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Tuesday 15th February 2022 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

SPLASHING THE CASH!

Last week the Government announced over €500 million to mitigate the effects of inflation. It also announced another €200 million in sports grants with over 50 clubs and sports organisations in County Wicklow receiving an unprecedented level of funding.

In total Wicklow received over €3.7m in funding covering a wide range of community and private organisations from GAA, golf, soccer, rugby and athletics.

The awards this year were part of a €200m national fund aimed at supporting sports clubs across the country. Successful applicants received between 75 per cent and 100 per cent of the funding sought.

Privately owned Bray Wanderers received the



Minister Donnelly

single biggest award of €280,000 but there was also substantial funding of several clubs that received over €100,000.

Coolkenno Sports Field Ltd received €150,000, Arklow Rugby Football €138,299, Arklow Town AFC €150,000, Arklow Geradlines Ballymoney GAA received €103,774, Roundwood Athletics Club €148,272, St Patrick's GAA Wicklow €150,000 Stratford Grangecon GAA €134,580, Glencree Society €150,000, Valleymount GAA received €122,952 and



Masie Stapleton, with Niamh and Caoimhe Fanning at the Wicklow Vs Fermanagh Football League Division 3 match in Aughrim. The game finished in a draw, Wicklow 1-10 to Fermanagh 2-07. Pic: Michael Kelly



Minister Simon Harris

Greystones AFC got €150,000.

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said: "I'm absolutely delighted to see so many clubs getting much needed funds that will have a massive impact on their futures."

"The unprecedented scale of the Sport Capital Grant this year shows just how seriously this Government takes the role of sports clubs in our community not just for the role they play in physical health but also our mental health."

"The timing of the

funding could not be better for these Wicklow clubs, like the rest of society, they have been badly impacted by the pandemic.

"I have seen up close the fabulous work the clubs across our county do in providing a vital outlet for young people."

"With the money received the clubs are able to plan for a much brighter future."

Also welcoming the grants, Minister Simon Harris said "Sport is crucial for all communities in County Wicklow and I want to thank all the volunteers in Wicklow Sports Clubs for everything they do to strengthen our communities and well-being."

"It has been a tough two years for many sports clubs, but the pandemic really demonstrated the enormous value of the work of our sports clubs and as a result this year the government

responded with the highest level of individual awards in the Sports and

Capital Equipment Programme. I want to congratulate the 53 suc-

cessful Wicklow Clubs and assure them of my continued support"

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Forest and Ann Thompson at Carrig Eden in Greystones, where a snooker table used by former world champions Steve Davis and Dennis Taylor in the Irish Open was donated.

Wicklow groups invited to apply to Toy Show Fund

The generosity of viewers to the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal is being turned into action with groups which support children in Wicklow being invited to apply for support from the €6.6 Million raised.

The Community Foundation for Ireland, RTÉ's partner in the appeal, is beginning the process of turning the donations into grants supporting a range of local services and supports.

The first year of the appeal in 2020 benefitted an estimated 600,000 children and their families as highlighted in an Impact Report showing how through their donations the 1.7 Million viewers of the Late Late Toy Show have given vital support to communities.

This year's funding is being distributed through two rounds, the first has now opened and is inviting applications from community groups and organisations. It will provide grants of between €5,000 and €20,000.

Grants will be made under three thematic pillars:

Addressing Essential Needs

Grants are available to eligible organisations that can demonstrate the impact of their work at local and community level. Grants within this Strand of funding will be made to ensure that vulnerable children are safe, warm and fed; and they are properly supported in addressing educational needs. This Strand aims to improve living conditions and outcomes of children at risk by providing holistic and practical supports and by improving their educational outcomes.

Improving Wellbeing

Grants are available to eligible organisations that can demonstrate the impact of their work at local and community level. Poor



Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of The Community Foundation for Ireland

health is difficult at any point in life, but it can have significant and long-term impacts in childhood in terms of educational outcomes and emotional wellbeing. Covid has created additional challenges in terms of mental health and social isolation. This Strand aims to improve the mental health and resilience of children and to increase quality of life for children with disabilities and serious health conditions.

Creativity and Play

Grants are available to eligible organisations that can demonstrate the impact of their work at local and community level. Creativity and play are essential to supporting children's development of cognitive and social behaviours. This Strand aims to enhance personal and emotional development, resilience and wellness for disadvantaged children through creative programmes and activities.

Wicklow voluntary, community and charitable groups who wish to apply should check out details including criteria at www.communityfoundation.ie. Applications for this round will remain open until 18th February 2022. A second of grants aimed at Impact will open on 21st February 2022.

Commenting on the success of this year's Appeal, Dee Forbes, Director General, RTÉ said: "We are thrilled that as a result of the public support for the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal, many children's lives will be improved. Some children's lives are harder than others and we are confident that these grants will make a real difference in the lives of many children and families, in communities all around Ireland."

Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of The Community Foundation for Ireland added: "The opening of applications for the second RTÉ Toy Show Appeal is an important moment for groups across Wicklow and around the country. It is when we re-capture the magic of an extra-ordinary Friday night and start turning it into actions on the ground which benefit hundreds of thousands of children and their families. I would encourage Wicklow community groups and organisations to take time over the coming four-weeks to carefully examine the application process and criteria, and if they are eligible to make an application. The team at The Community Foundation take the responsibility which has been placed on them by the viewers very seriously and will in the coming weeks be fully focussed in ensuring that the huge generosity we have is used to transform young lives."



Tutors, volunteers and participants are now being welcomed to the new Luisne in Bray which is opening this week for the beginning of term on February 14th at its new location at Hub D, Egan Business Centre, Upper Dargle Road. The rooms are bright and comfortable. As long as Covid is with us masks will be required. It is not too late to register for courses – see www.luisne.ie for course listings. You will receive a warm welcome. Pictured is the Meditation Room at the new premises.

Wicklow ICA Drama Festival

The 66th Wicklow ICA Drama Festival will take place in Gleanealy Village Hall from 25th-27th February. This is an open festival with a section for One Act plays and a section for Short Plays / Sketches. "We would welcome welcome late entries in both the One Act and Short Play/Sketch section," organisers say. For further information contact Festival Director Hilda Roche at hderoiste@gmail.com or call 087 9833935."

Fundraising walk for commemorative plaque

The Arklow commemorative committee for Archbishop Edward Byrne is organising a fundraising heritage walk hosted by local historian Pat Power in St Gabriel's Cemetery in Arklow on Sunday 20th February at 2.30pm. All are welcome to attend. The committee was formed to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the installation of Wicklow man Edward Byrne as Archbishop of Dublin in 1921. Funds raised from the walk will go towards a commemorative plaque on the grave of the archbishop's parents and infant siblings in St Gabriel's Cemetery. Archbishop Byrne's family and relatives are all from the greater Arklow area. There is currently an exhibition on the Archbishop's life and times on display in Arklow Parish Church. A new panel is added to the exhibition each month.

The walk is weather permitting.

Glendalough Farmers Market

Irish Farmers Markets created the first local Farmers Market in Ireland at the Brockagh Resource Centre in March 2002, now exactly 20 years later they are back, having created over 150

markets nationwide. This market will have all the elements of the best in Irish Food and Crafts to showcase and promote Irish products in one of the busiest tourist sites and holiday sites in the country.

"We will attract the best in Irish Food and Crafts starting with over 20 stalls to include Barrista Coffee from Mcabes Wicklow roasters NewtownMountKennedy, handmade chocolates, Irish artisan cheese with a large selection Mediterranean olives, sugarloaf bakery sourdough bread, Birds and Teas handmade jams and chutneys, organic fruit and vegetables stall, local baked goods and savouries, artisan Italian pasta, street food, local nursery, lots of local craft stalls."

Starting Sunday 13th February and thereafter every Sunday 11 am to 4pm.

For more details contact Sean Mcardle email seandavidmcardle@gmail.com or mobile 087 6115016.

Bingo back at Woodbrook

Woodbrook College are delighted to welcome back bingo on Friday 4th of March- doors open at 7pm, first game 8pm

Meals on Wheels

Enniskerry and Kilmacanogue Meals on Wheels is looking for new volunteer drivers to offer their services. People who can give two or three hours of their time twice a month can contact 086 8322466. The service delivers hot meals to elderly people on Tuesdays and Thursdays. You can also volunteer with the Greystones Meals on Wheels service, or avail of the service if you need it, by calling 01 2877311.

Wicklow Active Retirement Association

The Association is back meeting every Tuesday morning in the De La Salle Pastoral Centre at 11am for tea/coffee and a chat. There is Line Dancing at 12 noon each Tuesday, and the Association Choir started again on Friday 11th February at 3pm in the centre. At the end of April the Association has booked a holiday to Kilkenny. New members are always welcome.

Dogs Trust urgent appeal

Dogs Trust is urgently appealing for foster homes across the country. The organisation received 297 surrender requests from members of the public, from Christmas Day to the end of January, seeking to relinquish their dogs into the charity's care.

If you are over 18, have access to dog friendly transport for vet visits and meeting potential adopters, a secure garden and time to temporarily care for a dog in need, they would love to hear from you. For more information about fostering a dog from Dogs Trust, please visit DogsTrust.ie/Fostering.

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3 MILLION EURO 'DOWN THE DRAIN'

The suspension of the N11/M11 Junction 4 to 14 Upgrade project as of January 2022 is likely to have “serious repercussions” for the work completed to date, councillors were told at last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council.

Just short of €3 million has been invested in the project so far, however in a presentation at last week's meeting Executive Engineer from the Council Deirdre Forde said that some of the work done so far “may become obsolete and may have to be revisited or reworked”.

It was recently confirmed that funding is not available to the Council to advance the N11/M11 Improvement Scheme to the next phase of development at this time.

The reason given by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), which provides grant allocations to local authorities, is that the €1.1 billion in Government funding for new national roads for the first half of the National Development Plan (NDP) is not sufficient to concurrently progress all schemes outlined in the NDP through planning and design in the 2021-2025 period. The progression of projects must be phased in line with available funding and the priorities of the NDP, TII says. Once funding from the Government is available, Wicklow County Council intends to recommence the planning and design of the scheme.

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council Brian Gleeson said “While we are obviously very disappointed at the pausing of the scheme, we will continue to have talks with TII on the matter. We will also be writing directly to the TDs in the county on the matter and looking for their support. The plan is to make sure that the pause is as short as possible. There is the fear that if it's for too long that the work that has been completed will be obsolete and will have to be reworked again, so it is important that we keep the item on the agenda.”

Speaking after last week's meeting, Fine Gael councillor Derek Mitchell said “The project to improve the N11/M11 also includes a number of new long distance bus routes increasing the public transport share along the whole route to Rosslare (for example, doubling the Public Transport share in Arklow). Cancelling it is a serious blow to all transport in Wicklow. The cen-

tral, and most expensive part is improving the 'Bray Bypass' to allow more 'persons' rather than 'vehicles' through. The Interim Bus Priority Scheme, which is to proceed in Co. Dublin, does virtually nothing as it does not change the congested area, which is in Co. Wicklow!

“The Wicklow Rail Line has the worst service of any in the region. My 2018 plan to improve this was mostly rejected. The current studies have cost €3m since 2018, but there are previous studies going back to 2010, so the study cost so far must be €5m. The Green Party Minister of Transport Eamon Ryan has just abandoned Wicklow transport without even suggesting alternatives such as putting a double track rail tunnel through Bray Head to provide a proper service. He has no concept of providing for transport demand, only stopping roads.”

