.org

National Gallery of Ireland launches Zurich Portrait Prize art competitions

The National Gallery of Ireland today launches the Zurich Portrait Prize and Zurich Young Portrait Prize competitions. For the Zurich Portrait Prize, the annual competition showcasing contemporary portraiture, the Gallery invites submissions from across the island of Ireland, and from Irish artists living abroad. The Zurich Young Portrait Prize is open to young people aged 18 and under.

The Zurich Portrait Prize aims to encourage interest in contemporary portraiture and to showcase the National Portrait Collection at the National Gallery of Ireland. The winner of the competition will receive a cash prize of €15,000 and will be commissioned to create a work for the national portrait collection, for which they will be awarded a further €5,000. Two additional awards of €1,500 will be given to highly commended works. Judges for the Zurich Portrait Prize are: artist Eamonn Doyle; Róisín Kennedy, art critic and Lecturer/Assistant Professor in the School of Art History & Cultural Policy, UCD; and Seán Kissane, Curator at IMMA.

The Zurich Young Portrait Prize returns for its third year in 2021. The inclusive art competition is open to children and young people of all abilities aged up to 18 from across the island of Ireland. Winners in four age categories and an overall winner will be chosen from a shortlist of 20 works. Winners will receive a bespoke art box and a cash prize. This year's Zurich Young Portrait Prize judges are: visual artist Aídeen Barry; artist, art teacher and activist Joe Caslin; and Tadhg Crowley, Senior Curator of Education + Community at the Glucksman.

Sean Rainbird, Director of the National Gallery of Ireland, said, "We were overwhelmed with the tremendous response to last year's Zurich Portrait Prize and Zurich Young Portrait Prize. Following a challenging year for artists and children, we hope to learn more about how art has inspired, provided an escape or brought joy to people across the country in recent times."

Neil Freshwater, CEO of Zurich, said, "Zurich is proud to have supported these important competitions since 2018. Working with the National Gallery of Ireland to shine a spotlight on talented artists of all ages has been a fantastic experience."

We're looking forward to seeing the shortlists for both the Zurich Portrait Prize and Zurich Young Portrait Prize later this year."

The closing date for entries to the Zurich Portrait Prize and Zurich Young Portrait Prize is 23 June 2021. Exhibitions featuring shortlisted works in both competitions run at the National Gallery of Ireland between 13 November 2021 and 3 April 2022. The exhibition will continue to partner Crawford Art Gallery, Cork where it will be displayed between 23 April and 17 July 2022. Details of both competitions can be found at www.national-gallery.ie.

An Post announces artistic commission for 2022 centenary stamp

An Post has announced a competition for a special commission for artists to create an artwork marking next year's centenary of Saorstát Éireann, the Irish Free State. The work of the chosen artist will feature on a postage stamp to mark the centenary on 6th December, 2022.

Artists will be invited to submit artworks for the €10,000 commission in a competition being run by An Post in partnership with Business to Arts and an expert panel led by the Chairperson of the Stamp Design Advisory committee, Mick O'Dea PPRHA.

Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, Hildegard Naughton TD, who has responsibility for An Post, welcomed the commission saying: "This is an innovative way of supporting the artistic community during this most challenging of times while encouraging a fresh, contemporary perspective on the centenary of the Irish Free State, one of the most important milestones for our country and its people."

"I commend the work of An Post

and their independent Philatelic Advisory and Stamp Design Advisory Committees who ensure that Irish stamps are renowned across the world for the quality of their carefully chosen subject matter and their outstanding design and production", she added.

David McRedmond, An Post Chief Executive said "We look forward to strong interest from Irish artists in our Irish Free State centenary commission. It is a unique opportunity for an artist to respond to this important anniversary by creating an important public art piece which itself will become a piece of philatelic art, and travel the world representing Ireland's rich history and artistic tradition. Every year through the national stamp programme, An Post is proud to support the work of our finest

artists and designers, showcasing their skills in Ireland and across the globe.

