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# CHILDCARE CRISIS

Childcare in County Wicklow is at “crisis point”, Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore declared in the Dáil last week. Parents in Wicklow are currently paying the highest childcare fees outside Dublin, at approximately €924 per month, or roughly one fifth or one quarter of their disposable income, she declared.

Meanwhile, the percentage capacity of all places in the county set aside for children under the age of one stands at 0.6%, the second lowest rate in the country.

“€924 per month is an incredible sum for any family to find, not least for a service the Social Democrats believe should be publicly provided,” said Deputy Whitmore.

“I cannot quite understand why we are so far behind our European neighbours in how we deal with childcare. I understand the budget is approaching and hope the Government will make that serious investment we need in respect of childcare costs in order that parents will be supported.”

Deputy Whitmore said the capacity

shortage means that “Many parents, primarily women, have to decide between their job and staying at home because they cannot find any facilities that will take their babies. I have spoken to parents who have spent a year looking for places for their children and to a woman who had to turn down two job offers because she could not find childcare when she



Rachel Gillespie and Tilly Byrne at the Harbourman Triathlon event in Wicklow Town.  
Photo by Michael Kelly

looked for it. Similarly, I have spoken to parents who, when they went looking in April, were told it would be next July before they would be able to get a place, which is not acceptable.

“Parents need to be able to work, particularly in Wicklow, in order that they can meet their incredibly high mortgage repayments or afford their rent. In addition, we do not want women being unable or not having a choice to continue with their careers because the service is not provided.”

“It would be really useful if flexible full and part-time childcare was available to parents in order that they could pay for three or four days’ childcare as opposed to the full five. If such childcare were available, it would facilitate with the type of remote working policies at which we are current-

ly looking. People could also take their parental leave and make their work-life balance a bit more manageable. The three main issues I wish to raise with the Minister of State in the context of childcare are cost, availability and flexibility.”

Minister Malcolm Noonan responded, saying: “An initial analysis of the data captured in June 2021 found significant vacancy rates across the country with the national vacancy rate averaging at 21% and a vacancy rate in Wicklow of 16%. In April of this year, the network of county childcare committees undertook a nationwide survey of capacity in early learning and childcare services. This was followed in May by the early years sector profile survey, which is undertaken annually by Pobal on behalf of the

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

“An initial analysis of this data shows that there is currently

a vacancy rate in Wicklow of 12.5%.

Continued on Page 5

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Robin and Pip Peters at the Wicklow Pony Club Summer Camp in Rosanna, Ashford.

## Glendalough Community Excavations

Glendalough Community Excavations will return from 8th-19th August. If you have an interest in archaeology and Glendalough it is a fantastic experience.

Glendalough Heritage Forum said "We regret we cannot offer places to those under 18 this year but we hope to welcome younger participants again next year. Adult places (subject to availability) are available from fixed blocks of two or three days. No prior knowledge of excavation is required and we endeavour to accommodate people of all abilities." For information and details of application please email [glendaloughheritageforum@gmail.com](mailto:glendaloughheritageforum@gmail.com).

## Irish-German Society of County Wicklow

The first in-person meeting of the Irish-German Society of County Wicklow in over two years will take place on Monday 25th July at 7.30pm in Bray Town Hall. The Chairman of the Society George Jones said he was delighted that the AGM/General Meeting will now take place after two years of Covid. He was also delighted that over 30 members had recently travelled to Wurzburg to celebrate twenty years of partnership (Two years delayed because of Covid).

Guest Speaker at the meeting will be H.E Cord Meier -Klodt newly appointed Ambassador of Germany to Ireland. All are welcome to attend. For further info contact George Jones on 086 821 7357.

## Safety warning at Greystones Harbour

A number of incidents occurred at Greystones Harbour and Marina last week which were concerning on grounds of Health and Safety, Wicklow County Council has said. It has been reported that a significant number of people were diving from the pier, at serious risk to their wellbeing and that of other harbour and marina users, notwithstanding that this is not permitted. There were also reports of anti-social behaviour which were brought to the attention of An Garda Síochána.

Accordingly, the gate on the North Pier was closed by the operator on safety grounds for a period, but was reopened on Wednesday. With the good weather set to continue, Wicklow County Council is appealing to all users to be mindful of Water Safety and to respect all users of the facility.

The operator is monitoring the situation constantly and should there be further incidents, they may, in consultation with An Garda Síochána and Wicklow County Council, arrange for the gate to be closed again for a further period.

## Summer activity taster sessions on Bray Seafront

If you've ever wanted to try out yoga, dance or fitness classes, get yourself down to Bray seafront this August for some free taster sessions by the sea. The sessions will take place every Wednesday morning from 10.30-11.30am for four weeks, starting on 3rd August. All fitness levels are welcome.

The taster sessions are being put on by Bray Area Partnership's Social Prescribing for Bray and North Wicklow initiative, in collaboration with Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership - as part of Sláintecare Healthy Communities.

Places will be limited so book now by calling the partnership on 01 286 8266 or emailing [alex@brayareapartnership.ie](mailto:alex@brayareapartnership.ie). For more information see [www.brayareapartnership.ie](http://www.brayareapartnership.ie).

## Wicklow Mountains National Park Family Fun Days

Family Fun Days take place at 2-4pm every Tuesday for July and August. Fun for all the family with nature walks, arts and crafts, treasure hunts and bug safaris. Free with booking essential. To book or for further details email us at [wickloweducationcentre@housing.gov.ie](mailto:wickloweducationcentre@housing.gov.ie). Parking: Wicklow County Council, Upper Lake Car Park, A98W778 (parking charges apply).

# National Ambulance Service launches new campaign for Community First Responders

The HSE National Ambulance Service last Wednesday launched a new nationwide campaign for additional volunteer Community First Responders to support the work of the Emergency Services in local communities.

The campaign, which features a new promotional video and website, [www.becomeacfr.ie](http://www.becomeacfr.ie) was launched by Cathal O'Donnell, Medical Director of the National Ambulance Service, at an event in Dunboyne Castle, Co Meath.

Community First Responders are an integral part of dealing with an emergency in the community in that they provide vital lifesaving CPR and defibrillator treatment to patients while an ambulance is en route.

Speaking at the launch today Mr O'Donnell said: "We currently have 250 Community First Responder schemes operating in Ireland, but our goal is to ensure that every patient who needs treatment across Ireland gets access to a community response, so this promotional campaign forms part of this."

"I would encourage anyone interested in becoming a Community First Responder to visit

[www.becomeacfr.ie](http://www.becomeacfr.ie) and get in touch. There is currently a need for additional Community First Responders right around the country and you will be given the essential training required. We would also like to see additional Community First Responder Schemes established where they are needed."

