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Tuesday 11th January 2022 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

'A FOREST OF TURBINES'

The Sea Stack Offshore Wind Farm, a ESB Wind Development is now seeking a Foreshore License for surveys for the third separate proposal for offshore turbines off the Wicklow coastline.

The Codling & Dublin Array wind farm projects are further advanced, and

Cllr Derek Mitchell has expressed concern about a potential 'Forest of wind turbines' off the Co. Wicklow coastline, saying "these wind turbines in combination will cause serious visual amenity loss especially off Greystones where they meet and the effect is greatest."

"From Greystones they will take up 115 degrees Arc of View,

almost the entire sea horizon. The turbines are huge, 300 meters tall. When you're standing on top of Bray Head, the local landmark, you will be looking up at them as they are 60 metres taller."

"The project has been proposed by ESB Wind Developments Ltd. They state the wind farm would be located 'East of Co. Dublin' when in fact it is nearest Co Wicklow, 12km, and has the greatest visual impact on Co. Wicklow."

"We need to get offshore wind energy to save carbon but the visual effect of this forest of turbines needs to be scaled down. Combined visual planning is needed and a gap of at least 15 degrees Arc of View should be left between wind farms off Greystones the worst affected place. Also benefits must be provided to areas which have to look at them."

The site is located approximately 12km (at



Eoin and Maurice Byrne with Jack Brophy at the New Year's Day fireworks display in Tinahelly.
Pic: Michael Kelly

the nearest point) off the Dublin & Wicklow Coast. The ultimate site will be refined over time and it is anticipated that the final wind farm area is likely to be in the order of 160km squared.

The expected capacity output of such a project will be approximately 800MW which is enough energy to power in excess of 700,000 homes.

"The project name is derived from the iconic Poolbeg Chimney stacks, one of the most readily identifiable landmarks in Dublin," ESB says. "The stacks are associated with Poolbeg Generating Station, constructed in the early 1970s, and are a monument to an era of fossil fuel burning. In the same way, we believe that Sea Stacks Offshore Wind Farm will become representative of a new era defined by transformation towards renewable energy."

In November 2020,

ESB applied a Foreshore License which would convey the right to undertake preliminary survey work and site investigation studies for what could be the location of the Sea Stacks Offshore Wind Farm.

"Such site investigation studies relate to the potential turbine array site, the cable corridor and the cable landfall areas. The results of the proposed survey work, in conjunction with other desktop studies, will assist in determining the feasibility of developing an offshore wind farm at this location."

"The survey work will be used to inform the optimal area for the wind farm within the study site and will also provide baseline data for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process. Should the site be deemed suitable for an offshore wind farm, ESB aims to seek planning

permission for the project at the appropriate time under the terms of the

Marine Area Planning Bill." The public consultation phase for the pro-

ject has now opened and will be open until 30th January.

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Change a life by donating your unwanted Christmas gifts to Oxfam

Now that their stores have re-opened, Oxfam Ireland is calling on people to donate their unwanted Christmas gifts. Unpopular or duplicate Christmas gifts can be resold at Oxfam Ireland stores around the country to help raise vital funds for their life-saving work worldwide in 2022.

A survey commissioned by Oxfam Ireland in recent years revealed that 83 per cent of adults have received an unwanted gift on Christmas morning. Oxfam Ireland are welcoming the donation of these unwanted gifts to one of their 46 stores across the island of Ireland.

Items accepted for donation include clothes, beauty products, books, gadgets and jewellery, as well as bags and accessories, CDs, DVDs, homewares, soft furnishings, furniture (selected Oxfam shops only) and even wedding dresses.

The sale of these

items will raise funds for Oxfam's programmes, including ongoing emergency responses, as well as long-term projects that lift people out of poverty and campaigning that gives a voice to the vulnerable.

Oxfam Ireland Director of Trading Trevor Anderson says, "We are appealing to the generosity of people this Christmas to donate their unwanted gifts. Maybe Santa didn't bring exactly what was on your Christmas list, but your donation could help feed an orphaned child or struggling family.

"It only takes a moment to drop your unwanted gift into one of our stores but it could change a life forever.

"With 8 out of 10 adults receiving an unwanted gift on Christmas morning, we can help you find a new home for that gift.

"We're asking you to think twice before you push that unwanted gift to the back of the wardrobe. No matter how small, your donation will help us to continue our vital work into 2022."

How your donation can help save lives:

*The sale of that unwanted top for €8

could help purify around 2,000 litres of water, making it safe to drink for South Sudanese families living in makeshift camps.

*The sale of an unopened cosmetics set sold for €15 could give a family in the Democratic Republic of Congo an eco-friendly efficient stove, designed to be hotter than traditional cooking methods while using only half the wood.

*That gift of a necklace that just isn't to your taste sold for €30 could feed a child orphaned by AIDS in Malawi for three and a half months.



Adam Burke and daughters Hannah, Emma and Aimee with Jamie Brierton having a swim on New Year's Day in Bray. Pic: Joe McQuillan

Birdwatch Ireland Species Recovery Appeal

For the past 53 years, BirdWatch Ireland has worked hard to save our most threatened bird species from extinction. It is their most fundamental aim as a conservation charity, and is only possible thanks to the generous support of their members and donors. "We need to keep fighting to save Ireland's threatened bird species on your behalf . . . but we can't do it without your support.

"That's why we are asking you, please, to contribute what you can to our Species Recovery Appeal. All funds raised will go to furthering our work to conserve and protect some of Ireland's most endangered species and their habitats."

See birdwatchireland.ie/donations/sra/

Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk

The Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk remains partially closed, it is safe to walk from Bray along the Cliff Walk as far as Windgates steps. From there walkers can take the alternative Bray Head Looped Trail, which can be quite challenging or return on the Cliff Walk back to Bray.

The Greystones side of the Cliff Walk is extremely dangerous and is closed in certain spots. The Council continues to assess and has put in place measures for the short-term protection of the public and are actively pursuing an alternative route for the sections of the walk which are currently closed due to erosion.

Brockagh Resource Centre

The Brockagh Resource Centre wishes to thank everyone who has supported them throughout a challenging year. "A special thank you to our dedicated staff, who are always ready to greet and help customers, also to our board of management for volunteering their time. We wish you all and your families a very happy, peaceful and joyous 2022."

The Centre closed on Mon 20th December and re-opened on Tuesday 4th January 2022. For details of our ongoing activities see www.brockaghresourcecentre.ie/events. You can also 'friend' them on Facebook or Twitter.

Anam Cara

Anam Cara will begin their support services in 2022 with a face to face group meeting in South Dublin. The national organisation will hold their first meeting in Dublin on the 10th January and would like to extend a warm welcome to any bereaved parent in the area. On Monday 10th January, Anam Cara will hold their meeting in The Maldron Hotel, Tallaght @ 7:15pm. Regardless of the age of the child or circumstances of death, Anam Cara offers these peer to peer support meetings monthly, free of charge.

Registration is required to attend the meeting on Monday 10th January. Anam Cara would welcome any bereaved parent in the South Dublin area and surrounds to contact them to register for this free event. Anam Cara can be contacted on 01 4045378 or by email info@anamcara.ie.

ALONE Covid-19 Support Line for Older People

ALONE manage a national support line and additional supports for older people who have concerns or are facing difficulties due to COVID-19. Professional staff are available to answer queries and give advice and reassurance. The support line is open seven days a week, 8 am to 8 pm, 0818 222024.

Greystones Active Retirement

The planned return date for Greystones Active Retirement Association (GARA), Covid permitting, is in the week starting 17th January 2022: Mondays 2.30 - 4.30 ART 4 Euro; Tuesdays 10.30 - 12.30 BOWLS 4 Euro; Thursdays 2.30 - 4.30 BINGO 4 Euro.

Coffee Mornings will take place on the following Fridays: 28th January, 25th February, 25th March 2022. Times and dates of further activities will be advised in the coming weeks. GARA's office hours are Tuesdays 10.30am - 11.30am. All activities take place at Kilian House Family Centre, Greystones.

N11 Improvement Scheme's option selection report published

Wicklow County Council is progressing the development of the N11/M11 Junction 4 to Junction 14 Improvement Scheme in partnership with Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the Department of Transport.

An online public display and non-statutory public consultation of the preferred option took place from 30th of August 2021 until 4th October 2021.

Following on from this, the Project Team has now published Bulletin No.11 to advise that the completed Option Selection Report is now available to view on the project website at www.n11m11.ie.

The Option Selection Report represents the primary deliverable for Phase 2 of the project as outlined in the TII Project Management Guidelines. The purpose of the Option Selection Report is to document each step in the analysis during Phase 2 of the project, recording both the assessments and decisions undertaken to identify and make recommendations on the preferred option for the scheme.



Kyle, Halle and David Burke at the St Vincent's Foundation's Stephen's Day Swim on Arklow South Beach. Pic: Michael Kelly

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Major investment in Blueprint for Blessington Plan

Over €1m Rural Regeneration funding for visitor centre & e-hub

The Blueprint for Blessington Plan is to receive €1.3 million in Government funding as part of the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

This money will be used to develop plans for improvement of the public areas throughout the town, the redevelopment of derelict property to create a remote working e-hub and a visitor centre for the forthcoming Greenway.

West Wicklow Fine Gael councillor Edward Timmins said "Hopefully this work will go ahead in the near future and works will commence shortly on the funding previously announced for Baltinglass. The project will develop plans for public realm works, the redevelopment of derelict property to create an eHub and a visitor centre for the forthcoming greenway.

"The plan aims to maximise the opportunities created by the expected increased visitor numbers to the Blessington Lakes eGreenway and Russborough House, while reinvigorating the centre

of Blessington to create a town centre that can be enjoyed by residents, visitors and businesses."

Welcoming the news, Green Party TD Steven Matthews said "There has been good investment in Blessington over the years on the Greenway and Russborough House and this funding can be used to further improve tourist and resident amenities and rejuvenate the beautiful Main Street.

I have been working with Wicklow County Council to advance the Blessington Inner Relief Road which will remove the heavy through traffic through Blessington further improving the safety and attractiveness of Blessington.

"Removing this heavy traffic will allow the development of good cycling infrastructure, Safe Routes to School, better pedestrian access around the town and the

creation of good public places to sit, meet and enjoy the town centre.

"All of these works will be good for local business and all residents and visitors to Blessington. The Green Party have secured unprecedented funding for pedestrian and cycling facilities across Wicklow and there will be further projects and improvements carried out by Wicklow County Council over the coming years. I will continue working with local business, community groups and residents groups to identify the works required and with government departments and transport agencies to ensure that the funding is provided."

Minister Simon Harris said "The project will reinvigorate the heart of Blessington and enhance Market Square. In addition to creation of a new community focal point the project will also see the acqui-

sition and redevelopment of a derelict vacant property in Market Square to create an eHub/co-working space, offering opportunities for commuters and third level students to work locally.

"There will also be a Shop Front Improvement Scheme for commercial premises on Market Square and Main Street in Blessington, the creation of new pedestrian and cycle linkages in the town and new street furniture to improve the appearance of the heart of the town."