Andrew Hetherington, CEO, Business to Arts said, "Business to Arts are honoured to be working with our long-term members, An Post, on this historic stamp commission. The range of artists and designers that have been selected to create stamps for An Post in recent years is an outstanding list of Ireland's leading creatives. We look forward to seeing the submissions and the final artwork selected for the Irish Free State centenary commission."

Full information on the application process will be announced during the week of April 12th on businessstoarts.ie/an-post. An information webinar for artists will be held on Wednesday April 28th, at 12:30pm, which will be recorded and made available online for artists who are unable to attend.

To register for the information webinar, go to businessstoarts.ie/an-post.



Wicklow mum publishes book for daughter

Leah-Alice was 9 months old when she was first diagnosed with Cyclic Neutropenia by Dr. Melanie Cotter who is the only haematologist in Ireland to look after children with rare white blood cell disorders.



Wendy O'Neill and her daughter Leah-Alice

Leah-Alice has a type of DNA (she is one of 5 in Ireland with it) which gives her Cyclic neutropenia, this means that her neutrophils cycle on a 21/24days basis lowering her immune system to these days.

With daily injections her levels are kept at an acceptable level and she is cared for by Temple Street Children's Hospital which she visits every 3 months.

"Her Daddy and I make sure Leah-Alice has everything she needs to grow up happy and healthy," says Leah's mum Wendy.

"Leah-Alice calls her blood sparkly blood and her doctor checks to make sure the sparkles are still there to make sure she doesn't have to stay in hospital.

"We have learnt to look after Leah-Alice's condition and she is a very happy little human with the help and support of our family and friends. I have written this short



children's book to create awareness about cyclic neutropenia and to try and help other children that may need to go to hospital and for it to be a positive experience.

"With funding I will hopefully be printing my

book soon. This book will be used to raise monies for Temple Streets haematology department helping with bone marrow failure."

The Kindle edition of the book is now available on Amazon

Local groups Invited to apply to the Human Rights and Equality Grant Scheme

Organisations from across Wicklow who are working on issues of human rights and equality are invited to apply to the Human Rights and Equality Grant Scheme 2021-22.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission ("the Commission") will award small grants of up to €6,000 and general grants of up to €20,000 to support activities under three strands: Advancing Social and Economic Rights and Equality; Combatting Racism and Racial Discrimination; Progressing the Rights of People with Disabilities.

The scheme, which is closing soon, is open to civil society organisations, rights-

holder and community led groups, and trade unions from across the country, who can bring forward proposals on empowering people and communities to understand and claim their rights and be part of decision-making that affects them. This includes people at risk of discrimination protected under the nine grounds of Ireland's equality legislation: gender, civil status, family status, age, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community and people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

One organisation in Wicklow, the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation is among those previously awarded funding for work focused on human

rights and equality.

Activities that the Human Rights and Equality Grant Scheme 2021-22 supports include:

- Participatory education and training activities
- Projects focused on engaging people in shaping policy and legislation reform
- Conferences, seminars and roundtables
- Campaigns and print or digital tools
- Participatory research and policy analysis
- Monitoring compliance of public bodies with human rights and equality standards

The strict deadline for receipt of applications is **Thursday 22nd April at 4pm** and full details of the grant scheme are available on the Commission's website.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Thank you, I was very pleased to read your article in Thursday 1st April edition of the Wicklow Times about the biodiversity of the marine environment along the Wicklow Coastline. The marine environment does not seem to get the attention that is afforded to rivers and forests when we think about climate change and the loss and gain of species. Two members of Wicklow Aquanauts, the scuba diving club at Greystones Harbour that is myself and Albert Kerr were involved in the NUIG KelpRes survey. It had been hoped to do several dives along from north of the harbour to the 'mens' diving site but due to bad weather that day only Greystones harbour was diveable.