Fine Gael Councillor Irene Winters said “The upgrade is vital to all of the people who live and use that road on a daily basis for commuting, because there is no other option except to use that road. If you live south of Greystones there is one train track and no plans to increase that in any way. I and my colleagues in the Fine Gael party have made our views known, not only to our own minister but to our junior minister and the minister in the Department of Transport. It's actually a disaster to have stopped the N11 Project. It will take so long to get a team together again when money is finally made available for it.”

Cllr Gerry Walsh (FF) said “I would like to express my disappointment that the N11 improvement scheme has been paused, particularly when you look at €3m being spent just to bring it to Phase 2 which is not even up to the design stage. The significance of the N11 as a prime artery from Belfast to Rosslare Europort needs to be emphasised to TII. The traffic on our roads is back to pre-pandemic levels so this problem isn't going to go away. I suggest we correspond with TII again and reinforce the message that this €3 million cannot be

allowed go down the drain.”

Independent councillor Joe Behan said that “€3 million of public money has gone down the drain. That is the minimum amount wasted, as Cllr Mitchell indicated it might be more. This is no mistake. Before the last General Election Eamon Ryan said that if he became the Minister for Transport if the Greens were in Government, he would put a halt to the road schemes, so you can't say he hasn't kept his promise; he has kept it.

“He has basically abandoned the thousands of people and families, not only from Bray and Greystones but all down along the N11 who are suffering morning and evening with the traffic jams that they are stuck in trying to get to work in south Dublin and beyond. It is a complete waste of time talking to Minister Ryan, he has obviously made up his mind with regard to this, he will just not approve this funding.”

Independent councillor Tom Fortune said, “I think there is a massive issue here underneath this and that is the serious question of accountability. The sheer fact that €3-5 million and now we'll have a delay with no indication of when that delay will cease or if it will cease, is absolutely scandalous.

“It highlights to me the serious flaw in the way the system works and the way money is wasted. To pull a plug like this is crazy. I think that proposing to have a meeting with the minister will be an absolute waste of time.

“I think what should happen is that the councillors on the Council from the Government parties should immediately talk and meet with their TDs and come back to the next Council meeting with an update on what they are being told. They should come back to the next meeting and be able to say 'We have spoken to minister X, Y and Z and this is what they are telling us'. Then we can go from there. Imagine thinking it's okay to lose three to five million? I think that is a scandal.”



Thomas Moore delighted to be going to the Wicklow Vs Fermanagh Division 3 match in Aughrim. The final score was Wicklow 1-10 to Fermanagh 2-7

Gardai investigating fatal Assault in Shillelagh

Gardaí are investigating all the circumstances surrounding the fatal assault of a male that occurred at a house in Ballyconnell, Shillelagh, last Thursday evening, 10th February.

Gardaí attended the scene of the incident at approximately 8.15pm. A male, aged in his 30s, was located deceased inside the property with fatal injuries.

The scene was preserved for a technical examination carried out by the Garda Technical Bureau. A post-mortem was conducted on Friday.

A female (aged in her 20s) and a male (aged in his 30s) were arrested at the scene and detained under Section 4 of the Criminal Justice Act, 1984 at Bray Garda Station and Baltinglass Garda Station, respectively.

Gardaí in Baltinglass are appealing to any person who may have information in relation to this incident to contact them.

Anyone who was in the village of Ballyconnell last Thursday or any person who noticed any unusual activity in Ballyconnell that evening is asked to contact investigating Gardaí.

Any person who was in the village of Ballyconnell on Thursday evening between 7pm and 8.15pm and who may have camera footage of the area is asked to make this available. Similarly, if any road user was travelling in the area and who may have camera (including dash cam) footage is asked to make this available to investigating Gardaí.

Any person with any information which maybe relevant to the Garda investigation should contact Baltinglass Garda Station on 059 648 2610, the Garda Confidential Line on 1800 666 111, or any Garda station.

'Shocking and unjustifiable'

West Wicklow councillors unhappy with NTA funding allocations

Councillors from West Wicklow have aired their frustrations with the lack of funding going to the District under the 2022 Active Travel Scheme.

€9 million in funding is being distributed to projects throughout Co. Wicklow under the scheme, however West Wicklow is getting just €670,000 of it.

At a special meeting of Baltinglass Municipal District, held on Friday 4th February, councillors unanimously expressed their dissatisfaction at the lack of funding allocated to the Baltinglass Municipal District under the scheme and in particular the lack of funding allocated to rural villages and towns within the District. They reiterated these frustrations at last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council.

In total 63 projects in Wicklow are being funded from the €239m that has been allocated for 2022 by Minister Eamon Ryan to the NTA for Local Authorities to build, design and improve cycling and pedestrian routes. Wicklow is receiving the least amount among Dublin's commuter counties, with Kildare and Meath each getting over €13.5m. Wicklow's alloca-

tion is however 60% more than its 2021 allocation.

The Council had submitted a list of 79 projects throughout the county to the NTA, requesting €11.7m in funding, and the NTA allocated funding according to the order of the prioritised list sent to them. 12 of the 79 projects were from the Baltinglass Municipal District (17 had been put forward to Wicklow County Council by Baltinglass District engineers) totaling just under €1.65m, but only 6 of the 12 have been funded.

“It is clear from the projects that were approved that there was a focus on funding projects in urban areas rather than rural locations,” a Senior Executive Engineer from the Council told the Councillors. “We did include a number of projects in rural areas, that were not allocated funding. Successful projects were those with the biggest impact on local population in terms of increasing the active travel opportunities. It

is worth noting that the Active Travel programme is a rolling programme, there may be further opportunities to add projects that did not receive an allocation. Also projects not included in the 2022 allocation will remain on the list of proposed future projects and will be considered for future funding applications.”

Speaking at last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council, West Wicklow councillor John Mullen (FF) described the allocation as “shocking and unjustifiable”.

“We West Wicklow councillors represent 25,000 people,” he said. “Out of a €9m allocation, if you are to take it that we all represent populations that do walk and cycle, our district should have gotten 1.68 million. Instead we got €670,000. I want the Council's Roads Department and the senior management of the County Council to ensure this never happens again. I have consistently emailed the management of this council about trying to ensure a balanced investment portfolio for the county. This cannot continue. Rural Wicklow is

not being looked after, at all.”

Cllr Vincent Blake said “we have been short changed in the Baltinglass district,” while Cllr Patsy Glennon said “I think it's a disgrace what was given out to this part of the world. We are kind of used to it out here. It should be pointed out that in the West there was nothing south of Blessington that got any funds. That is a disgrace, there are a lot of very valid projects both cycling and pedestrian that could have been upgraded.”

Cathaoirleach of Baltinglass Municipal District Avril Cronin said “I want to echo my disappointment at the funding allocation and the imbalance of the allocation across county Wicklow. Unfortunately a huge amount of our rural areas again have been forgotten about. This funding seems to have been given to many of the urban areas, but even in my own district here, Blessington, it's the only town that has received this funding. We have many villages such as Dunlavin, Donard, Hollywood and Stratford which have been left out of this funding.”

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Potential for rapid growth of film, food and renewables sectors at Clermont

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, heard about proposals for the further development of Wicklow County Campus planned by Wicklow County Council when he visited the site recently.

The Minister was greeted at Clermont House, Wicklow County Campus, by the Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Shay Cullen; Mr Michael Nicholson, Deputy Chief Executive; Ms Lorraine Gallagher, Director of

Services, and Head of Enterprise, Ms Vibeke Delahunt.

Cllr Shay Cullen welcomed the Minister to the

Campus advising that "Content Creation (Film), Renewables; Food and Beverage - these three sectors are not only well established in County Wicklow but also have the potential for rapid growth and development in line with the Regional Enterprise Plan."

Following a tour of the site for the Content Creation Hub and Clermont House, Minister Harris was briefed on a number of developments and future plans for County Wicklow. These included presentations by Vibeke Delahunt, Linda Healy and Christine Flood on the Local Enterprise Office, the Content Creation Hub, Screen Skills Training, the Screen Strategy, Campus Companies, the



Minister Simon Harris with Cllr Tom Fortune, Cathaoirleach Shay Cullen, Cllr John Snell, and Wicklow County Council officials at Clermont Campus



Head of Enterprise at Wicklow LEO Vibeke Delahunt briefing Minister Harris about the ongoing development of Clermont

Renewable Energy and Food Sectors.

Responding to the presentations, Minister Harris outlined the role of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. He said he could see opportunities for the development of the 55-acre facility, for investment in further education and the possibility of pro-

gressing from further to higher education all within the campus. He welcomed the Council's openness to collaborating with IT Carlow and KWETB to achieve their vision for developing a centre of excellence in innovation, enterprise and education.

Mr. Michael Nicholson, Deputy Chief Executive, Wicklow

County Council, stated: "Wicklow County Council has been busy in its efforts to attract and sustain business in the County and also to create the conditions through provision of infrastructure and support for developing our talent, to ensure that this county is seen as a Centre of Excellence in areas such as film, food and renewables."

Minister Harris also met with Cllr Tom Fortune, Chairman of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support Strategic Policy Committee; Cllr John Snell, member of the Board of Clermont Enterprise Hub CLG, along with senior representatives from IT Carlow and Wicklow County Council.

Campaign group urges Donnelly to act on maternity hospital

The Our Maternity Hospital Campaign has called on Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly to "stop 5+ years of endless negotiation with St. Vincent's Healthcare Group and the National Maternity Hospital".

The campaign group chose St. Brigid's Day to make their statement as she's the Celtic Goddess said to empower women.

Jo Tully, Chairperson of the Our Maternity Hospital Campaign, stated "We've repeatedly been told that the Mulvey agreement is the silver bullet to ensure all reproductive healthcare services are available in the new Maternity Hospital planned for Elm Park, yet why is the government still negotiating 5+ years on? What is St. Vincent's Healthcare Group so resistant to? It appears that maintaining control and power over women's reproductive healthcare is more important to vested interests than providing a badly needed new maternity hospital for the women of Ireland. Women are sick and tired of being in the middle of these power struggles while their healthcare needs are not met and no end in sight.

"It is time for the Minister for Health to prioritise women's reproductive healthcare and listen to us. Stop the platitudes and CPO the site upon which the new hospital will be built at Elm Park or look to a new location. Only State ownership of the land and hospital can guarantee a secular hospital that is fit for purpose."

Architectural contracts signed for Aughrim and Ballywaltrim Libraries

Contracts for the design and management of construction of a new library in Aughrim and an extension to Ballywaltrim Library at Boghall Road in Bray were signed by Wicklow County Council and award-winning architects, De Blacam & Meagher last Monday.

Both projects will now be progressed. Allowing for relevant timescales for development and construction, a completion date of late 2023/early 2024 is likely for both projects.

The planned work, which will jointly cost in the region of €5m, will include the demolition of the existing library building in Aughrim and its replacement with a modern facility while there will be an extension to the current Ballywaltrim library in Bray.

Mr Brian Gleeson, Wicklow County Council Chief Executive, said: "Wicklow County Council's library capital programme has seen a significant upgrade of all other library buildings in recent times. Aughrim and Ballywaltrim are the main projects remaining. This will ensure we have high quality library buildings throughout county Wicklow. Co-working facilities will be an important feature of both developments."

Cllr Shay Cullen, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, stated: "The recent new libraries in Wicklow and Rathdrum (due to open in the coming weeks) have shown



Lorraine Gallagher (Manager of Bray Municipal District), Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Shay Cullen, Cllr Pat Kennedy, Shane de Blacam of de Blacam and Meagher Architects, Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Michael Nicholson (Head of Operations at WCC), and County Librarian Brendan Martin signing the contracts which will see a new Library in Aughrim and an extension to the Ballywaltrim Library.

what is possible to achieve. The two projects being signed here today will reinforce the importance of libraries to Wicklow County Council."