Minister Harris continued: "I am excited by this announcement for Blessington. The Blueprint for Blessington will also include the development of a visitor centre for the Blessington Greenway and will maximise the opportunities created by the increased number of visitors to both the Greenway, Lakes and Russborough House. I want to commend



Cillian Finn collecting money for the St. Vincent's Foundation at the St. Stephen's Day swim at Arklow South Beach

the Blessington Town Team and Wicklow County Council for their work in bring the project thus far and I look forward in working with them to bring it to fruition."

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said the RRDF money will play a vital role in helping to transform the town.

"The more than €1 million in funding along with the development of the greenway will make Blessington an even more attractive tourist destination," he said.

"The fact the money is to be used for the redevelopment of derelict property to create an eHub and a visitor centre to link in with the greenway is exactly the right approach.

"The town is being primed to take advantage of the rise in visitor numbers to the Blessington Lakes, the Greenway and Russborough House, while improving the town centre.

"The first-class facilities going in will not only have long lasting benefits for Blessington but all of West Wicklow."

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Shay Cullen, welcomed the announcement saying: "This funding will be transformative for Blessington and will help promote West Wicklow as a major tourist destination".

Welcoming the news, the Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Mr Brian Gleeson, said: "Approval for this project from the RRDF will consolidate the strategic investment in Blessington to date. Opportunities

will be created by the increased visitor numbers to the Blessington Lakes eGreenway and Russborough House, while reinvigorating the centre of Blessington to create a town centre that can be enjoyed by residents, visitors and businesses alike".

Cllr Avril Cronin, Cathaoirleach of Baltinglass Municipal District, was delighted to learn that Blessington had been awarded the funding by the Minister and thanked all involved in making the application.

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Ciaran and Felicity Hogan out on New Year's Day for a swim at Bray Seafront. Pic: Joe McQuillan

'Some of us do want this mast'

Despite the numerous local objections to the telecommunications mast that's been granted approval by An Bord Pleanála at Rock Farm, Brittas Bay, one resident maintains that public opinion about the mast is far from one-sided.

Speaking to *Wicklow Times*, a local resident in full support of the mast outlined the reasons for why it's needed. Vantage Towers Ltd, who successfully appealed Wicklow County Council's decision to refuse permission for the mast, said the area is a 'blackspot' in terms of coverage for Vodafone.

"The coverage we have now isn't good, we need this mast," the resident agreed. "There are people working from home because of Covid and it doesn't look like Covid is going away anytime soon. They need fast reliable broadband, as do local schoolchildren who may be getting schooled remotely, and local businesses."

Up to 2019 Vodafone, Three and Eir all transmitted from a site at McDaniel's pub and holiday home complex, and since operations ceased there Vantage say public complaints about poor coverage have increased.

"Following the loss of that site all operators have struggled to meet the basic coverage requirements of the resident population to include local businesses, educational facilities and residents in addition to the additional network coverage demands required by tourists particularly during the summer months," Vantage said.

"We're a coastal community, and with the sea also comes danger," the resident told *Wicklow Times*. "If there's an accident and an ambulance has to be called, or a person's phone has to be tracked, having reliable coverage is vital."

New Year, New You: Pledge to do two-minute beach clean as part of your New Year's resolution

In a brand-new video produced by Clean Coasts with Cube Media, Clean Coasts is urging people to have a green New Year and choose a resolution they can commit to by pledging to do a #2minutebeachclean.

The video shows Dave (played by Bryan Quinn) trying to go into 2022 being better and greener by being more conscious of the environment. However, after several failed attempts he begins to lose hope until he finds himself on a beach in front of a #2minutebeachclean board and exclaims; "A 2-minute beach clean. So simple and keeps me green. New Year's resolution in the bag!"

We have all seen marine litter along Ireland's coastline.

For all the beach lovers out there, the new year is an opportunity to do something about it in just 2 minutes! In 2021 2,000 people pledged to do a #2minutebeachclean and



received a kit. For 2022, Clean Coasts are calling people around Ireland to visit their website and pledge to do a #2minutebeachclean to receive a reusable individual beach clean kit containing a tote bag and gloves.

How to take part in the #2minutebeachclean? The next time you are out and about along the coast or near a waterway, take two minutes to pick up some litter you see, share a picture of it on social media, tag Clean Coasts, use the hashtag #2minutebeachclean and dispose of the litter properly.

Sinead McCoy, Coastal Communities manager said: "The #2minutebeachclean is such a great initiative to get involved in. Every day, so many people around Ireland share their #2minutebeachclean on social media, and that helps

show how easy it is to get involved and make a difference. By taking part, not only do you make an immediate positive impact for the marine environment and wildlife, but it's also a chance to

spend time outdoors by the sea, exercise and even practice mindfulness."

To sign up to receive your own #2minutebeachclean kit, visit the Clean Coasts website at www.cleancoasts.org.



Another fine showing for Arklow in IBAL litter league rankings

Arklow takes Top 5 spot in nationwide ranking

The final survey of 2021 by business group Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) shows Arklow to be once again 'Cleaner than European Norms', in 5th place in the ranking of 40 towns and cities. According to the study, nationwide litter levels have risen slightly, with cities faring particularly badly. PPE litter was found to be at its highest level since the pandemic began.

Naas finished ahead of Portlaoise and Ennis to record its first win in the annual rankings. There was a slight fall in the number of clean towns nationwide, to 22.

The An Taisce report for Arklow stated: "Another excellent result for Arklow, with well over half of the sites surveyed getting the top litter grade, and no seriously littered sites. The Main Street presented particularly well, especially considering the high number of closed down / For Sale / To Let premises. The Bring Facility at Croghan Recycle

Centre was spotless - clearly it is a very well respected and maintained environment. Other top-ranking sites included Avoca Riverwalk and Arklow Sports & Leisure Centre - the building of the latter was adorned by colourful murals, a welcome feature in what would otherwise be a very grey environment."

Cork and Limerick City Centres, both littered, showed a deterioration on the previous survey, while Dublin City Centre fell to heavily littered. Galway City lost its clean status, leaving Waterford as the country's only

clean city.

The report showed PPE at record levels, with an increase in the presence of both masks and gloves. "It would appear that this litter is accumulating as the pandemic continues, as there remains an understandable reticence to pick up other people's PPE," says IBAL's Conor Horgan. "The disposable blue face mask has become a ubiquitous part of the landscape up and down the country. People have not moved to reusable masks and people are not taking care of their masks." International research has found

PPE litter accounting for as much as 5% of all litter, and likely to have "a devastating, lasting effect on the environment". Mask use is forecast to remain high into 2022.

There was a significant rise in other pandemic-related litter, such as coffee cups, while alcohol-related litter remained at previous levels despite hospitality reopening and the survey being conducted in winter.

IBAL has frequently criticised the failure of local authorities to clean up sites identified in its surveys as heavily littered, and this was again the case.

Of 89 such sites highlighted in summer last year, only 33% had been addressed by the time of this most recent survey.

2021 was the 19th year of the IBAL Anti-Litter League.

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€2m available for heritage led regeneration of historic towns in 2022

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and the Heritage Council continue support for Historic Towns Initiative

The Heritage Council is now accepting applications from local authorities across the country for the Historic Towns Initiative 2022.

A total of €2 million has been allocated for the heritage-led regeneration of towns under the initiative, which takes particular account of their heritage and history.

The scheme was announced by Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan, TD.

The Historic Towns Initiative is a joint undertaking between the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and the Heritage Council. Last year, €1.5m in funding was awarded under this scheme, providing local will, in turn, help drive employment and economic stimulus.

Since 2018, a total of 23 towns have benefitted from the scheme, with a variety of projects funded. These include streetscape conservation projects, such as works to traditional railings, render and joinery, as well as historic roof maintenance, and public realm works. A full list of towns can be found in the Notes to Editors.

Making the announcement, Minister Noonan said: "I am delighted to launch, in collaboration with the Heritage Council, another year of the Historic Towns Initiative, supporting the regeneration of further historic towns.

"This initiative will make €2m available to a number of towns, which will, in turn, help drive investment and renewal. I firmly believe that heritage-led regeneration can breathe new life into a town, helping to provide an attractive environment where people can live and work."

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien said: "Along with my colleague Minister Noonan, and the chief executive of the Heritage Council, Virginia Teehan, I welcome today's launch of the Historic Towns Initiative.

"This year, in line with our 'Housing for All' policy, I am encouraging local authorities to work with private owners or occupiers to bring vacant floor areas in historic buildings back into residential use and I invite applications for same. The renewed vibrancy in the heart of a town brings its own economic benefits, as footfall and visitor numbers increase and new light shines into once-vacant commercial and residential premises."

Chief executive of the Heritage Council, Virginia Teehan, added: "Programmes such as this rely on the strength of local communities and businesses in caring for their historic town.

"With support from local and national government, we can use heritage to improve the quality of life for all in our historic towns and address dereliction and vacancy."

Funding applications must be submitted via the Heritage Council's online grants system. The closing date for applications is Thursday, 3rd February at 5pm.

For more information about the Historic Towns Initiative, visit the Heritage Council website.

Call for cross party support of strict penalties for those who steal or damage defibrillators

Over the last number of weeks, there have been attacks on Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) and on their storage cabinets across the country.

CFR Ireland is calling for cross party support for the Life Saving Equipment Bill 2018 which would impose a maximum sentence of 5 years imprisonment or a €50,000 fine or both for those convicted of interfering with a defibrillator or life buoy.

CFRs and other voluntary groups around the country have fundraised to purchase and install these life-saving devices.

Dr David Menzies, Medical Director of CFR Ireland said: "Damage to, or theft of a defibrillator installed for public use could be a death sentence for a patient if it were not available for a patient in cardiac arrest as a result. It is that serious. Locking up AEDs isn't the ideal solution - you wouldn't lock up a fire extinguisher."

In the event of a cardiac arrest, CPR and defibrillation within the first 10 minutes is the most important intervention. The patient's chances of survival drop by 10% for every minute, treatment is delayed. There are estimated to be over 13,000 AEDs in Ireland.

John Fitzgerald, Chair of CFR Ireland said: "CFR Ireland believes that strict penalties should apply to those guilty of theft or damage to life saving devices such as defibrillators. The issue of defibrillator theft and damage is not new, it is time for action. I would also appeal to those who stole the AEDs to return them."



Thomas Burke and Rachael Mythen at the St. Vincent's Foundations's St. Stephen's Day swim at Arklow South Beach.



Lillian Keating, Sarah Kinsella and Sarah Dowling at the New Year's Day Fireworks display in Tinahelly.



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Third level opening proceeds as planned after meeting with stakeholders

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD confirmed on Friday that the third level sector will recommence on-site activity on the basis of the continued operation of the Safe Return Plan.

This follows the Minister's meeting on Friday with student, staff and management stakeholders.

Minister Harris said: "Education is an essential service and I am pleased to confirm the reopening of third level on site will proceed consistent with public health advice from Monday. Our priority will be teaching and learning."

