

# LOCAL Wicklow Times

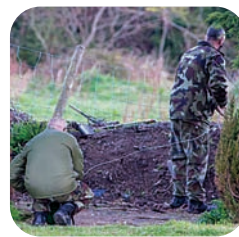
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OPERATION EASTER EGG  
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GRENADE  
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Monday 12th April 2021 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: [wicklowed@localtimes.ie](mailto:wicklowed@localtimes.ie) [www.wicklowtimes.net](http://www.wicklowtimes.net)

# THE HILLS ARE ON FIRE

As Covid restrictions ease and the weather improves, more people are venturing out to the Wicklow hills and forests which brings increased dangers of forest fires. Last weekend saw fire crews battling a number of dangerous fires in forests and hillsides around County Wicklow.

A fire which broke out in Ballinastoe over the Easter weekend had to be brought under control by the fire service.

The incident happened on Saturday 3rd April. It's believed to have occurred due to a campfire which got out of control, and according to Wicklow Fire Service the blaze almost spread to the nearby forest.

The following evening, Wicklow Fire Service fought to extinguish a blaze in a field at Mountain View in Wicklow Town, and on Tuesday fire crews from Rathdrum and Wicklow Town battled a gorse fire on Blair Hill.

In total, Wicklow Fire Service attended five gorse fires between Thursday 1st April and Sunday 4th April. Another gorse fire at

Duck Pond in Arklow also had to be extinguished by fire crews, and there was also a fire in a forested area overlooking the Bel-Air Hotel in Ashford.

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is reminding people of the Yellow status warning currently in effect until September 1st, the traditional fire outbreak sea-



Freya and Yasmin Kelly with Jordi Butterworth enjoying their Easter eggs in Arklow last week

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son in Ireland.

With warmer and dryer Spring weather, dead grasses, gorse and heather become much more flammable and fires can spread quickly from open lands to forests.

"Easter holidays can be a peak time for forest fires as people venture out to visit woodlands," said Coillte's National Estates Risk Manager, Mick Power.

"We have seen a doubling to tripling of visitors to some of Coillte's most popular forests since lockdown began. An unextinguished barbecue, campfire or burning of lands can be the start of a large and unintended blaze," he said.

Coillte is urging the public not to light fires in the outdoors such as campfires and barbecues and reminds the public that it is an offence to deliberately burn vegetation between

the 1st day of March and 31st day of August.

In Coillte's experience most forest fires in Ireland do not arise from natural causes. "Forest fires in Ireland are not caused by spontaneous combustion but instead are caused by unattended fires, or campfires that are not extinguished," said Mr Power.

He added "It's very important individuals don't approach forest fires and report them to the local fire service immediately. We've had over 580 fires in the past five years and we can bring this number right down if we all work together" said Power.

"Forest fires pose a serious health and safety risk to the public, firefighters and foresters whose job is to bring the fire under control and prevent it from spreading to other areas. Once fires

become established, they are very difficult to control and cause

considerable damage. In 2020, Coillte estimate the combined costs of

loss of crops to fire and clean-up amounted to €1.3 million."

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European Union  
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WICKLOW





Jimmy Balbontin at his food stall in Wicklow Town with some Easter treats last week.

## WCC Community Awards Scheme 2021

Wicklow County Council Community Awards Scheme Grants are for community groups and local organisations undertaking community projects. There is a maximum grant of €500 for small projects and group running costs. Only one application is allowed per group. Applications from [www.Wicklow.ie](http://www.Wicklow.ie). Queries to Office of Community, Cultural and Social Development at WCC ([ccsadmin@Wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:ccsadmin@Wicklowcoco.ie)). The Deadline is Friday, 23rd April at 4pm. Late applications will not be considered.

## Greystones Tidy Towns AGM

The Greystones Tidy Towns AGM will be held on April 15th at 8pm. This meeting will be held via Zoom. Anyone with anything they would like to add to the agenda or has anything to contribute or has any queries can contact [marriettown@gmail.com](mailto:marriettown@gmail.com) or the Greystones Tidy Towns website. When registered, participants will be forwarded the Zoom meeting code for the AGM.

## Purple House Global Cycle Challenge

Over the past two years and during Covid19, Purple House volunteer drivers have driven Cancer patients the distance of driving around the globe (40,000km) bringing patients to their chemotherapy treatments.

This month, join Purple House as they virtually cycle around the world to support Cancer patients across Ireland!

"Our collective goal is to cycle 40,000km and to raise €40,000. Whether you cycle 5km a week or 50km, you can help us reach our goal! Grab your bike and cycle within the Covid Government restrictions near where you live or jump on the turbo trainer at home and clock up the miles! After each spin, log your miles on your idonate page and track our collective progress around the globe! Free Purple House bandana for each cyclist!

"Sign up at [www.purplehouse.ie](http://www.purplehouse.ie). We need your help to keep driving Cancer patients into hospitals and we are asking you to sign up to the Purple House Global Cycle Challenge today!"



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# Wicklow Library service encourages families to 'spring into storytime'

Wicklow County Council Library Service is organising a series of virtual events and activities as part of the Public Libraries' annual 'Spring into Storytime'.

The programme launched on April 1st and promises to bring the magic of storytime to homes across the county. All of the virtual events and activities are based around reading and listening to stories which families can enjoy at home. It provides an ideal opportunity for children to take time to enjoy a variety of stories through online story times by library staff and authors

and experience reading as an activity which is fun, entertaining and allows families to share this happy time together. Reading with children and access to books has many important long-term benefits. Children who develop an interest in stories and reading have been found to have greater self-esteem and well-being, greater creativity and imagination, better social and health outcomes, and an overall

better quality of life as they get older.

The 'Spring into Storytime' initiative is a creative way in which children's literacy skills can be developed.

The following events will be part of Wicklow's 'Spring into Storytime' programme:

- **Monster Book Quiz** for schools with Sarah Webb and Alan Nolan on Friday 23rd April.

- **Family Quiz** with Sarah Webb and Alan

Nolan on Saturday 24th April.

- **Zoom Storytimes** for Junior and Senior Infant classes on request from County Wicklow primary schools or early education providers.

- **Author Visit** by Ronan Moore, author of Irishology, Irishography and Young Fionn.

- **Regular Bedtime Stories** on library social media for young children.

- **Saturday morning**

Storytimes online.

- **Crafting sessions** via social media platforms.

To take part in 'Spring Into Storytime', visit [www.librariesireland.ie](http://www.librariesireland.ie) where online storytimes from library staff all over Ireland will be uploaded.

You can also see the Wicklow Library Services Instagram page ([Wicklowlibraries](https://www.instagram.com/Wicklowlibraries)) and Facebook (Wicklow County Council Library Service).

# Operation Easter Egg in Wicklow Town

Gardaí from Wicklow Town took part in Operation Easter Egg on the Thursday before Easter. The gesture of goodwill to local community groups and residential care homes saw them call around and share some Easter treats.

Residents and Staff at First Care Blainroe and Knockrobin Hill Care homes were visited by Detective Sergeant Colm Corrigan and Garda Catherine O'Rourke, who made the delivery to both residents and staff.

Easter eggs were also delivered to Wicklow Meals on Wheels, Wicklow Fire Services, Wicklow Ambulance Service as well as the local Direct Provision Centre. Superintendent Declan McCarthy said "It is a small token to some of those who have been working at the frontline over the past 12 months as well as those who have been unable to receive visitors during this pandemic. We hope the roll out of the vaccination program gives hope for brighter days ahead."

The donor of the Easter eggs wishes to remain anonymous.



Detective Sergeant Colm Corrigan and Garda Catherine O'Rourke are pictured delivering the treats to the residents and staff of Blainroe Nursing Home



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**Contacts:**  
Shay Fitzmaurice, Managing Editor - [shay@localtimes.ie](mailto:shay@localtimes.ie)  
Ian Colgan, News Editor - [ian@localtimes.ie](mailto:ian@localtimes.ie)  
General enquiries - [info@localtimes.ie](mailto:info@localtimes.ie)



# Shoreline chosen for school vaccination programme

Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, has welcomed the decision to use the mass vaccination centre in Shoreline, Greystones (as yet not opened) to administer vaccines for schoolchildren.

Covid restrictions had put the school vaccination programme on hold but from this Monday hundreds of children from across the county will be vaccinated at the newly established centre. It is estimated more than 1600 junior infants from across the county will be eligible to receive their vaccine from Monday. An estimated 800 children in the south of the county are expected to be vaccinated at the Arklow Bay Hotel when it comes into use. While it is estimated 800 children from the north of the county will be

directed to the Shoreline centre. And on Saturday the aim is that students from Greystones Community College will be offered the HPV vaccine. The Shoreline centre is expected to begin use as a Covid vaccination centre for the north of the county later this month followed shortly by the centre in the Arklow Bay Hotel. The Schools Immunisation Programme is part of a national strategy to protect children from infectious diseases through vaccination. Minister Donnelly said: "It's fantastic news



Minister Donnelly

Wicklow's vaccination centres are going to be used to vaccinate school children. "Unfortunately, the school immunisations

programme has fallen behind because they are normally done in school but due to the disruption of the past year that hasn't been possible. "Having the mass vaccination centres in place means they can be used to carry out a huge number of school vaccinations in a short space of time. "An enormous amount of work has been done by the HSE vaccination teams to get this programme organised. "We are seeing real progress in the Covid vaccine rollout- last week we reached one million vaccines being administered and for the next three months, we expect to see an average of one million vaccines being administered for the months of April, May and June. "We are making real progress towards finding our way out of this pandemic but we just need to continue to hold firm for another while because we are not there yet," Minister Donnelly concluded.



Members of Wicklow Fire Service deal with a gorse fire at the Duck Pond in Arklow last week.

## Wicklow hotels begin slow recovery

A survey from the Irish Hotels Federation shows early signs that hotels in certain parts of the country are beginning to see an uplift in bookings for July and August.

This follows the Government's recent announcement that it will look at the reopening of hotels and guesthouses in June. With booking levels nationally averaging 23% for July and 21% for August - the key summer months - Gerard O'Brien, Chair of the Wicklow branch of the Irish Hotels Federation, is encouraging people to plan their holidays and breaks early while there is plenty of choice and availability around. Mr O'Brien says the positive developments around the vaccine roll-out coupled with the Taoiseach's announcement around the reopening of hotels have allowed hotels in Wicklow and across the country to start planning towards reopening. "However, as the latest IHF survey shows, there is still a long way to go before hotel occupancy reaches even last summer's levels. Recovery will be a challenge for the hotel sector this year, requiring continued Government support through to 2022, when the tourism industry should start to recover in earnest. "Staycations were a real positive last summer and we expect booking levels to continue to rise over the coming weeks. Not surprisingly, as indicated by our latest survey, we would expect to see stronger demand in coastal areas, popular tourism destinations and hotels offering packages and facilities for families. However, we would encourage people to explore all parts across the country, as they did last year. There is excellent value available. Guests should contact hotels directly to find out what special offers are available and shop around."



Shoreline Leisure Centre, Greystones

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Philip Rothwell sent out the longest priced winner at Clonmel on Thursday 1st April where the John Lackey-owned Natural Breeze landed the two-mile and two-furlong handicap hurdle. Ridden by James O'Sullivan, the 25/1 chance battled to see off the Tom Cooper-trained Definiteadare by half a length. Rothwell said, "That wasn't a surprise, he is a summer horse and the trip suited. I told James I thought we had a good chance and to jump out and be plenty positive on him. We'll step him up in trip as the summer comes along and these little tracks suit him. He could end up in those conditions' chases during the summer." Photo: Patrick McCann

## Arklow, Greystones and Ashford now covered by 5G network

Telecommunications company eir last week announced the further expansion of their 5G network, which now reaches more than 57% of the Irish population and is now available in Arklow, Greystones and Ashford.

This is in addition to other areas in Wicklow already covered by eir's 5G network including; Tinnahally, Delgany, Woodenbridge, Barranisky, Bray, Wicklow Town, Blessington and Baltinglass.

eir is rapidly expanding its 5G footprint across all 26 counties and their 5G network now spans 268 towns and cities, across 904 sites. This 5G network is complemented with 4G coverage across 99% of the population of Ireland.

Eir is rolling out Ireland's largest 5G network as part of its €1 billion capital investment programme.



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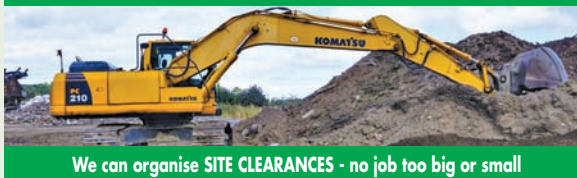
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# Delgany Judicial Review group reaches fundraising target

The Delgany Judicial Review group (DelganyJR) has announced that it has reached its fundraising target in just three weeks.

The group of 12 Delgany residents was set up to fund a Judicial Review of the planning permission for a Strategic Housing Development (SHD) at the Carmelite Convent site in Delgany.

Chairperson Alice O'Donnell stated "The response from the local community has been phenomenal and we are very grateful for that. People were very happy to contribute to ensure that this crowdfunded community driven action could progress.

"Many people have left mes-

sages of support on our fundraising page and have contacted us directly to express their gratitude that we are challenging the decision.

"People have a new appreciation of their locality due to Covid and they want to take a stand to allow our area time to catch up instead of adding even more houses without the necessary infrastructure. High Court actions are very expensive and we could not have considered taking this on without the backing of the local community. As well as the generous contributions from

locals, the campaign has also received donations from Delgany natives who have emigrated to countries like the U.K, America and Belgium.

"The next High Court date for the group is April 12th when the case will come up on a special SHD list. A date for a full hearing will then be scheduled, that is likely to be in several months. The group would like to express their sincere thanks to all those who have supported the fundraising effort."

## New outdoor dining scheme in partnership with Local Authorities

Minister for Tourism Catherine Martin TD and Fáilte Ireland has announced details of a new €17million Scheme for developing outdoor dining capacity nationwide.

The Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme comprises two parts and will be delivered in partnership between Fáilte Ireland and Local Authorities across the country. Part One of the Scheme will provide funding for individual tourism and hospitality businesses to develop and increase their own outdoor seating capacity. Funding allocated under Part Two will enable Local Authorities to develop permanent outdoor public dining spaces in towns and urban centres, similar to those that exist in various European cities.