Brigid Sinnott, Resus Manager, the Irish Heart Foundation said:

"At the Irish Heart Foundation one of our key

goals is to help save lives from cardiac arrest through CPR training. The more people who know CPR the more lives we can save. By starting CPR you can double or triple a person's chances of surviving a cardiac arrest. We are delighted to be here today to support this new drive for more Community First Responders and to hear Emma's remarkable story about the amazing care she received after her cardiac arrest."

## New funding available to give older people a greater say

Wicklow groups working with and supporting older people are being invited to apply for support to advance their Active Citizenship and Advocacy work.

The Community Foundation for Ireland is offering support to initiatives which 'give greater voice'. Grants are being made available under the Older Persons Fund at the Foundation which over the past seven years has provided over €1.5 Million to groups and organisations.

Applications are now being sought for grants of up to €7,500 under two strands. The first strand, Active Citizenship offers support to community based and national activities that promote older people as active citizens and build older people's capacity and potential to take on roles in their community. The second strand, Advocacy offers support to projects that empower older people to become advocates on issues that affect them. Applications can be to support advocacy by older persons' for older persons, training to influence policy, developing community decision-making processes, building leadership or negotiation skills and other innovative projects.

Announcing the opening of applications, Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of The Community Foundation for Ireland said: "During Covid-19 our donors funded research which showed that members of the older generation in Wicklow felt 'cancelled' during the pandemic. Side-lining people because of age must never happen again."

"This year our Older Persons Fund is firmly focussed on preventing a repeat by working to strengthen voices, so that everyone can have their say and everyone is heard. Such work ties in with the mission of our donors of Equality for All in Thriving Communities and the empowering of generations to achieve it."

Application details are on [www.communityfoundation.ie](http://www.communityfoundation.ie). The closing date is on 5th August.



Nathan Byrne and Ben at the launch of the 2022 Tinahely Show which takes place on August Bank Holiday Monday.

WICKLOW  
Times

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# Arklow and Wicklow Town rail users being 'penalised'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has expressed his concern at the failure of the Government to extend the Short Hope Zone from Kilcoole as far as Arklow.

Under the current catchment area of the Short Hop Zone rail users can use a Leap Card as far as Kilcoole. But, passengers wishing to travel onto Wicklow or Arklow must either book a ticket online or purchase at the train station. The extra cost involved represents a penalisation of rail users in Wicklow.

Deputy Brady said: "It is not acceptable that rail passengers in Wicklow are being asked to pay extra

just because Leap Cards are not accepted after from Kilcoole onwards travelling south.

"The Government may be advising more people to leave their cars behind and to use public transport instead. But they are doing little to make rail travel an attractive alternative, instead we have rail users in Wicklow and Arklow who are being penalised for using the train.

"This is a poor service for which passengers are

being penalised by being asked to pay more for. This is not acceptable. This amounts to the deliberate penalisation of rail users in Wicklow and Arklow, at a time when there needs to be financial incentives in place to encourage people to use the train.

"I have consistently pushed for the provision of extra train services, and increased capacity. I also want to call for the extension of the Short Hop

zone as far as Arklow.

"It appears that the Government is content to issue platitudes and appeals in the name of the environment but are prepared to do little in the way of improving services or making them more economically equitable for passengers. I intend to further raise this matter with the Minister, and the National Transport Authority (NTA) at the earliest opportunity."

## New Arklow-to-Kildare Local Link service welcomed

A new Local Link service connecting Arklow to Sallins in Kildare is expected to be up and running within a couple of months.

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore last week received confirmation of the news, stating: "I have been in touch with the National Transport Authority regarding this new bus service, who have confirmed that the proposed new route will service Arklow - Avoca - Rathdrum - Gleanealy - Rathnew - Wicklow - Rathnew - Ashford - Roundwood - Laragh - Glendalough - Hollywood - Blessington - Naas - Sallins.

"This is really positive news

and will make travelling between the east and the west of the county by public transport a possibility for residents and commuters. It will also mean that it will be easier to get between neighbouring towns and villages for shopping, work or school. This is a win-win situation for our local economy, our environment and tourism.

"The tenders are being sought to operate 5 services a day between Arklow and Sallins and four services a day between Sallins and Arklow.

"The service is currently the subject of a tender process at present with tender submissions due to be submitted at the end of this week. The NTA hope to launch the route in the next couple of months.

"I am really pleased to see this expansion of local link services across the county, as I believe that they are a very important part of our transport solutions. They are particularly important for our rural areas and smaller communities. I want to see a situation where each town and village in Wicklow is connected by a local link service and I will continue to raise the importance of this service with the Minister and the NTA."



Kirill Perevashov and Sadhbh Bryne giving giant Jenga a go at the launch of the Kilmacanogue Show which takes place on 23rd July. See page 13

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# Council joins forces with Rotary Ireland on Bikes For Africa Project

The bikes are being collected through Wicklow's five recycling centres. The bikes are repaired in Shelton Abbey Open Prison before being shipped to the Gambia for distribution to students.

The project is seeking good quality sturdy bikes that can be repaired for reuse and which will be suitable for use on more basic roads. The project provides students with the means to get to their nearest secondary school. This simple mode of transport can help transform their daily lives where students often have to commute up to 5km to school.

Bikes can be left in at any of Wicklow's five recycling centres from where they will be brought to Arklow for repair. Bikes wanted include:

- Strong bikes that can withstand rough terrain
- Bikes that suit both primary and secondary students but not small children's bikes
- A minimum wheel size of 24"
- A bike in reasonable repair that can be readily brought back to a workable order

The project is a joint initiative between the Rotary clubs in Wicklow and Bray, the Irish Prison Service and Wicklow County Council. Wicklow County Council has installed storage at Arklow recycling centre for the

bikes and the Irish Prison Service has developed a bike repair service in Shelton Abbey Open Prison.

Cllr Tommy Annesley, Cathaoirleach, Wicklow County Council, welcomed the initiative noting that the town of Arklow has benefited from several Shelton Abbey projects and work programmes.

He said: "Bikes can be given a new lease of life with repair and shipment. It will give students vital support to get an education at school. It's great to see the three partners Wicklow County Council, Rotary Ireland and the Irish Prison Service working together to make this happen."

The project is part of Wicklow County Council's commitment to promoting circular economy activity through its recycling centre. If you have an old bike or two unused in a shed or garage, why not take the opportunity to declutter and give it a new lease of life.