"There is a staggered reopening of third level with five of our higher education colleges reopening on Monday and a further five reopening the following week. Others will follow throughout the course of the month. Apprentices are already on site in the technological sector continuing their training."

"Since third level reopened in September, public health teams have been working with third level providers to ensure staff and students can safely access education. Last month we provided a fund of €9 million fund to purchase antigen tests for staff and students to provide an extra layer of protection. This will continue to be rolled out over the coming weeks and months."

Minister Harris confirmed his Department is also working with the Health Service Executive to roll out Vaccination Week again this semester to ensure students can access their boosters.

Colleges will operate in line with the Safe Return Plan, which provides a detailed framework for a safe return to campus, and which enabled the successful return to and remaining on site in higher and further education and training since last October.

Implementation of the Plan in campuses and other educational settings will continue to be overseen by the Department working closely with partners across higher and further education and training.

The Irish Second-level Students' Union (ISSU) had issued a statement last Wednesday complaining that schools were rushed to put in place adequate risk-mitigation measures to ensure a safe return for students. Its statement came following the

announcement of a full re-opening of schools with a two-day notice.

3rd Year student Louisa Tyrrell, the ISSU Regional Officer for Wicklow, said "As a third-year student myself, I am extremely disappointed in the Department of Education's decision to have a full reopening of schools."

"With case numbers rising some students and teachers may not feel it is safe for them to return to the classroom. As such, I cannot see how at risk students will receive the same standard of education."

"With no online learning options in place if we see extreme absences this week while having in-person teaching, students unable to come into the school will be at an acute disadvantage."

"With a substitution crisis in place, the cover needed for absent teachers simply does not exist. From my own experience, I am not confident that the new measures in place will make an effective change in time for a sudden full return to school."

The ISSU complained that students were not consulted on the announcement of the re-opening.

"This demonstrates a disregard for how important the voice of students is in this discussion, as an equal stakeholder in education," the ISSU stated.

"This approach to finalising the return to school without consultation comes as a surprise, considering a very productive and close relationship between a wider pool of stakeholders with the Department of Education in recent months, in response to the challenges that the pandemic has brought about."

The ISSU called for an open and solution-oriented discussion with all education stakeholders on how to minimise disruption of teaching and learning.

The union called for: A phased return to school, starting from Monday, January 10th, prioritising in-person tuition for exam year students and students with Special Education Needs (SEN); The urgent sourcing of HEPA filters for all class-

rooms; Additional adjustments to be made to the Leaving Certificate and Junior Cycle exam papers for 2022. The ISSU is urging all stakeholders in school communities to adhere strictly to public health regulations in order to ensure the safety of schools for all students and staff.



The Walsh family at East Glendalough School getting ready for the 'Field of Dreams Streets' of Wicklow 5km run

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Arklow makes history with country's first Pride Crossing

Arklow Town made history on 21st December 2021 as being the first place in the Republic of Ireland to install a permanent Pride Rainbow Pedestrian Crossing on Arklow's Main Street.

The project was initiated by local filmmaker, author, and LGBTQ+ activist Dave Thomas. It was first proposed in 2016 but was not passed at the time. Dave proposed the initiative again in early 2021.

"I am thrilled beyond words that Arklow Municipal District accepted my proposal and created this amazing crossing on Arklow's Main Street," says Dave.

"It would never have happened without the support from the Arklow Town Team, Town Engineers, Arklow Municipal District Staff and Administrator Claire Lawless, along with the County Councillors.

"I would like to give a special mention to Cllr Peir Leonard who took on this initiative on my behalf and who underlined the importance of this project to the other Councillors. Cllr Leonard has been a fantastic ally for the Arklow LGBTQ+ people.

"It is a very important public statement from Arklow on acceptance of the diversity of the town, publicly supporting the LGBTQ+ community and it clearly tells young people questioning their sexuality that no matter who you are or what your sexuality may be,



you are accepted for who you are in your own hometown. It acts as a beacon of hope, inspiration, and support.

"It also is a very public way to celebrate the diversity in the town and to show the world how progressive Arklow can be."

The colourful crossing can be seen at the Traffic Lights located at the Post Office in the centre of

Arklow's Main Street.

Wicklow County Council stated that "Arklow Municipal District and its Elected Members are very proud to show their support for the members of the LGBTQ+ community through the installation of a Pride crossing on Arklow Main Street.

"We hope that this project will highlight to those passing through

the Main Street area that the community in Arklow and its environs is an inclusive one where everyone is treated equally.

"Arklow Municipal District is delighted to be setting an example on a national level in this regard and we hope that this project will lead the way for other local authorities and communities to follow."



Arklow RNLI members Craig O'Reilly, Liam O'Neill, and Jimmy Myler are pictured at the St. Vicent's Foundation's St. Stephen's Day swim on Arklow South Beach.

Wicklow winner takes 50 minutes to scoop horse racing bonanza just short of €5,400

Windfall triggered by four winners at Hereford & Lingfield

A County Wicklow punter took just 50 minutes to turn a Horse Racing wager into a mega four-figure windfall after four selections beat the odds in quick succession.

The anonymous customer had picked the four horses for a €50 accumulator and placed the bet via their online BoyleSports account in the hope of all four all winning.

The incredible winning streak started with 5/6 favourite Porfin in the 2.00 at Lingfield. Next up was Red Rookie, who obliged at 11/8 in the 2.15 at Hereford, before Twistaline (7/2 in the 2.35 at Lingfield) and Felton Bellevue (9/2 in the 2.50 at Hereford) completed the coup.

With four winners in a row in the bag, the lucky punter was able to log back in to see their account boosted by a grand total of €5,388.28 to kick off their new year in style.

Sarah Kinsella, spokesperson for BoyleSports said: "Blink and you'd miss it, but huge congratulations to our County Wicklow customer who wasn't wasting any time in securing nearly €5,400 on Tuesday. They made it look easy with four well fancied runners, so fair play to them and happy spending!"

Whitmore calls for extension of public facilities in Wicklow during winter months

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has called on Wicklow County Council to extend the opening times of public facilities such as public toilets during the winter months in light of more people engaging in outdoor recreational activities throughout the year.

Deputy Whitmore said "More and more people are engaging in recreational activities not just during the summer months but throughout the year which means they will need the same access to public facilities as a result.

"A group contacted me concerned that public toilets at Glendalough close at 3pm during the winter months while the carpark closes at 4pm. At that time of day many people are either coming down from a walk or embarking on one and should therefore be able to access public facilities as a result.

"In light of this I have written to Wicklow County Council asking that the public toilets at Glendalough be opened for longer, at least until 4pm when the carpark closes. They responded to say that the tendered contract allowed for



Jennifer Whitmore TD

these closure times which facilitate the cleaning staff. However, I asked if the contract with the company managing the facilities could be amended to extend it to at least

4pm. I am still waiting to hear back on this.

"In the meantime, I believe it is a conversation that needs to be had across Wicklow, such as Brittas Bay that enough bins are available throughout the year. Just the other day someone sent me a photo of an overflowing bin at Brittas and already we are into December. It means the demand is staying relatively high for facilities like bins and toilets, and we need to see that popular spots continue to have the necessary public facilities throughout the year, and not just during the summer months.

"I will continue to liaise with the Council on this in the hopes that an all-year plan can be developed to maintain popular places in Wicklow while also serving the needs of those who visit them."

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Maria Lancaster with Emily and Rebecca Murphy at the fireworks display on New Year's Day in Tinahely.

Fresh plans lodged for Enniskerry housing development

Capami Limited have lodged a fresh application with An Bord Pleanála for a Strategic Housing Development of 219 units (135 houses & 84 apartments) at Kilgarron Hill in Enniskerry.

Capami was previously refused permission on two occasions by ABP for the development of houses on Kilgarron Hill but have now made a third application which they lodged on 15th December.

The new application contains a revised Natura Impact Statement and Hydrological Assessment Report.

Separately, applications for 84 residential units on Cookstown Road and 22 units at the rear of Kilgarron Hill from Cairn Homes and SPV Limits respectively, could

mean over 300 new homes in Enniskerry if all get the green light.

ABP is due to decide on the Capami application by 14th April. Wicklow County Council will decide on Cairn Homes' application next month. The development on Cookstown Road would include 10 sheltered housing units. SPV Limited's application is at pre-validation stage.

On the previous two occasions, in September 2020 and January 2021, ABP refused permission to Capami for the development because of con-

cerns over the potential adverse effect on the Knocksink Wood Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Many local residents and elected public representatives also made objections.

In refusing permission previously, ABP's Inspector's Report stated "Having regard to the deficiencies in the information provided in the submitted Natura Impact Statement, as relates to a Qualifying Interest of the Knocksink Wood Special Area of Conservation, namely 'Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and

Blechnum in the British Isles', and in relation to the potential in-combination impacts of the proposed waste management facility in the vicinity of the site, the Board is not satisfied that the proposed development, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of the Knocksink Wood Special Area of Conservation in view of the site's conservation objectives. In such circumstances, the Board is precluded from granting permission."

Fire breaks out at historic Kynoch Lodge in Arklow

A family was lucky to escape with their lives after a fire broke out at Kynoch Lodge in Arklow over the holiday period.

The historic building in Ferrybank went up in flames on 29th December. Kitty Brennan, ages in her 80s, and her family who were visiting from abroad, were all in the house at the time.

According to BuildingsofIreland.ie, Kynoch Lodge was "built c.1895, originally as a temporary structure. The house is rectangular in plan with a five-sided projecting bay to the north-west corner and two widely spaced canted bays to the south elevation. The façade

is clad in painted timber whilst the slated double-pile gable-ended roof has an overhang with decorative bargeboards, and six relatively small brick chimneys. The entrance is located within a gabled porch to the north-facing front elevation, and consists of a panelled timber door with plainly glazed sidelights. There is a round moulded panel with a lion's head above the door. There is a now disused former doorway to the east of the porch. The windows are flat-headed and have mullioned and transomed timber frames. Cast-iron rainwater goods. The house is set within extensive secluded grounds overlooking the Avoca River."



Members of the Wicklow Fire Services attend a fire at the historical Kynoch Lodge over the holiday period.

Coolnagreina transferred to Tiglin

The operations of the Coolnagreina Centre on Trafalgar Road in Greystones has been transferred to Tiglin from the Young Women's Christian Association of Ireland (YWCA).

The transfer was completed on 9th December. In its running of the centre, Tiglin wish to implement minimal changes and will continue the Christian work and ministry which the YWCA has been operating the centre under to date, and put this ethos at the centre of the vision Tiglin has for the centre going forward.

It's understood that Tiglin wish to continue with the activities which take place at the centre in the same manner in which they have been carried on to date.

These will be complemented with supported accommodation and aftercare for a small number of female Tiglin graduates along with family supports.

The YWCA say that the step is necessary in order to achieve both theirs and Tiglin's legitimate interests in ensuring the continuation of the work and success of the Centre.

The nearby building of Carrig Eden in Greystones is also operated by Tiglin and serves as the supported accommodation and aftercare facility for Tiglin's male graduates.

The Coolnagreina Centre was originally a private residence before it became a holiday home in 1894, providing safe accommodation to women who were shop workers or in domestic service.