Cllr Miriam Murphy, Cathaoirleach of Arklow MD, commented: "Arklow library has been

a great success, since opening almost six years ago. It's great to see that the smaller towns in the county are also being taken care of. The people of Aughrim will welcome the news to build a new, modern library of 200 sq mtrs".

Cllr Aoife Flynn

Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District, also welcomed the news, stating: "Bray is currently the only town in Ireland with two libraries. Although the Eglinton Road Carnegie library has a great tradition, the southwest side of Bray has grown sub-

stantially in recent years. The current Ballywaltrim library serves its public well, but it is limited in size. The proposed extension on the current site, over two floors, will ensure a modern, high quality library service for all the people of Bray."

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Caroline Kennedy Lunde with her mother Joyce Hume donating a snooker table to Tiglin's Carrig Eden centre in Greystones, with Tiglin's CEO Phil Thompson and Chairperson Aubrey McCarthy. The snooker table was used by former World Snooker Champions Steve Davis and Dennis Taylor in the Irish Open.

Plans for Blessington Greenway bridges raise concerns

West Wicklow Independent councillor Gerry O'Neill was left frustrated at last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council as his request for a Suspension of Standing Orders to discuss his concerns about the proposed bridges facilitating the Blessington Greenway was denied.

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council Brian Gleeson said Cllr O'Neill had not submitted the request for the Suspension of Standing Orders in advance of the meeting, as is the correct procedure, while Cathaoirleach Cllr Shay Cullen said it would not be appropriate to discuss the matter while the formal planning process is ongoing.

Cllr O'Neill wished to discuss the three bridges being proposed at Blessington Lakes which are to contain concrete dividers at their centre. Cllr O'Neill made it clear that he is in full support of the Greenway but not the

plans for the bridges. He said that he only learned about the concrete dividers after hearing them discussed at a recent Town Team meeting.

"It is unfair if we can't discuss this," said Cllr O'Neill. "Why weren't we given the opportunity to discuss it before? It is a serious issue where the centre of the bridge is to be divided by concrete."

Cllr O'Neill said he proposed the Part 8 on the project four years ago and knew nothing about the plans for the bridges, however Director of Services Michael Nicholson said that that was a different project.

"Anyone with concerns or comments can make them before the [end of the consultation phase] on 3rd March," said Mr Nicholson. "Any comments made will be referred back to us for replies and inquiries. The final design of the Greenway is still to be done. We will sit with the contractors to do a detailed design. The bridges are a proposal by a consultant, it's open to negotiation and discussion. This is a formal planning process, not application, so we should not discuss a formal planning process at an open meeting."



The Veba site at The Murrough, Wicklow Town

Former Veba site expected to make in excess of €7 million

The former Veba radiator factory in Wicklow town is on the market and last week the *Irish Times* reported that it was expected to achieve a sales price in excess of €7 million. It is for sale by tender.

Located on the Murrough, it is claimed the site has potential for more than 450 homes.

The site is for sale by tender with Vincent Finnegan Commercial, with a deadline of March 25th. There is no guide price on the land, but market sources say it could be worth in excess of €7 million.

The 7.57 acre site is the former home of the Veba factory, a radiator plant that closed in 2005. The site is covered by the Wicklow Town/Rathnew Development Plan 2013-2019 and is zoned mixed use, which includes residential, community, employment and retail uses.

A feasibility study conducted by Brady Mallalieu Architects revealed the potential for 700 units on the site, comprised of two-bed apartments and three-bed townhouses.

'Matthews' actions could possibly endanger the future of community property deal'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has accused Green Party TD Steven Matthews of 'naivety' following recent statements Deputy Matthews made about the returning of the Carnew and Tinahely Bank of Ireland buildings to community use.

"Certain public representatives are inserting themselves into the middle of commercial negotiations," said Deputy Brady, "in a naked attempt to accrue publicity, ignorant to the fact that their actions will inevitably significantly weaken the negotiating hand of the relevant public body and subsequently lead to the imposition of a significantly increased monetary cost to the taxpayer. The attempt at publicity could significantly increase the costs of the properties pushing them beyond the means of the council."

Deputy Matthews had released a statement declaring that he had raised the matter with the Bank of Ireland Chief Executive at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance to see what could be done to repurpose the units.

"I then followed up with a meeting with officials from the Bank to get their assessment of potential community leases on the vacant buildings," said Deputy Matthews. "Subsequently, I visited both sites and I then discussed my idea with Minister for Finance - Pascal Donohue and Minister for Rural Development - Heather Humphreys to seek their

advice and experience on options we could pursue. I met again with Bank of Ireland to explore options on purchasing the buildings and engaged again with Wicklow County Council to examine potential funding, future enterprise use of the buildings and options to purchase. I have now brought the Bank of Ireland and Wicklow County Council together with a clear objective to acquire the buildings and I am very hopeful of a positive conclusion to this process."

Deputy Brady continued, "Having been engaged directly with the Bank of Ireland for several months as to their plans for their former branch buildings in Tinahely and Carnew, I have learned that it is the explicit intention of the Bank to dispose of their former branch buildings on the open property market in the coming months. The former Branch building in Rathdrum was sold before Christmas."

"Despite my appeals that the buildings be made available to the community, the Bank of Ireland responded by stating that it has no intention of engaging in leases or handing them over to the community, and that it is their intention to prepare the buildings in Tinahely and Carnew to be put on the market in the second quarter of 2022."

"Having also been engaged with Wicklow County Council they have an interest in securing these buildings for the community, I believe that by his public utterances on the subject over the last week, Stephen Matthews has succeeded in undermining Wicklow County Council's position, and potentially scuppering a



John Brady TD

possible deal on the properties.

"In alerting the Bank of Ireland to Council's interest, he has allowed the Bank of Ireland the opportunity to increase their asking price if they see fit. All at the expense of the ordinary taxpayer. I would encourage Matthews to conduct his due diligence in the future, lest his future actions incur more penalties for the ordinary people of Wicklow or result in the loss of possible valuable community facilities."

Speaking to *Wicklow Times*, Deputy Matthews said "I don't understand Deputy Brady's anger and personalised nastiness over this matter. I have been doing real work on this opportunity for Carnew and Tinahely for months as I do across all of Wicklow. He is normally quite adept at hopping on a bandwagon and I hope his intention is not to scupper the project simply because he missed this one."

"My priority remains working for the people of Wicklow, not using my time to constantly attack every other party and politician. I prefer to focus instead on my constituents, and doing the job people elected me to do."



Steven Matthews TD

'Designated staff member needed to tackle dog fouling'

Independent councillor Mary Kavanagh has asked Wicklow County Council to consider recruiting an outdoor member of council staff for each Municipal District to deal with the problem of dog fouling. Cllr Kavanagh raised the issue at last week's Council meeting in response to what she called 'a growing problem'.

"I want to know can the Council consider recruiting a dedicated person in each district to deal with the problem of dog fouling. There are so many dogs now, and there isn't a footpath you can walk on that isn't covered in dog dirt, so we need to start being proactive on this."

Director of Services Breege Kilkenny said that it is up to each Municipal district to manage the issue using existing staff. "There are pressures on every single section of the Council and every single section is asking for additional staff. It would be a matter of priority," she said.

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council Brian Gleeson said "There is no additional resources in this year's budget that would cater for new staff, so it would have to be catered to from existing resources within the district. However we might raise it at the next district engineer's report and see if there is an issue across the districts and whether we can push more regular resources to cater for that particular issue."

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Enhanced youth facilities at Wicklow Tennis Club

There was plenty to celebrate at Wicklow Tennis Club last week as restrictions lifted and the club's newly enhanced outdoor social area was officially unveiled.

Funded under the SSE Renewables Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase 2 Sponsorship Fund, the club's new outdoor table tennis table and interactive big screen are now permanently up and running.

Funding was granted during lockdown and club officials worked hard to ensure the new facilities were installed safely and ready for use by club members and guests once society reopened fully.

Ella Tindale, Junior Captain of Wicklow Tennis Club said: "We are

delighted to have these new facilities at our thriving club. It was essential that we expanded our outdoor amenities to ensure that members could mix safely outside of the clubhouse. For our youth members, in particular it was vital that we were able to provide some social events and there has been such interest in the table tennis set up that we are hoping to expand this also."

Deborah Coleman, SSE Renewables said: "It is wonderful to see clubs like Wicklow Tennis Club

back up and running again, and we at SSE Renewables are delighted to support their endeavours, particularly as younger members benefit greatly from this social area."

The reopening signals the start of a very busy season ahead for Wicklow Tennis Club with lots of activities for club members already scheduled.

At SSE Renewables, the Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase 2 project team is continuing work to deliver Ireland's first offshore wind farm of scale,



Deborah Coleman of SSE Renewables at Wicklow Tennis Club with Will McConnell, Tom McConnell (Snr), Vice President Tina Meehan, Junior Captain Ella Tindale and Tom McConnell (Jnr).



Deborah Coleman of SSE Renewables at Wicklow Tennis Club with Tom McConnell, Vice President Tina Meehan, and Junior Captain Ella Tindale.



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Construction of Arklow wastewater treatment plant ready to begin

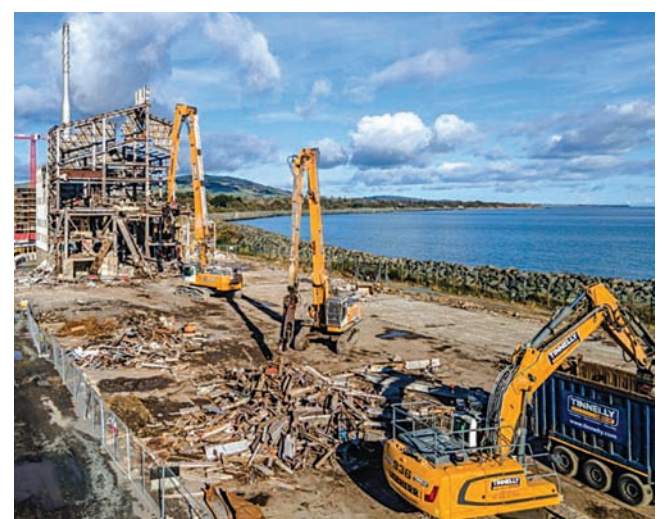
Construction will begin on the new wastewater treatment plant on the South Quay in Arklow in the coming weeks, Irish Water has announced.

"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 said.

A number of traffic management measures have been put in place and the junction of Harbour Road and South Quay was closed from Monday, 7th February. During the works, there will be no left turn from Harbour Road onto South Quay. There will also be works at the junction of South Green and South Quay where access to the South Quay will be restricted to local traffic. Works will include tree felling, services diversions and construction of tunnelling shafts which will facilitate the new sewer pipeline.

Local and emergency access will be maintained at all times throughout the work. Works on the North Quays are progressing well and will continue over the coming weeks with current traffic management remaining in place. Irish Water and Wicklow County Council would like to thank all businesses and residents for their continued cooperation during these essential works and regret any inconvenience caused.

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 the next phase of works along the South Quay. 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 practice 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/arklow.



Government seeks views of Wicklow people on providing more toilets for disabled people

Green Party TD and Chair of the Oireachtas Housing Committee Deputy Steven Matthews has welcomed the opening of a public consultation on the review of Part M of the building regulations to make provision for 'Changing Places' toilets in certain public buildings.

The review stems from the recommendation of a Working Group, formed by Minister Malcolm Noonan after Deputy Matthews raised the issue in the Dail of equitable access to toilet facilities. Prior to raising the issue with the Minister, Deputy Matthews had several meetings with the Changing Places Ireland advocacy group, which includes representatives from several disability groups.