The Minister for Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport, Gaeltacht and Media, Catherine Martin T.D. has officially launched the Scheme, which opens for initial applications on April 12th.

Announcing the Scheme Minister Catherine Martin said: "This Scheme has two main objectives: firstly, to enable individual tourism and hospitality businesses increase their dining and seating capacity in the short-term and secondly to enable a long-term strategy for local authorities to develop appropriate permanent weatherproofed outdoor dining infrastructure.

"The aim is to support jobs and businesses and to

transform appropriate outdoor spaces within our cities and towns as welcoming, vibrant places that will help support economic recovery. This funding announcement further strengthens this Government's commitment to the development of rural towns, as outlined in the 'Our Rural Future' plan announced earlier this week."

Paul Kelly, CEO of Fáilte Ireland added: "I want to thank Minister Martin for securing this funding and the CCMA for its support with designing and administering it. Part One of the Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme relates to Outdoor Seating and Accessories to help tourism and hospitality businesses offset some of the costs incurred in upgrading premises for outdoor dining and seating. Part Two of the Scheme relates to Weatherproofing and Outdoor Dining Infrastructure which focuses on the development of medium to large scale permanent public dining spaces in towns and centres in preparation for welcoming back visitors when it is safe to do so.

"Each Local Authority can apply for up to €200,000 under this element of the scheme. We have been working closely with the County and City Management Association (CCMA) on behalf of the Local Authorities to design a scheme that will be efficient and practical. We look forward to seeing the results across the country."

## Aontu Rep calls on council to waive outdoor fees for cafes

Aontú Representative for Wicklow, Ciaran Hogan, is asking Wicklow County Council to announce an immediate waiving of outdoor seating fees to allow hard-pressed businesses plan and prepare for what will be a 'make or break' summer period.

"The past year of rolling Covid lockdowns has resulted in the hospitality sector being shut for 200 days, the industry is on its knees and one must wonder how many will survive unless good trade happens in the coming months," Mr Hogan said.

"The local authorities must act now to help businesses that can offer outdoor dining within social distance guidelines, they must work closely with tourism sector that is a key element in the county economy. A report in recent months showed the Wicklow was one of the worst affected counties nationally by closures to tourism and hospitality industry.

"The people in positions of influence, not only must they be aware of the pressures on the cash flows of those businesses that have been largely closed for the past 12 months but need to start preparing to open for a summer of some sort and give owners ample time to plan for it.

"The months of April and May in 2020 were perfect for outdoor dining, our ever changing weather patterns mean that we need to be conscious that often in Ireland some of the finest, driest weather is in the spring time and early summer, we need to be ready to take advantage of good weather as soon as the government reduce restrictions and allow din-

ing to restart."

The Aontú representative went on to say that decisions need to be made early so the councils know what is happening on the streets.

"The council will have to regulate at some level to avoid a free for all and knock-on safety concerns, they need to work with businesses to organise the available space to strike a fair balance between outdoor seating and flow of pedestrians while undertaking temporary measures to increase the pedestrian space and street space."

Mr Hogan is adamant that when "Coffee Shops, restaurants and pubs apply for consent to place chairs

and tables outside that they won't have to pay the fee. I also feel it is necessary that an outdoor dining fund is created to help purchase appropriate furniture or equipment or make adjustments to their space. The hard-pressed entrepreneurs deserve comfort in the knowledge that they can extend their service provision for food and drink outdoors without adding to their already growing debt.

"Government councillors and TDs across the county need to do their job and apply pressure on the Minister for Enterprise, Leo Vadarkar, to instruct local councils to support local businesses in whatever way they can once reopening is allowed however the planning and preparation for this needs to happen now," concluded Mr Hogan





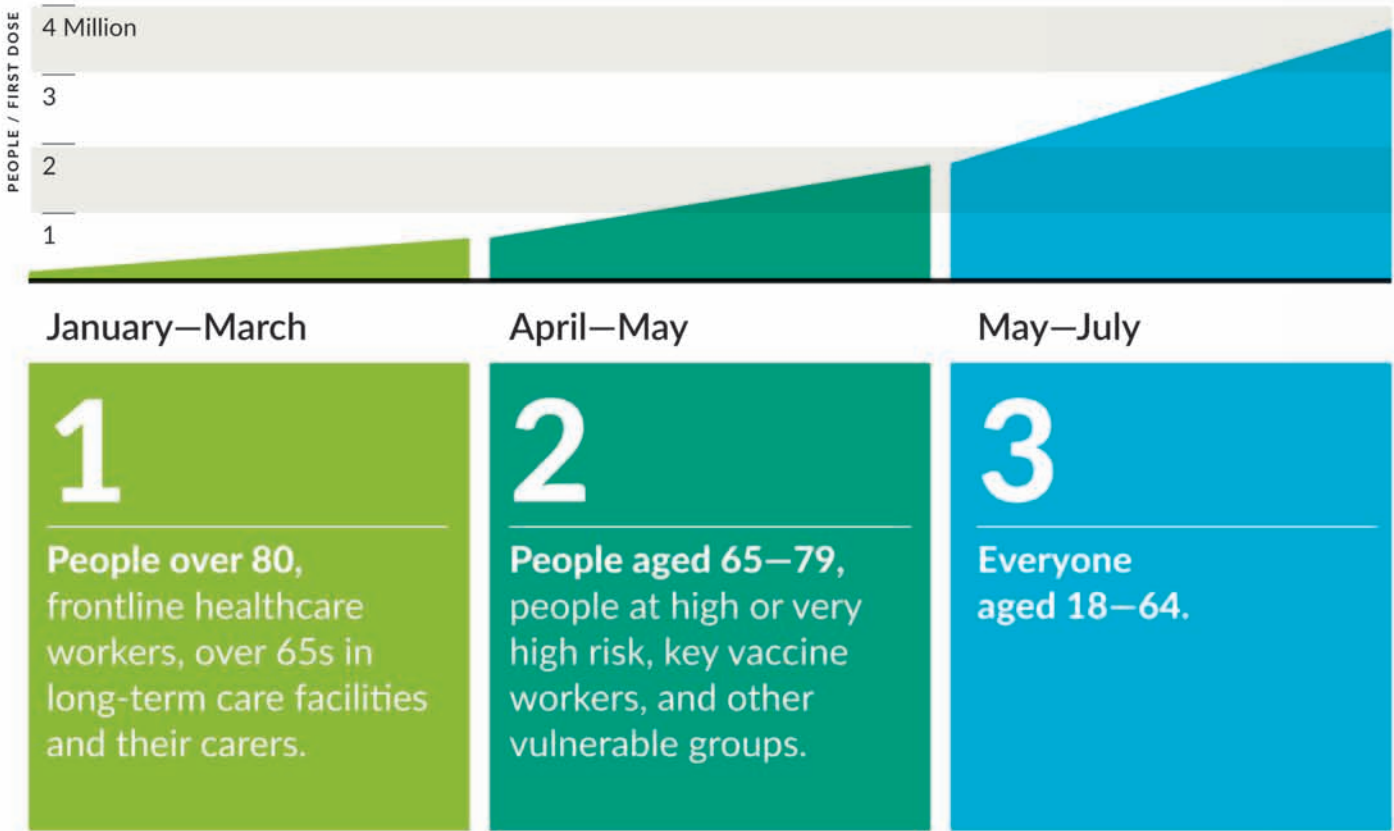
# COVID-19: The Path Ahead



**COVID-19  
VACCINE**  
Public Health  
Advice

Ireland's COVID-19 vaccination programme is now fully operational. As we vaccinate, Government will have more options in terms of easing restrictions. Vaccines are being delivered to GPs around the country as well as special Vaccination Centres strategically located for ease of access.

## Ireland's COVID-19 Vaccination Programme



## Phased Easing of Restrictions

### Stay Local for April

#### 12th April

- Full schools reopening
- Two households can meet outside for social/recreational purposes
- You can move within your own county
- Construction of housing and childcare facilities recommences

#### 19th April

- Additional high performance sports training will resume, including senior inter-county GAA and Sport Ireland approved high performing athletes.

#### 26th April

- Golf, tennis, pitches reopen
- Outdoor amenities including zoos and wildlife parks reopen
- Funerals up to 25 mourners
- Outdoor training for all exercise activities for under 18s can recommence



People who have been fully vaccinated (first and second doses, or single-dose vaccination) may socialise indoors with others who are also fully vaccinated, 14 days after final vaccination.

Infection levels are still dangerously high. Over the next few months we are asked to make one final effort to keep each other safe and protect our health services.

For full details of current Level 5 Restrictions and the new relaxations, please go to [gov.ie](https://gov.ie)



**Rialtas na hÉireann**  
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Eabha O'Reilly pictured with the Easter Bunny in Arklow last week

## Footpath, cycle & road improvement plan for 2021

In Delgany, Wicklow County Council intends to provide a footpath on Bellvue Hill from the new houses up to the pedestrian gate into the Woods and also to improve the footpaths on the R762 in the village centre.

Cllr Derek Mitchell, Cathaoirleach of Greystones Municipal District said "I have been urging this for years as the roads are narrow and busy and we need to encourage walking.

"€50k has also been allocated by the NTA to improve cycle/pedestrian facilities on the Bray/Greystones Road which are lacking on the South side.

"€800,000 has been allocated for drainage and improving the very poor road surface on Kilquade Road, Ballyronan Road, and Sea Road Kilcoole, Bellevue Hill and Sea Road in Newcastle."

## Harris calls for safe pedestrian link to Ashford for Ballinahinch residents

Minister Simon Harris TD has called upon Wicklow County Council to avail of the opportunity to complete a safe pedestrian link between Ballinahinch and Ashford Village.

Minister Harris said "It is great to see so many people want to make their home in Ashford, however for some time it has been a serious cause of serious concern the absence of a safe footpath between Ballinahinch and Ashford Village.

"I have written to the CEO of Wicklow County Council asking that the local authority revisit the decision to not avail of the free land offered by local landowners to complete the pedestrian link. In an era when we are encouraging people to shop local and to walk or cycle rather than getting in the car for short journeys small projects like this footpath can make a big difference.

"Given the expended budget that has now been allocated nationally for walking and cycling I have also requested that the National Transport Authority also examine this particular case to see what national funding the council could avail of to complete these minor works."

Local Fine Gael Councillor Irene Winters added "The addition of 300 new houses in the area results in increased traffic, so safer pedestrian access is even more important."

# Spanish wind energy company examines Wicklow's offshore potential

Offshore wind energy company Ocean Winds is evaluating the expansion of its global offshore wind portfolio (1.5GW in construction and 4GW in development) to include Co. Wicklow.

Ocean Winds has established Cailleach Offshore Wind Farm Ltd, a project delivery company which has submitted a Foreshore Application Licence Application to undertake site investigations for the potential development of an offshore windfarm 13km from the shore at Co. Wicklow.

The proposed wind farm aims to take advantage of the offshore wind resource opportunity in

the Irish Sea, off the coast of counties Dublin and Wicklow. The surveys will enable OW to determine the ground conditions and ascertain the metocean conditions on site which will feed into the future design of the windfarm.

The timeline for the survey programme is designed to ensure that the Cailleach Offshore Wind Farm is well positioned to bid into upcoming

offshore specific RESS auctions.

Cailleach is the first of a number of Irish sites which OW is examining, and the Foreshore Licence is required to enable preliminary site investigations to be undertaken, and development potential assessed.

Commenting, OW CEO Spyridon Martinis said "OW has a strong international portfolio and an excellent track-record

of bringing projects from concept to construction. Ireland has excellent renewable resources, and our background, expertise, strength and experience will allow the Irish economy to make best use of those resources.

"In June 2019, The Irish Government announced their Climate Action Plan, with a target of generating 70% of electricity from renewable sources by 2030, with at

least 3.5GW of offshore wind. In June this was increased to 5GW.

"In the neighbouring UK market, OW will soon reach completion of the 950MW Moray East offshore Windfarm, which was ground-breaking in terms of technology and cost. We look forward to the opportunity of working in Ireland and maximising the potential of offshore wind technology in a new geography."

## Steering group set up for Bray Harbour Regeneration Project

A Steering Group has been established to work with the consultants, councillors and stakeholders to help progress the Bray Harbour Regeneration project.

The consultants - RPS - will now consider, refine and agree the options with a view to identifying the preferred redevelopment option for the Bray Harbour which will see the project move to the planning phase.

An update to members of Bray Municipal District said funding of €7.14m had been announced for the Bray Harbour Area Integrated

Regeneration Project from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF).

The project, it said, would unlock the great potential of Bray Harbour and surrounding area. The funding of €7.14m represents 75 per cent of the projected cost of the project with 25 per cent match funding required.

The works will include: Review potential for harbour

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

RPS Consultants were engaged to carry out a Technical Feasibility Study to determine the feasibility of developing options that would enhance the hydraulic performance of Bray Harbour and

ultimately enhance the area by acting as a focal point for the town of Bray addressing a set of objectives.

As part of this study a number of harbour improvement development options were considered by RPS in early consultation with key groups and these options have been presented by the consultants to user groups such as the Bray Harbour Joint Development Committee (BHJDC), land-based stakeholders such as residents and businesses and also the Bray elected members.

## Former Wicklow District Hospital set for June re-opening

The HSE has confirmed that refurbishment works of the former Wicklow District Hospital in Wicklow Town are complete and it intends to re-open the 18-bed short-stay facility for older people in June.

Welcoming the news, John Brady TD said "The news that the former Wicklow District Hospital will reopen in June is positive news. This comes following the completion of refurbishment works at the premises.

"The HSE have informed me that the intention is that the refurbished premises will be opened as Wicklow Community Nursing Unit. The Unit will be an 18 bedded short stay facility for the rehabilitation and convalescence of older persons who may require additional support following an acute hospital stay. It will also provide short term respite for older persons living in the community.

"The HSE are currently engaged in a campaign to recruit nursing and care staff and that process is currently being completed. It is intended to induct and train staff during the month of May to allow for first admissions to Wicklow Community Nursing Unit in June 2021.

"In 2010 Wicklow District Hospital closed down, this was despite a massive community campaign to try keep it open. Ultimately it was a political decision of the then Fianna Fáil/Green government that allowed the hospital to close. They hid behind a report from HIQA which showed that minor works

were needed in the hospital. Evidence was shown at the time that the work could be done quickly and economically to ensure the hospital could remain open, this reopening shows that we were right in 2010 in our opposition to the closure.