Harris meets Minister for Transport to discuss N81 upgrade

Minister Simon Harris TD last week met with the Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan to discuss the upgrade of the N81. Minister Harris sought the meeting on foot of his work seeking much needed improvements to the route.

Minister Harris said: "Firstly, I would like to thank everyone who participated in my N81 survey last year. The information residents and commuters shared with me has been extremely helpful in my dealings to date with the Department of Transport, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and the National Transport Authority (NTA) regarding the N81.

"The purpose of my meeting with Minister Ryan today is to ensure that much needed road safety improvements, ring roads of Baltinglass and Blessington are designed in an integrated plan for the entire N81 combining the enhanced public transport and further pedestrianisation and public realm improvements in Blessington and Baltinglass".

Minister Harris continued: "I am happy to report that Minister Ryan



Minister Harris

has undertaken to bring the transport agencies together along with County Council and Department of Transport to devise a wholistic plan to deliver a comprehensive upgrade

of the N81".

A number of immediate safety improvement measures along the N81 have been already granted funding including the Hangman's Bend realignment scheme and new footpaths at Tuckmill. Funding has also been allocated towards further examination of the necessary road safety improvements needed to the south of Blessington and the need for proper bus stop facilities at Hollywood Cross.

Minister Harris concluded: "I emphasised to Minister Ryan the excellent opportunity offered by the N81 to design a road upgrade that will combine the best of modern sustainable and public transport with much needed road safety. I will of course continue to work on ensuring the most immediate road safety works are delivered on the N81."

'Issues with the 185 Bus Route must be addressed'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has called on the Minister for the Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport Eamon Ryan to act immediately to have the serious issues with the 185 Bus Route addressed.

He made the call after meetings with Go Ahead and the National Transport Authority (NTA) failed to resolve the issues with the 185 route that serves Enniskerry. Deputy Brady is now asking that the license to operate the 185 be given back to Dublin Bus.

"Since Go Ahead took over the 185-bus route from Dublin Bus there has been a significant decline in service in terms of reliability," said Deputy Brady.

"On a daily basis now passengers trying to get to or from Enniskerry are left stranded as the scheduled bus fails to show up, unfortunately this has been constant since the route was privatised and handed over to Go Ahead.

"I have held meetings now with both senior management from Go Ahead and the CEO of the National Transport Authority Anne Graham. I expressed my frustration and that



John Brady TD

of the community that rely on the 185 at both meetings, and how much the route has deteriorated since Go Ahead took over operating the route from Dublin Bus.

"At both meetings it was acknowledged that there were some issues and that measures

were being put in place to address them.

"Unfortunately, despite assurances that were given, the public that use the 185 are still experiencing major issues. This week alone a considerable number of buses simply didn't show or were canceled.

"I have now written to the Minister for the Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport Eamon Ryan and asked him to immediately intervene, and to ensure that the major issues with the 185 are immediately addressed.

"It is very apparent that Go Ahead have failed to deliver a fit for purpose service to the community that needs and rely on it. I believe that now is the time for the license to operate the 185 route be withdrawn from Go Ahead and be given back to Dublin Bus who operated this route without any difficulties for many years."

Increased penalties for motorists who park on footpaths, cycle tracks and bus lanes

The Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan has signed regulations doubling from €40 to €80 the fixed charge penalty for motorists caught parking on footpaths, cycle tracks and bus lanes. The new €80 penalties will come into operation on the 1st February 2022.

Minister Ryan said "I am very pleased to announce these increased penalties which will both promote active travel and encourage a more considerate use of road space. Parking on footpaths puts vulnerable pedestrians, such as wheelchair users and those pushing buggies, at significant risk by forcing them off the footpath and into traffic.

"Parking in bus and cycle lanes endangers cyclists and undermines State investment in sustainable public transport infrastructure. These increases should help improve the safety of all vulnerable road and footpath users, by creating a more effective deterrent to these specific forms of illegal parking."

Minister of State with responsibility for Road Safety Hildegard Naughton T.D., also welcomed the increases

"Obstructing footpaths, bus lanes and cycle tracks can confront vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists, with particularly dangerous obstacles on busy roads, while also forcing tricky manoeuvres upon buses and cars who may be attempting to overtake such careless parking," she said.

"These new penalties will safeguard families and communities as they make use of our growing network of active travel infrastructure and will encourage more people to walk and cycle as Government invests almost €1 million per day on projects across the country."

Locally, Cllr Erika Doyle welcomed the new regulations but added that "there's work to be done in the enforcement. There's been a very light touch in Bray and it's rampant." She said that it will be particularly important to enforce around schools.



David Murray and Toby at the New Year's Day fireworks display in Tinahely.

Property prices rise by €15,000

Property prices in Wicklow have mirrored the national trend and risen by €15,000 during the quarter, according to the latest MyHome.ie Property Report.

The report for Q4 2021 shows that the median asking price for a property in the county is now €365,000. This means prices have also risen by €30,000 compared with this time last year.

Asking prices for a 3-bed semi-detached house in the county also rose by €12,500 over the quarter to €372,500. This means that prices in the segment have risen by €42,500 compared to this time last year.

Meanwhile, the asking price for a 4-bed semi-detached house in Wicklow rose by €7,500 over the quarter to €482,500. This represents a year-on-year increase of €50,000 in the segment.

There were 436 properties for sale in Wicklow at the end of Q4 2021, a decrease of 13.6% on Q3. The average time for a property to go sale agreed in the county after being placed up for sale now stands at four and a half months.

The author of the report, Conall MacCoille, Chief Economist at Davy, said that the findings of the report painted a grim picture for prospective homebuyers. "The unwelcome message from this quarter's MyHome report

is that there is little sign of conditions easing. This quarter's MyHome report shows annual asking price inflation accelerating to 9.7% in Q4 2021. Prices also rose by an uncharacteristically sharp 1.2% in Q4 during the normally quiet winter months. This reflects the market grinding tighter, with the stock of homes listed for sale having fallen to a fresh historic low of just 11,300. In addition, Ireland's labour market is performing exceptionally well, adding to housing demand.

"The shortage of stock for sale or rental is most acute outside the capital, Dublin, and is also evident in a marked decline in the average time to sale agreed to just three months nationally."

He said that the inflation forecast for 2021 and 2022 would likely now be beaten. "We had forecast an 11% rise in Residential Property Price Index (RPPI) inflation through 2021 and 4.5% in 2022. However, RPPI inflation rose by 13.5% in October and so the out-turn for last year is now likely to beat our forecast."

He added: "Our analysis shows that house prices are now seven times' average incomes.

Even still, Central Bank of Ireland and Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) estimates suggest that the mortgage lending rules have stopped house prices rising by an additional 10-25% over and above existing levels."

Angela Keegan, Managing Director of MyHome.ie, said: "It is promising to see construction activity has increased for seven months in a row to November, but the stark reality is that we will unfortunately be living with a dysfunctional property market for some time to come."

She said that supply was far too low to accommodate soaring demand for housing. "We have never seen such a lack of stock on the MyHome.ie website and, given the significant increase in savings among prospective homebuyers, it is doubtful we will see much let-up in demand during 2022. We can only hope that restrictions are not reintroduced as the construction sector needs to be given every opportunity possible to continue to build properties."

In a separate property price report from Daft.ie, it was found that in Wicklow prices in the final three months of 2021 were 12% higher than a year previously, compared to a rise of 7%

seen a year ago. The average price of a home is now €384,000, 89% above its lowest point, according to the Daft.ie report.

Commenting on the report, its author Ronan Lyons, economist at Trinity College Dublin, said: "Inflation in listed prices continues to cool from its mid-year peak. Nonetheless, at nearly 8% for the year, it remains stubbornly high. This reflects a combination of unusually strong demand and on-going weak supply. Demand for homes to buy, which had been strong anyway from the mid-2010s, has received an unexpected boost during the covid19 pandemic, with prospective buyers able to tap into 'accidental' savings, as expenditure fell during the lockdowns.

"Meanwhile, both new and second-hand supply remain weaker than expected before the pandemic. While the pandemic has changed some particulars, the general health of the housing market is largely unchanged - it is one characterised by weak supply in the face of strong demand. For that reason, additional supply - not just of homes for sale but also of market and social rental housing - remains key to solving Ireland's chronic housing shortage."



Ailish, Sharon and Cora Giles at the 'Field of Dreams' Streets of Wicklow 5km run



Michael O'Reilly and Mary Burke at the St. Vincent's Foundation's sea swim on Arklow South Beach on St. Stephen's Day.

Deal is reached with HSE to save St Joseph's Dementia Care centre

A deal has been reached on funding to secure the future of St Joseph's Dementia Care Centre in Shankill. The centre had for years been struggling to stay open as it sustained heavy losses trying to meet operating costs.

However, a deal has now been agreed between the board of St Joseph's and the HSE which will keep the current residential service in place.

The service provides 60 beds and 120 day care places supported by an army of 200 volunteers and a team of over 100 dedicated staff.

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said: "Keeping St Joseph's open was a key commitment of mine during the election and remained so when I took office.

"I worked closely with their excellent chief executive Emma Balmaine when in opposition to lobby for the continuation of the service.

"So, when I was given the honour of being Minister for Health, I made it a top priority to make sure the doors of St Joseph's remained open.

"There was no way it was

going to be allowed to close because it is the best dementia care service in the country.

"It sets an example that everyone else can aspire to. Now under this deal the service can continue to provide the superb level of care they do safe in the knowledge their future has been secured."

Chief Executive of St John of God Hospital Emma Balmaine said:

"This is a most special day in the history of Saint Joseph's which celebrates 60 years of service this year.

"I want to thank Minister Donnelly for being with us from the start and assisting our efforts to sustain the service and his unwavering support and help since he took office in making this day happen.

"The Minister's support along with Minister Mary Butler for this deal has helped give a most



Minister Stephen Donnelly

precious gift to the most vulnerable and their loved ones who need Saint Joseph's now or who will need it in the future.

"We are equally pleased on Christmas week to be able to make this hugely important announcement to our staff, our residents and their families and our volunteers and supporters and to be finally able to put everybody's minds at ease after such a long and stressful campaign to secure the future of St Joseph's.

"Anyone who has ever been through its doors will know how unique St Joseph's truly is - I know both Ministers appreciate this fact - and today I pay special tribute to the staff and management there for the remarkable dedication and commitment shown through the toughest of times over the past 2 years.

"There are now brighter days ahead and we look forward to them with confidence and a sense of new found opportunity."

Agri Aware 2022 Farm Safe Schools Programme launched

Minister of State with responsibility for Farm Safety at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Martin Heydon T.D. launched the Agri Aware Farm Safe Schools Programme for 2022 last Thursday.

Minister Heydon said: "I am determined that we get the message of 'Safety First' onto every farm. That is why I am delighted to be able to support the Farm Safe Schools Programme for 2022. It is important that we take every opportunity to emphasise the need for a change of culture around safety on our farms.

"I believe children can play an important role in improving safety on farms by bringing the safety message home to their families. We should not underestimate the ability of young people to deliver real and tangible change and this programme can empower them to do so."