Deputy Matthews was driven to push for legislative change after meeting a young woman called Sophia, who has cerebral palsy and athrogyrosis.

Deputy Matthews said, "I first became aware of the lack of bathroom access for people with profound disabilities following meetings between Green Party Cllr Erika Doyle and disability activist Aaron Daley. Both Cllr Doyle and I then met with Aaron and his daughter Sophia and he told us that as Sophia is now in her teens, she requires the use of a hoist and adult sized changing table in a toilet facility. There are few of these available, less than 20 in the State, with some counties having none at all, and no onus on developers to include one at design stage. Due of the lack of available facilities, Sophia has to be changed in the back of the family van if the family is on a day out. Often, the fami-



Aaron Daly and his daughter Sophia with Deputy Matthews and Cllr Erika Doyle

ly simply chooses to stay at home to avoid the difficulty associated with locating an appropriate place to change Sophia.

"We then went on to have meeting with Changing Places Ireland campaigners, and learned about work that had been done in the UK. We realized that legislative change was what was required. While there are plenty of standard disabled toilet facilities, Changing Places toilets include a central changing table, a hoist, a larger floor space and a larger bin. However, it is currently completely at the discretion of each individual developer to install these. It was clear that the way forward required a review of the building regulations.

"I then raised the issue with

Minister for State Malcolm Noonan, who committed to the setting up of a Working Group. This working group included Aaron, representatives from disability groups including Changing Places Ireland, construction interests, the Department of Housing, HSE, architects, the National Disability Authority and most importantly, Changing Places users themselves. We have now reached the stage where the recommendations are ready to seek feedback.

"The fact that we have reached this stage so quickly and smoothly shows the successful outcome of activism meeting political will. While there is still a way to go, it is incredibly positive to have reached this stage and I want to pay tribute to the campaigners who

have been working so hard on this for many years.

"I am positive that meaningful contributions will be made by the public along with relevant experts, and we can move to the next stage. If passed, we could see up to 80 of these facilities built each year and those who require them will finally be able to use the bathroom with dignity, while visiting towns around Ireland. For far too long people with disabilities have had to curtail their activities or change sanitary wear on floors or the backs of cars due to lack of services, and this change in legislation will change that," concluded Deputy Matthews.

The recommendation from the Working Group suggests the type and sizes of buildings where a Changing Places toilet should be required, along with the technical requirements (equipment, room size and layout) of a changing places toilet. The department is interested in focused input into the technical aspects of the proposals. Views are welcome from everybody but particularly people who use or support others who use Changing Places toilets, builders, building designers. All documents and information on how to make a submission can be found on the Department of Housing website. Submissions can be made until 5pm on May 12th



Des Burton pictured at the Wicklow Vs Fermanagh Football League division 3 match in Aughrim. The final score was Wicklow 1-10, Fermanagh 2-7

Traffic chaos in Arklow

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has called for an immediate review of the traffic management plan and signage that has been erected in Arklow to notify motorists of the temporary one-way system that has been implemented to facilitate the works at the Parade Ground.

"Monday was the first day of the works at the Parade Ground on Arklow Main Street, to facilitate the works a management plan has been put in place. This involves a temporary one-way system in the town. It's estimated these arrangements will be in place for 5 months. On Monday however the signage that was installed proved to be totally inadequate. A considerable number of motorists turned right onto Main Street from Bridge Street as they were unaware of the traffic restrictions.

These vehicles turning right onto what is now a one-way street caused serious safety issues and in a number of cases cars crashed into the signage because it wasn't as visible or prominent as it should be. The first day turned into a day of chaos.

"On Monday evening the signage caused even more problems as it wasn't visible in the dark and I'm aware that one car actually crashed into the signage and the sandbags holding it in place."

Deputy Brady concluded "I have contacted the contractor and Wicklow County Council and asked that an immediate review of the signage and traffic management plan be carried out to ensure that everyone's safety is prioritised during the works and that traffic can move through the town safely and with the least amount of disruption."

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Bray Camera Club's 50th anniversary exhibition a success

The Signal Arts Gallery was the setting on Thursday February 3rd, at which Club Chairman Philip Ryan presided, for the formal launch of the Bray Camera Club special exhibition of members' work which was on view in the Gallery until Sunday February 13th.

Former Club chairman, president and PRO James Scannell, was the guest of honour to open the exhibition and his address to members and guests congratulated the Club on reaching its 50th anniversary, paying particular tribute to Willie

Owens and to W.J. Owens Ltd. for the excellent support and assistance they gave to the Club in its early years.

The Bray Camera Club's exhibition of 48 prints featured all mainstream photographic gen-

res and styles including landscape, wildlife, abstract, street, macro, and studio with this exhibition featuring prints from Matthew Hurrell O'Connor, Deirdre Whelan, Joe McQuillan, Frank McGowan, Diarmuid O'Brien,

Roisin McArdle, David McKenzie, Sallie O'Sullivan, Bill Murphy, Malcolm McCamley, Anne Marie Byrne, Laura Kinsella, Graeme Fryer, Mick Hanley, Craig Smoothy, Philip Ryan, Aongus Collins, Brenda Keogh, Una



James Scannell, Sallie O'Sullivan, Mick Hanley and Graeme Fryer at the launch of Bray Camera Club's 50th anniversary exhibition. Pic: Joe McQuillan



Frank McGowan, Sallie O'Sullivan and David McKenzie at the launch of Bray Camera Club's 50th anniversary exhibition. Pic: Joe McQuillan

Armstrong. Joe Dutton, Pat Killilea, Donal Enright, Tony O'Connor, and Pat Judge.

Reflecting on the exhibition of members' photographs on view, James said that Roy Byrne, Noel Sheils, Nigel Tyney, Brian O'Reilly, Bill Stapleton, James Coutts, Paddy O'Kelly, and Vincent Corcoran, who judged the Club competitions in the 1970s and 80s would be very impressed by the standard of work on display.

After declaring the exhibition open, James undertook to give a talk to the Club later in the year about the early years of the Club based on his scrapbooks which contain news reports, cuttings and documents about the Club and its activities.

Bray Camera Club was formed in April 1971 and since then it has provided the local community with a welcoming forum for photographers of every ability and throughout the Covid-19 pandemic,

and has remained stalwart in its drive to celebrate and share photography through a busy schedule on online activities and social interaction.

Members comprise of an eclectic mixture of amateurs', competition winners, and professionals. The mission of Bray Camera Club is for members to learn from and support each other in improving each member's photographic creativity and skills in the use of all sorts of cameras.

Bray Camera Club welcomes everyone over 18 years of age with an interest in photography whether you use a phone camera or a high-end digital SLR. Until such a time as meetings can be reconvened in the Mermaid Arts Centre, the Club will continue to meet online on Monday evenings. If you wish to sample some meetings with a view to joining or you would like more information about the club, please email: info@braycameraclub.ie.

Arklow filmmaker publishes children's picture book

Not content with being a multi-award-winning film producer, director and writer, Dave Thomas has just launched his first children's picture book titled 'Bebe the Bee Buzzed and Crash Landed'.

With each page filled with colour, fantastic illustrations along with an original story for young people aged 3 to 7 years, Dave wanted to make sure it was educational with a lot of fun.

"It's a great way to help the young people in your life learn their numbers, their colours, identify a variety of animals, learn something very important about Bees while enjoying a dramatic and engaging story," says Dave.

"One of the best ways to share quality time with the young people in your life is to sit together with them while you both travel on an adventure with each page you turn. Reading a book to a child is a shared experience, and some of my favourite times in my life was when I read stories to the young people in my family and when my partner and I were Foster Carers. No matter how many times you read and reread the same story, they never became tired of it, because it was quality time spent with you, and that's a very special time indeed."

The title of the picture book paints a dramatic story of a Bee named Bebe crash landing.

"In the story, the little Bee named Bebe tries to land to rest as she has flown way too long. But she is forced to take off again just as she landed due to a very grumpy man. When she gets too tired, she unfortunately crash lands, and this is where she meets seven-year-old Lilly. And it's with Lilly we learn

something very helpful when it comes to saving tired Bees. Bees are vital to our ecosystem, and we need to stop being afraid of them and to educate children on how to love these little creatures and how we can do our part in helping them, as they help us."

'Bebe the Bee Buzzed and Crash Landed' is available from Amazon.com. Dave is asking book stores and Libraries to stock the book to make it as accessible as possible for children.



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Wicklow resident pens second novel, Lucina's Letters

Wicklow resident Barbara Francesca Murphy will release her second book, *Lucina's Letters* in March.

Barbara was born in Austria in the '70s. She started writing at an early age, mostly short stories for her family and friends to read.

As a child and teenager, she travelled extensively, getting a taste for foreign cultures and countries, fuelling her imagination. She graduated from high school in America and went on to study in Austria, then settling in Ireland, where she has been living ever since. Murphy's first book, *Second Chances*, was published with Austin Macauley Publishers in 2019.

The plot of *Lucina's Letters* follows a multi-generational family headed by the matriarch, Lucina, who moves from Ireland to Italy. After Lucina's death, through letters and machinations she is able to reunite her troubled family at her estate in Italy and set in motion events that lead secrets from the past decades to come to light, sending shockwaves throughout the family and forever altering their dynamics-for better, and for worse.

Lucina's Letters will out on 31st March.



Barbara Francesca Murphy

The Ark & Music Network Present Wires, Strings & Other Things



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Jack O'Rourke at The Courthouse Arts Centre

Saturday 19th February 8.30pm €18

After yet another cancellation caused by Covid last year, The Courthouse Arts Centre is pleased to welcome Jack O'Rourke to Tinahely with his new album *Wild Place*, released November 2021.

One of Ireland's most gifted songwriters he has gone from strength to strength since his song 'Silence' became synonymous with the Irish Marriage Equality Referendum.

Winner of the Nashville-based International Songwriting Award, Jack's career has seen him headline *Other Voices* in 2019, playing with an orchestra at the Cork Opera House and most recently in Home, alongside Loah, Villagers and Denise Chaila.

His collaboration, 'New Day' with electronic artist, Kormac has nearly 500,000 views for its award winning music video. His album, *Ivory Towers*, a foray into alternative pop, produced many radio hits, including the title track and *Myth*.

See www.courthousearts.ie for tickets



Jack O'Rourke

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Here he comes again, trotting on to the stage with all of the misplaced confidence of a waiter with no pad. Is he going to remember it? HOPEFULLY!

There'll be lots of talking, some apologising and some songs on a glued together plastic keyboard from 1986. As seen on BBC's 'Live at The Apollo' and Channel 4's '8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown'.



Des Bishop presents Mia Mamma

Friday 25th February @ 8pm.
Sold Out. Tickets €28 available at
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Des Bishop brings his new show 'Mia Mamma' to the Whale Theatre on 25th February

"Mamma I am often asked 'where do you get your material from?'" The truth is really that I try to see the funny in everything. My mother died in March 2019 and of course it was sad and grief can be tough sometimes but I saw a lot of funny in that too," says Des Bishop. "Since death comes to us all and grief is something most of us will experience I thought there must be plenty of people who would like that funny to be shared. Also I did a show about my Dad being sick back in 2010 and I couldn't face my mother in the afterlife because I know her first question would be 'your Father got a show, how come I didn't get one?'" I think it's tougher to lose your mum. My Dad was best supporting actor. My mother was the actress in a leading role. You are never ready when the star of the show dies. So this is a show about My mother. It's a show about motherhood and sacrifice, anxiety and grief, the mistakes you make as a mother and a son and the hard road to forgiveness and finally it's about loss, grief and the chaos that surrounds it. Where do I get my material from? Life and death!" Suitable ages 18+

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Spring is in the air, Mermaid Arts Centre is open & there's loads for all to enjoy!
Visit mermaidartscentre.ie for all events.