"Work is also currently underway to refresh the former Wicklow Day Services building on Glenside Road, which had been used for Community Covid Testing and a Community Assessment Hub until recent weeks.

The HSE have advised me that as restrictions are lifted for older persons attending community services, they will gradually reopen the Day Services as it is deemed safe to do so with all infection prevention controls in place.

"I look forward to the reopening of the former Wicklow District Hospital and I will continue to work with the HSE to see services further expanded to meet the needs of the community of Wicklow Town."



Deputy Brady at Wicklow District Hospital



# Adult speech and language therapist appointed for North Wicklow

The HSE has confirmed that an adult Speech and Language therapist has been appointed for North Wicklow and is due to start on May 6th.

Speaking on the appointment, Jennifer Whitmore TD said "the appointment of a long-awaited adult speech and language therapist is most welcome and am pleased the appointment will be on a permanent basis.

"In response to local activist Bernadette Nolan, I inquired with the HSE about the need for an adult speech and language therapist and was delighted to get confirmation of this post. The therapist will provide specialist assessments, diagnostic and manage-

ment services as well as services to adults presenting with feeding, eating, drinking and swallowing (FEDS) disorders including voice disorders.

"This post will be a great addition for Wicklow however, it must be seen as part of the wider need for a dedicated rehabilitation unit to facilitate people who've had a stroke or acquired brain injuries, living south of Dun Laoghaire. Currently there is no access to rehabilitation services for patients between Dun Laoghaire and Wexford

including Wicklow and patients end up on a 6-month waiting list for the National Rehabilitation Hospital, as a result.

"It is important that people who have undergone a stroke or brain injury receive rehab services as soon as possible to maximise progress. Instead, a patient from Wicklow is left to the care and supervision of their loved ones while they linger on long waiting lists with no available home visits from the NRH.

"I hope the additional post will go a long way

towards addressing waiting lists, however, we need to see meaningful movement on the roll out of a dedicated unit providing community rehabilitation services in line with Sláintecare and funding to support this. I want to thank Bernadette Nolan and other activists who have been pushing for greater access to rehab services in Wicklow and I will continue to work with her to seek a commitment from the Minister for Health for a rehab unit in this county," concluded Deputy Whitmore.



Pictured are Anna O'Halloran, Angela Merrigan, and Geraldine Young at the opening of Murt's in the Boatyard at South Quay, Arklow.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Manipulation of Local Government Democracy: 'the Emperor has no clothes'

Dear Editor,

Something that I have observed over a number of years causes me great concern.

For at least ten years there has been a gradual erosion of County Councillor powers and input on all matters. It seems that the work of councillors, who are democratically elected and whose main responsibility is to hold the executive to account, is being passed over to unelected committees such as town teams, etc.

This has increased in pace in recent years. You have local authority executives on the team, organising and scheduling meetings, selecting participants. They are evolving into a mirror image of District Councils. The same number of executives do not attend the municipal district meetings and when they do you have to invite them for what can only be described as them doing the councillors a favour.

All of this should - if it is to continue - be under the control of the elected councillors who have the desire and skill sets to do this and who are elected by the public. The executive also needs to be more answerable to elected members.

The dual mandate was stopped twenty years ago, this was done to achieve better and more independent local government. Recently there has been a reversal of this through the back door. Some TDs have put their personal assistants on to local authorities to replace them when they were elected to the Dail, which is really dual mandate through the back door. They are employees of the relevant TD and they operate accordingly. It is plain to see they are there just to represent the TD.

All of this is undermining the



Cllr Tom Fortune

local authority members and requires urgent reversal. There is no respect for the local councillor from the local Authority executive.

Local government is being fully controlled from central government. This is done by the major parties using the 'Whip' on their councillors. The executive is just an implementor of the department overview which is politically influenced by any government of the day.

All of this leads to a deficit of democracy locally and does not serve the public well. In a perfect situation all Local Authority members would be independent councillors, but this is a much bigger discussion. Some party councillors and government party councillors of the day are a barrier to smart and efficient local government.

We need to have an independent councillor organisation that mirrors the LGMA (Local Government Managers Association) and have regular meetings with them. The LGMA are an organisation that needs better oversight in the

interest of better local democracy. Councillors need to be better paid - it is a full-time role yet we are paid half the minimum wage level. TDs have a package that is twenty times greater. We need a stronger and consistent relationship with independent Senators. This is all leading to a decline of local government & undermining of councillors.

Progression of the erosion / Decline : 1.) Monthly meetings reduced from two to one; 2.) Standing orders manipulation; 3.) Executive control of council meeting agenda's.; 4.) Appointment of chairs to key committees, such as audit; 5.) Planning oversight; 6.) Housing Allocation; 7.) Waste Management; 8.) Inner Sanctum control; 9.) Water & Environment; 10.) Manipulation of council management committee through the control of SPC chairs; 11.) GDPR - this enables the executive to stop influence of councillors regarding many areas of importance for the people who elect us; 12.) No support from TDs- as I mentioned earlier some are re-introducing the dual mandate through the back door; 13.) Meetings are to the minimum and micro managed. No proper time to discuss issues that effect the lives of our constituents; 14.) Asking for legal advice is like pulling teeth; 15.) Investment and project opportunities are not proactively and transparently discussed with elected members; 16.) Everything is being managed to exclude the elected councillor at any opportunity.

All of this is not good for open and transparent democracy. Plain and simple.

Independent Councillor Tom Fortune



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## Hand grenade found in Rathnew

An Army bomb disposal team carried out a controlled explosion on a hand grenade last Thursday morning in Rathnew. Two local men discovered the grenade in a field while out walking on Wednesday evening. It is understood one of the men carried the device to a green area at the Woodside housing estate. Gardai were called to the scene.

The Army bomb disposal team carried out the controlled explosion at 7am on Thursday morning and deemed the area safe. Gardai confirmed the grenade was live and had historical dating from World War I.

## O'Brien argues for local version of Citizens' Assembly

**Sinn Féin councillor 'Daisy' O'Brien is calling for an upgrade of the model of community participation at local level within Wicklow County Council.**

Cllr O'Brien said "People want to have a say in the decisions that affect them, that is a given. I believe that we are not making the most of how we include people in the processes of change in their communities.

"It is one thing to invite people to make submissions which involves sending an email if you are that way inclined or writing your views in a letter and submitting them to the Local Authority but it's another thing to actually involve them in the conversations about change. For me we have a one-dimensional participation model and it barely scratches the surface of the potential for real purposeful and meaningful engagement. A deliberative democracy approach offers so much more."

Deliberative democracy is a school of thought in political theory claiming that political decisions should be the product of fair and reasonable discussion and debate among citizens. In deliberation, citizens exchange arguments and consider different claims that are designed to secure the public good. Through this conversation, citizens can come to an agreement about what procedure, action, or policy will best produce the public good. Deliberation is a necessary precondition for the legitimacy of democratic political decisions.

Cllr O'Brien argues that "involving people in a dialogue where there is a responsibility to 'deliber-

ate' means that there must be a commitment to providing accurate information, reflecting societal diversity, giving equal consideration of arguments and ultimately a mandate to reach a consensual outcome. It's not about taking sides or making power plays or using influence to achieve a goal, it's about an inclusive and purposeful process that places a real value on the contributions of all stakeholders as they pursue a 'public good'.

"If we take a local example at the moment where there is a substantial proposal for works within the centre of Enniskerry village. A 'submissions' approach really only facilitates a process that becomes 'for' or 'against'. A 'deliberative' approach would gather a group of people, map out a set of proposals, answer all questions and queries, include and involve members of the community young and old, officials, Cllrs, business reps etc and task them with deliberating and making a final recommendation. I can't see how that would not be worthwhile unless of course we place no value on the contributions or capacity of all stakeholders or indeed there is a perceived hierarchy of stakeholder?"

O'Brien concludes, "In a time when we have very real concerns about polarisation and the risks that come with a lack of faith in the integrity of political processes, we must explore ways of rebuilding and consolidating confidence in local democracy. Ireland has a very positive reputation across the world for how it operates the Citizens' Assembly, for me a local version of this model would be a game changer!"

# DART+ Coastal to boost Drogheda to Greystones capacity

**Iarnród Éireann has appointed Arup as multi-disciplinary design consultants for the DART+ Coastal route, from Drogheda in the north to Greystones in the south (approx. 86km), as part of the DART+ Programme, funded by the National Transport Authority under Project Ireland 2040.**

DART+ Coastal will see the extension of electrification of the line from Malahide to Drogheda, and improvements along the existing DART line from Malahide/Howth to Greystones to increase passenger-carrying capacity along the Eastern Commuter Corridor from 17,980 to 26,680 per hour each way, an increase of almost 50%.

Improvements that DART+ Coastal will bring include the upgrading of infrastructure from Drogheda to Greystones to enable an increase in frequency of train services, including: Upgrade of junctions and station turn-back facilities; Identify solutions to remove level crossings, reducing constraints on both rail and road traffic; Modifications to bridges and structures; Provision of train stabling; Upgrade of signalling, telecoms and power supplies; Modifications to the existing depots at Drogheda and Fairview to support the new fleet.

DART+ Coastal aims to increase passenger capacity from 17,980 to 26,680 passengers per hour per direction, increase train frequency (subject to demand) along the Eastern Commuter and improve journey time reliability. Arup will be working

closely with the Iarnród Éireann's DART+ Delivery Team to create a design for the electrification extension and associated works, along with the design of modifications on the existing DART line to provide for the required increase in service levels.

The project will eliminate level crossings between the city centre and Merrion Gates and develop traffic management and infrastructure plans to facilitate continued vehicular pedestrian and cyclist access to areas adjacent to the existing DART line.

Permissions for the necessary works will be subject to a Railway Order being approved. The Railway Order processes will include extensive public consultation with communities and individuals along the route. Subject to the Railway Order being granted it is expected that construction will commence on DART+ Coastal from the beginning of 2024 with works scheduled for completion in 2027.

The commencement of detailed design of DART+ Coastal means that all aspects of the DART+ Programme are now live.

Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan TD said: "This is another important step in delivering the overall DART+ Programme which will be the single biggest investment in the rail network ever. Improving our rail infrastructure between Drogheda and Greystones forms an important part of this transformative programme of investment in rail across the Greater Dublin Area. DART+ supports a shift to greener and cleaner transport and can also play an important role in enabling transport-led development across the network."

Anne Graham, Chief Executive of the National Transport Authority said "I very much welcome the appointment of design contractors for DART+ Coastal, and this development is a clear indication real progress is being made across all elements of the DART+ Programme. Thanks to DART+, passenger capacity and service frequency will be vastly improved for people across the rail network in the Greater Dublin Area in the coming years.

"DART+ will allow more people to make sustainable travel choices and will contribute to reducing our emissions by providing a reliable alternative to the private car. NTA looks forward to continuing to work with Iarnród Éireann in making DART+ a reality."

Jim Meade, Chief Executive of Iarnród Éireann said: "The start of DART+ Coastal is a very significant milestone for our organisation. It means all aspects of the DART+ programme, which will revolutionise public transport in the Greater Dublin Area, are now underway. It will facilitate a modal shift to sustainable, frequent and reliable train travel to new and existing communities along the all existing and proposed DART routes."

Peter Adams, Ireland Rail Leader at Arup said: "The DART+ Coastal Line expansion unlocks the transformative potential of rail, creating a fully integrated rail system that will improve the passenger experience and enable the greater Dublin region to flourish. Arup's multidisciplinary team is proud to partner with Iarnród Éireann to create a more resilient public transport network that will ultimately support Ireland's move towards sustainable mobility."

## Strategic Rail Review will examine rail network across the island of Ireland

**The Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan TD, and the Minister for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland, Nicola Mallon MLA, last week announced the launch of an all-island Strategic Rail Review.**

This Strategic Rail Review will consider how the rail network on the island of Ireland can improve sustainable connectivity between the major cities, enhance regional accessibility and support balanced regional development.

In addition, the Review will consider the feasibility of high-higher speeds on the network and whether there is a potential to increase use of the network for freight.

Minister Ryan stated "I'm a firm believer in the potential of rail in supporting social and economic development and the environmental sustainability of our transport system. This year is designated as the European Year of Rail and I'm delighted to launch this strategic review of rail here in Ireland. I'm particularly pleased that we'll undertake this review on an all-island basis, working with our colleagues

in the Northern Ireland Executive. The review will look at how rail can help better connect cities and regions across the island and will complement the investment we already plan in our commuter rail networks."

Minister Mallon said "I am delighted to announce today this Strategic All-island Rail Review that will explore the opportunities to better connect communities and open up opportunities for our island economy. Travel by rail is an issue I am very passionate about and I believe it has massive untapped potential to deliver multiple benefits across our island. Since coming into office, I have been clear that it is my priority to address regional imbalance, tackle the climate crisis and better connect communities across Ireland.

"The All Island Strategic Rail

Review will allow us to consider our network across this island to view how we can improve it for everyone. Building on our commitments in New Decade New Approach to progress a spine of connectivity, this ambitious review, in partnership, will look at opportunities to enhance rail across our island. Now, more than ever our citizens deserve ambition in government and we need to take this chance for change to build back better for all peoples across Ireland. This is an ambitious piece of work that will help inform our decision making and investment in our rail network for years to come. It's an exciting start of a journey, many have been waiting for."

The Strategic Rail Review will be delivered by external consultants and overseen by the Department of Transport in co-operation with the Department for Infrastructure, supported by key stakeholders including the Commission for Rail Regulation, the National Transport Authority, Iarnród Éireann and Translink.

## Wicklow RNLi assist three fishermen



Photo courtesy of Wicklow RNLi

**The Wicklow RNLi all-weather lifeboat RNLB Joanna and Henry Williams launched at 4:10pm on Thursday 1st April following a launch request from the Coast Guard, to assist a 10-metre fishing vessel in difficulties ten miles offshore.**

The lifeboat crew located the stricken vessel with three crew eight miles east of Wicklow Head thirty minutes after launching. The vessel was found to have a rope fouled in the propeller.

Speaking after the callout, Coxswain Nick Keogh said: "We managed to cut the rope away from the propeller and the vessel was able to get underway again. The fishermen wanted to continue fishing and no further assistance was required."