This project received funding from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communication under the Anti-Dumping initiative.



Billy Redmond, Arklow Recycling Centre; Martina Robinson, President of Wicklow Rotary Club; Jim Callery, Wicklow County Council; Andy Bolger, Wicklow Rotary Club; Cllr Tommy Annesley, Cathaoirleach, Wicklow County Council; Sean Fitzgerald, District Governor, Rotary Ireland; Mike Connolly, Assistant Governor, Rotary Ireland; Theresa Morgan, President, Bray Rotary Club; Pat Dunne, Arklow Recycling Centre and Pat Hastings, Bray Rotary Club.

## Charities invited to apply for Movement for Good 2022 larger grants

Phase 2 is open now until August 5th

Benefact Group's Movement for Good Awards is giving away a further €500,000 to support charity projects that have a lasting impact on communities.

For the fourth year running, the Benefact Group is giving away £1 million to charities through its Movement for Good Awards. Applications for the larger grants of £10,000 or more are now open and close on Friday, 5th of August.

Charities supporting education and skills, rural or community development, heritage, arts or culture, climate or environment, and human rights or equality are invited to apply online at: [www.movementforgood.com/largergrants](http://www.movementforgood.com/largergrants)

In 2021, Dublin based charity, Common Ground, which is an arts development organisation; and Sligo based charity, Kids' Own, which is a children's arts organisation and publishing house; both received a £10,000 grant to fund great projects. This

year Ecclesiastical Insurance Ireland is inviting more charities to apply. The funding can be used within three years and for a blend of project and core funding costs.

Siobhán Geoghegan, Director at Common Ground, said: "We were absolutely thrilled to hear

we were one of the winners of the Movement for Good Awards 2021. Winning €10,000 made a huge difference to the work we do locally.

"The grant also came at a perfect time as we had been navigating a difficult period following the Covid 19 Pandemic. These

resources are helping us support and empower local people to create greener neighbourhoods through creative greening initiatives, and we hope other Irish charities benefit from this great initiative."

David Lane, Managing Director for Ecclesiastical Insurance Ireland, said: "We understand the importance of longer-term funding for charities, especially when trying to bring ambitious new ideas to life and get larger transformative projects off the ground.

Through our larger grants, we are actively championing innovation, giving charities the backing they need to propel their plans forward and turn creative ideas into practical solutions that benefit society.

"As a company whose purpose is to contribute to the greater good of society, charitable giving is at the heart of what we do. We hope to see a number of strong applications from Ireland between now and the 5th of August, so we can continue to help charities at a time when they need it most"

ties at a time when they need it most"

In June, 250 €1,000 awards were donated. A further 250 €1,000 grants will be awarded in September and a further 120 €1,000 grants will be given away in December.

For more information and an application guide which details how to apply for the larger grants visit: [www.movementforgood.com/largergrants](http://www.movementforgood.com/largergrants).

Movement for Good is funded by EIO plc, part of the Benefact Group.

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Members of Arklow Cancer Support Group at their recent coffee morning fundraising event.



# 'Gamechanger' First Home Scheme for Wicklow house buyers

Fianna Fáil Senator Pat Casey has warmly welcomed Minister Daragh O'Brien's First Home Scheme which he called a "game-changing policy which will help the thousands of people in Wicklow get their feet on the property ladder and secure a home in the Garden County".

Senator Casey continued, "For years house prices in Wicklow have been skyrocketing and have only been surpassed by the most affluent areas of Dublin. This has had the effect that many people born and reared in Wicklow have been priced out of the local housing market and have either been unable to secure a home in their

own locality or forced to leave Wicklow entirely to seek affordable properties.

"The First Home Scheme reduces the price of a new home which a buyer in Wicklow has to pay now by up to 30%. It is one way in which the Government is helping First Time Buyers and those seeking a fresh start to own their own home.

The State, and participating banks, step in to bridge the gap between the deposit and mortgage approval a prospective buyer has, and the money they need to buy a new home in Wicklow.

"For example if a new home costs €300,000 and the buyer could only get a mortgage and deposit together of €240,000, the First Home Scheme provides the remaining €60,000 or a 20% equity stake to bridge the gap."

"And unlike many financial schemes there is No catch. All the terms and conditions are fully visible on [www.firsthomescheme.ie](http://www.firsthomescheme.ie) Wicklow home buyers can pay back the equity stake in full if you wish but there is no obligation to until the house is sold. People will pay a small servicing fee on the equity stake after year six.

"The scheme will not drive prices up as the initiative is subject to price caps and strict mortgage drawdown criteria to help restrict the risk of price inflation. It represents a tiny but important fraction



of the overall €12bn mortgage market in Ireland.

"The First Home Scheme will step in to bridge the gap between the deposit and mortgage approval you have and the money you need to buy a new home. I urge the many people in Wicklow who have been saving for years to secure their first home to visit [www.firsthomescheme.ie](http://www.firsthomescheme.ie) for information, to check your eligibility and to apply online.

"This new scheme along with the massive

increase of home building both public and private in Wicklow are proof that Fianna Fáil in Government are making a huge difference to the supply of homes for all the people of the county. Housing delivery in all parts of Wicklow has been one of my top priorities in becoming a national politician and I will continue working to ensure that all the people of Wicklow have access to housing. Other parties just hurl insults but the facts in Wicklow prove that our policies are



Senator Pat Casey



Mary Margaret and Jim Molloy at the Harbourman Triathlon in Wicklow Town.

## CHILDCARE CRISIS

Continued from page 1

However, the Department of Children is aware that, in some areas, capacity issues have re-emerged for some families.

"The Department has demonstrated its commitment to increasing capacity through having secured €70 million in the revised national development plan for the early learning and childcare sector. This funding will enable significant capital investment in early learning and childcare and much of it will go to increasing capacity in the sector in order to fulfil the Government priority of ensuring availability of high-quality early learning and childcare that is affordable and accessible.

"In order to assist with increased capacity, the Department secured €70 million for the sector under the national develop-

ment plan for the period 2023 to 2025. The majority of this funding is earmarked for new places. This will enable significant capital investment in early learning and childcare during 2023 to 2025 across the three pillars of modernisation, new capacity and First 5 initiatives.

"Parents in Wicklow who are experiencing difficulty in respect of their early learning and childcare needs should contact their local city or county childcare committee, which can provide assistance on centre-based childcare, childminders and other options."

Deputy Whitmore said "One parent said she contacted 46 crèches and minders before she found someone. There is obviously a problem. When we talk about averages, what needs to be reflected is

that Wicklow is a very diverse county with many towns and villages. Some villages have no access at all to any childcare and they will obviously not be reflected in the figures.