The Agri Aware Farm Safe Schools programme in association with, the Irish Farmers Association, Agrikids and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine is just in its second year.

As a pilot programme, Farm Safe Schools ran in over 500 schools across Ireland and impacted over 21,000 primary pupils, in an attempt to improve farm safety nationally in 2021.

Despite Farming accounting for only 6% of national workplaces, it accounts for almost

half of workplace deaths.

The Farm Safe Schools Programme has three modules: Farmer and Field Safety, Animal Safety and Machinery Safety, highlighting the many risks on farms to schoolchildren.

This curriculum-linked programme aims to engage, educate and empower Irish children to become farm safety ambassadors and in doing so help create a safer, brighter future on Irish farms.

Farm Safe Schools 2022 will run from February to May and is free for all schools to

sign up. Schools can register at agriaware.ie.

The Agri Aware Farm Safe Schools programme in association with, the Irish Farmers Association, Agrikids and The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine is in just its second year.

Despite Farming accounting for only 6% of national workplaces, it accounts for almost half of workplace deaths (HSA Report)

As an existing component of the SPHE curriculum, this programme will also provide Irish primary school classrooms with fun, interac-

tive resources and webinars all tailored to the Farm Safe School ethos.

In order to become accredited Farm Safe Schools, teachers must cover three topics in each of the 3 programme modules (two topics for younger classes) and show evidence of learnings achieved for each.

Modules cover everything from Farmer and Field Safety, as well as Animal and Machinery Safety.

Teachers can create a web page, a logbook or blog page to showcase their classes' hard work on raising farm safety awareness. They are also

encouraged to share their progress via social media, using the hashtag #FarmSafeSchools.

As well as achieving the status of becoming a recognised 'Farm Safe School', participating schools who show excellence in each module and achieve the Superstar status of accreditation will have the opportunity to be crowned the 'Farm Safe Schools Champion'. The inaugural Farm Safe Schools Champions were Scoil Naomh Bríd, Talbotstown, Co. Wicklow. The school has 76 pupils and completed the programme across all classes.



Martin Heydon TD (left) launching the 2022 Agri Aware Farm Safe Schools Programme

Purple House European Challenges in 2022

Purple House Cancer Support Centre has two exciting European Challenges planned for 2022.

If you are up for the challenge of walking the Camino this May, or cycling from Bray to Paris in June, Purple House wants to hear from you.

The Camino trek will take place from the 15th-22nd May 2022 will include a fully guided trek over 6 days from Sarria to Santiago de compostela. The trek will be under the guidance of Camino experts 'Follow The Camino'.

The Bray to Paris Cycle will take place from the 15th-20th June 2022 and will include 5 days of cycling under the guidance of Irish Cycling Safaris from Purple House in Bray to the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Funds raised from both events will help families impacted by Cancer by providing counselling, hospital transport, art therapy for children, bereavement support services and cancer survivorship programmes at Purple House in Bray and through their virtual Cancer Support Services to people across Ireland.

To sign up for either challenge, please contact Stephanie at Purple House on 012866966 or visit www.purplehouse.ie



Changes to events at Whale Theatre

Due to COVID-19 government policies, there are changes to Whale Theatre schedules. These have been difficult decisions for the theatre to take.

Two events, listed below, have been postponed until further notice. Ticket holders have been advised and will be notified of new dates. Refunds are available if needed, please contact the theatre.

Please contact Whale Theatre at ask@WhaleTheatre.ie if you have any queries.

"Whale Theatre thanks all for their continued support and patience.

These have been very challenging times," the the-

atre stated. "Whale Theatre wishes everyone a safe and Happy New Year."

• 7 and 8 January 2022 - David O'Doherty Whoa is Me! Postponed until further notice.

• 15 January 2022 - Strung Live in Concert. Contemporary Irish music ensemble. Postponed until further notice.

Full information, all future events, bookings and details from Whale Theatre



Signal Arts Centre submission call for 2023

Signal Arts Centre is currently accepting submissions for exhibitions in 2023. The deadline for applications is Friday, March 25th at 5pm.

All submissions should include:

- A proposal including a title, covering what you hope to exhibit if you are successful.
- A minimum of six images in digital format clearly marked with your name and title of picture. All images should be suitable for print reproduction and accompanied with their dimensions.
- C.V. (art related only) and artist statement (for PR Purposes).
- There is an exhibition fee of €250 to be paid by the artist if selected.

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

Haiti in Need

Since the publication last year of 'Memories of Haiti and Other Stories', the situation in Haiti has seriously deteriorated. The cost of living soared and riots, violence and kidnappings became common. Gangs abound, the assassination of the president and then the devastating earthquake.

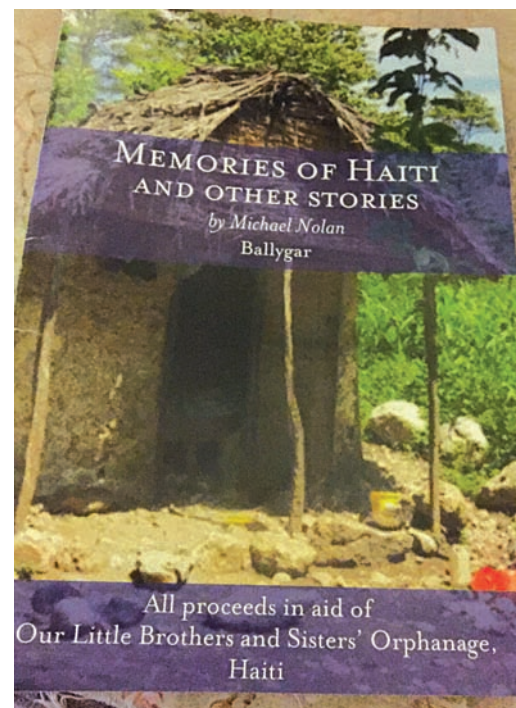
The proceeds of the book 'Memories of Haiti and other stories' by Michael Nolan are going to 'Our Little Brothers and Sisters' Orphanage, Kenscoff, Haiti.

Life expectancy in the country is low with many children being orphaned and sometimes abandoned. The Orphanage comes to their rescue.

Due to a past, tragic event a secure fence was constructed around the Orphanage but outside workers have difficulty getting there and often fail due to the riots and violence.

The book is available from the author (who was a volunteer at the Orphanage) for €5 (€7 by post): Michael Nolan, Tully, Ballygar, Co. Galway, F42 WR88

Or email mikenolantul@gmail.com / 087 9695924



Pictured at the launch of 'Ireland On The Box' are: Director of the National Library of Ireland, Sandra Collins, with RTÉ Director-General, Dee Forbes, RTÉ presenter Bláthnaid Treacy and Brid Dooley, Head of RTÉ Archives. RTÉ television turned 60 on new year's eve, and RTÉ is marking the occasion with a special photographic exhibition presented in partnership with the National Library of Ireland (NLI). Ireland on the Box running at the National Photographic Archive in Meeting House Square, Temple Bar, Dublin. The free exhibition explores six decades of television in Ireland, through entertainment, drama, sport, music, education and news and current affairs programming. From "Roll it there, Róisín" to "A nation holds its breath" and from "Well, Holy God" to "Coola Boola", iconic phrases from popular TV programmes and national moments of celebration will connect visitors to recent shared cultural history, represented in images which feature the many familiar faces that graced Irish television screens throughout 60 years of RTÉ television, from the early days, right through to more recent times. Pic: Andres Poveda

Rhythms - A group exhibition by ReVerve

Signal Arts Centre, Tuesday, January 4th to Sunday, January 16th 2022



Rhythms is a response to an idea by a group of nine visual artists based in Meath and surrounding area.

This body of work by ReVerve was made through a mutual and energising process of investigation, exploration, constructive discussion and a sharing of processes and ideas over the last 2 years.

Works reflect each artist's own practice in interpretations and narrative, while at the same time there is a collaborative thread running through the show.

Techniques and materials displayed show a diversity reflecting the membership of ReVerve. Rhythmic stitching, photography, painting, printing, charcoal, soft and hard sculptures and installation works are present in thoughtful and investigative ways.





Rachel Saint Sevin, who was shortlisted in the Individual of the Year category for her efforts in the clean-up group Arklow Coast Care, is pictured over the Christmas holidays with fellow beach cleaners Peter Dunne and Eileen Gough.

Households will be paid for renewable energy they produce under Micro Generation Support Scheme

The Green Party has welcomed Minister Eamon Ryan's announcement of two new schemes that will support households and communities to play their part in climate action by paying them for electricity that they export to the national grid.

The Clean Export Guarantee will allow households and communities with small installations of solar panels to be paid a competitive market rate for electricity that they export to the grid. The Clean Export Premium guarantees a payment rate for the next 15 years for medium sized generators such as solar panels on community centres and farm buildings.

Welcoming the news, the Green Party's Spokesperson for Climate Action and Environment and Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action Brian Leddin TD said: "I welcome the announcement that householders will be paid for electricity that they produce. This was a commitment in the Programme for Government and will support householders to generate their own electricity. The new announcement of a higher tariff for community groups and farmers is particularly welcome. It allows us all to take a collective stake in climate action by providing a stable source of income for sports halls, community groups, and other community owned buildings through the production of solar power. Farmers will be offered a sustainable and stable source of income from solar power while ensuring that they are less vulnerable to electricity price rises.

"The Green Party is delivering in government and the measures announced today will allow a large amount of people to have their own stake, either through their home, their community or their farm, in a clean renewable future."

The Irish Solar Energy Association (ISEA) has welcomed Minister Eamon Ryan's announcement today that a new Microgeneration Support Scheme framework is to be introduced with customers likely to receive first payments in summer 2022. ISEA, who have been advocating for greater supports for rooftop solar projects, say this has potential to be among the most impactful climate measures introduced this decade.

The measures announced today are aimed at increasing the amount of renewable electricity generated by energy users. Solar panels located on domestic and business rooftops as well as in agricultural settings are likely to be the most common technologies used. While this electricity is primarily designed to be used where it is generated, the energy consumer will now be compensated for excess electricity sent back to the grid. SEAI Grants of up to €2,400 will be maintained for domestic customers

to cover the upfront costs of installing solar panels or other similar technologies. Businesses, farms and community buildings up to 5.9kW will also be eligible for grant support.

Welcoming the announcement Conall Bolger, CEO of ISEA said "People across the country have a strong desire to play their part in the decarbonisation of our society. Today's announcement will provide a new option, empowering people farmers, communities and businesses to produce their very own green energy. At a time when energy bills are soaring this will empower many more people to reduce their costs and dependency on energy markets.

"These new measures can deliver a step-change in how Irish society responds to climate change; giving people an entry point to take meaningful action. The potential is huge, Ireland could be generating 1 gigawatt (GW) of solar energy from this 'customer scale generation' by the end of the decade."

Bolger welcomed that the measures provide both upfront assistance and a long-term financial incentive. "The original scheme design omitted support for the capital investment in solar PV, which concerned ISEA greatly. It is good news that the government has heeded the calls from industry and citizens, as it is more likely to result in widespread use of microgeneration.