Wakame was found in the harbour and a specimen brought ashore so we could familiarise ourselves with it. As a point of interest I understand it can be used in Chinese cookery.

As part of Seasearch, Wicklow Aquanauts have been carrying out surveys of marine wildlife for the past 4 years in Greystones Harbour and Carrig Eden Bay and have completed 63 surveys in total, 38 in the harbour and 25 in Carrig Eden Bay. These results are sent to Rory O'Callaghan in Galway where he collates them for the National Biodiversity website.

We would like to thank Wicklow County Council for awarding us a grant to carry out the Link Project. This involves diving and recording in the area between those two sites and extending to the north from the harbour and to the south of

Carrig Eden Bay. Also we are recording new species not previously seen and their habitats. (eg. rocks or sandy bottom.) With this information it is hoped to better understand the food web, and where marine life may be vulnerable. eg due to the effects of litter or pollution. We are intending to do a litter sweep at the same time as the survey. We started this project last year and then had to stop because of Covid. However we are ready to start again in the next few weeks.

I would like to draw attention to another invasive seaweed in the harbour. It is Sargassum muticum, with the common name of wireweed. This is a branching seaweed that has dense fronds. Our observation is that it appears to provide shelter for small fish, and so has benefits. In the Wadden Sea it has been planted for this reason to give shelter to pipe fish. These fish are related to seahorses. We used to see them in Greystones and Carrig Eden but they have become very rare and seem to be in decline.

When we think about the loss of species due to climate change the marine environment does not get the attention necessary because it is hidden under the sea. However if marine ecosystems break down then fish stocks may disappear and also the loss of kelp and other seaweed will mean a loss of a vast carbon sink which at the moment is helping take out carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Ann McAvoy
Secretary Wicklow Aquanauts
The Harbour Greystones



Sargassum muticum

Roundwood Athletic Club receives €5,000 funding

Roundwood and District Athletic Club is to receive €5,000 funding under the Texaco Support for Sport initiative launched last September by Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited.

Open to sports clubs across the 26-counties, irrespective of sporting discipline, size, membership, age, cultural appeal or gender, the initiative saw a fund of €130,000 being made available by Valero for distribution in equal amounts of €5,000 to successful applicants chosen on a county-by-county basis.

Congratulating the club on its success, James Twohig, Director of Ireland Operations, Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited said, "A feature evident in almost all applications was the pressure felt by clubs in the current circumstances to expand their role within their local communities with increased membership demands and the need for extra equipment and improved facilities.

"The purpose of our initiative is to help clubs to overcome these obstacles so that they can continue to remain active and at the very heart of their local communities. This is why we believe our initiative has been so warmly welcomed by sports clubs nationwide in its launch year," he added.

Located in the Wicklow Mountains, in Ireland's highest village, the club was established in 1991 and has over 100 members. One of almost 400 clubs countrywide to make application under the scheme, it is operated on a voluntary basis catering for children age 6 to 18 with a social running club for adults. The €5,000 award will be used to purchase new sporting equipment such as high jump mats, shot putt and javelins. A longer-term plan includes the development of a 100-metre track, jumping and throwing area and clubhouse.

'People's park bins now overflow every single weekend'



Aontu Representative Ciaran hogan has challenged Bray's councillors to meet with him in People's Park on Sunday 25th April at 6pm to see for themselves the "dire need for improved waste facilities at the park".

"This past Sunday I walked around People's Park in Bray with my daughter, each and every bin was overflowing with refuse. I should be shocked, but this has been the case for every single Sunday evening for weeks now," stated Hogan.

"Just by the children's playground coffee cups and packaging surround the bin there and taken by the wind into the playground and into the river.

"It's not one bin, or

happening intermittently. It is every weekend without fail, every single bin is overflowing. And this will only get worse as the weather improves.

"People have been cooped up in their houses for too long, and within 5km there are few parks to choose from, so People's Park along with others is seeing higher visitor numbers.