"The other issue is that when we talk about childcare, we are looking at a wide range of ages. Although the Minister of State showed me the same statistics, Pobal also said that only 0.6% of the childcare places in Wicklow are for children who are aged under one year, which is the second lowest in the country. There is an obvious issue in Wicklow, particularly when it comes to younger children and babies. That is not reflected in that figure of 16% either. To say that we found an average vacancy rate and that everything is fine is to dismiss the problems parents are facing. It indicates that the Department is not listening to people or aware of what is happening on the ground."

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# New €50m fund to refurbish vacant properties

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien T.D., together with the Taoiseach Micheál Martin, last week launched a new €50m Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund which will support bringing vacant and underused buildings in Wicklow's towns and villages back into residential use.

Many areas of towns and villages face the blight of vacant properties, which, if brought back into use, could add real vibrancy to towns of all sizes across county Wicklow. The Government's Our Rural

Future policy and recently published Town Centre First policy aim to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into our town centres. The Scheme is set to benefit those who wish

to turn a formerly vacant house or building into their principal private residence and become part of the community in the area, furthering the aim to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and

attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

The Fund will be delivered through local authorities who will provide a grant to support the refurbishment of vacant properties, with priority given to applications in areas where the level of vacancy or dereliction is high.

A grant of up to €30,000 will be available for the refurbishment of vacant properties for occupation as a principal private residence, including the conversion of a property which has not been used as a home before now.

Where a property is derelict, a maximum top-up grant amount of up to €20,000 will be available, bringing the total grant available for a derelict property up to a maximum of €50,000. This can also be combined with the SEAI Better Energy Home Scheme that covers works of up to €26,750.

Steven Matthews TD, Green Party Spokesperson for Planning and Local

Government, and Chair of the Oireachtas Housing and Planning Committee, launched the 'Vacancy, Dereliction and Regeneration Bill 2022' in February of this year.

Welcoming the €50m fund Deputy Matthews said: "We know there are at least 90,000 vacant homes left idle across the country and our villages, towns and cities are blighted with neglected and derelict buildings. We need to reimagine our existing built environment to create vibrant, liveable villages and towns that will also bring jobs and enhance security and safety. I welcome today's funding announcement, that along with a suite of other measures including a vacant home tax, will help ensure that as many vacant buildings as possible can be added to our housing stock and once again become homes."

Welcoming the news, Fianna Fail Senator Pat Casey said, "I'm delighted to see this new €50m fund under Housing For



Steven Matthews TD

All which will support more people to live in our towns and villages by refurbishing currently vacant properties. A priority of the Government's Housing For All plan is to encourage refurbishment of vacant properties to boost housing supply. There is a huge appetite across Wicklow for people to be able to live and work in their local area and this scheme will support people to do so while breathing new life into our towns and villages."

Announcing the new initiative, the Taoiseach Micheál Martin emphasised: "We know there is a great appetite across the towns and villages of Wicklow to bring vacant properties back into use for home ownership and this scheme will provide the ability to turn many of those opportunities into reality."

"This initiative is among the suite of measures in Housing for All which are designed to ensure that everyone has access to good quality housing as well as seeking to strengthen and diversify rural towns and villages to be a focus for local housing and employment growth."

Minister Darragh O'Brien TD added: "The Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund is another key delivery milestone in the Government's Housing for All plan and supporting home ownership."

Recently we launched our new Home First Scheme, announced affordable and cost rental accommodation to be developed through

the Land Development Agency at Shanganagh and promoted the development of apartments for owner occupiers through the Croí Cónaithe Cities fund. Today, this scheme becomes our latest addition to boosting home ownership by supporting people to refurbish vacant properties to become their homes, enabling them to live in towns and villages and addressing vacancy through sustainable reuse. At the same we are adding to the vibrancy of towns and villages across the country and supporting local communities. I also intend extending the scheme further into city areas with high vacancy or dereliction in the coming months"

The application form, eligibility criteria and associated FAQs as published (available here) will provide additional information to people who would like to apply for the grant.

Further information will be available from the Vacant Homes Officer in each local authority.

## Funding secured to bring Ashford and Carnew buildings back into public use

Funding has been secured for the purchase of both the former Garda Station in Ashford and the former Bank of Ireland building in Carnew by Wicklow County Council to redesignate them for public use. The funding is being provided under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

Sinn Féin TD John Brady said it represents a huge victory for all of those involved in the campaign to ensure that these premises would be preserved for public use.

Deputy Brady has been centrally involved in long-running campaigns to have the former Garda Station in Ashford and the former Bank of Ireland premises in Carnew transferred to the Council in order to allow both buildings to be used by their respective local communities.

"This development represents a victory for all involved in the campaign to ensure that these two buildings would be preserved for public use. This will represent a huge benefit for the people of Ashford and Carnew," said Deputy Brady.

"Wicklow County Council deserves credit for listening to the strong arguments I brought forward, which I had submitted to try and secure the buildings for public use. I believe that it is an important development to have buildings such as these purchased and preserved for the use of local communities."

"The former Garda station in Ashford has been lying vacant and unused for almost 20 years since it was extensively damaged in a fire in 2003. But what we have now is an opportunity to revamp the building into a vibrant and dynamic community hub. When I originally heard that the OPW was set to dispose of the property I contacted the Minister responsible for the OPW and asked that the property be transferred to the Council at the earliest opportunity."

"When the Bank of Ireland announced the closure of 88 of its branches across the state, three of the branches were located in Wicklow, in Carnew, Rathdrum and Tinahely. I made repeated representations at the



The former Garda station in Ashford

time to the Bank of Ireland at the behest of the community in Carnew that the former branch building in the town be allowed to be used by the local community.

"The Bank responded by stating that it has no intention of engaging in short term leases or handing it over to the community and they intend to prepare the building to be put on the market in the second quarter of 2022."

"However, the success of Wicklow County Council in securing funding through the Town and Village Enhancement Scheme, which offers grants up to €400,000 in order to bring older buildings back into use as multi-purpose spaces, means that they are now in a position to apply for further funding in 2023 and 2024 to carry out refurbishments on both buildings."

Fine Gael Minister Simon Harris TD said "This fund aims to take disused buildings and return them to public use. Applications were submitted to convert the former Bank of Ireland building in Carnew into a remote working hub and the former

Ashford Garda Station into a community centre. Both these applications have now been approved.

"I am really delighted that we have secured this funding for Ashford and for Carnew. The scheme is designed to tackle the scourge of dereliction in rural towns and villages and deliver new facilities that will benefit communities. I have no doubt that this fund will make a massive difference to these two communities and will deliver much needed community facilities."