"Similarly providing farms, communities and small businesses with support addresses a long-standing gap in our policy framework. This framework could enable farmers, often cast as the pariahs of the climate conversation, to take practical and positive actions towards decarbonisation. Small businesses and communities can play a more active role, not only reducing emissions but also supporting the wider community to do so. Inclusion of businesses, communities and farms can maximise the significant potential of microgeneration."

Bolger has however warned that the current bottlenecks being experienced trying to connect projects to the electricity network must be addressed or these efforts may be redundant. "The solar technology is there and ready to be deployed with householders, farmers and communities all eager to engage. One of the biggest risks is ESB Networks. They must be primed to connect every single customer scale generator within a consistent and reasonable timeframe. The delays that have been experienced by solar projects to date can no longer be an option."

Bolger commended the planned removal of Building Energy Rating (BER) restrictions as a condition of accessing support for the Microgeneration Support Scheme.

Want to be a leader in climate action?

County Wicklow Partnership is offering its free "Climate Action for Wicklow Communities" training to all residents of County Wicklow, starting 1st February 2022.

This 8-week training course will help communities to:

- Understand what projects will make meaningful contributions to reduce our collective carbon footprint and become more environmentally sustainable.
- Become more resilient in the face of climate change.
- How we can make better purchasing choices.
- Identify projects that are eligible for funding under LEADER, the Climate Action Fund and other support.

The course comprises 8 workshops, of which participants are required to attend four with the remaining four being selective.

"Naturally we hope you will be interested in attending all of them," said County Wicklow Partnership.

The course modules are:

- 1) Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation, 1st February, Required
- 2) Energy & Water Use, Renewables, 8th February, Selective
- 3) Transport, 15th February, Selective
- 4) Waste, 1st March, Selective
- 5) Growing and Groundskeeping, 8th March, Selective
- 6) Teamwork & Engagement, 15th March, Required
- 7) Green Procurement, 22nd March, Required
- 8) Climate Action Presentations & Discussions, 29th March, Required

The training is organised by County Wicklow Partnership and delivered by Sustineo, a consultancy specialising in Climate Action training. The training is funded by the

LEADER Rural Development Programme, which in turn is supported by: The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and The Department of Rural & Community Development.

The workshops are all on Tuesday evenings 7-9pm at An Tairseach in Wicklow Town, and will facilitate a hybrid learning approach where participants can attend in person or dial into a meeting virtually. Those attending in person will be limited to 20 per session, but we can accommodate additional numbers to the same session via videolink.

Please complete the online survey (link available at [wicklowpartnership.ie](https://www.wicklowpartnership.ie)) to register your interest. Applications to register interest close on 19th January.



Lough Tay. Photo by Giuseppe Milo

New funding stream for Wicklow Biodiversity Officer

In recognition of the vital work that local authorities and their staff undertake in tackling the biodiversity crisis, Malcolm Noonan TD, Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform announced that the Local Biodiversity Action Fund will receive funding of €1.5m in 2022 - a 300% increase in funding for this scheme since 2019.

Minister Noonan also announced that a new funding stream will be made available to ensure that all local authorities have a dedicated Biodiversity Officer.

Green Party TD Steven Matthews and Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore had renewed their calls for a Biodiversity Officer for Wicklow in recent weeks.

Biodiversity Officers are the public face of biodiversity at the local level. They are tasked with supporting the implementation of the National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) and the delivery of national biodiversity targets, commissioning biodiversity surveys and working with the community on projects to improve the status of biodiversity in the local authority area.

Commenting on the

announcement, Greystones Cathaoirleach and Green Party Councillor Lourda Scott said: "I'm delighted to hear that funding to this vital biodiversity funding scheme has been increased. Local Authorities play a key role in addressing the biodiversity emergency, and the benefits of this are shared by all of us, not least local communities. As the incoming Chair of the Climate and Biodiversity Policy Group I'm particularly pleased that the increased funding includes a new stream to extend the Biodiversity Officer programme across the country. Wicklow County Council have already done a fantastic job working within their own biodiversity plans and with communities, to help halt biodiversity loss. However having a dedicated

Biodiversity Officer to support this work would be greatly impactful. Reversing biodiversity loss is among the greatest challenges of our time and this increased investment will go a long way to boost their efforts. Biodiversity officers are a key part of this and I have already urged Wicklow County Council to apply for funding for this role."

The funding was made available, in line with a grant application and award process, to biodiversity officers in the counties that have them, and heritage officers.

Funding awarded is subject to provision of an agreed level of co-funding from the local authority's own resources, and is spent on a project directly related to one or more actions of the National Biodiversity Action Plan

or targeting Invasive Alien Species projects, including species which are included on the on EU IAS list of Union concern. The project outputs must be reported to the Department before the end of the year.

Targeted project areas include: Projects tackling IAS, especially species on the EU IAS list of Union concern; Wetland habitat creation; Management of road verges for native species; IAS remediation work in LAWPRO Priority Areas for Action; Remediation of damaged river corridors; Sustainable visitor management in coastal amenity areas; Restoration/maintenance of foredune habitats.

The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 and its Interim Review are available at <https://www.npws.ie/legislation/national-biodiversity-plan>. Work on drafting Ireland's 4th NBAP is underway and it will go for public consultation and launch in 2022.

New Arklow wastewater treatment plant progresses with demolition of old Wallboard Factory

Irish Water, in partnership with Wicklow County Council, continues to progress works on a new wastewater treatment plant in Arklow, a landmark project that will provide wastewater treatment for the first time for the area.



The old Wallboard Factory

When completed, the treatment plant will bring significant benefits to the local community in terms of protecting the environment and improving water quality in the River Avoca for angling, water sports and marine life. It will also act as an enabler for housing and support economic growth and development in the town.

Irish Water commenced works in September 2021 and has fully completed the demolition of the old Wallboard Factory as well as undertaking site investigation works and diversions at a number of locations on the North Quays. One tunnel shaft has also been sunk in the North Quay area. As part of the next phase of works, a number of traffic management measures will be in place in the North Quay area from today, Tuesday, 4 January 2022 for 3 months with diversion routes clearly signposted. A single lane closure will be in place on the North Quay Road outside the Bridgewater Shopping Centre. Entry to the Bridgewater Shopping

Centre/Aldi will remain open as normal. Traffic leaving the Bridgewater area will exit via a new temporary link road connecting Mill Road to Seaview Avenue. A temporary traffic light system will be in place at the junction of Seaview Avenue and Ferrybank. A temporary road closure will also be in place on a section of the North Quay Road and will extend from the entrance of the Arklow Marina Village to the T-junction at North Quay and Mill Road. Local access will be maintained to the residents of North Quay Road.

Speaking about the works, Michael Tinsley, Portfolio Delivery Manager with Irish Water, said "We are delighted to announce that works on this essential project are progressing well and we look forward to starting 2022 with the next phase of works. Eliminating the discharge of untreated wastewater into the River Avoca has always been a priority for Irish Water and we are committed to ending this current prac-

tice and safeguarding water quality in the river and marine environment.

On the benefits to the local community, Michael added, "The new wastewater treatment plant will have significant benefits for both residents and businesses as well as tourists that visit the area as it will improve the water quality in the River Avoca and enable future economic growth. We will continue to work closely with the local community and on behalf of Irish Water, I would like to thank businesses and residents for their ongoing support and cooperation as we progress this vital project".

The project, which is being carried out by Ward and Burke Water Limited on behalf of Irish Water, represents an investment of €139 million and includes the development of a new, state of the art, wastewater treatment plant that has been designed to provide an ultimate treatment capacity for a PE (population equivalent) of up to 36,000, at the Old

Wallboard Factory site located at Ferrybank in Arklow, two interceptor sewer pipelines (along North and South Quay) to bring untreated wastewater to the proposed plant and a marine sea outfall pipe to safely discharge the treated wastewater effluent to the Irish Sea.

This project marks another major milestone in Irish Water's work to end the unacceptable practice of discharging untreated sewage into our waterways and sea. More than half of all the raw sewage discharges have been eliminated since the establishment of Irish Water in 2014 and Arklow is the largest remaining town without treatment. The commencement of this project and the progress made throughout 2021 and next means that we are on track to eliminate the vast majority of raw sewage discharges by 2025. For more information, visit the Irish Water website at www.water.ie/projects-plans/arklow-wwtp/.

Irish Water is committed to keeping customers informed about their water and wastewater supplies across multiple platforms 24/7 and we encourage customers to engage with us on Twitter @IWCare, through our customer care helpline which is open 24/7 on 1800 278 278 and by setting their location on www.water.ie.

Irish Water is responsible for the delivery of all public water and wastewater services in Ireland. We are committed to continuously upgrading and developing critical infrastructure to support the growth needed in housing and across our economy, while protecting the environment and safeguarding water supplies.



Martin Stapleton, IFA Treasurer, James Kelly, IFA Director of Operations, host John Murphy, Dripsey, Co Cork and Killian Walsh, Bord Gáis Energy.

IFA and Bord Gáis Energy launch new solar energy pilot

IFA and Bord Gáis Energy have launched a comprehensive solar pilot for farmers. The project, which has been in development for over a year, reached a key milestone recently with the successful installation and commissioning of two farms.

At the launch, James Kelly, IFA's Director of Organisation said, "This important partnership with Bord Gáis Energy will see solar energy installations on up to a further 15 farms, across a number of sectors and geographies. The purpose of this pilot is to establish what works commercially and the challenges that create barriers to implementation.

"The farming community want to play an active part in the green agenda, and this is a very real demonstration of this commitment which also reduces cost inputs for farmers as well as helping Government deliver on the 2030 carbon reduction targets."

Martin Stapleton, Chairman of IFA Member Services said, "IFA and Bord Gáis Energy have invested a significant amount of time in this project. For rooftop solar on farms to be adopted in large numbers, there is a need for up to a 60% capital grant to achieve a reasonable payback. To ensure that there is successful adoption of solar, it must be clear that it does not take from any existing capital grants open to farmers."

Colin Bebbington, Director Energy, Marketing and Data at Bord Gáis Energy said "Bord Gáis Energy is committed to contributing to a net zero economy and helping our customers transition affordably to a lower carbon future. We have a longstanding relationship with the IFA and we're proud to be working together on this initiative which will drive solar energy generation on farms, helping farmers to lower their carbon footprint which leads to long term sustainable farming."

Progress in third interim report on Project Woodland

Senator Pippa Hackett, Minister with responsibility for forestry, has published the third interim report on the implementation of Project Woodland.

The report, prepared by the Project Board overseeing the project, recorded notable progress on the implementation of Project Woodland notably the 60% increase in forestry licencing in 2021 compared to last year and the significant progress on development of a new national Forestry Strategy.

The commencement of the legal and regulatory review, with strong interaction with the Working Groups, was acknowledged as the advancement of the development of the new Forestry Strategy, with a draft vision agreed. The report detailed that the consultation on the strategy is already underway, with a public attitudes survey and a community engagement survey completed and broader public engagement planned for the New Year.