The lifeboat returned to Wicklow harbour and was alongside the South quay by 5:30pm.

The crew on the callout were Coxswain Nick Keogh, Mechanic Lisa O Leary, Tommy Murphy, Paul Sillery, John Stapleton and Ian Heffernan.



# New approach to inconclusive bovine TB reactor animals to reduce risk

Following on from a recent meeting of the Implementation working group of the TB Forum, the Department of Agriculture has announced that it is now proposed to move forward with implementation of the recommendations in the bTB Eradication Strategy in respect of inconclusive animals.

It was agreed at the Implementation working group that other potential initiatives regarding inconclusive reactors will be considered by the TB Forum at a future meeting.

Scientific research shows that cattle which test inconclusive to the bTB skin test are at increased risk of becoming reactors at a later date, even after testing negative on a re-test. In that context they also pose a risk of spreading disease to other cattle within their herd. Currently, in some cases, these animals after re-testing clear, are kept on farms for extended periods of time. Whilst not all inconclusive animals progress to being reactors, they do so at such frequency that it is important in the context of protecting individual herds and for the success of the programme to intervene to reduce this risk.

The new approach is designed to reduce the risk from these inconclusive animals. The specific

actions include:

- Increasing the time between the first skin test where inconclusive reactors are found and the retest. This will help to increase the possibility that all infected animals are found on the re-test.

- Blood testing by the Department of the inconclusive reactors within 30 days after the first skin test where they have been found. This will also help to ensure all infected animals are found.

- Carrying out blood tests by the Department every 6 months on inconclusive animals that pass the skin re-test and the first blood test.

- If these animals ever test inconclusive again at a future test, they will be removed as reactors.

- Where a herd has a bTB breakdown and it already has some historical old inconclusive animals, these will be removed as reactors with full compensation.

- If four or more new inconclu-

sive reactors are disclosed at a test, without any other reactors, they will be made reactor and removed with full compensation.

- In cases where you have one or more reactors on a test, other inconclusive reactors on the test will be made reactor and removed from the herd with full compensation.

- In the past some herds were able to sell animals while the inconclusive animal was awaiting a retest. Under new EU rules any herd with an inconclusive reactor will be restricted and will remain restricted until the inconclusive animal retests clear or is slaughtered. It will still be possible to move animals directly for slaughter.

DAFM will continue to give advice to farmers about these inconclusive animals. Farmers can then make an informed decision about whether to keep them or not. See [www.bovinetb.ie](http://www.bovinetb.ie) for more information on bTB.

## Harris helps launch 'Climate Ready' programme to prepare businesses for climate change

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD and Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications Eamon Ryan TD have launched Climate Ready, a five-year national climate initiative from Skillnet Ireland designed to equip businesses with the skills they need to respond to climate change.

Skillnet Ireland has partnered with Chambers Ireland, Wind Energy Ireland, and Sustainable Finance Ireland to support over 1,100 companies and 3,000 workers throughout Ireland in preparing for the challenges and opportunities climate change will bring for businesses.

Climate Ready includes: Training on how to reduce energy waste, deliver cost savings and protect the environment; Expansion of the Water Stewardship programme, which helps businesses reduce water consumption; Online courses designed to assist staff at all levels to understand how their sustainable actions will play a vital role in Ireland's collective response to climate action; Series of educational engagements with experts, who will share best practice on sustainability related topics.

Minister Harris said: "Irish businesses have seen significant upheaval over the past year due to COVID-19 and Brexit. Climate change is a reali-

ty for businesses too and it is essential we help businesses prepare for this radical change.

"Businesses will need new skills to respond to these challenges. Skillnet Ireland's Climate Ready programme supports our climate goals by providing every Irish business with the opportunity to build the skills they need to prepare for this challenge and capitalise on the many opportunities the green economy will offer. We will start with over 1,000 businesses and seek to expand this further over the next five years.

Minister for the Environment, Climate, and Communications, Eamon Ryan TD said: "The Climate Action Bill approved by government commits Ireland to halving greenhouse gas emissions by the end of the decade and achieving net-zero by 2050. The actions taken by business will be critical to achieving these ambitions. Climate Ready will equip Irish businesses to prepare for this transformation of our economy,



Minister Simon Harris

ensuring we can achieve a cleaner, greener and more prosperous future for us all."

Paul Healy, Skillnet Ireland Chief Executive, said: "Practically every industry, business and job will be impacted by climate action in some way over the coming decade. Working side by side with industry, we have developed Climate Ready to ensure Irish businesses have access to the leading edge supports they need to build sustainable operating models and develop the talent to respond to this shift. Taking action now is critical to ensuring our

businesses remain resilient and competitive as we tackle the challenges posed by climate change."

Chambers Ireland Chief Executive Ian Talbot said: "Chambers Ireland is proud to partner with Skillnet Ireland on its new Climate Ready initiative. We believe that equipping businesses with the right skills to tackle climate action is essential and that sustainability should form a key part of the agenda as the economy recovers. Through the combined networks of our local Chambers and Skillnet Ireland, we can make a real and tangible contribution to building sustainable and competitive businesses and communities."

Climate Ready supports the aims of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science's Statement of Strategy (2021-2023) in respect of climate action, ensuring the provision of a workforce skilled in sustainable techniques and technologies.



Detective Sergeant Colm Corrigan and Garda Catherine O'Rourke making a special delivery of Easter treats to the residents and staff of Knockrobin Hill Nursing Home



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Deputy John Brady and Arklow Sinn Féin representative Ciaran Deay at the barriers at Arklow's North Beach

## 'Attempts to reinforce illegal barriers at Arklow's North Beach are outrageous'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has said attempts to reinforce the illegally erected barriers in an attempt to stop members of the public accessing North Beach in Arklow are 'outrageous'.

He further said that the actions are "contemptuous towards the public and Wicklow County Council who are preparing to take legal action to have the public right of way re-opened."

Deputy Brady said "As Wicklow County Council are finalising affidavits with a view of issuing legal proceedings to have the public right of way reopened, it is outrageous that attempts to reinforce the illegal barriers have been made. A number of warning letters have already been served on those that blocked the public right

of way and these new acts are contemptuous towards the public and Wicklow County Council.

"I know people are frustrated at the pace of the legal proceedings and I have voiced these to the Council. The council are committed to legal action and need to ensure that the large volume of papers they have on the issue are in order."

Arklow Sinn Féin representative Ciaran Deay said "This is a fantastic local amenity that has been used by generations of Arklow people and the blocking of the route

needs to be reopened so full unrestricted public access can be restored. Having the issue dragged into the courts serves nobody's purpose and I'd ask again that the right thing is done and that the barriers are removed and not reinforced."

Deputy Brady concluded "The protection of our public right of ways are very important and any attempts to restrict or curtail those rights has to be opposed. The right of ways to the North Beach and Porters Rock/Seabank areas in Arklow date as far back as 1896, these are fantastic beach-

es and any attempt to essentially turn them into private beaches will not be tolerated. The evidence gathering stage of the process by the council was engaged with by many local people who have used the right of way over many years and they have given affidavits.

"I urge people to notify the council if more illegal barriers are erected in the area so they can act on it. Getting the right of way reopened is critical and I will continue to work with the council to ensure it happens."

## Mitchell calls for urgent action to re-open Cliff Walk

**The Cliff Walk from Bray to Greystones has been closed since late February due to the cliff collapsing, at the Greystones end, following heavy rains.**

Wicklow County Council stated "The Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk is currently closed as the cliff face is unstable due to a number of landslides, following prolonged period of very heavy rainfall. The Council is assessing the situation to determine the extent of the collapse and possibilities for remedial action and investigating the feasibility of an alternative route as a diversion over the most hazardous section and have put in place measures for the short-term protection of the public."

Speaking on the matter, Cathaoirleach of Greystones Derek Mitchell said "This erosion has been going on forever though increased rain intensity from Global Warming has made it worse. The Council engineer has proposed a

short term solution of moving the walk back from the Cliff edge to by pass the worst area. This involves negotiating with landowners and should start immediately. I am urging this to happen as soon as possible as the walk is very busy.

"In the longer term the surface water flowing over the edge will have to be reduced by piping and possibly by using the field for growing trees instead of crops, trees absorbing more water. This would also assist Biodiversity, soil stabilisation and amenity value. The recent Arup report on erosion on the railway from Dublin to Wicklow recommended a Detached Breakwater and an assessment of slope stabilisation techniques here.

"I noticed 20 years ago that in heavy rain the cliff soil on the South side of Bray Head seems to become jelly like and it collapses and is washed away by the sea. I am glad that someone is finally prepared to consider how to slow erosion down."

## 'Do Not Consume' notice remains in place for Barndarrig

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

Irish Water announced last week that the water is still not safe for consumption or the preparation of foods, but is safe for hygiene and use in washing machines and dishwashers. It is especially important that mains drinking water is not given to bottle fed infants. Irish Water would like to remind the public to continue to follow public health advice on handwashing and hygiene.

Irish Water said "We would like to reassure our customers that Irish Water's drinking water compliance and operational experts are working to lift the Do Not Consume Notice as quickly and as safely as possible, in consultation and agreement with the HSE. The EPA have been notified of the Do Not Consume Notice. Please note this is not a Boil Water Notice. Boiling the water will not reduce Nitrite levels and is therefore not a suitable measure to make the water safe to consume. This notice does not apply to



other areas or water schemes in Co. Wicklow.

"An alternative water supply continues to be in place to support impacted customers and bottled Water is available at the car park opposite Barndarrig church and is being provided in accordance with current Level 5 restrictions. Customers are reminded to continue to follow the HSE guidance on

social distancing, face coverings and hand hygiene when collecting water.

"Impacted customers have been directly notified and bottled water continues to be arranged for vulnerable customers who are registered on this supply, in adherence with current HSE advice. Vulnerable customers or those who have concerns about leaving their homes during the current pandemic should contact our customer care team, open 24/7, on 1850 278 278."

Peter Thornton, Regional Operations Lead with Irish Water, said "Irish Water acknowledges the impact of this notice on the local community in Barndarrig and we would like to reassure impacted customers that our drinking water compliance and operational experts are working to resolve this issue as quickly and as safely as possible. We would ask customers who have concerns to contact our customer care team on 1850 278 278.

"The water is safe to use for handwashing and personal hygiene and all customers on this water supply scheme should continue to follow public health advice on handwashing at this time."

## Progress made on Scoil Chonglais extension

**Scoil Chonglais in Baltinglass has been approved for their extension. Welcoming the news, Minister Harris said "I am delighted to confirm that Scoil Chonglais' extension has now been approved. I recently visited the school and I would like to pay tribute to the entire school community and the staff lead by Ms Gurhy".**

This announcement by the Department of Education includes three general classrooms, a textiles room, music room, DCG room, Home Economics room, two science labs, a Prep area and two Classroom SEN base.

Minister Harris added: "It is important that these new facilities are delivered as speedily as possible. Last month my colleague the Minister for Planning Peter Burke amended regulations to exempt temporary school buildings from having to secure planning permission.

"This vital change will speed up the delivery of temporary accommodation for local schools such as Scoil Chonglais in Baltinglass and St Kevin's Community School in Dunlavin.

"The growth in the local school population is a welcome indicator of vibrant growing communities in West Wicklow and it is important that we make the necessary investments in local schools to enable them to cater for the population growth in the years ahead. I look forward to Scoil Chonglais' building project progressing and the school can be assured of my continued wholehearted support."

Also welcoming the news, West Wicklow councillor Edward Timmins said "I wish to welcome the additional accommodation just announced for Scoil Chonglais, Baltinglass. This has been approved under the additional accommodation scheme 2021. This will allow the school to expand and provide more and better educational facilities to all students."

## 'More recreational, community and seafront infrastructure needed in Capital Programme'

**Social Democrats councillor Jodie Neary has made a submission to Wicklow County Council seeking more recreational, community and seafront infrastructure for Greystones, Delgany, Kilcoole and Newcastle. The submission was sent as part of an upcoming development of a three year Capital Programme for county Wicklow.**

Speaking on the submission, Cllr Neary said "It is evidently clear that much of our recreational, community and seafront infrastructure is under huge strain at the moment due to unprecedented population growth and changes in demographics. We are seeing a welcome addition of young families and tourists (pre-COVID) to the area which means existing playgrounds and parks are at maximum capacity. As the town expands, there are parts of Greystones including Delgany and north Greystones still without access to playgrounds or public green spaces with-

in walking distance which will likely be in contravention of the Local Area Plan which requires "that active open spaces be provided at a rate of 2.4ha per 1,000 population".

"Importantly, is the need for more age-appropriate recreational facilities. Children too old for playgrounds but too young for skate parks have nowhere to go and so I have been calling on Wicklow County Council to look into the potential of having a scooter park in the area.

"There is huge demand and parents are asking me about this all the time. Same goes for

'teen spaces' which we need to see more of in our local communities. If you ask teenagers what they want in the area, they really just want a safe space to hang out and I am working closely with the local community to see how we can make this happen.

"Disability access is a huge concern of mine. As we see more and more people out using our seafront and walking routes it is very clear that there still remain barriers to access as well as a lack of facilities. I would love to see an uninterrupted disability accessible route for people from one end of the town to the other including disability accessible public toilets. This goes for adults too - an inclusive adult outdoor gymnasium could cater to all ages and all abilities and would be ideally located by South Beach to con-

nect with existing walking routes or along Kilcoole seafront.

"Our seafront as well needs more maintenance of existing structures like railings, seating and steps but also basic facilities which other Councils enjoy such as outdoor showers, changing rooms and taps. There has been a huge increase in the numbers of people taking up sea swimming thanks to its physical and mental health benefits and is something we need to harness and promote.

"All of this has been included in my submission to the Council and I will continue to engage in this process and with the community to see how we can expand on the need for more of these kinds of facilities in the Greystones, Delgany, Kilcoole and Newcastle area" concluded Cllr Neary.



# First Women's Sheds launched in County Wicklow

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly has welcomed the setting up of the first Women's Sheds in County Wicklow.

The first branch of the Women's Shed organisation was launched in Blessington on International Women's Day on March 8th.

Since then it has attracted over 600 members and two further branches, one in Arklow and a third in Rathnew have been founded.

The shed is covering a whole range of areas from educating women about the impact of the menopause to running car maintenance classes with local garages.