ReWild Wicklow launches as new community group



The ReWild Wicklow members launching their new environmental group at a tree planting at Jacksmill Forest Gardens

ReWild Wicklow marked their launch as a new environmental organisation with a tree planting event on Saturday 5th February at Jacksmill Forest Gardens, Timmore, in Newtownmountkennedy.

It started with a petition last year by members of the Alvey family calling on the Wicklow Mountains to be rewilded with native trees. The petition had 11,000 supporters and from these the new group has formed with the mission to monitor, protect, enhance and increase native habitats across the county working with public, private and other community groups.

At the event, chairperson Danny Alvey said: "Thank you to Huw O'Toole for having us here to help today, we're delighted to launch this organisation for Wicklow and start working with partners to plant native trees. Huw's project here that combines native planting, allotments for hire and a co-working space, Hub13, is a brilliant idea! Our

beautiful county was once covered in native forests and home to so many species of birds and animals. Now many of these are absent or on the brink of survival. We want to channel people power to turn the tide on this biodiversity crisis. We'd love to hear from more volunteers who want to join us and also landowners who want to create more space for nature on their land!

"Over the next few months we're hoping to do more tree plantings with our partners, and also clean-ups of the more wilder places and field trips with local guides. Find us on Facebook or send us an email to rewildwicklow@gmail.com to join our email list and find about the next events. And check out hub13.ie to find out more about Huw's project."

Local authorities encouraged to apply to €1.5 million Biodiversity Fund

The 2022 Local Biodiversity Action Fund has opened to applications from local authorities. The fund increased to €1.5m in 2022 and supports locally-led projects that align with actions under the National Biodiversity Action Plan.

First launched in 2018, the re-named Local Biodiversity Action Fund offers funding to assist local authorities in the implementation of actions in the National Biodiversity Action Plan. Local authorities play a vital role in addressing the biodiversity emergency. This funding stream enables them to develop projects that address biodiversity loss in their localities by helping to create new habitats, restoring existing ones and by tackling invasive alien species.

Funding to this scheme has increased by 200% since 2019. The funding will be made available, in line with a grant application

and award process, to local authorities' biodiversity officers in the counties that have them, and heritage officers, subject to certain criteria*.

The scheme, operated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, has proven hugely popular, with all 31 local authorities seeking funding in 2021.

A wide variety of projects were financed, ranging from the surveying of breeding birds and the creation of pollinator-friendly initiatives, to projects raising awareness of

the importance of biodiversity to our well-being.

Commenting on the announcement, Minister Noonan said:

"I'm delighted that funding to this popular scheme has increased by 200% since 2019 and congratulate the Local Authorities on the many excellent projects that have been delivered under this funding to date. Greater funding allows us to be increasingly ambitious in our efforts to reverse biodiversity loss.

Action for nature at the local level is critical. Local Authorities and communities are a huge part of the biodiversity solution and I'd encourage everyone to see what can be done in their community, engage with their local Heritage and Biodiversity Officers, and get their applications in."

Air your views on water quality at upcoming local public meetings

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage Darragh O'Brien TD, and the Minister of State with responsibility for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan TD, have encouraged Wicklow people to give their views on water quality through a number of open meetings to be held around the country as part of the public consultation on the draft River Basin Management Plan.

The consultation is currently open and members of the public or interested parties can make submissions online (until March 31st) at www.gov.ie/draftRBMP or through the Local Authorities Water Programme (LAWPRO).

LAWPRO will also be holding 62 consultation meetings throughout the country over the next month, beginning with Carlow, Cavan, Clare and Cork on February 15th. At these virtual meetings, attendees will have the opportunity to hear from LAWPRO representatives on the factors affecting water quality in their local area and will provide an opportunity for multiple local stakeholders and the public to share their views on the Government's draft River Basin Management Plan.

The meetings for Wicklow residents will take place on these days and times:

Wednesday 16 February 7:30 pm
Arklow, Wicklow, Rathnew, Ashford, NewtownMK, Roundwood, Aghrim, Laragh, Rathdrum, Glendalough, Glenmalur

Wednesday 23 February 7:30 pm
Baltinglass, Blessington, Dunlavin, Donard, Shillelagh, Carnew, Tinahely, Kiltegan, Rathdangan, Vallemount, Lacken, Stratford, Grange Con, Hollywood

Wednesday 2 March 7:30 pm
Bray, Greystones, Delgany, Enniskerry, Kilcoole, Newcastle, Kilmacanogue

A full list of meetings and information on how to register can be found at lawaters.ie/rbmp-public-meetings-2022/.

The public meetings will be complemented by a new Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage digital campaign to encourage as much participation as possible.

The draft River Basin Management Plan sets out an increased ambition for

water quality is managed in Ireland. There are 4842 water bodies in Ireland, organised in 46 catchment areas and 54 % of all waterbodies are considered to be at risk of not meeting Water Framework Directive objectives by 2027. A number of pressures are impacting water quality including agriculture, hydromorphology (physical changes), urbanisation and waste water treatment. The draft Plan also takes account of the impacts of climate change on our water and biodiversity.

Minister O'Brien said: "We all recognise the pressures and risks to our water and the draft River Basin Management Plan sets out ambitious plans to make improvements to our water quality. We recognise that more needs to be done, as a matter of urgency. Extensive engagement on this plan is already underway with stakeholders and I am asking the public to make their views count on this important issue. Through our digital campaign and in public meetings, we're asking the public to think about water and how it is used in their daily lives and recreation, but also its role in sustaining communities and in the face of climate change. I'm hoping for a great response to this public consultation and encourage people to get involved either through the LAWPRO local approach or the Department's at www.gov.ie/draftRBMP."

Minister of State Noonan added, "By getting involved, members of the public will be helping to shape the overall management of Ireland's rivers, lakes and streams. In recent years, we have made substantial progress in how we manage our water services and how we work together to protect and improve water quality, but challenges remain and we have much more to do. By working together, we can develop a pathway to achieve our environmental objectives and deliver the clean waters and healthy freshwater ecosystems that are vital for protecting public health, supporting economic growth and restoring aquatic biodiversity."

Wicklow groups supported to protect native plants and animals

Eight Wicklow communities are getting support so they can step up local efforts to protect native plants and animals by developing biodiversity plans.

The supports are being provided by The Community Foundation for Ireland in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage as part of a joint Environment and Nature Fund, which is now in its third year.

Funding is being provided under two strands so that Wicklow communities can respond to a biodiversity emergency which has seen many native species under immediate and ongoing threat.

Under the first strand grants are being provided so that seven Wicklow groups can assess the impact of the emergency amongst native species in the countryside, woodlands and along riverbeds. These grants are going to Glenealy Biodiversity Action Group (€5,500), Delgany Community Council (€7,000), Bray Tidy Towns (€10,000), Enniskerry Tidy Towns Association (€5,000), Newcastle Residents Association (€4,000), Arklow Town Team (€3,950), and Kilcoole Tidy Towns/Keep Kilcoole Tidy (€8,000).

In the second strand groups who have already developed their plans will be working with an expert ecologist to draw up a community biodiversity action plan within their local community or with two or 3-5 local landowners. This funding is being awarded to Arklow.

Announcing the grants Minister of State for Heritage at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Malcolm Noonan TD, said

"I am very happy to continue to support this innovative scheme that connects local communities with ecologists. This scheme will enable local communities to become more effective environmental stewards and empower them to establish a shared vision for conserving biodiversity in their local areas"

Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of The Community Foundation for Ireland added: "There is real passion and energy in Wicklow communities to reverse the crisis facing our native plants and animals. Our fund has already seen citizen scientists mobilised to protect peat-lands, native butterflies, bats and birds as well as plants and trees even during a pandemic.

"With this latest funding in partnership with Government we are setting ourselves long term goals by offering Wicklow communities access to ecologists who will advise and guide on the actions which need to be taken. This will see groups re-assured that the actions they take are the right ones which will be impactful by delivering benefits not just for the immediate future but for generations to come."



Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of The Community Foundation for Ireland



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Grand Annual Career Day at BIFE

While in many cases students, schools and parents see the CAO as the 'be all and end all' for those seeking third level education, nothing could be further from the truth according to Gabriel Allen, deputy principal at Bray Institute of Further Education (BIFE). "Over recent years many new avenues have opened up to students to enable them pursue their dream career via a different route. BIFE will be showcasing the large variety of courses at our Grand Annual Career Day on Tuesday 8th March from 10am – 3pm," he said.

He added, "Further Education offers a learner, who may not have achieved the required CAO points, the opportunity to gain advanced entry onto honours degree programmes, both in Ireland and abroad."

The huge range of courses available at BIFE offers learners fabulous opportunities, not only for those looking for additional skills or hoping to go

directly into employment, but also as an alternative route on to a college course in a university or institute of technology in Ireland or abroad.

Over the past few years, graduates of BIFE have achieved honours degrees across a wide range of programmes, opening up a myriad of career opportunities from graphic design to performing arts to psy-

chology.

This year BIFE will offer Higher National Diplomas in the following:

- Fine Art - Art Practice
- Acting
- Dance
- TV & Film (Moving Image)
- Music Production
- Music Performance
- Applied Social Studies
- Graphic Design
- Fashion Design

As Gabriel Allen explained, "These nine courses will allow graduating students to proceed to the final year of an honours Degree Programme in Ireland or Britain if that is their ultimate ambition."

This year, the College has launched a number of new courses at Level 5:

- Professional Make-Up & Hairdressing Level 5



BIFE Staff and Students at BIFE's Erasmus+ International Event preparing to head to Spain and Finland as part of their work experience internships

- Occupational Therapy Assistant Level 5
- Film Special Effects Level 5
- Tourism with Airline Studies Level 5
- Special Needs Assistant (Primary & Post Primary) Level 5
- Security & Pre-Garda Level 5
- Equine Studies QQI Level 5
- Barista, Pastry & Baking Level 5
- Brewing & Distilling Techniques Level 5

Work Experience is a vital part of the BIFE courses and now all students in the College have the opportunity to complete a 3-week work placement abroad in countries such as Spain, Portugal, Poland, Italy, Finland, Malta or Czechia under the Erasmus+ Programme which is sponsored by the European Union. This is a terrific opportunity for our students, not only to gain valuable work experience

in a European country, but also to experience a different culture and to broaden their horizons.

Bray Institute will be holding their Grand Annual Career Day again this year on **Tuesday 8th March from 10am to 3pm.**

Potential students, parents, and career guidance teachers will have the opportunity to speak to the staff who, with their educational knowledge and specialist industry experi-

ence, can guide you in the right direction. Workshops, demonstrations, presentations and career lectures will run throughout the day and visitors can speak to students and get their views on the courses.

Applications for September 2022 Courses are now open. Apply online at www.bife.ie or call the Institute any day during office hours on 01-2829668 for further information.

New students encouraged to apply for the school transport scheme

Applications for the primary and post primary school transport scheme for the new school year of 2022/23 are now open.

The post primary transport scheme provides support for the transport to and from school of children who reside remote i.e. 4.8 km or more from their nearest post primary school. In the case of children in primary education, the transport scheme provides transport for children who live 3.2 km or more from their local primary school.

This application process applies only to new applicants seeking primary and/or post-primary school transport for 2022/23. That includes:

- Students starting school in September 2022.
- Students moving school, including those moving from primary to post-primary school.