"I want to thank Wicklow County Council for their excellent work on these applications and I would also like to pay tribute to the local communities for their work and ideas and enthusiasm as to how these buildings can be put back into use for the community. I look forward to now seeing these facilities develop and to working with communities across our county on similar initiatives. A new community centre and a new remote working hub for our county is really good news which I am delighted the Government could support."



Dermot Hickey makes his way from the water during the recent Harbourman Triathlon in Wicklow Town

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Bobby McKenna and Wendy Coady at the Wicklow Pony Club Summer Camp in Rosanna, Ashford.

## Wicklow finalists shine bright for Miss Ireland 75th Jubilee year

Wicklow is well represented this year in the 75th Miss Ireland competition with two finalists. The 37 finalists vying for the coveted Miss Ireland 2022 title were revealed at a sparkling white party last week for the 75th Diamond Jubilee of the competition. The finalists arrived to House on an open top bus to celebrate in style and begin their Miss Ireland 2022 journey.

Wicklow will be represented this year by Tanya Flood who was crowned Miss Wicklow and Erika Bellamy who was crowned Miss Wicklow Town. Tanya Flood is 24 years old from Druids Glen and is currently working as a Research and Development Scientist having graduated from Dublin City University with a degree in Chemical and Pharmaceutical Science. Tanya is very passionate about health and fitness and has a huge interest in beauty and fashion.

Erika Bellamy is a 21 year old student from Kilcoole. She is currently studying business in DCU and is on her third-year placement working in vehicle finance. Erika enjoys playing camogie and hopes to build a career in management once she leaves college.

Selections have taken place all over the country to find contestants from each county and the winner from each county will represent their county at the most spectacular ever Diamond Jubilee Miss Ireland show with 1500 in attendance on August 20th at the Royal Theatre Castlebar. Tanya and Erika will represent their county and attend various awards, openings and engagements over the next year as well as working on her various charity projects.

The headline sponsor for Miss Ireland 2022 is TanOrganic and the theme is 'Our World Our Future' with a focus on the environment and global citizenship.

The finalists of Miss Ireland this year will be put through their paces in a challenging competitive process testing their skills in debating, public speaking, talent, sports, modelling, social media and each finalist will be tasked with raising much-needed awareness and funds for their chosen charities. Challenges will also include beach clean ups, ethical upcycling, education pieces and a new Miss Eco-Ireland sash will be awarded.



Pictured are (left) Miss Wicklow Town Erika Bellamy and (right) Miss Wicklow Tanya Flood

## Funding to support Wicklow enterprise development projects at Clermont

Fine Gael Minister Simon Harris TD has announced that the Clermont Enterprise Hub at Rathnew has been awarded funding under the under the Regional Enterprise Innovation Scoping Scheme (REISS).

Last Thursday the Minister for Business, Employment and Retail approved 47 projects nationwide for grant support under REISS and the Clermont Enterprise Hub will be a beneficiary of this.

Minister Harris said: "As Minister for Further and Higher Education the development of Clermont in Rathnew as a Hub for both Enterprise, Innovation and Training is key local priority for me.

"Many of our excellent local businesses and entrepreneurs in Wicklow will be in a position to significantly benefit from the outcomes of this targeted support which is aligned to the objectives of the Regional Enterprise Plan that was launched earlier this year."

"The funding to be invested at Clermont is one of 15 projects to



Minister Simon Harris

receive priming grants of up to €200,000. Strengthening the links between our education system and innovative local businesses is an

important strategy in our Regional Economic Plans and the Clermont Enterprise Hub is a key to this in County Wicklow.

"The Clermont Campus will also be a hub for training facilities for emerging industries in Wicklow including the Renewable Energy Sector, Marine Training and the development of a Content Creation Enterprise Hub and I am working with Wicklow County Council, KWETB, Technical University for the South East and local businesses to make this a reality."

Minister Harris concluded: "This funding promotes innovation within the Wicklow enterprise ecosystem and will benefit the local economy and entrepreneurial activity, productivity and innovative capability."

## Independent Regulatory Review of Forestry Licensing Published

The Minister of State with responsibility for Forestry at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Senator Pippa Hackett, has welcomed the publication of the 'Project Woodland: Regulatory Review Report'.

The independent expert review was commissioned by the Minister's Department to review Ireland's forestry regulations.

Commenting on the report, Minister Hackett said: "This independent report was necessary to assess the extent to which forestry in Ireland is being appropriately regulated, and also importantly whether any improvements can be made to the licensing system while working

within the parameters of Irish and EU environmental law. The report outlines changes in environmental law which have resulted in the increasingly complex regulatory framework that has ultimately led to delays in the issuing of forest licences in recent years. It also makes recommendations which my Department and I must now fully consider as we continue to reduce the backlog of forestry licence applications."

"The report is a valuable source of information and a reference document for

everyone involved in forestry. It is comprehensive and was the subject of detailed stakeholder consultation with over 60 stakeholder meetings informing its final outcome.

"I encourage all stakeholders to read the report now in detail. In parallel, the Project Board which is leading on the implementation of Project Woodland will be studying closely the recommendations and working with my Department on an action plan for implementation."

## Pushing Wicklow to the 'fore' in the Middle East

A group of golf tour operators and journalists from the UAE recently visited Wicklow to play a number of our golf courses and experience some of our visitor attractions - to coincide with the 2022 Horizon Irish Open at Mount Juliet. They were here as guests of Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland.

The aim of the fact-finding visit was to highlight the fact that Ireland offers some of the very best golf in the world, with something for everyone, from beginner to pro, as well as spectacular scenery and fantastic experiences.

Their action-packed itinerary included a round of golf at Druids Heath, a visit to Powerscourt Golf Club and a tour of the Powerscourt Distillery. They stayed in Druids Glen Hotel.

Aisling McDermott, Tourism Ireland's Manager Asia and Middle East, said: "Tourism Ireland was delighted to invite leading golf tour operators and journalists from the UAE to come and experience our world-class golf, spectacular scenery and wonderful visitor attractions. Our aim is to remind them that Ireland offers some of the very best golf in the world and has something for everyone, from beginner to pro."



Matthew Smith and David Burke, both Golf Digest Middle East; Barney Coleman, Emirates Golf Club; Jenny O'Reilly, Fáilte Ireland; Matt Lynch, Tourism Ireland; Arun Fernando, United World Travel; Joe Shannon, G Golf Ireland; and Bimal Jain, Al Rostamani Travel, about to tee off on the Druids Heath golf course.