Women are also learning how to navigate while hiking as well as taking

on challenges such as the Recliner to 3km.

The group, who can be found on Facebook, say: "We hope to offer up-cycling skills, upholstery, making blankets for our homeless, arts and crafts, flower arranging, crochet, and whatever the women decide they would like."

"This is a new project which gives women a sense of empowerment through peer education and friendship."

"We hope to improve mental health and wellbeing through social interaction."

"We will have to begin

this journey virtually until such time as we can come together."

Minister Donnelly said he would be giving the organisation his full support and would work to help them meet the unprecedented demand for their services.

He said: "It's fantastic to see Women's Shed establish its first ever branches in Wicklow."

"I'm not surprised there has been an overwhelming response to the first branches being set up because it just shows they are meeting a real need."

"The Women's Shed

provides women with a place where they can learn new skills and share ideas as well as offer each other support so it's definitely something to be promoted."

"Organisations like this are exactly the kinds of things we should be backing because they help to improve both women's physical and mental well-being."

"I've worked closely with the Men's Shed and I've seen what an incredibly positive impact that is having on so many lives so I'm looking forward to doing the same with the Women's Shed."



Jack and Elsie McGrath enjoying some food in the Boatyard on Arklow's South Quay

## Council hosts 2021 business breakfast briefing

The theme of "Town Centres and Tourism" was explored during the 2021 Business Briefing hosted by Wicklow County Council on Thursday March 25th.

The virtual briefing was held as part of the Council's ongoing commitment to economic development and had participation from over 120 leading local and national businesspeople, along with representatives from key local and State agencies.

This was the fifth annual Business Briefing but unlike previous years, this year's event was held online.

Welcoming the guests and speakers, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Pat Kennedy, outlined the importance of ongoing communication between the business community and Wicklow County Council, with particular emphasis on enterprise and economic development.

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Mr Frank Curran, delivered an update on the various developments in County Wicklow, focussing on those of particular interest to the business community.

Keynote speakers were Mr David Fitzsimons, Crest Ireland and formerly of Retail Excellence Ireland, who spoke about reviving town centres; and Ruth Andrews, Chair of the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (ITIC) and recent Chair of the Tourism Recovery Taskforce, who spoke about tourism recovery.

In his presentation, Mr Fitzsimons outlined the importance of Town Teams and having a clear plan for the future of towns, noting that the bigger towns in County Wicklow were embracing this strategy. He spoke about revitalising Main Street and the move away from out-of-town shopping centres.

Ms Andrews, a native of Wicklow and key figure in the tourism sector, spoke about the challenges facing the industry and outlined the various supports available to assist businesses throughout COVID-19 and during the re-opening period.

The presentations were followed by a panel discussion, with questions submitted by the attendees and responses provided by the panel. MC for the event was Alan Shortt from Mediaskills, who kept the conversation flowing.

## Wicklow Lions on film

Wicklow & District Lions Club members have been very busy lately in many aspects of fundraising and sharing with the community through various projects.

The latest is the South Quay Project in conjunction with Wicklow Tidy Towns.

To raise important club awareness the members have been filming a number of videos which are featured on YouTube and other

social media platforms.

First of all the ladies and gentlemen performed their own interpretation of the worldwide dance phenomenon Jerusalem which has received huge success internationally.

Then along came the Lions Pizza Virtual Party for the Homeless. President of Wicklow Lions Club Sean Olohan and his family performed 'The Lions Sleeps Tonight' on behalf of Wicklow Lions.

It was part of a national project organised by Dublin and Lions Ireland.

To celebrate St Patrick's Day a pride of Lions donned their official Lions costumes and met up with St Patrick by the sea in Wicklow.

The legend is that Patrick banished the slithering snakes from Ireland and according to folklore he quickly replaced them with lovable Lions.

The Lions family has been growing not only in Wicklow but throughout Ireland. New members are always very welcome.



## Darkness Into Light in Wicklow

Pieta's biggest annual fundraising event will take place this year on May 8th throughout Ireland and many parts of the world.

Wicklow town with the support of Wicklow Lions Club will hold the Darkness Into Light event this year in a very different and socially distanced format.

People are invited to take the Challenge and raise vital funds for suicide prevention and create their very own Darkness Into Light Challenge - whether you choose to organise a 10k hike or bike, run a marathon, or sea swim, your fundraising will benefit so many and save lives.

People are asked to join Pieta and Electric Ireland for a special Darkness Into Light sunrise, and give the gift of hope to those impacted by suicide and self-harm and require bereavement services. Join in any way you can.

It is also possible to make a donation directly to Pieta. Lions Geraldine Mooney and Ann Chambers head the Wicklow committee and are hoping for the usual fantastic support from the people of Wicklow and surrounding areas.

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Ben Byrne-Diaper and Jenny Corbalis from Kilcoole are pictured on their wedding day in Dublin last week.

# Serious concerns about maintenance of €46m Dargle River flood protection scheme

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has said that the failure to properly maintain the River Dargle flood protection scheme risks completely undermining the €46 million project.

Deputy Brady made his comments after tonnes of material were removed from the river and deposited on a flood overflow area at Rehills Land along the Dargle in Bray. This material has yet to be removed.

Deputy Brady said "The Dargle River flood protection scheme was officially opened in 2017 and cost €46 million to construct. A critical component of the scheme was its maintenance which includes the emptying of any debris washed down the river and the emptying of the natural silt tract at the Slang which is located at Rehills Land adjacent to the Dargle Road.

"Unfortunately, the last time the debris and silt were removed from the Dargle it was deposited on an important flood overflow

area which is a critical area in the event of a flood occurring.

"The overflow area acts as a storage area for flood water in the event of a flood and any reduction in its capacity risks undermining the entire €46m project."

Deputy Brady continued "At the same location there is also a large section of a temporary bridge in the river. This bridge was used during the construction of the flood scheme and it has been damaged during floods and has since ended up within the river itself.

"This is really dangerous as it could possibly get washed down the river in a flood and dam up the river creating serious repercussions up stream."

Cllr Grace McManus added

"Worried residents of Bray have been raising these maintenance issues with us, and we want to ensure all concerned that we hear them, we recognise the significance of this work, and we are raising these important matters with the council.

"Nobody knows the river better than the residents of Bray who have lived through flooding, and if we listen when they share their wisdom, we all benefit. I hope we will see this issue resolved without delay."

Deputy Brady concluded "These issues and concerns have been raised with the council and unfortunately to date no action has been taken to address them. The flood protection scheme came about following many years of camp."

# Work underway to connect homes and businesses to high-speed broadband

Work is underway to ensure Wicklow homes and businesses will be connected under the Government's plan for high speed broadband, Minister Simon Harris has said.

Minister Harris said: "Homes and businesses in Wicklow will be connected to high speed broadband under the Government's National Broadband Plan, for which survey work is underway despite the challenges of the pandemic."

The Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) initiative will see publicly accessible sites in rural and isolated parts of Wicklow provided with a temporary high-speed broadband connection by National Broadband Ireland (NBI), the company contracted to deliver the NBP. Many points have been connected already.

As part of the work to connect homes and businesses to high speed broadband, surveying is currently underway or is already completed in the following locations:

Powerscourt, Kilmac, Calary, Greystones, Newcastle, Delgany, Killiskey, Glenealy, Kilcoole, parts of Roundwood, Townlands in Blessington Area, Lackan, Lugglass, Hollywood, Rathdrum, Redcross, Tigroney, Bardarrig, Cloghogue,

Johnstown, Templarainey, Barranisky, Brittas Bay, Three-Mile-Water, Ballykippogue, Kilcoole Blainroe, Tubbervilla, Glenealy, Hawkstown, Dunbur, Wicklow Town, and Rathnew.

"This is great progress and is so important for the economic and social development of Wicklow as part of Fine Gael's vision for balanced regional development across the county.

"Rural broadband is so essential to this vision. It will allow enterprise to flourish in Wicklow and ensure people have increased options to live and work here.

"This why in the last Government, Fine Gael began the largest and most significant investment ever in rural Ireland through our National Broadband Plan. Broadband is coming to every town, village and community across the country. This will take time, but it is positive that preparatory work is underway in Wicklow."

Minister Harris continued: "Not one of the other political parties supported Fine Gael's broadband plan and they



Minister Simon Harris

sought to block it at every turn. There are remote and rural areas across Wicklow where commercial providers will not invest. If Fine Gael didn't persist with this plan, too many people and businesses in Wicklow would have been left behind by the opposition.

"Since the pandemic, the parties that opposed Fine Gael's Broadband Plan are belatedly coming around to the importance of remote working.

"Fine Gael's vision for The National Broadband Plan (NBP) was for it to enable new ways of working and exploit the huge benefits that remote working

offers to employers, employees and society more generally.

"This was a crucial part of our strategy to ensure balanced regional development across Ireland, long before the pandemic. But COVID-19 has shown us the demand for this is growing.

"The pandemic has changed the way in which we live, work and interact with each other. Covid has shown us that location is not as important anymore, connectivity is what counts."

Minister Harris concluded "Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, it is great to see the installation of high speed broadband already underway in Limerick and surveying works also underway nationwide over the winter months.

"While Covid-19 might have delayed us, it will not stop us and Fine Gael is determined that 1.1m people in 544,000 homes, 695 schools, 54,000 farms and 44,000 business in the country will be online under the NBP so that no part of the country is left behind."

# New social enterprise helping to revive rural areas

Minister for Tourism Catherine Martin TD and Fáilte Ireland announced details of a new €17million Scheme for developing outdoor dining capacity nationwide.

The Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme comprises two parts and will be delivered in partnership between Fáilte Ireland and Local Authorities across the country. Part One of the Scheme will provide funding for individual tourism and hospitality businesses to develop and increase their own outdoor seating capacity. Funding allocated under Part Two will enable Local Authorities to develop permanent outdoor public dining spaces in towns and urban centres, similar to those that exist in various European cities.

The Minister for Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport, Gaeltacht and Media, Catherine Martin T.D. is today officially launching the Scheme, which opens for initial applications on April 12th.

Announcing the Scheme Minister Catherine Martin said: "This Scheme has two main objectives: firstly, to enable individual tourism and hospitality businesses increase their dining and seating capacity in the short-term and secondly to enable a long-term strategy for local authorities to develop appropriate permanent weatherproofed outdoor dining infrastructure. The aim is to support jobs and businesses and to transform appropriate outdoor spaces within our cities and towns as welcoming, vibrant places that will help support economic recovery. This funding announcement further strengthens this Government's commitment to the development of rural towns, as outlined in the 'Our

Rural Future' plan announced earlier this week."

Paul Kelly, CEO of Fáilte Ireland added: "Part One of the Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme relates to Outdoor Seating and Accessories to help tourism and hospitality businesses offset some of the costs incurred in upgrading premises for outdoor dining and seating. Part Two of the Scheme relates to Weatherproofing and Outdoor Dining Infrastructure which focuses on the development of medium to large scale permanent public dining spaces in towns and centres in preparation for welcoming back visitors when it is safe to do so. Each Local Authority can apply for up to €200,000 under this element of the scheme. We have been working closely with the County and City Management Association (CCMA) on behalf of the Local Authorities to design a scheme."

Moirá Murrell, Chair of the CCMA Rural Development, Community, Tourism, Culture and Heritage (RCTCH) Committee stated: "Local Authorities are looking forward to administering this Scheme for individual businesses, as well as delivering year-round all-weather outdoor seating options to boost the appeal and attractiveness of our cities and towns. Following the success of the Street Furniture Grant Scheme, implemented by some Local Authorities in 2020, we look forward to creating outdoor dining experiences around the country that not only benefit locals, but are also attractive to domestic and overseas visitors when the sector re-opens. Developing outdoor infrastructure is a key element of answering the consumer demand for more flexible dining options."



# GIY aim to help half a million people grow their own food

In partnership with Healthy Ireland and Libraries Ireland, GIY has announced the launch of 'Grow it Forward'. Through this initiative, 50,000 free food growing kits will be given away, with participants asked to use the kits to share the experience with ten people, enabling half a million people across Ireland to enjoy the wide range of benefits that come from growing food at home.

Budding GIY'ers are invited to claim a Grow it Forward pack at [giy.ie/growitforward](http://giy.ie/growitforward) or by contacting their local library, as all 330 branches nationwide are helping to drive the effort. As part of the Government's Keep Well programme, this campaign is designed to help the nation eat well by inspiring and supporting people to grow some of their own food at home while connecting with friends and family to join them.

Each food growing pack includes seeds for beetroot, carrots, salad leaves, peas and tomatoes; a guide to help grow them and a postcard and gift tags to help share them. Those who sign up will also receive regular e-mails with growing support, video clips and ideas for how to 'grow it forward' by passing on seeds, seedlings or produce in accordance with social distancing guidelines.

Speaking at the campaign launch, Michael Kelly, Founder of GIY said, "The pandemic has seen a record number of people turn to growing their own food and discovering the joy and pride that brings. The process of seeing a seed turn into a seedling and eventually food you can eat is full of magic and no shortage of optimism. Grow it Forward is all about sharing that feeling as far and wide as possible at a time when we need it most. That's why we're inviting people to get free seeds and do good deeds."

Speaking in support of the campaign, Frank Feighan TD, Minister of State for Public Health and Wellbeing said, "During these challenging times, it is vital that we do everything we can to look after our wellbeing. Right now there is a great need for positive, outdoor activities and creativity in how we stay connected to one another. Evidence suggests that being out in nature, spending time in green space or growing some plants at home can help lift our mood and have a

positive impact on our health and wellbeing. I would like to congratulate GIY for this Grow it Forward project as part of Healthy Ireland's Keep Well campaign – this simple idea can really bring great joy, foster wellbeing and can also help revive community spirit. I encourage everyone to get involved."

On behalf of local authorities and libraries, Colette Byrne, Chief Executive of Kilkenny County Council said, "Local authorities and libraries are delighted to partner with GIY on the GROW It Forward programme. As the days brighten all of us are looking for things to do and what better way than growing your own healthy and nutritious food from seed? When you sign up, you're not just getting seeds, you're getting a whole programme of support and the opportunity to share your new knowledge along with seedlings, plants and produce with friends and family. This could be a lovely inter-generational project where grandparents share seedlings with grandchildren and keep in touch and share photos as their vegetables grow. Library staff will be available to support and guide you through your growing journey so contact your local library today to sign up and get started. You don't have to be a library member but this is a great chance to join because as well as GIY's adults and children's books available as e-books, you'll have access to thousands of gardening and cookery books and magazines so you can continue to develop your new hobby."