- Students who have or will move address before the 2022/23 school year.

Encouraging eligible families to apply for the scheme Wicklow Minister Simon Harris TD said: "School transport is a necessity for many families in County Wicklow and it is vital that all students who require this service apply as soon as possible. Starting in a new school is a big change for students and having their transport needs met can reduce the impact of the transition on children."

The closing date for applications is Friday 29th April.

School transport services are operated by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. For more information about school transport, please visit www.buseireann/schooltransport.

Additional ASD classrooms approved for Blessington Community College

Minister Simon Harris TD has welcomed the decision by the Department of Education to grant Project Approval for two ASD classrooms for Blessington Community College.

Minister Harris said: "I welcome the decision to grant approval for Blessington Community College to build two ASD classrooms.

"The provision of additional ASD capacity at Post Primary level in West Wicklow is a key priority for me. I want to commend Blessington Community College for their efforts to open an ASD Unit. I am supporting the school in their efforts to have this ASD unit opened at the earliest date possible."

Minister Harris added: "Blessington Community College's wider new building project to expand the school is at present being designed. It is hoped that the Department of Education and the school's architects can agree a design in the near future to allow the school expand further to accommodate the growing post primary population in the area".

SciFest launches 2022 programme with a call for entrants to regional competition



SciFest, Ireland's largest and most inclusive STEM fair programme for second-level students has announced its return for the 17th consecutive year. The competition attracts 10,000 student participants annually and organisers have kicked off the 2022 competition with a call for entrants to the 16 SciFest@College regional fairs.

SciFest is free to enter and open to everyone across the island of Ireland, no matter their background or circumstances. The goal of SciFest is to help students develop research, problem solving, critical thinking, and presentation skills while fostering an interest in STEM fields. Project entries will be accepted across a range of scientific disciplines. The deadline for completed entry forms for SciFest@College 2022 is 11 March. The competition is eyeing a return to

in-person fairs having successfully hosted the previous two years' programmes online due to COVID-19 restrictions.

SciFest is local, regional and national with international opportunities for winning projects. Overall winners from each regional STEM fair will go on to compete at a national final in November 2022. The winner(s) of the SciFest National Final 2022 will be presented with a trophy and will represent Ireland at the Regeneron International

Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) 2023 in the USA.

Speaking at the launch of SciFest 2022, Sheila Porter, SciFest Founder and CEO said: "I'm always so pleased to launch SciFest, and this year is no different. We are now entering the 17th year of SciFest, and I continue to be staggered by the high standard of submissions we receive each year. We're immensely proud of this competition and the opportunities it offers students. These kids are the doctors, scientists and innovators of tomorrow and we are calling on all students, regardless of their circumstance or current STEM abilities to join us for SciFest 2022."

At last year's national final Clare Reidy, a sixth-year student from Our Lady's Bower school in Athlone, Co. Westmeath was named SciFest STEM Champion 2021, for her innovative research project which explored

Cosmic Radiation Protection, investigating effective building materials for future exploration of Mars. Clare will represent Ireland at Regeneron ISEF in Atlanta, Georgia, USA this May.

Speaking about her award, Clare said: "I loved every minute of the SciFest experience last year and winning the competition was a source of great pride for me and my family. SciFest enabled me to research something that intrigued me, and it helped sharpen the skills I needed to investigate it. Winning SciFest means I get to travel to Regeneron ISEF in the United States and I'm really looking forward to representing Ireland. I'd encourage students with an interest in STEM subjects to give SciFest a go because it will give you the tools to come up with ideas and solutions for real problems and existing issues."

For more information on SciFest visit www.scifest.ie.

Sallynoggin College of Further Education: The perfect choice for school leavers and mature students

Sallynoggin College is easily accessible to Wicklow students via the Dart and bus corridors. Choices include Art & Design, Acting, Musical Theatre, Dance, Fashion, Hair and Beauty, Childcare, Social Studies, Special Needs Assisting and much much more! All of courses deliver a choice of clear progression routes to employment or further study at University.



SCFE Fitness Instruction and Exercise Science students practice their teaching skills

SCFE: The place to be for a career in Health & Fitness

Looking for a career or even a career change in the Health and Fitness industry? Well look no further - Sallynoggin College of Further Education is the place for you! Offering both QQI and ITEC professional qualifications, recognised at home and abroad, in Fitness Instruction, Personal Training, Strength & Conditioning and Sports Rehabilitation with Sports Massage, the career pathways are endless! Open your own

business or progress with proven links to third level courses. SCFE will



SCFE students on the Yoga Teaching course working on their routine



SCFE Travel and Tourism students on skills practice at Waterford Airport

support you every step of your journey via a mix of small groups, flexible times, and blended learning in a fun diverse campus. SCFE have expanded the range of courses available to meet future skill needs in these areas to include Physical Education (PE) & Sports Coaching, you can also train to be a Yoga or Pilates Teacher specialising in wellbeing and holistic studies. Students from all of these courses can progress to a range of third level degree courses as well as employment.

SCFE students flying high with growth in the Travel and Tourism Sector

Having been badly hit during the pandemic this sector is now experiencing high demand and is faced by skills shortages. SCFE has a proven track record and a high level of expertise and experience in this area. SCFE's Airline and Travel Industry studies and Hospitality & Tourism studies courses are the perfect starting point for a

range of careers in the sector.

Discover more at the SCFE Open Day March 3rd

Why not see for yourself by dropping into the SCFE in-person Open day on March 3rd. Check out the SCFE facilities, find out about all the different courses and career areas, meet with teachers and students and chat about course content, progression and employment options.

Greystones Community College welcomes sponsorship of GAA teams

Greystones Community College have partnered with O'Gorman Properties, who are continuing their support as sponsor of the school's GAA teams.

The students were in Greystones today, Thursday 10th February, to be presented with their new school jerseys by Ms. Sonya O'Gorman, Managing Director of O'Gorman Properties. Speaking about the sponsorship, Ms O'Gorman said "I was delighted to be in a position to sponsor the sports jerseys for Greystones Community College. Sports and outdoor activities are so important for our kids' general well-being within the community, especially during these times. The staff at the school here are so invested in their pupils' all-round development. Helping out in any way I could is a pleasure."

School Principal Ruairi Farrell acknowledged the support of O'Gorman properties, as well as other local business who support the school in many ways, saying "As a Community College, we are immersed in the local Greystones community and are delighted to partner with O'Gorman Properties and to receive their very generous support. The school are proud to field competitive teams across a wide variety of sports and this sponsorship has given a huge boost to our boys and girls GAA teams in particular"

GCC students have been working closely with Eire Óg GAA club in Greystones and acknowledge the support of Games Promotion Officer Mr. Kevin Spain who, along with teacher Mr. John Blake, have been driving the development of Gaelic Games at Greystones Community College.



Greystones Community College Students Callum Halpin, Eoe Dunne, Jasmine Judge and William Cash pictured with Sonya O'Gorman, Managing Director of O'Gorman Properties.

Two new classes starting soon at Baltinglass Further Education and Training Centre

Two new classes are starting at Baltinglass Further Education and Training Centre:

'Make the most of your Smartphone'

Know your Smartphone and all you can do on it. 4 week course, one evening a week, small numbers to make for a better learning experience

CV Preparation and Interview Skills

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- to gain skills and confidence for interviews
- to create an effective and impressive CV.

For more details on these courses, please contact Annette/Maeve on 0596482642 or 0868462771 or email abebaltinglass@kwetb.ie

Students invited to enter new Climate Action and Energy Award



Sinead Dooley, EirGrid Head of Public Engagement, with Rachel Collier, CEO of YSI, and Transition Year student Mia Jervis.

Second-level schools in Wicklow are invited to take innovative action in response to the climate emergency through a new Climate Action and Energy Award, in association with Young Social Innovators and EirGrid.

EirGrid, the national electricity grid operator has launched a partnership with non-profit organisation, Young Social Innovators (YSI).

The collaboration will see EirGrid become the new Climate Action and Energy partner with YSI for a three-year period.

Young Social Innovators empowers and supports young people to develop and implement innovative ideas to bring about positive social change for the benefit of people, communities and the environment. Over the past 20 years, some 145,000 teenagers have taken part in YSI's social innovation programmes in post primary schools nationally.

EirGrid will become YSI's Challenge Partner under its Environment Pillar. Along with this, a 'Climate Action and Energy' award will be created for current partici-

pants in the Young Social Innovators of the Year Ireland Awards 2022.

Speaking about the partnership, EirGrid's Head of Public Engagement, Sinead Dooley said, "EirGrid is transforming the power system for future generations, and with that in mind we believe it is incredibly important to listen to and involve young people who are the driving force behind climate action efforts."

"At EirGrid we engage for better outcomes for all and we recognise the value of creating a dialogue with the wider society. Going forward EirGrid intends to engage a broad range of stakeholders in in-depth, meaningful discussions about the future and the role of the grid. With this partnership we hope to learn a lot from young people across the island of Ireland and that we are

challenged and inspired by their innovative ideas," added Dooley.

Commenting on the partnership, Rachel Collier, Co-founder and CEO, Young Social Innovators said, "We are delighted to announce this exciting new partnership with EirGrid, focused on what is undoubtedly the biggest challenge facing us globally. How we can live and consume more sustainably is a key question and one that young people can contribute to. This new award, in partnership with EirGrid, will recognise young people's efforts to innovate around climate action and energy and will empower and engage them in being a vital part of the solutions needed."

Schools can register their interest in getting involved now by emailing educate@youngsocialinnovators.ie.

To find out how EirGrid is delivering a cleaner energy future visit www.eirgrid.ie or to get more information about the important work YSI do, visit www.youngsocialinnovators.ie.



Irish Distillers is looking for ambitious Wicklow graduates to join the 2022/23 Jameson International Graduate Programme. Now in its 30th year, the Jameson International Graduate Programme empowers graduates to shape their future by providing them with the tools and opportunity to realise their personal and professional goals, as part of a global community.

Jameson is looking for creative, innovative, self-starters with an entrepreneurial mindset to follow in the footsteps of Bren Gonouya from Bray who is working as a Jameson Brand Ambassador on Jameson's International Marketing Team.

Bren Gonouya from Bray (pictured), who is currently a Jameson Brand Ambassador for Jameson's International Marketing Team said: "I would definitely recommend the Jameson International Graduate Programme to any students and graduates, who, like me, are interested in a career in marketing. The programme gives successful candidates an opportunity to build a career on an international stage while working with a world-renowned Irish brand. I have learned a lot in my first 100 days as a Marketing Assistant on the programme and improved my organisation, project management and core marketing skills."

Applications for the 2022/23 Jameson International Graduate Programme are now open and will close on Wednesday 23rd February 2022 at 1pm. Visit jamesongraduateprogramme.com for more information.

'Rent rises of 2.9% compounds cost of living crisis'

John Brady TD has commented on the latest rental report from Daft.ie, which shows that rents are continuing to rise across the State, with renters facing increases of 2.9% in county Wicklow at the end of 2021. The average monthly asking rent in the last three months of 2021 in Wicklow was €1630.

Deputy Brady said: "The Daft.ie rental report for the last three months of 2021 shows that the average asking rent in Wicklow is up 2.9%. The report shows 19 counties had double digit rent inflation. Rents are continuing to soar in Wicklow.

"This is a phenomenal increase and is a massive additional cost for workers and families to bear, on top of rapid increases in household bills.

"This latest Daft.ie report makes it clear that there is little or zero affordable rental supply in most parts of the State.