# Cost of disability impacting people in Wicklow

**Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has spoken on a Dáil Motion calling on government to address the cost of living with a disability. The Social Democrats Motion called for a disability budget among other measures to help disabled people navigating the everyday cost of disability as well as the rising cost of living.**

Speaking in the Dáil last week, Deputy Whitmore said, "The cost of living crisis is out of control. Inflation is now running at nearly 10pc and prices, across the economy, are soaring. Disabled people, and families who have a child with disabilities, spend more on things like heating, transport, therapeutic equipment and medical expenses. This is what's coming across in my constituency in Wicklow - already vulnerable individuals just can't make ends meet."

"I have spoken with two individuals looking for a new wheelchair. One was Leo Dixon from Arklow who had to travel all the way up to the Dáil with his family to ask for a new wheelchair. As Spokesperson for Children, I believe this is unacceptable. Another man has been in need of a new wheelchair for over half a year with no indication from the HSE when he will get it. In the meantime, his quality of life, his level of independence has been negatively impacted."

"As Spokesperson for Climate Action, I believe the government has also been lacking in poverty

and disability-proofing legislation when it comes to climate change, which disproportionately impacts on vulnerable people. As we transition to a zero-carbon economy, our climate action policies must be checked against any negative impacts this will have on disabled people including when it comes to access to health equipment and costs associated with the transition.

"In this context, the government must step up and address the cost of disability head on. Our motion is calling for a cost of disability payment of €20 per week to be introduced as a first step to addressing the significant additional costs of having a disability. We are also asking the government to commit to increasing the disability allowance by at least €15 per week; publish its action plan on the Capacity Review, including a plan to fill the hundreds of vacant posts in disability services; and publish its action plan for the Cost of Disability report."

"We cannot allow a situation to develop, during this crisis, when those at the margins fall over the

edge - into extreme poverty and deprivation. The government must act, before it is too late" concludes Whitmore.

Meanwhile, Green Party TD Steven Matthews has written to the Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys TD, asking for targeted income supports for those in receipt of Disability Allowance in the upcoming budget.

Discussing this proposal, Deputy Matthews said: "The cost-of-living crisis has affected everyone in society but has been particularly difficult for those with disabilities. I have been contacted by constituents who are struggling to pay for food, heating and electricity."

People who are suffering from illness or disability are more vulnerable to the effects of inflation and a loss of real wages can result in a deterioration in their standard of living and lead to worse health outcomes.

"While I welcome the Government's measures to address the challenges associated with the rising cost-of-living that people across society are facing, I am urgently seeking addi-

tional income supports for those in receipt of Disability Allowance. We need to build on the supports that have already been established, such as the recent increase in the Back-to-School Allowance and the additional payments for those in receipt of Fuel Allowance, and ensure that no one is left behind during this unprecedented period of high inflationary pressures."

"I have written to the Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys TD, in relation to this issue. The onus is on us to protect the most vulnerable in society, and I look forward to further engagement with local groups and organisations representing people with disabilities in advance of Budget 2023."

"If anyone who is eligible for Disability Allowance is experiencing difficulties accessing income supports or are struggling with the impact of the cost-of-living increases, I would encourage them to get in touch with me directly and I will offer any support I can", Deputy Matthews concluded.



*Pictured at the Roundwood AFC Summer Camp was Flynn Cowen*



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# Greystones Community College Campus likely to be in next bundle of design & build projects



Minister Harris meeting with students and teachers at Greystones Community College

Fine Gael Minister Simon Harris TD has been advised that the permanent buildings for Greystones Community College are likely to be in next bundle of Design & Build projects from the Department of Education that will proceed to tender later this year.

Minister Harris said: "I have been assisting the school with their permanent build project in addition to the handover of the new modular accommodation to accommodate the school's immediate growth in the autumn. The Minister for Education has advised me that Greystones Community College will be included in the next bundle of Design & Build projects to proceed to tender later this year. This is good news for GCC as the

school is rapidly expanding to cater for local demand and will eventually outgrow its modular accommodation. I am anxious that the first intake of students that enrolled in the school in autumn 2020 will have an opportunity to occupy their permanent buildings at the school campus before they complete their Leaving Certificate"

Minister Harris continued: "The final handover of the extra modular accommodation for the

Greystones Community College will take place by August 1st. These additional classrooms and facilities will be on the grounds of Eire Og GAA Club. I am working with the school and Eire Og at present to develop shared sports facilities adjacent to the permanent school campus, that will not only benefit the school but the wider community with extra facilities for matches and training for the many young families making Greystones their home".

## 'Large population growth in Greystones justifies need for more services'

The large population growth in Greystones over the last five years, as revealed in the 2022 Census, justifies the requirement for more services in the area, Cllr Derek Mitchell says.

Cllr Mitchell says he will not vote in favour of Wicklow's Budget for 2023 unless Greystones Municipal District gets its 'fair share' of funding and services.

The preliminary Census results show the population of Greystones District has increased by 4,041, a 15% increase since the 2016 Census. County Wicklow has increased by 9%, the Greystones increase being 31% of the total, increasing Greystones from 18% to 20% of the County's population. The populations of Greystones, Delgany and Kilcoole have increased 16.2% to 27,854.

"Greystones' share of the budget has remained at 12% for at least the last five years. It is by far the lowest spend of any area and it is not increasing with the population. Increasing population needs more resources," said Cllr Mitchell.

"The outdoor staff are less than half that of other areas. This is why Greystones Tidy Towns has had such difficulties in spite of a huge effort by them.

"The Capital Budget shows every other area gets four or five times more spent even though they are expanding less. I am not prepared to vote for the Budget if it does not aim to correct this."

## 'Urgent support needed from County Council to help Greystones Tidy Towns'

Green Party TD Steven Matthews has called for additional support and resources from Wicklow County Council for Greystones Tidy Towns.

The objective of Greystones Tidy Towns is to make Greystones the "most liveable community" and as a result of the work of dedicated volunteers Greystones was awarded a Silver Medal in the National Tidy Towns Competition in both 2019 and 2021.

Discussing the need for assistance from Wicklow County Council, Deputy Matthews said: "I'm extremely disappointed at the lack of local authority support for Greystones Tidy Towns. They do incredible work throughout the community, as do all the other Tidy Towns groups across Wicklow. The Greystones volunteers have spent over 1,800 hours of litter picking, weeding and painting over the past 2 months which is testament to their commitment to improving their town.