Calling on people of all ages to join the campaign, GIY's Director of Development Karen O'Donohoe added, "We encourage everyone to take part regardless of your experience in growing or the space you have to grow. Packs will be given out on a first-come, first-served basis and we will then teach people how to grow,

whether on a windowsill or a large garden. We will also show a wide range of ways to share seeds, small seedlings, plants in pots or the produce at harvest time, to make sure your Grow it

Forward experience is as easy as can be."

Register for a Grow it Forward pack while supplies last at [www.giy.ie/growitforward](http://www.giy.ie/growitforward) or contact your local library.



Helping to launch 'Grow it Forward' is two-year-old Harry Molloy along with his Great Grandfather Fintan Walsh and his Granny Mary Molloy.

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# Hot School Meals Programme extended to three Wicklow schools

The Hot School Meals Programme will be extended to three primary schools in Wicklow. Minister Simon Harris said "The Covid-19 pandemic presented everyone with many challenges over the past twelve months, including our schoolchildren here in Wicklow and especially those who would previously have come to school each morning without a breakfast.

"The Hot Meals Programme is a major initiative to encourage school attendance when schools are open, when schools are closed and when classes are held virtually. This initiative will consequently facilitate better educational outcomes by the schoolchildren and help tackle the issue of education disadvantage."

Minister Harris continued "As part of Budget 2021, my Fine Gael colleague Minister Heather Humphreys provided an additional €5.5 million for the extension of the Hot School Meals with effect from January to 35,000 primary school children who had been availing of the Department's School Meals Programme which provided cold lunch options only.

"The Department contacted some 700 primary schools currently receiving the cold lunch option under the School Meals Programme in November seeking expressions of interest to avail of the hot school meal.

"Approximately 40% of schools expressed an interest in the programme and 189 schools were selected, including Glenealy NS, Newtownmountkenedy PS and St Coen's PS having regard to geographical spread across all local authority areas, taking into consideration pupil numbers and the overall budget

available for the programme in 2021.

"The hot meals will be available to all pupils enrolled in these schools, which do not have canteen/kitchen facilities for preparation of the hot dinners on site.

"The hot meal will replace the cold lunch option that had been in place previously. Each school must identify a supplier who will supply (prepare and deliver) the hot meals in line with HACCP and food safety regulations in compliance with the Healthy Ireland 'Nutrition Standards for Hot School Meals'.

"Schools will be expected to provide a menu choice of at least two different meals per day plus a Vegetarian/Vegan and an option that caters for students' religious and cultural dietary requirements."

Minister Harris continued "In further welcome news, Minister Humphreys also announced today that funding under the School Meals Programme will continue during the upcoming Easter holidays for primary and second level schools.

"Before the Covid-19 pandemic, funding for the School Meals Programme had been confined to the academic year, however the Department of Social Protection has ensured that this support has continued throughout, including during term breaks

and school holidays."

The funding for the programme also continued during the Easter break between 29th March and April 9th. This was done through the provision of food parcels.

Minister Harris continued: "The funding for the School Meals Programme throughout the entire school terms and holidays offers a security for many vulnerable of schoolchildren by ensuring that participating schools in Wicklow can provide food parcels benefiting pupils during this time."

Also, Minister Humphreys published 'Evaluation of the Hot Meals Pilot' which was carried out on behalf of the Department and completed in July 2020.

Minister Humphreys commented: "This research has found that the hot school meals pilot project had a very positive impact on their child's attendance at school, physical health and psychological wellbeing.

"Overall, the results were encouraging with the majority of parents, teachers and SNAs rating the hot meals as better quality than food that children ate previously.

"This is a sound endorsement for the expansion of the Hot School Meals programme and I would hope to extend it further to include additional schools in the future."

## Achievements of Wicklow graduates and current students celebrated

A virtual Ceremony of Recognition took place at Mary Immaculate College (MIC) on Friday 26th March whereby the academic and other notable achievements of over 2,000 graduates and students were celebrated. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the annual three-day conferring ceremonies, which usually take place in October, had to be cancelled and in its place, students were conferred in absentia allowing them receive their parchments for employment and career progression purposes.

Students from across 31 counties throughout Ireland, as well as international students from Brazil, Mexico, Morocco, Poland, India, China and the United States, graduated from almost 40 different undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, including 19 graduates who were conferred with doctoral awards. Over 150 graduates and current students of the College also received awards and scholarships in recognition of their academic and sporting achievements.

Speaking at the virtual Ceremony of Recognition, Professor Eugene Wall, President of MIC, said, "While the social restrictions around COVID-19 may have prohibited us from celebrating in a proper and time-honoured way, it will not thwart our efforts to recognise your remarkable achievements, accomplishing what you have against the backdrop of a global pandemic. You met a litany of challenges during your course of study here at MIC, more so than any other preceding graduating class, but you successfully and bravely overcame them, displaying a determination and strength of character that will serve you well throughout your life."

Of the over 2,000 students who graduated, 19 hailed from Brazil and are the first cohort to graduate from MIC's Graduate Diploma in Mentoring and Leadership in Schools

(International) programme. The students came to study at MIC as part of a three-year joint scholarship scheme between MIC and the Brazilian Government Scholarship Agency, CAPES. Seven of the students have continued their studies at MIC and are now undertaking a masters in mentoring and leadership at the College.

In another first for the College, almost 100 students from Mexico graduated following completion of the San Patricios Teacher Education programme, which was delivered by the College in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Irish Embassy in Mexico, and the Mexican Ministry of Education. The programme was designed to empower student teachers with the requisite knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions to enable children in Mexico to confidently meet the demands of the 21st century.

Also included in those who were acknowledged at the ceremony were 72 students from MIC Thurles as being the first cohort to enter MIC Thurles in 2016 following the incorporation of St Patrick's College by MIC earlier the same year.

Included in those who received awards was LINC programme graduate, Saibh Hanahoe from Rathnew, who



Professor Eugene Wall, President of MIC

received the award for Best Regional LINC Portfolio in the Wicklow region. Established in 2016, LINC (Leadership in Inclusion in the Early Years) is a Level 6 Special Purpose Award designed to enhance inclusion of children with additional needs in early years' settings through the development of the role of Inclusion Coordinator. The programme, offered by a consortium led by MIC and including Early Childhood Ireland and Maynooth University, is part of a government commitment to the provision of high-quality education and training in the field of early childhood care and education.

Current students at the College were also presented with awards in recognition of their academic and sporting achievements, including over 50 first-year students who were presented with Entrance Scholarships (valued at €2,000 each) on the basis of results obtained in the 2020 Leaving Certificate.

Six students were awarded the

Saint Bonaventure Trust Prize, including Beibhinn Byrne from Tinahely, who is studying on the BA in Education, Business Studies and Religious Studies programme at MIC Thurles. The Saint Bonaventure Trust was established in 2008 for the advancement of Catholic Theology at MIC.

Congratulating all the award recipients, Professor Wall said, "Individually and collectively, all of the students whom we honour here today embody our College's mission - ultimately to make the world a better place through our ideas, our innovations and our engagement."

Bringing the virtual ceremony to an end Professor Wall imparted the following advice to the graduates and awardees, "Be open to the possibility and to the idea that deviating from an obvious path can lead you to a place you might never have considered but which could offer you immense satisfaction and reward."



Pictured is Wicklow Educate Together Third Class student, Molly Power. The school recently completed a mini-project all about food origin and identifying Irish produce through online learning with their teachers. Wicklow Educate Together National School students put together posters, booklets and a fact file based on where the food in their kitchen fridges and cupboards comes from.

"We researched and learned that some food is grown in Ireland, such as strawberries and potatoes, but foods like bananas are only grown in hot places, like Africa. One pupil told us how their granny milks the cows and uses the milk to make butter and cheese," said the Third Class students who are taught by Mercedes Russell and Eamonn O'Hanrahan.

## Focus on early childhood education leads to launch of new course

Early childhood practitioners in Co. Wicklow and beyond who are currently active in the field of Early Childhood Education - as well as those considering a career in the sector - are being addressed by Hibernia College with the launch of a Bachelor of Education (Honours) Early Childhood Education programme for which applications are open until May 12th.

Designed to satisfy Early Education guidelines published by Government and the Department of Education, the four-year blended learning programme being offered by Hibernia College will begin in Autumn and will include face-to-face tuition coupled with online engagement and mentoring.

Nationally and internationally the evolving policy and practice landscape within early childhood is moving towards a graduate led workforce. With Government and media focus on the sector also becoming more acute, the need for a structured approach to providing quality education and qualifications has become more evident.

In putting forward its case for the programme, Hibernia College says it is seeking to provide a qualification built by Early Childhood Professionals to meet the market demand for qualifications that can be earned while students continue to work and practice.

Described as 'bringing twenty years of innovation in teaching to Early Childhood Education', the Hibernia College programme will offer skills that will enhance research-informed practice including modules on early intervention, special education, inclusion and diversity and research methods in addition to the flexible blended learning aspect.



# Standardised rents above €1,000 a month

The Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) has published the quarterly Rent Index for the October to December period (Q4) of 2020, revealing that Wicklow was one of eight counties which had standardised average rents above €1,000 per month.

The county with the highest standardised average rent in Q4 2020 was Dublin (€1,745 per month) and the counties with the lowest monthly rents were Donegal and Leitrim (€626 per month). At the Local Electoral Area (LEA) level, the LEA with the highest standardised average rent was Stillorgan, County Dublin (€2,385 per month) and the lowest was Carndonagh, County Donegal (€521 per month).

New tenancies continued to account for approximately four-fifths of all registrations at 82.8%, with 17.2% of registrations representing tenancy renewals.

Padraig McGoldrick, Interim Director of the RTB, commented on the latest Rent Index findings: "The impact of Covid-19 on the rental sector continued into the fourth quarter of 2020. The national standardised average rent remained static in the quarter and, overall, in the year there had been a significant trend of moderation in rental inflation relative to previous years.

"While there has been a definite trend in moderation in rent levels, it is clear affordability issues and related risks remain. We understand that Covid-19 presents many challenges and adjustments for those operating and living in the rental

sector. We continue to encourage those who are experiencing issues in their tenancies to keep lines of communication open and if they still cannot resolve their dispute to contact the RTB for support and information on how to resolve these matters.

"We also want to highlight that further measures and the extension of temporary protections for those impacted by the pandemic were introduced by Government towards the end of last year. The Planning and Development, and Residential Tenancies, Act 2020, enacted in December 2020 provides protections for tenants who are financially

impacted by Covid-19, in rent arrears and at risk of losing their tenancy. It also introduced protections for landlords who have been financially impacted by Covid-19 as well as their tenant's ability to pay rent.

"The Residential Tenancies Act 2020 introduced temporary protections for tenants where they cannot be made to leave their rental accommodation, except for limited circumstances, any time there are restrictions on travel outside a 5-kilometre radius of a person's home. Currently, this protection will remain in place until at least 15th April 2021."

## Wicklow house prices rise 3.5% as time to sell falls

The price of the average second-hand three-bed semi in county Wicklow has increased by 3.5% to €303,400 in the last three months, according to a national survey by Real Estate Alliance.

Across the county, the average time taken to sell has reflected a national trend and fallen to five weeks from six between December and March, the Q1 REA Average House Price Index shows.

Average prices in Bray this period rose 2.9% to €360,000, with time to sell falling from four weeks to three. North East Wicklow prices rose 3.2% to €320,000, with time to sell remaining steady at four weeks.

"We have seen a definite increase in price across all properties in the market, this is due to a lack of supply and very high demand," said Karl Tracey of REA Forkin, Bray.

During this period, prices in Wicklow town rose 0.6% to €322,000.

"We are seeing that quality properties are seeing instant bidding despite restrictions on viewings," said Matt Forkin of REA Forkin, Wicklow.

Average prices in Blessington

rose 5% this quarter to €315,000, with time to sell falling from six weeks to four. Baltinglass prices rose 8.1% to €200,000, and time to sell in the area fell by a fortnight to eight weeks.

"We are seeing very strong demand from buyers who have loan approval and who want a decision," said Simon Murphy of REA Murphy Baltinglass and Blessington.

"The presence of Covid-19 restrictions on viewings is currently a deterrent to new listings for the open market."

Nationally, average house prices rose by almost 2% over the past three months, despite the absence of physical viewing, in a marketplace which is seeing the lowest supply and the shortest time taken to sell in recent history.

The REA Average House Price Survey concentrates on the actual sale price of Ireland's typical stock home, the three-bed semi, giving an accurate picture of the second-

hand property market in towns and cities countrywide.

The price of a three-bedroomed semi-detached house across the country rose by almost €4,500 over the past three months to €243,603 - representing an annual increase of 3.6%.

The average three bed semi is now reaching sale agreed after just five weeks on the market across the country - almost half the nine-week average this time last year.

Not having to schedule appointments has led to potential buyers making swift bidding decisions on the back of virtual viewings, speeding up the selling process according to REA.

The biggest rises in Q1 came in commuter counties as buyers move out further from the city in preparation for long-term hybrid working situations.

Dublin city experienced its biggest quarterly rise in over three years as the price of a three-bedroomed semi-detached house rose by 1.5% to €438,500 during the past 12 weeks.

This represents an annual increase of 2.7% and means that the average Dublin three bed semi has now recovered to its December 2017 price level after a period of decreases, mainly in 2019.

Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford cities shared a combined increase of 1.2% in the past 12 weeks with prices rising by €3,000 to an average of €265,625.

Three bed semis in commuter counties rose 2.3% by almost €6,000 in the past three months to an average of €258,889 - with the average home selling in four weeks - down from a high of 11 a year ago.

As the flight to rural locations continues, prices in the rest of the country's towns rose by over 2% in Q1 to €168,828.



## Wicklow new car sales holding up well

**New Car Sales in the first 3 months of 2021 are 5.4 % down on 2020 - which is not bad considering there was only Covid 19 effect for 2 weeks during the end of Q1 last year - but garages are restricted in their operations this year.**

*By Martin McCarthy*

A total of 1077 new cars were sold in the county this year as against 1139 in 2020.