"This issue has been raised before, and it has seen some coverage in

local papers as well. But I'm still surprised that nothing has been done, that's why I'm calling on councillors to meet with me in the park on Sunday 25th, and I am confident that the bins once again will be overflowing as they have been every Sunday before.

"We are all adapting to Covid, it seems that it has changed the way we operate, and the council is no exception they must see the way people behave and make the corrections as needed. It should only take a week or two to source new bins, and this has been going on for more than a year now."



Angela Merrigan enjoying her breakfast at the recent opening of Murt's in the boatyard in Arklow's South Quay

Whitmore launches survey for Wicklow businesses

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has launched a Wicklow Business Survey and is inviting business owners across county Wicklow to take part.

Launching the survey, Deputy Whitmore said "During our third and longest COVID lockdown, now is an important time to really ask on the ground how small, local businesses in county Wicklow are doing.

"Covid 19 has had a huge impact on small local businesses which many people rely as a source of employment and for goods and services. Whether it's the local hairdressers, mechanics or butchers, an online craft shop or bookshop, the pandemic is affecting everyone differently and the impact has not been felt equally across all sectors or regions.

"I've had so many emails from business owners across Wicklow, ranging from bookshops, to beauty salons, the live events sector and sports companies, all hugely affected by restrictions. While there have been many Government supports and support coming from Wicklow County Council, there are many businesses that have fallen between the cracks and is causing a lot of anxiety for many owners who have put so much of their own time and money into building their business.

"I am calling on any business owner in county Wicklow to take part in the 10-minute survey which will be used (confidentially) to build a case for more targeted supports to businesses in the area. Crucially, the survey will help identify what Government supports have worked but also what specific supports businesses need to either continue trading, to reopen or to manage the transition as the economy reopens.

"The health of the small business sector reflects the overall health of our local economies and our national economic performance.

"For anyone interested they can access the Business survey at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/2WDL6PD or contact me at jennifer.whitmore@oireachtas.ie."

PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Nick & Gráinne Austin intend to apply for permission for development at this site 95 Hollybrook Park, Bray, Co. Wicklow, A98 R152. The development will consist of the removal of the existing main low pitch hipped roof and replacement with new dormer roof with extended gable walls to include salvaged roof tiles to front with rooflights and metal/membrane roof/dormer to rear. New dormer roof extension to contain master bedroom with ensuite and walk in dressing room and to be accessed by new stairs from first floor level. Existing utility shed to side to be removed and new utility room to be constructed and associated site 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.

Funding for outdoor dining for businesses

Applications for funding under the Outdoor Seating and Accessories for Tourism and Hospitality Business Scheme have opened.

The key aim of the scheme is to provide support to individual hospitality and tourism businesses towards the cost of equipment to provide additional outdoor seating and facilitate individual businesses to increase their outdoor dining capacity for the summer of 2021.

In order to place furniture in public places, applicants must firstly have applied for and been granted a Section 254 licence by Wicklow County Council. The Section 254 licence fee has been waived for table and chair street furniture applications in 2021.

Further information and application form can be found at www.wicklow.ie.

Fáilte Ireland in partnership with local authorities across the country is working to assist town centre hospitality businesses to increase their outdoor seating capacity. The aim is to support jobs and businesses with a town centre focus while providing a safe environ-

ment for shoppers and diners.

Clr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, welcomed the Fáilte Ireland funding for the enhancement of outdoor seating and dining saying "It is more important than ever to support local businesses and the hospitality sector, by shopping locally, dining locally and staying locally. This scheme will help our local restaurants, coffee shops and food providers to accommodate outdoor dining as businesses begin to reopen and will help to bring vibrancy back into our towns".

Mr Frank Curran, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council, welcomed the scheme which he said was aimed at assisting those businesses who have been badly affected by COVID restrictions "This scheme is the result of strong partnership and collaboration between Fáilte Ireland and local authorities and will add to the range of supports already available through Wicklow County Council and the Local Enterprise Office", he stated.