It noted progress on other objectives, such as the invitation for quotations for a Training Needs Analysis on licencing and the imminent roll-out of a Pre-Application Discussions pilot.

Welcoming the update, the

Minister said: "This third interim report really highlights the enormous range of work ongoing under Project Woodland. Progress is never easy on big reform projects like this and there is no silver bullet to resolving these issues, but we are definitely moving in the right direction. I would like to highlight the contribution and active engagement of all stakeholders in Project Woodland who are contributing hugely to this progress. Their work has been facilitated by my Department, the chairs of the Working Groups and of course the members of the Project Board. This is very much a shared endeavour with all of us working towards a common goal to fully realise the potential of forestry and trees in Ireland. There is an opportunity to make a real difference and to ensure a bright future for the forestry sector and for society at large. I believe this latest report of the Project Board should give us confidence that, while we are nowhere near the end of this process, progress to date indicates

that we can achieve what we have set out to do."

The Minister added: "There have been some real gains this year not least the continued delivery on licencing. We have issued 4,000 licences this year and exceeded expectations by licencing 8.4 million cubic metres of timber, the highest on record. Our output on forest roads was equally impressive with 260km licensed, double our target.

"I know of course that output on the afforestation side is still very low but my Department is prioritising it and will soon be producing more ambitious projections for licencing for 2022, with a focus on afforestation."

"Overall, I firmly believe that forestry in Ireland, in all its forms, enters 2022 in a far better place than at the beginning of the year. Our resolve to ensure that forestry in Ireland continues to be central to our environmental, social and economic priorities is as strong as ever. It's up to all of us now continuing to work collaboratively to build on this bring further progress in 2022."

Project Woodland was established to reform the regulation and vision for forestry in Ireland.





Clara Kane at East Glendalough School in Wicklow Town getting ready for the 'Field of Dreams' Streets of Wicklow 5km run.

Interested or stressed by public speaking?

If you're looking for a New Year's resolution with a difference then come along to the Greystones Toastmasters open night online and learn what Toastmasters is all about. Greystones Toastmasters is a thriving club with over 20 members and is a great place to develop your public speaking skills.

Whether it's for an impending wedding speech, a business presentation or just generally building on your current skills, toastmasters is an excellent way to improve your communication skills and in particular your public speaking ability.

Here is the newest member speaking about her history with public speaking and how Toastmasters has helped her: "Ever since I was a child, I was terrified and mesmerised by public speaking. Being able to communicate clearly to a group of people without trembling, or forgetting your words is a very good skill to have; especially if you have to make presentations or speeches for any reason (work, social gathering, etc.)."

"The Greystones Toastmasters club is a very nurturing environment for those who are like me, and are wanting to improve their speaking skills, but are too shy to make the first step. I loved that from the very first meeting, everyone has a chance to talk, if not as a Speaker, then as a Table Topic participant. The club members are very welcoming, and supportive of new comers. As a new member myself, I am receiving a lot of helpful guidance in preparing and delivering my speeches."

Toastmasters is an international public speaking club where you share the learning experience with the members and build on their feedback and encouragement to become a powerful, persuasive and inspiring speaker.

Come along to our open night and see what Toastmasters can do for you. For more details just contact Tim on 087 621 8434 or email greystonestoastmasters@gmail.com

LUKE 3:15-16, 21-22

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.' Now when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.'

C.J.

First phase of upgrades to Barndarrig water supply completed

Irish Water has completed the first phase of upgrades to Barndarrig's water supply. Irish Water is working in partnership with Wicklow County Council to deliver the significant upgrade. The project, which began in November 2021, will help to provide a safer and more secure water supply.

A Do Not Consume Notice was issued in February 2021 to protect 213 customers following elevated levels of nitrite in the water supply. The water was deemed not safe for consumption or the preparation of foods. An alternative water supply was put in place to support impacted customers and 5L bottles of water made available at the car park opposite Barndarrig church.

Works involve the construction of over 3km of new water mains and ancillary works linking Barndarrig to Redcross Water Treatment Plant, replacing the local water supply in the area and providing the community of Barndarrig with a safer and more secure water supply. To minimise the impact on the local community, the project is being carried out in phases and is progressing well, with Phase 1 already completed and included the construction of almost 1.5km of new water mains on the R754 exiting Barndarrig.

Irish Water is progressing with phase 2 of the project with works due to get underway in the coming days. To facilitate the safe delivery of these works, traffic management will be in place and the R754 road between Redcross and Barndarrig will be closed from now until early February. Route diversions will be communicated locally. Irish Water and Wicklow County Council say they regret any inconvenience



Joe Carroll, Water Network Programme Lead with Irish Water

these essential works may cause.

Joe Carroll, Water Network Programme Lead with Irish Water, said: "Irish Water is delighted to undertake this important project for the people of Barndarrig and works are progressing well. The new scheme will see the construction and commissioning of over 3km of new water mains from Barndarrig to Redcross Water Treatment Plant, providing the

local community with a safe and reliable water supply now and into the future.

"Irish Water and Wicklow County Council will make every effort to maintain normal supply to our customers throughout the delivery of these vital works. Some short-term water interruptions may be necessary, however, the project team will ensure that customers are given a minimum of 48 hours' notice prior to any

planned interruptions. Standard working hours are between 8am and 6pm, with no work anticipated on Sundays or public holidays."

Also, as part of this project, Irish Water is upgrading the wastewater network which involves the construction of almost 2.5km of new sewer pipeline from Barndarrig to Redcross. A sewer network that is fit for purpose is essential in order to support business and social development in the community. These works will support existing and future growth and development while also improving the overall performance of the sewer network, helping to safeguard the environment.

"Irish Water and Wicklow County Council understand that this type of work may be inconvenient and work crews will make every effort to minimise any disruption these necessary works may cause. The project is being carried out on behalf of Irish Water by Ward & Burke and is expected to be completed in Q2 2022."

The Irish Water customer care helpline is open 24/7 on 1800 278 278 and customers can also contact them on Twitter @IWCare with any queries. For updates on local water supply issues, please visit the Water Supply Updates section of www.water.ie.

Wicklow angling clubs encouraged to apply for Sponsorship Programme

Inland Fisheries Ireland, is encouraging angling clubs in Wicklow to apply for funding under its 2022 Sponsorship Programme.

Angling clubs, groups and associations in Wicklow are being invited to apply for sponsorship funding before the January 21st deadline and in 2022, the €30,000 fund will have a particular focus on initiatives aimed at beginners and young anglers, as well as events that promote sustainable angling tourism.

Over 327,000 adults in Ireland consider themselves an angler while 18% of adults in Ireland that had never been fishing before said that they are "likely" to try angling in the future. Therefore, the sponsorship programme is one of the main funding mechanisms used by Inland Fisheries Ireland to promote angling in Ireland. It awarded funding to 41 angling events and initiatives across the country

in 2021; however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the programme didn't go ahead in 2020.

Of the 41 events that received funding, the state agency supported ten national or international competitions and festivals that showcased Ireland's angling resources and contribution to local economies in 2021. Meanwhile, a total of 28 coaching and juvenile outreach events were supported in 2021, to help increase participation in the sport, along with three public awareness events and angling-related initiatives.

Suzanne Campion, Head of Business Development at Inland Fisheries Ireland, said: "In 2022, our top priority is supporting projects and events that encourage more young people and

beginners to try angling sustainably, as well as initiatives that help grow sustainable angling tourism throughout Ireland."

She added: "As more people in Wicklow enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of being outdoors, mainly driven by Covid-19 guidelines, we are seeing greater levels of interest in angling nationally. For example, nearly one in five Irish adults are "likely" to try angling in the future, according to Amárach Research. In addition to supporting those who would like to go fishing for the first time, we also have a unique opportunity through the Sponsorship Programme to highlight the importance of biodiversity, conservation and sustainable angling."

Applications for funding from the Sponsorship Programme are now invited from angling clubs, associations or any local group organising an angling initiative in Wicklow during 2022. The programme will

remain open for funding applications until Friday, January 21st 2022. Meanwhile, applications for equipment, staff support and biosecurity assistance can be made to Inland Fisheries Ireland throughout the year.

THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

A consumer rights guide to January returns and faulty goods redress

From uncertainty about what to do with unwanted Christmas gifts, to doubts over how long you have to return a faulty item, you may find yourself wondering what consumer rights and protections you have, now that the festive season is over. To help clarify any post-Christmas confusion, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) has put together a consumer rights guide, with practical information and top tips.

FAULTY GOODS:

If you bought an item or received a gift over Christmas, which turns out to be faulty, under EU consumer protection law, you have the right to either: a refund, a repair, a replacement product or a reduction in price, as a solution. This is regardless of whether you bought the item online, instore, at full price, or at a discount. Consumer protection law doesn't currently set out exactly what you are entitled to when you return a faulty item, so it is up to you to negotiate with the business and agree which option suits you best.

Research commissioned by the CCPC showed that the vast majority (99%) of consumers didn't realise they can have up to 6 years to return faulty goods. However, how long the item was used for is considered when resolving issues, so you should act quickly as soon as you notice a fault. Contact the retailer who sold you the item as soon as you can, along with proof of purchase (such as a till receipt), to negotiate a suitable solution.

The CCPC's research

showed that, when asked about the returns period for faulty goods, 45% of consumers believe that it depends on the details of the product guarantee or warranty, which is not the case. Both guarantees and warranties are in addition to your consumer rights, they do not replace them! This means that even if your product guarantee or warranty has expired, you may still be entitled to a repair, replacement or refund, as covered by your statutory rights.

GUARANTEES & WARRANTIES:

Product guarantees and warranties can be popular add-ons for certain types of goods, such as electronics, laptops and smartphones, particular around Christmas time. Although they may offer additional assurances (e.g. a guaranteed timeframe, or to cover costs against damage or cracked screen repairs etc.) it's important to know that they are different to your statutory consumer rights. This is particularly important when it comes to faulty goods.

The CCPC's research showed that the majority

(89%) of those surveyed knew to ask the retailer who sold them the faulty item to fix the problem. A large cohort of respondents also identified the product's warranty provider (68%) and the product manufacturer (50%) as also being responsible for offering a solution.

When it comes to fixing the problem of an item that turns out to be faulty, you should know that irrespective of whether you have a guarantee or warranty, the retailer who sold you the item is responsible for resolving the issue, you don't have to deal with the manufacturer. This is important to be aware of, particularly in instances where a retailer may tell you to contact the manufacturer directly - as this is the retailer's responsibility, not yours.

CHANGE OF MIND RETURNS:

If you bought an item, but have changed your mind about it, or if you received an unwanted Christmas gift and wish to return it, the first thing that you need to be aware of is that your rights and entitlements are different

depending on whether the item was bought online, or in-store. If you buy something online and subsequently change your mind, under EU consumer protection law, you have 14 days from the day the item arrives, to cancel your order and then 14 days from when you cancel, to return the items and get a full refund. If you got something as a gift, the person who bought it online may be able to return it if its within 14 days.