Across Ireland, new car registrations for March alone were up 54.3% (9,270) when compared to March 2020 (6,006) but down 44.45% (16,687) on March 2019.

National registrations year to date are down 3.23% (48,188) on 2020 (49,794) and down 24.85% on the same period in 2019 (64,126).

Used car imports for March (5,842) have seen an increase of 25.61% on 2020 (4,651) and a decrease of 34.87% (8,970) on March 2019. Year

to date imports are up 5.46% (18,420) on 2020 (17,466) and down 31.35% (26,832) on 2019.

For the month of March 1,046 new electric vehicles were registered compared to 369 in March 2020. So far this year 2,831 new electric cars have been registered in comparison to 1,650 on the same period 2020. Electric Vehicle and Plug-in Hybrids and Hybrids continue to increase their market share, with their combined market share now over 11%. Diesel now accounts for 36.58%, Petrol 32.68%, Hybrid 17.04%, Electric 5.87% and Plug-in Electric Hybrid 5.51%.

Society of the Irish Motor Industry chief, Brian Cooke said: "The first quarter of each year is the key selling period for the Irish Motor Industry, and new car sales in Q1 when compared to the same period in pre-COVID 2019 are down 25%, or nearly 16,000 cars. This represents lost revenue to the sector in excess of €500 million and lost taxation to the Exchequer of €170 million."

## House rebuild costs increase by 5% in Wicklow

**The latest Guide to House Rebuilding Costs published by the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland (SCSI) shows that average re-build costs have increased by an average of 5% in Wicklow over the past 18 months.**

The Guide to House Rebuilding Costs, which is used by homeowners to calculate the rebuilding costs of their home for insurance purposes, shows the increase in rebuild costs ranges from 5% in Wicklow and Dublin to 9% in the North West.

The President of the SCSI, Micheál Mahon, said the main reason for cost increases was compliance with new Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB) standards and an increase in the cost of building materials.

"We fully support the introduction of NZEB standards and recognise the key role they will play in helping to reduce CO2 emissions and reducing energy costs over the long term. However, from a building perspective, they do come with an upfront cost. For example, if you're rebuilding a house

- or 25% or more of it - the 'envelope' or surface area of the home has to be bought up to a B2

BER rating. The envelope is the total surface area of the house which leaks heat, so it includes external walls, windows, doors, the ground floor and roof or ceiling. Replacing heat pumps, temperature control systems, heat recovery systems all adds mechanical, electrical and plumbing costs to the rebuild process."

"In addition, Brexit has led to supply issues with building materials and increased the cost of a range of products, including insulation and timber products, mesh, structural steel, plasterboard and metal studs, to mention just a few. The construction industry has adapted well to working safely in the era of covid and the new protocols have not led to significant cost increases for one off residential rebuilds" Mr Mahon said.

The Society believes the variation in the costs increase is due to increased competition between contractors in Dublin while it also



*Micheál Mahon*

reflects what is happening in the wider property market with prices stabilising in Dublin but still rising in the regions, though coming off a lower base.

The average minimum rebuilding costs for a standard 3-bedroom 95sq.m semi-detached house around the country. These are the base rebuild costs only. Additional items such as kitchen, built in wardrobes, floor finishes, and a garage, if the property has one, also need to be factored in. The rebuild costs of such items will vary from house to house.

While price increases may have moderated in Wicklow and Dublin, the counties still have the

highest rebuild costs. According to the figures the cost of rebuilding a 3-bed semi in Wicklow or Dublin, is €218K, while the cost of rebuilding a similar house in the North West of the country is €140K, a difference of €78K. Put another way the cost of rebuilding a 3-bed semi in Wicklow is €2,290 per sq.m versus €1,491 per sq.m in the North West.

Micheál Mahon warned Wicklow homeowners they may well face pro rata increases on their home insurance premiums due to these increases.

He added: "The reality of the situation is that if the rebuild cost of your home is €280K and you only have it insured for €210K, in the event of a catastrophic event such as a fire, you will be facing a shortfall of €70K. However, what a lot of homeowners don't realise is that if in that situation there was a partial loss, which cost €80K to repair, the insured party would only receive €60K and face a shortfall of €20K. This is because the homeowner in question has only insured their property to three quarters of its rebuilding cost."







## Shadows of Synge at The Courthouse

With support from the Arts Council, four residencies are being developed behind the scenes at the Courthouse Arts Centre. Currently working through a research and development stage, the Courthouse theatre residency focuses on the life and work of Wicklow's John Millington Synge. In the course of their residency at the Courthouse, Wicklow-based theatre makers, Andrea Kelly and Cliona O Connell, continue their exploration of playwright JM Synge, and his connection to the county. Searching for 'Synge's Wicklow' in landscapes both real and imagined, they are working towards creating a new piece of theatre inspired by their research that will engage audiences unfamiliar with his life and work.

## Entries invited for Greystones Poetry Trail

In March 2020, shortly after the first Covid-19 lockdown was announced for Ireland, the Whale Theatre teamed up with Greystones-based poet and curator Frances Browner to create a 'Poets Wall' which featured over 30 poems from people of all ages inspired by the locality, its history and its stories, and saw these poems being displayed all over the town.



Frances Browner

Now, one year and three lockdowns later, the Whale and Frances are back together and planning a "Greystones Poetry Trail" another celebration of creativity for national Poetry Day Ireland, which takes place on Thursday 29th April.

The Poetry Trail will see poetry once again flood the streets of Greystones, as poems begin to appear in shop windows, on digital displays and who knows where else!

Poetry Day Ireland's theme for this year is "New Directions: Maps and Journeys" and curator Frances Browner is asking people of all ages, experience, and backgrounds to submit a poem for this very special project.

You can send your sonnet, rhyme, limerick, pantoum, or any poem at all to [frannerb2@gmail.com](mailto:frannerb2@gmail.com).

The deadline for entries is Thursday 22nd April, and don't forget, your poem should be based on the theme of "New Directions: Maps and Journeys". Poems should be no more than 16 lines.

Frances is also looking for shops and premises in Greystones who would be interested in displaying a poem in their shopfront window, so if you are a shop owner please get in touch!

"Greystones Poetry Trail" is curated by Frances Browner and is proudly supported by The Whale Theatre and Greystones 2020. For more information, please visit [www.whaletheatre.ie](http://www.whaletheatre.ie)

# Young Wicklow filmmaker wins award at Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year 2021

Young Wicklow filmmaker Seán Treacy is the proud recipient of a Highly Commended for Cinematography award for his film 'Horizons' at this year's Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year Awards.

Seán is so stranger to winning awards as he took home the title of Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year in 2019 at the age of 15 for his film 'Rue'.

Seán has a huge presence on social media, in particular, YouTube, with his personal channel 'Stellar' having over 24 thousand subscribers. Sean also has a filmmaking account containing his award-winning short films.

Not only did Seán win an award but a film about his life also won an award! Director Ashish Prasai aged 16 from Portobello, Dublin took home the RTE Factual Award for his documentary 'Stellar' which tells the story of Seán's life as a filmmaker and social media influencer.

Seán spoke about 'Stellar' saying, "Ashish making that film about my story was really encouraging and gave me a huge amount of empowerment and self-belief, as it felt like all of the problems pushed through and projects pursued over the past few years actually meant something. I can't thank him enough for it and also can't congratulate him enough for what is a seriously well-deserved prize."

Ashish added, "This short documentary is about my good friend Seán. Showing his filmmaking journey from when he started till now. It feels very surreal to win the RTE Factual award for best documentary. I am extremely grateful for this achievement and seeing my work from other people's perspectives was refreshing. This Festival allows young filmmakers in Ireland to share their unique stories and collaborate with others to create something that is fulfilling and impactful."

Seán won the Highly Commended for Cinematography award for his film 'Horizons' which is a film that tries to capture the sheer joy of memories. The future can be scary, the present can be dull, but the past is full of emotions that are locked away and safe forever, and that's what the film tries to evoke.

Seán said, "Winning the award for cinematography this year was fulfilling, to say the least."



Wicklow filmmaker Sean Tracy



Ashish Prasai

Throughout the first COVID lockdown, I made YouTube video after YouTube video and was constantly trying to push the level up visually from what I had been creating over previous years. However, that effort didn't translate into much success directly on YouTube. Then in July, I put together my new short film Horizons, not thinking anything different of the behind-the-scenes standard. But once I completed the colour grade, I really felt like I had achieved something new in my filmmaking journey on a technical level, and looking back, that was all down to the work I had done on YouTube in the opening months of that first lockdown. That sensation of satisfaction was thankfully manifested in the form of the award at Fresh!"

17-year-old Ella Nethercott from Dublin took home the title of Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year 2021 for her short film 'Learning to Dance Like a Bird', about a young girl struggling with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder who is taken out of her comfort zone when she meets a boy who helps her to let go.

Speaking about her win, Ella said, "It was an absolute honor to win Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year. I'm extremely proud of myself and of how much I have grown throughout this process. It has been a huge honour to participate in the Fresh Film Festival over the last two years and I'm so grateful for the platform they gave me to express myself and meet like-minded people. I had such a genuinely incredible time making the film but to then receive recognition on top of that just made the experience all the more unforgettable."

In addition, a number of specialist awards were presented for the Seniors including the Cartoon Saloon Animation Award, the RTE 60 Second Short Film Award and the RTE Factual Award, in addition to the International awards.

The awards took place online via Fresh International Film Festival's YouTube channel.



# Council launches photography competition for 'Keep Well' campaign

A special photography competition is being organised by Wicklow County Council as part of the Government's 'Keep Well' campaign.

The competition celebrates the themes of 'Staying Connected and Minding Your Mood' in the County Wicklow since the start of COVID-19.

The winner will receive a €100 voucher and four runners-up will receive €50 vouchers.

The Closing date for submissions is Wednesday 21st April 2021 at 5pm.

The Government Action Plan in response to COVID-19 acknowledges the importance of people maintaining their

wellbeing and resilience to push through the sustained outbreak of the virus.

Most people's lives have changed over the last number of months, their routines have been affected by the outbreak, in different ways and the 'Keep Well' campaign - supported through Healthy Ireland - has been bringing together advice from various agencies to help people take care of their mental health and wellbeing at this time.

Pictures submitted

must be in landscape format, emailed to [ccsdadmin@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:ccsdadmin@wicklowcoco.ie) and must come with a title for the photograph, the name, address and phone number of the photographer and state clearly where the photograph was taken.

A selection of the photographs will be displayed online once the competition is over. Further details and terms and conditions can be found on [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie)

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County

Council, Cllr Pat Kennedy, outlined the important message of staying connected with people, looking after other people and addressing their isolation, can help mental health and wellbeing.

He stated: "It is so important at a time like this to stay connected to friends, family and community. We will get through this together by helping each other where and when we can. The key message is 'Ask for help if needed - offer help if you can'."

## Perceptions of Isolation: An Exhibition by Cliona Fox at Signal Arts Centre

Monday, 24th May - Sunday, 6th June

Cliona Fox is an Irish artist with a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art and Contemporary Studies from the National College of Art & Design. She has undertaken residencies throughout the country, which have inspired subsequent work. These include the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig, The Custom House Studios, Co Mayo and The Cill Rialaig Retreat, Co. Kerry.

She has exhibited widely throughout Ireland and abroad including Brussels and Beijing, and has had many solo and group exhibitions. Her work is in several private and State Collections including The Bord of Works, Department of Foreign Affairs, Waterford Healing Trust, Cill Rialaig Collection, Sheraton Hotel Group and CIAA (European Union).

In her recent work Fox sources her images from nature and the landscape but focuses on making her work less figurative, more gestural and abstracted. It is evident that the element of drawing and the visceral substance of the paint are dually important to her as the painted surfaces reflect areas of expression and precision.

Having spent part of each year in Co. Kerry for most of her adult

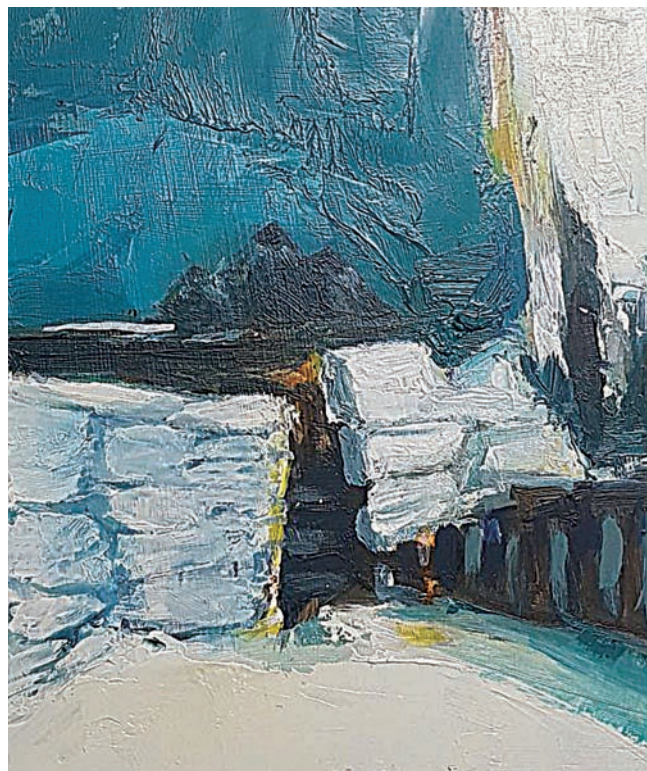
life, the artist made numerous trips to the Skelligs Islands which lie 12 kilometres off the coast. Here she made initial drawings and it was from these, her experience of the journey, and the artist's memory that she found inspiration for this body of work.

The work straddles the boundary between abstraction and representation and varies in size, successfully depicting the grand scale of this rocky outpost and capturing, through an extensive palette, the ever-changing light common in the Atlantic landscape. Central to and interspersed with the large expressive mark-making and loose brushwork to focused areas of detail, are hints of habitation long-abandoned.

There are no people portrayed but there is a sense of a spiritual presence gleaned from the remnants of the beehive huts and steep stone steps hewn from the rock face. In several of the paintings the artist uses cruciform shapes offering the reader an opportunity to immerse themselves in making this journey, a pilgrimage almost, as they too ascend some of these 700 approx. steps to the peak of this sacred mountain.

Apparent in the work also is the artist's obvious love of her chosen medium where her constant layering and obliterating of the buttery-oil painted surface allows for areas of control and ambiguity. This friction and tugging makes for a constant gratifying challenge to both artist and viewer as they attempt to fill in the voids of what is portrayed.