"The ban on local councils buying homes with HAP or RAS tenants in-situ where the landlord is selling up is also forcing families into homelessness while the properties are being sold to investment funds, who lease these same properties back to local authorities. This makes no social or economic sense.

"The government's 2% rent cap is clearly not working. We need a ban on rent increases on all existing and new tenancies, and we need the government to put money back in renters' pockets through a refundable tax credit worth a month's rent.

"Government must also accept that their social and affordable rental targets for 2022 are not sufficient and must be revised."

Bray Sinn Féin councillor Grace McManus added, "Young people in their twenties, and even those in their thirties are also struggling with these ever-rising rents. Stress builds when the idea of secure accommodation away from the family home is a distant dream no matter what you do. The lack of supply means there is little choice to turn down extortionate rents for often sub-standard accommodation. I worry about the consistent pressure of this rental situation on my generation."

Home Energy Upgrade Scheme 'does not do enough' to support 21,000 homes in Wicklow

The Alliance for Zero Carbon Heating and Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore have criticised the Government's Home Energy Upgrade Scheme, saying that this New funding stream offering low interest loans to homeowners could remain out of reach of many in Wicklow.

Speaking about the scheme, Deputy Whitmore, the Social Democrats Spokesperson on Climate Action, says, "The government has promised that 500,000 homes will be retrofitted by 2030, but there is little clarity on how this target will be delivered in the plan announced this week.

"There are three major problems with the government's plans: the large upfront cost to homeowners that a deep retrofit will still entail; the lack of qualified construction workers to do the work; and the lack of clarity surrounding the government's proposed low-cost loan scheme, the details of which will not be announced until the autumn.

"If we are to reach our climate action targets, and reduce the impact of fuel poverty on those low-income families who are currently struggling to heat their homes, it is crucial that we get this right.

"Retrofitting homes cannot just be the preserve of a minority who can afford the work. State supports must be targeted at those who would otherwise be unable to retrofit their homes.

"However, there are many people in Wicklow on low incomes, pensioners and even those with mortgages or facing high childcare costs who won't be able to take on another loan to retrofit. People will also be spending

more of their income on higher energy costs.

"A national retrofitting plan could make a hugely important difference to these people, but to do so it must work for the many - not just the few. The government has said it intends to spend €5 billion on retrofitting over the coming years, but the budget for this year is just a tiny fraction of this - €202 million from carbon tax revenue. When does it intend to ramp up spending, as it must to deliver its targets?

"Of crucial importance also is the lack of qualified construction staff to do this work. The Construction Industry Federation has already raised concerns about whether the requisite number of construction workers exist to simultaneously build new homes and deliver on ambitious retrofitting targets. The government has dismissed these concerns, without providing any real detail on how these twin demands can be achieved.

"Finally, the failure to provide any clarity on a central plank of this plan, the low cost loans, is a major failing. It is not clear why the government was unable to provide this detail, given the retrofitting targets were included in the programme for government and are now nearly two years old.

"Over-promising and under-delivering has been a recurring theme of this government. Unless barriers to access are

addressed, the national retrofitting scheme will also be doomed to disappoint and under-deliver."

The newly launched Alliance for Zero Carbon Heating, which unites businesses from across the Irish home heating sector, says the new scheme will not do enough to bring about the major emissions reductions we need, and that it will leave many homes behind.

The average cost of a deep retrofit is €56,000, which means that even with a 50% grant, homeowners will still be required to pay €28,000 - beyond the reach of many families already struggling to pay expensive energy bills.

Many people will have to borrow to pay for a retrofit, leading to an increase in personal debt of around €9 billion. Furthermore, the cost of loan repayments would amount to more, on a monthly basis, than the energy savings delivered by the retrofit.

Kevin McPartlan, spokesperson for the Alliance for Zero Carbon Heating and CEO of Fuels for Ireland, says that biofuels can offer a practical and affordable solution which can deliver real emissions cuts. He pointed to a recent report from the consultancy firm AECOM which showed that biofuels in home heating can reduce emissions by up to 86% at virtually no extra cost to the consumer.

"The AECOM research

demonstrates that solutions are on the horizon which will offer a reliable alternative to retrofitting, at an affordable price," McPartlan said. "Biofuels can be used in existing boilers with only minor modifications needed, meaning that they can begin reducing emissions as soon as they come on stream.

"There is a clear appetite for everyone to play a part in moving us towards carbon neutrality, and Wicklow families need real options for how they can do that. Advanced, renewable, synthetic and biofuels are exactly that.

"Any initiative that moves us closer to a zero carbon economy is welcome, but it is a mistake to put all our eggs in the retrofitting basket. The Government should consider every option available to them and take a multi-pronged approach to decarbonising Ireland's home heating sector. Incentivising the use of biofuels is a key part of that strategy," McPartlan concluded.

Speaking about the scheme, Minister Simon Harris said: "The measures announced are part of the National Retrofit Plan to address barriers for homeowners wanting to undertake energy upgrades. The greatly enhanced grants and supports announced in the National Retrofit Scheme also reflect the step-change needed - in pace

and scale of delivery - to achieve our target of 500,000 home energy upgrades, to B2 Building Energy Rating (BER) standard, by 2030.

"As we aim to become Carbon Neutral by 2030, retrofitting has become a key skill, and as Minister for Further and Higher Education one of my key priorities is to ensure the training is in place to ensure there are enough skilled construction workers to deliver the National Retrofit Scheme."

The new measures in the National Retrofit Scheme include:

- A new National Home Energy Upgrade Scheme providing increased grant levels of up to 50% of the cost of a typical deep retrofit to a B2 BER standard (up from 30%-35% grants currently).
- One Stop Shops to offer a hassle-free, start-to-finish project management service, including access to financing, for home energy upgrades.
- A significant increase in the number of free energy upgrades for those at risk of energy poverty.
- A special enhanced grant rate, equivalent to 80% of the typical cost, for attic and cavity wall insulation for all households, to urgently reduce energy use.

The Schemes will be administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and further information on how to apply is available at seai.ie.

People living in apartments across Wicklow urged to take part in survey

Residents living in apartments and duplexes across Wicklow are being urged to take part in a new survey being carried out on the issue of defects, by the Department of Housing.

A Working Group was set up to look into the issue of housing defects in apartments and duplexes built between 1991 and 2013 on issues of fire safety, structural safety and water ingress of home as a result of those defects.

Views are sought from people regardless of whether such defects in those properties in Wicklow are currently known, unknown or where no such defects have arisen.

Speaking about the survey, Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore says, "the Working Group is now looking to hear directly from residents regardless of whether such defects in those properties are currently known, unknown or where no such defects have arisen. So if you are currently living in an apartment, duplex of home and are concerned about fire safety or structural

defects, this is a good opportunity for you to have your experience counted.

"These issues have been raised with me in Wicklow and it's much more common than people realise. Residents' input from a Wicklow context will help inform the Department when they are drafting policy to address defects in homes built during the Celtic Tiger time.

"The online survey is available to anyone who is a homeowners (both current and former), landlords (including private investor/owner, institutional/ commercial as well as Directors of Owners' Management Companies (OMCs) and Property Management Agents.

"It has been well documented the range of issues that have arisen from a largely unregulated housing market during the Celtic Tiger. It is a person's worst nightmare to

realise the integrity of their home is not sound, and so it's crucial that the government hears directly from people so they are well informed on this issue. Residents' input will be very important for the development of policy to deal with home defects and the needs of residents."

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD, said "Understanding the experiences of those directly affected by fire safety, structural safety and water ingress defects in apartment and duplex buildings constructed in Wicklow between 1991 and 2013 will help us understand the scale of the issue. We need to understand the full extent of legacy problems so that we can address them going forward.

"I encourage all those who own or manage purpose-built apart-

ments or duplex buildings constructed in Wicklow between 1991 and 2013, to complete these surveys - whether the property in question has defects or not, or if the presence of defects is not known."

Acknowledging the Working Group's work to date, the Minister added: "I look forward to receiving the Working Group's report later this year and will give it my full consideration."

Separate surveys for each stakeholder group (Homeowners, landlords, directors of Owners' Management Companies, and Property Management Agents) are available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/7e319-online-survey-in-relation-to-defects-in-apartment-and-duplex-buildings/>

The deadline for completing the surveys is Monday 14 March 2022

Kilcoole chef is up next in 'from scratch' online series

Jack Lenards from Kilcoole, sous-chef at Michelin starred restaurant Liath, will be teaching the next 'from scratch' cookery classes in the art of French cuisine from Tuesday 22nd February with the chef supper club.

Learn the intricacies of creating the sweetest chocolate fondant and a succulent boeuf bourguignon all from the comfort of your own kitchen, led by one of Europe's most accomplished young chefs. Whether you're advancing your cooking skills in 2022, or impressing a loved one for a special occasion, Lenards' course invites chefs of all levels to master the complex artistry of French cuisine.

The course has been designed and will be delivered by Jack Lenards every week, from Tuesday, February 22nd where each week you will learn how to cook two delicious dishes such as Toulouse Sausage Casuoulet, Quiche Lorraine, Crème Brûlée, Tarte Citron or a Paris-Brest among others.

Lenards' French cooking course will run for six weeks as part of the 'from scratch' series, which is a multi-episode experience, with chef guided cookery tutorials as your taken step by step through the creation of these dishes. Each class will feature two recipes with insider tips and chef hints which will help to hone your cooking skills to absolute perfection. Price per class is €25 or €100 for all six if booked at the one time.



Jack Lenards

Each participant will receive links to the online classes along with the ingredients list and full recipe and full instructions so you can make the dishes again and again.

Lenards said of his French cookery course with the chef supper club, "By the time you complete this course you will have firm grasp on the basics of classical French cookery in both sweet and

savoury."

Jack was chef de partie at Mews in Baltimore. Before moving to Baltimore, Jack worked as a chef de partie at Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud in Dublin as well as Chapter One Restaurant. As the winner of the competition Jack won a stage in South Africa, where he spent time with Liam Tomlin in Cape Town and Singita

Lebombo. Jack describes this as a once in a lifetime experience. He moved to work in Liathas Sous Chef with Damien Grey in 2020.

Speaking about his experience, Jack Lenards said: "I've worked with some really inspirational chefs and had amazing mentors. In The Ritz-Carlton, Chapter One, L'Écrivain, and Patrick Guilbauds, Chef Ahmet Dede, Mews in Baltimore and now with Damien Grey in Liath. Each one, and the experiences, changes you and changes how you think and act around food. It's important to have people like that to mentor you. They force you to change your thought process for a time and actually understand what these guys are doing."

Liath's Damien Grey said of the course, "I'm incredibly proud of how far Jack has come as a young chef. It's an honour to work alongside him in the kitchen and I'm confident he will bring the same enthusiasm and culinary innovation from his work at Liath into this course." Experiences are available to purchase NOW and can be securely booked from the chef supper club website thechefsupperclub.com.



Junior Eurovision is back!

Adare Productions are putting a call out for talented young singers who will be aged between 9 and 14 years this Autumn. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for a talented youngster or group to represent Ireland at an international level. The Irish heats will take place this April in RTÉ studios in Dublin. The winner will go on to represent Ireland at the JUNIOR EUROVISION Song Contest 2022. With over 7.5 million viewers across Europe the show is something spectacular to be a part of. In 2021, 14-year-old Maiú Levi Lawlor from Greystones (pictured) flew the flag for Ireland in Paris, wowing Europe with his song 'Saor'. This year, could it be you? To enter all you need is an amazing singing voice, there is no original song necessary! Applications are open to solos, duets and groups of up to a maximum of 6 people. The closing date for entries is the 6th of March 2022. To apply all you need is a 40 second clip of the applicant singing. Apply now at www.tg4.ie/junioreurovision

Ladies gaelic football clubs given the opportunity to raise up to €20,000 through club reward scheme

Following the success of last year's Level the Playing Field campaign and Lidl Plus LGFA Club Rewards Scheme with the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA), Lidl Ireland has announced that they will be continuing the successful fundraising initiative this year as the retailer continues to show its support for Ladies Gaelic Football and help level the playing field for Ladies Gaelic Football clubs across the country.