Applications open on Monday, 12th April and will remain open until 30th September 2021.

Network Ireland Wicklow launch Businesswoman of the Year Awards

The deadline has now passed to apply for the Network Ireland Wicklow 2021 Businesswoman of the Year awards. This is the 5th consecutive year that the Wicklow branch have run these awards.

Last year, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the group to move their awards proceedings online, but that didn't dampen the spirit, with 3 of the winners going on to win at the national awards last October.

Last year's theme was the "Power Within". Our power within was truly tested, and the same can be said already for 2021.

Speaking about the awards, Network Ireland Wicklow President Jean Evans said, "I'm thrilled to launch the Network Ireland Wicklow businesswoman of the year awards for 2021. The theme for our network this year is Dream Big, and that's exactly what I want our members to do this year. The last 12 months have been particularly challenging, and the resilience demonstrated within our Wicklow group and across the network has been awe-inspiring. These stories need to be shared and celebrated."

Network Ireland amended the categories to reflect the changing times we're living through.

The categories for 2021 include:

- Solo Businesswoman
- Emerging New Business
- Established Business
- Employee - Rising Star
- Employee - Shining Star
- Creative Professional
- STEM
- Power Within Champion

The application deadline for the awards was Friday 16th of April.

Those who win in each category will then go forward to the National selection. The national awards



interview will take place in September, with the awards ceremony scheduled for the 8th of October in Waterford.

To support female entrepreneurship in Wicklow, Network Ireland are reducing their annual subscription (for 2021 only), from €195 to €136.50, representing a 30% discount.

Benefits of membership include: Access to the monthly newsletter; Profile on social media; Access to a highly supportive WhatsApp group; Monthly coffee mornings; Pitch in Person opportunity; Monthly speaker events; National mentoring programme; Self-development with lunch and learn sessions; Community and

tribe to support you and your business succeed; Access to national Network Ireland events.

If you would like to join, you can contact Jean Evans, Network Ireland Wicklow President at wicklow@networkireland.ie or NI Wicklow Membership Officer, Dawn Leane at the same email for more information. Established in 1983, Network Ireland now has over 1,200 members across fifteen branches around Ireland. Members come from all areas of the business community, those running their businesses, both large and small and

those working for corporate and small businesses. Each year they organise over 200 events for members. They also run several flagship national events, including an International Women's Day Celebration and the Annual Conference and Business Awards. In Wicklow, they welcome all to join them at their two monthly events, an evening event with guest speaker and an informal networking breakfast meeting, all of which are currently taking place on Zoom.

More information available on www.networkireland.ie

CLASSIFIEDS

Luke24:35-48 GOSPEL

The disciples told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread. They were still talking about all this when Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!'. In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see, I have.' And as he said this, he showed them his hands and feet. Their joy was so great that they could not believe it, and they stood dumbfounded, so he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes. Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled.' He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.'

C.J.

THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

Staff in Early Learning and Care settings urged to avail of free inclusion programme

The Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC) programme opens for applications on Monday 19th April. The programme is a free, higher education fully-online Level 6 programme designed to enhance and support the inclusion of children with additional needs in early learning and care (ELC) settings.

The programme, established in 2016, is offered by a consortium led by Mary Immaculate College and including Early Childhood Ireland and Maynooth University - Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The LINC Programme will be delivered wholly online for the 2021/2022 academic year with 660 places available nationwide.

Commenting on the opening of applications, Shirley Heaney, LINC National Coordinator said: "Over the last five years we have seen great enthusiasm from the Early Learning and Care sector for our programme, demonstrating their commitment to the inclusion of all children. We are extremely proud of the over 2,300 Inclusion Coordinators working across Ireland whose focus is on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in their setting; and we look forward to welcoming our

new students this September." Starting this September, eligible staff members in ELC settings will once again have the opportunity to participate in the programme which

is fully-funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Graduates of the programme can take up a leadership role of Inclusion Coordinator within their ELC setting. The application deadline for the LINC Programme is the 14 May 2021 and further information on how to apply can be found on www.lincprogramme.ie.