However, if you change your mind about an item you bought in-store, your rights and entitlements will depend on the store's own returns policy, unless the item is faulty. Most stores will offer a returns period, however, it's important to be aware that this is a goodwill gesture on the part of the store, not a legal obligation. So be sure to check out the 'change-of-mind returns' policy on the business's website, or on your till or gift receipt.

DELIVERY DELAYS:

If you bought items online before Christmas from an EU website, but they were either delayed or

never arrived, it's important to know that you have strong rights when it comes to delivery timeframes. If you haven't received your delivery, and the business told you they would deliver it by a certain date, then you are entitled to: 1). Agree a different date, or; 2). Cancel the contract and get a full refund.

If you were not given a delivery timeframe, then, under consumer law, the business must deliver your order within 30 days. Don't forget that you also have 14 days to change your mind if the product arrives too late. It's also important to be aware that a business is responsible for goods until they are delivered to you, unless you organised your own delivery. This means that if a business organises a courier to deliver an item to you, they must ensure its delivery and if the item is not delivered they should organise a replacement or a refund.

EU & NON-EU CONSUMER RIGHTS:

When it comes to items you bought online, one of the most important things



Jackie Hudson and JJ Sweeney at the St. Vincent's Foundation Stephen's Day swim at Arklow South Beach.

to be aware of is that your consumer rights are different depending on where the business you bought from is based. If the goods were bought from an EU-based business you have strong consumer protections, including the right to a refund for change of mind returns (as detailed above) and faulty items.

However, if the goods were bought from a non-EU website, this means that these rights do not automatically apply and therefore, if something does go wrong or you wish to return or exchange an item or gift, it may be more difficult to get the issue resolved. However, be sure to check the business's website to

check the T&Cs for any additional information on your right to a refund and, if it's not clear, contact the business directly to explain your circumstances and ask what options are available to you.

For more information on your consumer rights when shopping, visit ccpc.ie

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COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

NOTICE PURSUANT TO: SECTION 177AE(4) OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED) AND THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS 2001 (AS AMENDED)

Development of a Greenway in Blessington, Co. Wicklow Notice of Planning Application to An Bord Pleanála for Approval

Notice is hereby given that Wicklow County Council intends to seek the approval of An Bord Pleanála under Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) to carry out a proposed development encompassing the Blessington Lake/Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA that will pass through the following townlands in the Counties of Wicklow and Kildare – Blessington, Haylands, Knockieran Lower, Knockieran Upper, Carrig, Sroughan, Lacken, Ballynastockan, Ballyknockan, Carrigacurra, Annacarney, Vallemount, Monamuck, Humphrystown, Baltyboys Upper, Baltyboys Lower, Burgage Moyle, Russellstown, Russborough, Rathballylong, Tulfarris, Glebe East, and Burgage More and passing adjacent to the villages of Vallemount, Ballyknockan and Lacken before returning to Blessington at Knockieran Bridge.

The Proposed Development is proposed to provide a predominately off-road shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists. The Proposed Development will cover approximately 33 km and involve the provision and upgrading of a greenway mostly through forest and woodlands adjacent to the shoreline of the Blessington Lake/Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA.

Traffic lights are proposed at three existing bridge crossings (Knockieran Bridge, Baltyboys Bridge and Vallemount Bridge) to manage a new shuttle system for vehicular traffic. This will create space within the existing bridge cross section for the provision of a shared use path to accommodate users of the Greenway.

The greenway surface construction is proposed to consist of a machine laid, bound pavement. A 20 mm surface course is proposed to be laid on a 40 mm to 55 mm base course on 150 mm Clause 804 subbase on a geotextile layer as required. Construction works will require shallow excavation (maximum depth of 200 mm – 300 mm), tree removal and replacement, placement of culverts, single span bridges over larger streams, fencing and minor landscaping.

The Proposed Development is divided into six sections and is proposed to comprise of the following.

- 1. Blessington** – The Blessington section of the Proposed Development extends from the Wicklow County Council boundary at Russellstown to Blessington. The section comprises 9.2 km in length. This section is proposed to consist of new greenway and the upgrade of existing sections along the route with a connection to Russborough House via an existing underpass of the N81. It is proposed to extend the capacity of the Russellstown car park with an additional 50 car spaces. Works to both the Russellstown car park and the Blessington Greenway Hub and car park will provide electric vehicle charging points, bicycle parking, bins, seating areas, drinking water stations and CCTV. There is 1 no. new watercourse crossing included in this section while several existing crossings are to be retained.
- 2. Baltyboys** – The Baltyboys section of the Proposed Development extends from the Blessington section to the Vallemount section. This section comprises 5.3 km in length. Works to the Vallemount West car park and Baltyboys car park will provide electric vehicle charging points, bike parking, bins, seating, drinking water stations and CCTV. Precast box culverts and gabion retaining walls will be required within this section to construct the Proposed Development. There are approximately 5 no. small watercourses/ditches crossings along this section.
- 3. Tulfarris** – The Tulfarris section of the Proposed Development connects the Baltyboys section to Tulfarris via the R758. This section comprises 3.7 km in length. This section is proposed to consist of new greenway and share the existing road to connect with the Tulfarris Hotel & Golf Resort. There are approximately 2 no. new small watercourse/ditch crossings along its length.
- 4. Vallemount** – The Vallemount section of the Proposed Development extends from Baltyboys to Ballyknockan. This section comprises 5.2 km in length commencing at the Vallemount carpark, which is located adjacent to Vallemount GAA Club. Works to the two carparks in Vallemount East and West will provide electric vehicle charging points, bicycle parking, bins, seating areas, drinking water stations, and CCTV. Precast box culverts and gabion retaining walls will be required within this section. There are approximately 3 no. small watercourses/ditches crossed by the Proposed Development in this section as well as a crossing of the Annacarney Stream.
- 5. Ballyknockan** – The Ballyknockan section of the Proposed Development extends from Ballyknockan to Lacken. This section comprises 4.3 km in length. Gabion retaining walls will be required within this section. Due to the high ground to the east there are a few small tributaries on this section with approximately 13 no. small watercourses/ditches requiring to be accommodated by the Proposed Development.

- 6. Lacken** – The Lacken section of the Proposed Development extends from Lacken to Knockieran Bridge. This section comprises 5.6 km in length. The section involves new greenway construction. Precast box culverts, concrete underpasses, and gabion retaining walls will be required within this section. It is proposed to extend the capacity of the Knockieran car park with an additional 50 car spaces. Works to both Knockieran and Lacken car park will provide electric vehicle charging points, bicycle parking, bins, seating areas, drinking water stations, and CCTV. The eastern side of the lake has many small tributaries which will require the Proposed Development to accommodate approximately 7 no. small watercourses/ditches.

Signage will be provided to incorporate visitor information, way-finding information, heritage information and advisory/regulatory information in proximity to road crossings. All signage will be subject to full specification at detailed design stage of the project in accordance with national technical standards and guidance.

A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared as part of the application for approval in respect of the proposed development.

An Bord Pleanála may give approval to the application for development with or without conditions or may refuse the application for development.

A copy of the plans and particulars of the proposed development and the Natura Impact Statement will be available for inspection free of charge between **20th January 2022 to 4th March 2022** (Inclusive of both dates) at the following locations:

- The consultation website of Wicklow County Council
www.wicklow.ie/Living/ConsultationHub – At all hours
- The offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings,
Station Road, Co. Wicklow,
Opening hours: Monday to Friday 9.30am to 12.30pm and 2.00pm to 4.00pm.
(excluding bank and public holidays)
- Baltinglass Municipal District, Civic Offices, Blessington Business Park,
Blessington, Co. Wicklow
Opening hours: Monday to Friday 9.30am to 12.30pm and 2.00pm to 4.00pm.
(excluding bank and public holidays)
- Blessington Library, New Town Centre, Blessington, Co. Wicklow
Opening hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday 10.00am to 5.00pm
(excluding bank and public holidays)
Tuesday and Thursday 10.00am to 8.00pm (excluding bank and public holidays)
- The offices of An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.
Between the hours of 9:15am and 5:30pm Monday to Friday (Excluding bank
and Public Holidays)

For a period of six weeks.

The Natura Impact Statement and the Plans and Particulars of the proposed development may be inspected free of charge at the locations above or purchased at a cost of €50.

Any submissions and observations on the proposed development in relation to;

- the implications of the proposed development for proper planning and sustainable development in the area concerned,
- the likely effects on the environment of the proposed development, and
- the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European Site, if carried out,

may be made in writing to An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1, D01 V902.

Any submission/observation must be received by An Bord Pleanála not later than **5.30pm on 4th March 2022**.

A person may question the validity of any such decision by An Bord Pleanála by way of an application for judicial review under Order 84 of the Rules of the Superior Courts (S.I. No. 15 of 1986) in accordance with section 50 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000 as amended.

Practical information on the review mechanism can be accessed under the heading Publications – Judicial Review Notice on the Board's website www.pleanala.ie or on the Citizens Information website www.citizensinformation.ie

New car registrations in Wicklow up 15%

New Car sales in Wicklow increased last year by 15% - but are still some way off pre-Covid (2019) sales.

By Martin McCarthy

Stats just released by the SIMI show that nationwide Toyota were the best selling car brand in Ireland - with 13,053 unit sales, 12.44% market share - just shading Volkswagen (12,617) and Hyundai (10,740). Interesting trends are appearing, such as the X5 being BMW's best selling model - despite having a starting price of €81,888

and Tesla sales skyrocketing to over 800 new sales last years with prices going from €50,000 to €150,000.

Clearly, the rich and getting richer in Ireland.

Hyundai's Tuscon was the best-selling model with 5,467 sales across the country. The Hyundai SUV pipped the Toyota Corolla (4,361) and Yaris (2,702) with the highly spec'd C-HR not far behind.

Toyota sold an impressive 13,053 passenger cars, which represents more than a 30% year-on-year increase. Toyota maintains that when a wide range of electrified options are made available to customers, they tend to choose these more environmentally friendly models as evidenced by the fact that 92% of Toyota's

sales were for its low emission self-charging hybrid electric vehicles.

Steve Tormey, CEO of Toyota Ireland said, "It's really heartening to see the continued growth in low emission, electrified car ownership in Ireland, as we move ever closer to a world where CO2 emissions will be a thing of the past. At Toyota, we are proud to play our own part in this transition through advancing battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell innovations while furthering the long term viability of hybrids which are set to become even more efficient in the soon to be launched 5th generation models. Given our 4th generation models can operate in full EV mode for up to 80% of the time in urban driving conditions, the future looks very

promising for the next generation of Toyota hybrids.

"We look forward to another successful year in 2022 and are especially excited for the arrival of our first zero-emission full battery electric car in June, the bZ4X. With our focus on deriving as much power efficiency from batteries as possible, something we have been refining for thirty years, the arrival of the bZ4X will mark another exciting chapter in the Toyota story. There's a lot more to come from Toyota as highlighted by our recently announced plans to bring 30 BEVs to the market by 2030, have 3.5 million BEVs on the road globally by 2030, and to achieve 100% carbon reduction in Western Europe by 2035."



The Toyota Corolla Hybrid

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