From Monday 7th February, Lidl is calling on Wicklow customers to register for its Lidl Plus app, and sign up to the retailer's rewards scheme to earn rewards for their local club. Lidl will award the maximum amount of €20,000 to the top performing club in each of the four provinces with a host of other rewards available to all other clubs.



Each time Lidl Plus registered users spend over €30 in any Wicklow store and scan their app at the till between Monday 7th February and Sunday 27th March, they will receive a stamp on their digital stamp card. Multiple stamps can be earned in each shop if a multiple of €30 is spent and once six stamps have been collected, users can submit their completed stamp card via the app and their stamps are then added to their chosen club's total. Each club that achieves a minimum of 50 completed digital stamp cards is guaranteed a reward, starting from a set of Lidl sponsored jerseys up to €5,000 in cash funding for clubs that collect 500 or more completed stamp cards.

Fiona Fagan, Head of Marketing at Lidl Ireland commented: "We're delighted to be able to re-launch our popular Lidl Plus LGFA Club Rewards Scheme this year in support of LGFA clubs across the country. Our initiative last year saw such positive results for players at all levels and as a company we're extremely proud to continue to be the biggest supporter of women's sport in Ireland. However, we still have some way to go in terms of levelling the

playing field and we're confident that this campaign will contribute significantly towards that shared goal.

"For us, it's vital that our support for Ladies Gaelic Football isn't just at inter-county level but begins at grassroots meaning we are helping to encourage young girls to get involved in sport from a very early age. Our hope is that by continuing our initiative from last year and offering our Lidl Plus app as a means to help the LGFA raise support, awareness and funds, Ladies Gaelic Football clubs across the country will have the ability to gain access to more resources."

Commenting on the impact of the partnership with Lidl, Carla Rowe, All-Ireland Winner and Dublin LGFA Player said: "Since Lidl's partnership with the LGFA began, we've seen a fantastic upsurge in terms of awareness and support for ladies football. This has been reflected in attendance at games and overall support from the public. I see it every day when I meet people and talk to young school kids, boys and girls. There is an increased appreciation of the effort required to compete at a high level in our sport. There is no doubt in my mind that Lidl's contribution to this has been immense. This latest initiative by Lidl is a great opportunity for our clubs across the country to raise some much needed funds to help build on the progress we've made and to continue to encourage participation and growth in the sport".

Wicklow business hub features at the National Digital Awards

Digital Business Ireland, the country's dedicated representative body for the digital and e-commerce sector, and permanent tsb have announced the winners and runners-up of their annual National Digital Awards series. Wicklow Hub featured as a runner-up in the Business Hub of the Year award category.

The finalists gathered for the highly-anticipated awards ceremony which took the form of a virtual event, hosted by national broadcaster, Jonathan Healy.

This year, the Awards spanned twenty categories, and drew in more than four hundred entries from businesses, people and organisations across Ireland. The winners were announced across 20 categories spanning websites, digital innovation and the people who power them, with leading brands such as ez Living, An Post, Harvey Norman, Pamela Scott and Currys being rewarded for their sterling efforts in the digital arena over 2021.

There was no cost to make a submission to the National Digital Awards, due to the ongoing support of Digital Business Ireland's long standing partnership with permanent tsb and the generosity of the Awards' category sponsors. These include: Campion Insurance Ltd, humm group, LoyLap, Virgin Media, Core Optimisation, Trustpilot, Fortinet, Grouper, Prommt, Magico, Codec, Milk Bottle Labs, .IE, Orbital, OpenOut, Checkout.com, digifly, The People, Password and Lewis Silkin.

Secretary General of Digital Business Ireland, Lorraine Higgins said: "We were truly delighted to recognise the tremendous achievements of so many businesses, organisations and the people who power them through our National Digital Awards programme. Given that we received over four hundred entries to this year's series, including many from Wicklow, it is fair to say that our expert judging panel had a momentous task in selecting the winners and runners-up in each category.

"The talent, innovation and ambition showcased by Wicklow Hub was inspiring to all who were part of the judging process. While the depth of talent in this year's series was simply awe-inspiring, we are now firmly focused on next year's iteration - and I encourage every applicant in Wicklow to get involved in 2022."

Wicklow gardeners encouraged to feed birds to aid pest control



Gardening enthusiasts and vegetable growers in Wicklow are being encouraged to feed their local bird populations over the coming months to ensure they are around in summer to play a vital role in pest control.

Bird expert Patrick Croke says that several common bird species are invaluable for eating the kinds of caterpillars, moths and larvae that can ruin a gardener's year.

"For gardeners and farmers, birds are helpers, not pests – in fact, they play an important role in balancing the local ecosystem," said the Technical Officer with Connecting to Nature – a new Irish company that specialises in all-year-round bird food as well as wild flower seed.

"When insect populations rise in summer time, birds swoop in like the

cavalry and feast on them," said Patrick.

"In fact according to the Smithsonian's Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, birds reduce the pest insect population by almost 30% – and can significantly reduce the need for insecticide, which can only be a good thing.

"But the birds won't magically appear – making the effort to invite them in at this time of year will pay dividends in the summer.

"It's also important to be sure we are feeding the birds the right food for the time of year that

match the requirements of their lifecycle.

"As we move from winter towards spring we need to start moving from the fat-based food we were feeding them in winter to one that is more protein-heavy.

"We will shortly be entering the mating season, and they will require good proteins to grow good feathers and eggs.

"Connecting to Nature's Robin and Songbirds Seed Mix, which contains mealworms and fruit, offers the perfect blend of the right nutrients that those birds need now as the mating season approaches.

"The robins and song

birds in particular are vital to controlling the kinds of insects that can be found in many commonly grown vegetables and flowers."

Connecting to Nature is the brainchild of Julie Power, whose family has been in the seed business for six generations, and it aims to improve our feelings of wellness.

"The World Economic Forum has published research that the happiest Europeans are those who

see the most bird species in their day-to-day life," said Julie.

"Studies have shown that greater bird biodiversity can make people more joyful. Feeding birds is a very good way of feeling closer to nature and bringing wildlife closer to you, and Ireland has a wonderful array of small wild birds that you can feed.

"You don't have to be in the countryside to connect with nature, all you

have to do is create an environment that consistently attracts birds and bees.

"After the experience of Covid lockdowns, we have a new awareness of the mental health benefits of connecting to nature, a renewed interest in our living world and improving our gardens for the benefit and love of wildlife."

See connectingtonature.ie for more details.

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See connectingtonature.ie for more details.

CLASSIFIEDS

Luke 6:17,20-26 GOSPEL

Jesus came down with the Twelve and stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and from Jerusalem and from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon who had come to hear him and to be cured of their diseases.

Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said:

'How happy are you who are poor; yours is the kingdom of God

Happy you who are hungry now: you shall be satisfied.

Happy you who weep now: you shall laugh.

Happy are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, for then your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets.

'But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now.

Alas for you who have your fill now: you shall go hungry.

Alas for you who laugh now: you shall mourn and weep.

Alas for you when the world speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.'

C.J.

Brockagh Market/Car Boot

The Brockagh Market & Car Boot is on the 2nd Sunday of each month. It's open to the public from 10am to 3pm. Tea, coffee and food snacks are available to purchase on the day. The barrier will be locked from 6pm Saturday evening until 8am Sunday morning. To book a space with the Brockagh Market/Car Boot contact Michelle by phone 0404 45600 (Wed-Fri 9am to 2pm) or email carboot-brockagh@gmail.com.

Social distancing and masks must be worn when using the toilet facilities in accordance with government guidelines. Note this indoor and outdoor market is now run alongside the all new Irish Farmers Market which is every Sunday 11am-4pm. To book an Irish Farmers Market space contact Sean Mcardle, email seandavidmcardle@gmail.com or mobile 087 6115016).

• PLANNING • PLANNING •

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Barbara Doyle, intend to apply for retention permission for a development at this site, Bohilla lane, Kilnurray North, Kilmacanogue, Co. Wicklow, A98X267. The development seeks retention permission for the construction of a single storey timber frame garden pod structure with an internal floor area of 12 sqm, that is in use for short term residential letting on a 0.0915 Ha site. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Robert Driver, intend to apply for retention permission for development at this site Ballydowling, Glenealy, Co. Wicklow A67 XV99. The development consists of retention permission for a detached single storey flat roofed masonry - built storage shed to the rear of the property. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Liam Keogh seek planning permission to complete planning application 13610019. The construction of external door entrances with stairs and associated site works to existing Scout Den, Harbour Road, Arklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.



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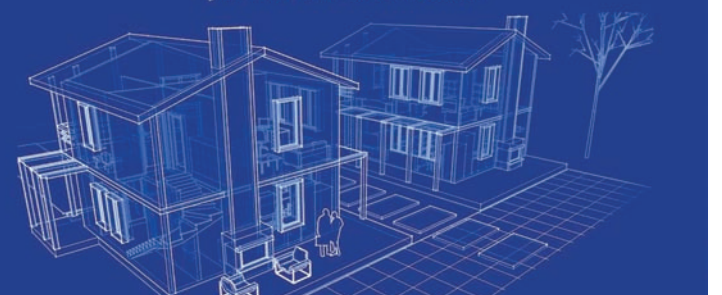
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PLEASE NOTE DEADLINE FOR CLASSIFIED ADS AND APPOINTMENTS IS 12 NOON FRIDAY



Join the campaign to get County Wicklow reading

Wicklow County Council Library Service is taking part in 'Ireland Reads', a campaign to get the whole country reading this month in the lead up to a national day of reading on Friday, February 25th.

Irish libraries have teamed up with publishers, booksellers, authors and others for the campaign, which is part of the government's Healthy Ireland programme and aims to celebrate reading and all the benefits it can have for wellbeing and enjoyment.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Shay Cullen, urged everyone to take the time to 'squeeze in a read' highlighting the importance of reading for enjoyment, saying "reading is really important to all of us - no matter what age, keeping us mentally

active and providing an opportunity for a bit of escapism".

The pledge to read can be made at www.irelandreads.ie where people can also see how much time has been pledged by the Irish public so far and sign up for reading reminders.

The website also offers book recommendations suited to a person's interests and the time they have available. There are more than 1,500 recommendations from librarians all around the country for all interests and reading levels.

A website user can simply enter their favourite type of book

and how long they would like to read each day and the website will offer the perfect book suggestion and work out how long it will take to complete - so anyone can set themselves a challenge if they are finding it hard to get back to reading.

In the run up to Friday February 25th, Library staff in all 13 Wicklow branches will offer in-house events and -times, new Book Clubs, author visits and other activities to welcome everyone back to the library setting where they can linger for a while, return books, renew memberships and maybe join for the first time.

On the day itself, all babies born since 2020 can get their first library card and pick up their My First Library Bag to carry their library items and get set up on the path to being ready to start reading when they start school.

The message from Wicklow Library's staff for 'Ireland Reads' is to look on reading as a pleasurable and relaxing experience and to remind you that reading doesn't always have to be a solitary experience - read with your children, read to your older relatives, join a book club and make sure to swap recommendations.



Donard man Paddy Toomey at the Wicklow Vs Fermanagh Football League division 3 match in Aughrim.

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