"However, Greystones Tidy Towns have stated that they are unable to continue the current level of volunteering without the support of allocated ground staff to Greystones Municipal District to assist with litter picking, weed maintenance and general upkeep of the area. There are genuine concerns amongst the group about the over-reliance on volunteers, who have limited time and should not be expected to carry out work on behalf of the local authority. Over the past 18 months I have repeatedly called for a review of ground staffing levels across Wicklow and met with the Director of Services in Wicklow County Council to advocate further supports for Tidy Towns.

"I have been an active member of Tidy Towns for many years, the success of these groups is visible throughout our towns and villages. I have arranged to meet with Greystones Tidy Towns in the coming weeks to join them in their work, to discuss future projects and to get the full details on the supports that they need to continue their work. I am also urgently seeking



Deputy Steven Matthews in Greystones

a meeting with Wicklow County Council, in which I hope to address the concerns of members of Greystones Tidy Towns.

"I am calling for more ground staff to be allocated to the Greystones Municipal District to assist with the work of Greystones Tidy Towns. If there are any local groups with similar concerns, I would encourage them to get in touch and I would be happy to offer any support that I can," Deputy Matthews concluded.

## 2022 Greystones Municipal District People of the Year Awards



The Awards will be presented in the Greystones Golf Club, Greystones on Thursday 29th Sept, 2022 at 8pm

Application forms and tickets are available from Greystones Municipal District, Tel: 01 2876694 or Email:

Kcoughla@wicklowcoco.ie / greystonesmd@wicklowcoco.ie

Ticket Price €35

www.wicklow.ie

Closing date for receipt of nominations is 19th Aug 2022

- **Sportsperson of the Year**
- **Civic Award**
- **Special Person of the Year**
- **Cultural Person of the Year**
- **Commercial Award**
- **Young Entrepreneur of the Year**



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# 559 residential units ringfenced

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD, has published a progress update on the planning measures he introduced one year ago to increase home ownership and restrict the practice of bulk purchasing by institutional investors.

It demonstrates that 559 residential units in Wicklow have been ring-fenced for individual buyers and restricted from bulk buying or multiple sales to a single purchaser.

In May 2021, Ministerial Guidelines for Planning Authorities ("Regulation of Commercial Institutional Investment in Housing") were issued to planning authorities, including Wicklow County Council in order to prevent multiple housing and duplex units being sold to a single buyer.

The Guidelines included requirements that a new form of condition be inserted in applicable new planning permissions, to the effect that:

\* All houses would have to be made available for sale and for first occupation by separate, individual households for a period of two years after completion of the home. (In the case of mixed developments, the

provision only applies to the houses and duplex units and not apartment units).

\* Exempts housing to be provided for social or affordable purposes from this requirement.

\* And if, after a period of two years, the local authority is satisfied that despite reasonable efforts, a market has not emerged, the condition will lapse.

As of 18th May 2022, An Bord Pleanála advised that it had applied the planning condition prohibiting multiple sales to a total of 7,988 residential units across 23 Strategic Housing Development (SHD) planning permissions. Furthermore, of the 31 local authorities, 23 confirmed that they have permitted 7,895 residential units with a condition attached to prohibit multiple sales. Among these, Wicklow County Council permitted 559 residential units with a condition attached to prohibit multiple sales.

Nationally, in a one-year period, a combined total of 15,883 homes have received planning permission with conditions restricting the bulk buying or multiple sales to a single purchaser.

The Ministerial Planning Guidelines are part of a series of Government measures designed to prohibit the bulk buying of houses and duplexes in order to increase housing stock for home ownership. Other measures include a 10% stamp duty levy on the cumulative purchase of 10 or more residential houses in a 12 month period.

Commenting on the data, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD, said: "The Government is committed to supporting home ownership. These data demonstrate that we are making the right interventions and delivering for those in Wicklow who wish get to get on

the property ladder. Through our plan, Housing for All, we are taking every possible measure to increase supply and provide greater access to homeownership for those who want it."

Last year, the Government gave further legislative effect to the Regulation of Commercial Institutional Investment in Housing guidelines. The requirement, an action under Housing for All, the Government's housing plan to 2030, requires Wicklow County Council and all other local authorities to ensure home ownership as a tenure type is provided for and estimated in their Housing Strategies.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage will continue to monitor the operation of the Planning Guidelines on the Regulation of Commercial Institutional Investment in Housing



Marta Pastor and Rebecca and Keira Tracey at the launch of this year's Tinahely Show

## House prices rise by 11%

In Wicklow, house prices in the second quarter of 2022 were 11% higher than a year previously, compared to a rise of 17% seen a year ago. The average price of a home is now €410,000, 102% above its lowest point.

Nationally, house prices rose by 3.8% on average between March and June, the largest three-month gain in nearly two years, according to the latest Daft.ie Sales Report.

The average listed price nationwide in the second quarter of 2022 was €311,874, up 9.5% on the same period in 2021 and just 16% below the Celtic Tiger peak.

The rural-urban gap in housing inflation continues to narrow, although rural areas are still seeing the largest increases. Outside the cities, prices rose by 11.4% in the year to June, down from a peak rate of inflation of 16.8% a year ago. In Dublin, the year-on-year change in prices was 6.6%, compared to just 3.4% at the end of 2021. The other cities have seen larger increases in prices in the same period, however: in Cork, prices were 9.4% higher than a year previously, while in Limerick city, prices were up 11.1%. The biggest increases in urban housing prices were in Galway (13%) and Waterford cities (13.5%).

As in 2019, improved availability is being driven by Dublin (where stock for sale is up 4.5% year-on-year) and the rest of Leinster (where it is up 10.8%). The number of homes available to buy on June 1st stood at just over 12,400, up from an all-time low of just 10,000 three months earlier.

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# Four young people from Wicklow receive Gaisce Gold Award

*President Higgins presents awards to participants at first in-person ceremony in three years*

Seventy-nine young people from across Ireland have been commended for their outstanding commitment to personal development and contribution to society at the Gaisce Gold Award ceremony that took place on Tuesday 5th July.



The 2021 Gaisce awardees

The Wicklow winners were Cillian Kavanagh from University of Limerick; Evan Dargan Hayes from St Gerard's School; Rachel Casey from Loreto Secondary School Bray; and Rachel Rice from Loreto Secondary School Bray.

President Michael D Higgins delivered the Gaisce Gold Award to each recipient at a ceremony which took place at Áras an Uachtaráin - the first Gaisce Gold Award Ceremony to take place in three years.

At the height of Covid in 2020-2021, over 40,000 young people aged 14-25 answered the President's call to pursue a Gaisce Award, supported by over 1,200 President's Award Leaders in 750 organisations Nationwide.