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

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

YOUTHREACH COORDINATOR

Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow (maternity leave)
Extended closing date - 23rd April 2021

BTEI ADULT EDUCATOR

Wicklow Town (part-time)
Closing date - 26th April 2021

Full details are available on www.kwetb.ie and click on 'vacancies'.

Dr Deirdre Keyes, Chief Executive.



Students on the LINC Programme pictured in 2019



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Wicklow Public Health Nursing Service

**Registered Midwives urgently required for the
Bray and North Wicklow Area**

**Registered General Nurses required for
vacancies across East Wicklow**

*The Public Health Nursing Service in Bray PCC and surrounding area has a number
of temporary vacancies for experienced Registered Midwives and General Nurses.
(whole time and part-time hours)*

For informal enquiries please contact Margaret Scargill ADPHN at
phnwwadmin@hse.ie or phone 0404 63043/40
Or forward CVs to phnwwadmin@hse.ie

ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER

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

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

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

TELESALES EXECUTIVE

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

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VIRTUAL OPEN AFTERNOON **Wednesday 21st April, 4 to 6pm**

ART & DESIGN

Art Portfolio Preparation Course
Art, Craft & Design
Art Practice / Fine Art HNC
Architectural Design & Technology
Architectural Technology - Advanced HNC
Graphic Design HND
Fashion & Textiles HNC
Garden Design
Furniture Design & Manu. Level 5
Furniture Design & Cabinet M. Level 6
Jewellery Making & design

MUSIC & COMPUTER GAMING

3D Game Design
Games Development
Music Production HND
Music Performance HND
NEW Traditional Irish & Folk Music Performance
Sound Engineering
DJ Techniques & Music Production

SPORT

Sports, Exercise & Fitness Instruction
Personal Trainer, Strength & Conditioning
Football Coaching & Fitness studies
Sports Injury & Soft Tissue Massage Therapy

SOCIAL STUDIES & APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

Early Learning & Care
Early Learning & Care - Advanced
Social Studies & Community Care
Applied Health & Social Care HND
Applied Psychology

BODY THERAPIES & HOLISTIC HEALTH

Beauty & Body Therapy
Nail Technician & Salon Administration
Hairdressing Junior Stylist
Hairdressing Senior Stylist
Barbering
Fashion Theatre and Media Make-Up
Holistic & Wellbeing Studies

SCIENCE, ENGINEERING & COMPUTING

Animal Care & Management
Animal Care
Canine Husbandry
Animal Science Advanced
Companion Animal Science - Start Your Own Business
NEW Equine Studies
Science - Pre University
Dietetics, Nutrition & Food Science
NEW Brewing & Distilling Techniques
NEW Forensics - Applied Science
NEW Applied Ecology & Biodiversity Studies
Engineering Pre-University
Computer Software Development
Computer Science Level 5
NEW Computer Networks & Cyber Security Level 6
Teacher Training & Education Pre-University

BUSINESS

Business Management & Administration
Business Management - Advanced Cert
Accounting Technician
Business Tourism & Event Management
Legal Administration
IT & Office Administration
Medical Administration
Security Studies

ADULT LEAVING CERTIFICATE

Adult Leaving Certificate

NURSING & HEALTH SCIENCES

NEW Nursing / Midwifery Studies
Occupational Therapy Assistant
Pharmacy Assistant
Pharmacy Technician
NEW Emergency Care Services

ACTING & DANCE

Acting for Theatre & Film
Acting-Advanced for Stage & Screen
Dance Technique, Performance & Chor. ND
Dance Technique, Performance & Chor. HND

FILM

TV & Film Production
TV & Film (Moving Image) HND

TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

NEW Tourism, Reception & Event Management
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