Despite it being a major tourist attraction today, and the film set for the Star Wars movies, the artist's images exude a feeling of solitude. In the midst of this pandemic these are timely representations of the alienation, solitude and isolation, which we all endure.



Pictured is Kilmacanogue artist, Nicholas Benedict Robinson, one of more than 1,200 artists taking part in this year's Incognito online art sale. The sale, in aid of the Jack & Jill Children's Foundation and its in-home nursing care for very sick children, goes live on Thursday April 22nd at 10am.

## Local Wicklow artists taking part in Incognito Online Art Sale for Jack & Jill

It has been revealed that a total of 74 artists from Co. Wicklow are among the Who's Who of Irish and international artists taking part in this year's Incognito 2021 online art sale in aid of the Jack & Jill Children's Foundation.

conditions, including end-of-life care. This equates to more than 28,000 hours of specialist home nursing care provided by Jack & Jill nurses and carers the length and breadth of the country.

For curator Lucinda Hall, Incognito 2021 is an opportunity to bring the talents of Wicklow artists to a brand-new audience: "We are so very grateful to each of our artists from Wicklow who have shared their talents with us and given their art for free. It is a huge tribute to their generosity of time and spirit following what has been an extremely difficult period for the arts world. We hope that by hosting what is Ireland's largest online public art exhibition, that we can shine a light on the amazing talent of our artists, and introduce a whole new audience to their work."

For Carmel Doyle, CEO of the Jack & Jill Children's Foundation, Incognito 2021 is about generous, talented artists turning their art into a real currency for care:

"Each year, Jack & Jill has to raise over €4 million to continue doing what we do supporting families to look after their sick children at home, where they belong. Less than 20 per cent of our funding comes from Government, and with COVID-19 continuing to restrict our public-facing fundraising and our charity shops still closed, including our shops in Arklow and Wicklow town, we are relying hugely on the generosity and support of the public for Incognito 2021."

"Each piece sold translates into almost four hours of specialist home nursing care for local children, turning this beautiful art into a real currency for care."



Pictured is artist Don Conroy, from Wicklow town, one of more than 1,200 artists taking part in this year's Incognito online art sale in which the identity of the artists behind 3,000 pieces of original art is kept top secret until the sale closes.

The Incognito art collection is now live at [www.incognito.ie](http://www.incognito.ie) with the online art sale taking place on Thursday April 22nd at 10am sharp.

What's so incredibly fun and exciting about Incognito compared with any other art sale is that the identity of the artists behind the paintings - for sale at €60 each - is kept top secret until the sale has closed.

The Incognito collection is made up of 3,000-plus original postcard-sized artworks in a range of mediums, from oils and pastels, to glass and metalwork, in a sale that is usually a sprint to the checkout. Everything sold out last year in just 15 minutes.

Among the Wicklow artists taking part are Sannie Cuddihy from Ashford, Nicholas Benedict Robinson from Kilmacanogue, Don Conroy and Sarah Eva Manson from Wicklow town, and Wicklow native Darragh Treacy. Some of the famous national and international faces taking part this year are U2's The Edge, rock star Bob Geldof, fashion designer Paul Costelloe, comedians Jason Byrne and Tommy Tiernan, artist Don Conroy and Nobel prize winner Dr William Campbell.

In the five years since its inception, Incognito has raised almost €450,000 for Jack & Jill's home nursing care for children with highly complex medical



One of the postcard-sized artworks in this year's Incognito online art sale





## Hot stuff in Bray

The lady that owns and runs Mizzoni Pizza was born and reared in Bray. Her father, Steven Cassoni had a chipper on the Main Street and this is where she met her husband Aurelio Mizzoni.

Aurelio's dad had a chipper on Albert Walk in the mid-70s just down the road from where the current Mizzoni Pizza is now located.

The first Mizzoni Pizza was opened on the Main Street in the early 90's by way of a franchise. It was their first franchise and they now have over 40 stores across Ireland.

Richard Brady from Newtownmountkenedy has been a chef for over 25 years and has used his extensive expertise to create wonderful tasting sauces to bring to your table by starting up Richie's Recipes Sauces. You have to try his signature Hot Sauce.

Mizzonis and Richies Recipes have now joined up to bring these tastes together in the Mizzonis Pizzerias. So you and your family can order and get the best of both worlds, great pizzas with unique hot sauces and they are both local success stories.

## 'Local businesses in Wicklow need a lifeline'

**Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has called on the Government to provide a lifeline for local businesses in Wicklow experiencing difficulties during the current lockdown.**

Deputy Whitmore said "With many businesses in Wicklow shuttered for some time now, and facing a further period of closure, there is a clear need for government intervention to support the local economy in Wicklow and across the country. The potential closure of many local businesses in Wicklow presents a clear danger to the vitality of

local towns and villages across the county unless something is done to address this.

"I've been contacted and have spoken with many small local businesses in Wicklow who are struggling to get through this third lockdown. Some of them have a premise with costly overheads and while they have availed of some gov-

ernment supports, they are struggling to pay rents or mortgages. Those business owners with an online presence or without a permanent premise are left out of many financial supports as they are not eligible as a result.

"The Local Enterprise Office and Wicklow County Council are doing great work and are dealing with businesses on a case by case basis as much as possible, but they are limited in what they can do as many Government supports are

revenue-led or social welfare driven. While some landlords have provided rental holidays, others haven't, and this is where small businesses are struggling. Often, what businesses really need to get going is certainty which is severely lacking at present.

"We need to see an immediate commitment to the extension of the EWSS/CRSS, extension of the 9% VAT until hospitality fully recovers, a commitment to extending the waiver until the end of

2021, the publication of the National Economic Plan with specific supports outlines for SME sector and support to address debt. Supports must also be extended to those business owners that have already gone out of businesses and who are personally struggling financially since then.

"Government can no longer ignore calls from SMEs and must see them as a crucial part of our full recovery from the pandemic."

## Matt Forkin elected President of Wicklow Town & District Chamber of Commerce



**Wicklow businessman Matt Forkin has been elected President of Wicklow Town and District Chamber of Commerce for 2021.**

Founder and Managing Director of REA Forkin Estate Agents, Matt has developed and expanded his business in Wicklow Town and Bray during the past 12 years. A native of Wicklow Town, Matt attended De la Salle College and was also involved in a variety of local sports clubs including Wicklow Rugby Club, Wicklow Swimming Club and Blainroe Golf Club, where he is still an active member.

Matt has been a member of the Chamber of Commerce since 2013 and a member of the Chamber Council since 2016. He has served on numerous Chamber committees including the IT committee that developed the Wicklowtown.ie website that was launched in 2019.

Addressing the Chamber's Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 23rd March, Matt spoke of the stark realities faced by many businesses this year as they sought to adapt to the ever-changing Covid landscape but sounded a positive note as he highlighted the Chamber's focus for the year ahead:

"Our goal remains to assist and support our members as we navigate the road to reopening our economy and uncover the new ways of doing business in an increasingly digital era, without losing the essence of what is truly local."

Matt offered his thanks for the manner in which the people of Wicklow showed their support for local enterprise over the past twelve months, citing it as key to ensuring the long-term viability of the local business community.

"People really rowed in behind one another and it is great to see such positivity, community and sense of common purpose in challenging times like these."

In closing the meeting, he also paid tribute to outgoing President, Rosie Cooney and the Chamber Council for their dedication over the past year and shared his gratitude for being entrusted with the Presidency stating he would continue to champion local business during a busy year ahead.

## John 20:11-18 Gospel

Mary stayed outside near the tomb, weeping. Then, still weeping, she stooped to look inside, and saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. They said, 'woman, why are you weeping?' 'They have taken my Lord away,' she replied 'and I don't know where they have put him.' As she said this she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not recognise him. Jesus said, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him.' Jesus said, 'Mary!' she knew him then and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbuni!' - which means Master. Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go and find the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' So Mary of Magdala went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that he had said these things to her. CHRIST HAS RISEN

C.J.

## PLANNING • PLANNING • PLANNING • PLANNING

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

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

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

JOHN BARRY seeks planning permission for DEMOLITION OF EXISTING EXTENSION TO SIDE OF PROPERTY AND DORMER WINDOWS AT ROOF LEVEL. CONSTRUCTION OF THREE STOREY EXTENSION TO SIDE OF EXISTING HOUSE WITH ALTERATIONS TO FRONT PORCH AND FRONT ENTRANCE STEPS AND ATTIC CONVERSION WITH DORMER ROOF TO REAR OF EXISTING DWELLING AT 101 NEWCOURT ROAD, BRAY, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Niall Barry of Unit 5, Kilcoole Ind Estate, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow am applying for a certificate of registration (suitability of premises) of manufacturing facility. Waste Management Act 1996 Waste Management Packaging Regulations 2007. We are required to accept on these premises, free of charge, for the purpose of recovery, packaging waste arising from products, packaging or type of brand sold or otherwise supplied on these premises. The products or packaging in question need not necessarily have been purchased from Dycon Ltd

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, Ian & Joan Finnegan, seek Retention Permission for the Retention of Sun Room as constructed in lieu of previous conservatory structure granted permission under register reference 05/3266 at 11 Kilquade Hill, Kilquade, County Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I Zofia Howell seek permission for the construction of a dwelling, garage, wastewater treatment system and photovoltaic solar panel system, together with associated site works at Sleanaglogh, Ashford, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.



## Wicklow people invited to attend Better Leadership Forum

People from Wicklow are being invited to attend a free online event series, The Better Leadership Forum, aimed at instigating a high-profile public debate on leadership.

The event series is a new initiative from LIFT Ireland and will feature four online events taking place across 2021, and each will focus on leadership in a particular sector of Irish society, including the media, politics, business and the public sector.

The first event in the series 'Leadership in the Media: A Two-Way Street?' takes place on **Thursday, 15th April at 1pm**. The event will explore leadership in the media, addressing topics such as: the role of the media in calling out good and bad leadership; the importance of press freedom and an independent and well-functioning media sector; and the role of the media in promoting positivity during difficult times.

The panel discussion will be moderated by Professor Kevin Rafter, Head of the School of Communications at DCU, while speakers include: Emily O'Reilly, European

Ombudsman, author and former journalist and broadcaster; Emma Dabiri, author, broadcaster and social historian; Ian Kehoe, Editor of The Currency and Deputy Chair of the RTÉ Board; Sinéad O'Carroll, Editor of TheJournal.ie; Joanne Hession, founder and CEO of LIFT Ireland.

Professor Niamh Brennan, the Michael MacCormac Professor of Management at University College Dublin and Founder / Academic Director of the UCD Centre for Corporate Governance, will serve as rapporteur for all four events in The Better Leadership Forum; and a final report on lessons from the events will be published later this year.

Sonya Lennon, co-founder of LIFT, said: "At every level - from community initiatives to international governments - we have seen examples of good leadership over the past year alongside incidences of poor judgement

and decision-making. We have a great opportunity now to reflect on what good leadership really means and explore a cultivation of eth-

ical leadership across Irish society, for everyone's benefit."

Registration for the first event of the Better

Leadership Forum, 'Leadership in the Media: A Two-Way Street?' is now open at: [liftireland.ie/better-leadership-forum/](http://liftireland.ie/better-leadership-forum/).

# WILSON

## SECURITY SYSTEMS

[wilsonsecurity.ie](http://wilsonsecurity.ie)

### ALARM & CCTV INSTALLER

Experience required • Competitive Package  
CV to: [jobs@wilsonsecurity.ie](mailto:jobs@wilsonsecurity.ie)

## Curry Chefs, Tandoori Chefs and Pastry Chefs

(specialising in Pakistani Pasteries)

### required for

**Daata Tandoori, Broadway, Strand Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow**

**Daata Greystones, Hillside Road, Rathdown Lower, Co. Wicklow**

**Minimum 2 years of experience.**

**39 hours per week • Gross Income of €30,000 P/A**

**Contact Bray -  
Shamim Akhtar at  
[info@daata.ie](mailto:info@daata.ie)  
T: 01 286 3006**

**Contact Greystones -  
Muhammad Waseem Saeed at  
[info@daata.ie](mailto:info@daata.ie)  
T: 01 287 8100**

# RECRUITMENT



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons to form a panel from which future temporary/permanent positions may be filled.

#### • ASSISTANT PLANNER

REF: 15/2021 Salary €39,522 - €62,117 gross per annum (includes 2nd LSI).

#### • EXECUTIVE PLANNER

REF: 16/2021 Salary €50,534 - €70,245 gross per annum (includes 2nd LSI)

**CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF  
COMPLETED APPLICATION FORMS IS  
12 NOON ON THURSDAY 29TH APRIL 2021 SHARP.**

Application Forms and further details may be obtained from Enterprise & Corporate Services at 0404 20159 or by emailing [recruitment@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:recruitment@wicklowcoco.ie) and on the Wicklow County Council website [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie).

Wicklow County Council reserves the right to shortlist candidates in the manner it deems most appropriate.

Wicklow County Council is an Equal Opportunities Employer.

**Lorraine Gallagher, Director of Services,  
Enterprise & Corporate Services,  
Wicklow County Council,  
County Buildings, Wicklow**

Phone: 0404 20159 Fax: 0404 20112  
Email: [recruitment@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:recruitment@wicklowcoco.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](mailto: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.

# LOCAL BUSINESS | CLASSIFIEDS | PLANNING | APPOINTMENTS

Reach the **MOST** people for the **LEAST** money with Wicklow Times

**For details of our amazing deals please call 01 286 9111**





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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  
Traditional Irish & Folk Music Performance  
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### SPORT

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

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Nail Technician & Salon Administration  
Hairdressing Junior Stylist  
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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  
Equine Studies  
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Dietetics, Nutrition & Food Science  
Brewing & Distilling Techniques  
Forensics - Applied Science  
Applied Ecology & Biodiversity Studies  
Engineering Pre-University  
Computer Software Development  
Computer Science Level 5  
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

Nursing / Midwifery Studies  
Occupational Therapy Assistant  
Pharmacy Assistant  
Pharmacy Technician  
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

Tourism, Reception & Event Management  
Tour Guiding  
Restaurant & Bar Management  
Professional Cookery  
Professional Cookery Advanced  
Barista, Pastery &



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