The Gaisce Gold Award is the nation's highest recognition of a young person's initiative, achievement, and voluntary contribution to society.

In order to complete a Gold Gaisce Award, each of today's recipients set and achieved their own goals across challenge areas

that include personal skill, physical activity, community involvement, team adventure journey and a residential project.

Since its inception, Gaisce has been committed to ensuring the accessibility of the Award, and to ensuring every young person can see themselves in the Award. Gaisce celebrates the innate talents and abilities of all young people in Ireland, regardless of their circumstances.

The Gaisce Awards, founded in 1985, recognise young people's commitment to personal development and community action.

At the heart of Gaisce is a wide network of trained adult mentors, the President's Award Leaders (or PALs) many of them Gaisce Awardees themselves.

PALs are instrumental in providing mentorship to young people across a wide variety of organisations including community, education, sport, disability and justice.

CEO of Gaisce, Yvonne McKenna said, "Gaisce - The President's Award is unique in the sense that it encourages young

people to set their own personal development goals within a framework that allows them to achieve them and contribute to their communities in their own way. Every single day, I am inspired by the courage, the energy and the commitment of young people doing their Gaisce Award, and I am so thrilled we are getting to celebrate the breath of their achievements, from tackling global challenges like biodiversity to local supports for neighbours in need, young people are consistently push themselves for others.

"With over 250,000 Awards achieved since 1985, there is an enormous community of like-minded awardees who we encourage to continue their involvement with Gaisce and inspire generations to come." Gaisce - The President's Award will this month launch a Gaisce Gold Voices Community encouraging all Gaisce Gold Award from the past 35 years to get involved and renew their commitment to promoting Gaisce values to new generations of young people.

## Triple A Alliance's Aisling recognised as Unsung Hero



Wicklow's Aisling Foran (pictured above with her son Aidan) has been unveiled as the MACE Unsung Heroes Charity Award winner in recognition of her tireless work on behalf of the Wicklow Triple A Alliance, which stands for Autism, Aspergers and ADHD. Aisling, a single parent and carer, is the chair of Wicklow Triple A Alliance.

As well as working full-time, Aisling dedicates her time to run the charity and kept the charity going throughout the pandemic singlehandedly as she didn't want to burden the committee members during this time.

The nationwide MACE Unsung Heroes Community Awards were initially launched in 2020 by Ireland rugby star Johnny Sexton to stimulate community spirit and recognise true local heroes like Aisling in communities all around Ireland. Following its remarkable success MACE was excited to go to the country once again this year and ask communities to nominate that special someone who goes the extra mile to make a difference, so they get the recognition they deserve.

Commenting, MACE Sales Director Peter Dwan said, "when you hear of the dedication and commitment of someone like Aisling, who devotes every spare moment she has to advocating for and lobbying on behalf of the Wicklow Triple A Alliance, it is impossible not to be humbled. MACE is very proud of the MACE Unsung Heroes Community Awards as it helps us identify people like Aisling who go over and above for their community without looking for anything in return. MACE retailers are famed for their commitment to the communities they serve, and I cannot think of a more deserving recipient of the MACE Unsung Heroes Charity award than Aisling."

In total, MACE presented five category Unsung Heroes Community awards, including the award to Aisling, with each individual category winner being rewarded with cheques for €1,000. Each winner was contacted personally by Johnny Sexton to inform them of their win. An overall MACE Unsung Heroes Community Award winner was also selected and presented with a cheque for €5,000.

## Fundraiser to get Paul's house adapted following life-changing stroke

A GoFundMe campaign has been set up by Conor Foley from Baltinglass, on behalf of his family member, Paul Flinter, who suffered a brain haemorrhage and massive stroke in May of this year. This left Paul paralyzed on the right hand side of his body and his speech severely impacted.

Paul has been in hospital for the last 12 weeks and is facing at least a year in rehabilitation. His family has been told that he will never work again. Due to the fact that there is no funding available, they are trying to raise the money to have Paul's house adapted to suit his needs.

Conor uses the GoFundMe page to write, "Anyone who knows Paul, will know he was always the first to help people in need. Whether it be helping people through college, practical help in the home or just being a caring friend when someone needed it. Nothing was ever too much for Paul. Paul was a very hard working man and now at the age of 52, everything has been taken from him. All we want is to get Paul back to and comfortable in his own home. Our goal is to raise €70,000 to facilitate the necessary adaptations to his house. Any help, no matter how big or small, would mean the world to Paul and his family. Paul has a long road ahead, I hope together we can make that road as easy as possible."



Paul Flinter from Baltinglass



Pictured are Jeff Mulgrew, Louise Mulgrew, Tadgh O'Leary, pet dog Bailey, Lauren McKenna, Niamh Bennet and Max Traem, who took part in a Three Peaks Challenge in memory of Tony and Debbie Beirne and to raise funds for Purple House Cancer Support. Starting at 9:30am, they climbed the Great Sugarloaf, Little Sugarloaf and Bray Head, covering a total distance of 20km in six hours. Photo by Joe McQuillan.



# Kilmacanogue Show celebrating 50 years

This year is an exciting one for the Kilmacanogue show, not only is it the first time since COVID that the committee can welcome spectators back to the show field, but it also marks the shows 50th anniversary, which is certainly cause for celebration. This year the show will be held on Saturday 23rd July in its usual location at Enniskerry Horse Farm in Monastery, Enniskerry (A98AK16) by kind permission of Mary and Syl Fenelon Bourke.

To kick start the celebrations, the committee invited their 2022 charity partners to join them for a photo launch to showcase some of the new activities in the show this year.

This year, in addition to the usual horse and pony and dog classes there will be a wide range of new classes and activities. These include the addition of children's baking featuring handmade cookies, brownies and decorated cupcakes. There are also children's craft and up-cycling classes giving children the opportunity to impress with their creativity and imagination. New classes for adults include a wild flower arrangement class and adult baking classes for those wishing to showcase their cake icing, bread, fruit cake and preserve making skills.

Activities and entertainment included this year include an ever popular vintage car display including Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, sheep shearing demo, children's games, free children's pony rides,



Fergus Finlay Chair of Lakers with Cllr Melanie Corrigan & daughter Rebecca Corrigan

the Stedfast Band, Donie's clever collie dogs herding geese, carriage driving, a showcase of local food producers selling delicious food produce such as bread, cakes, jams, chutney, sauces and much more....and of course the very popular dog show.

2022 also sees the return of the sheep show since pre-COVID times. The show includes 8 classes,

mostly made up of purebred Wicklow Cheviot sheep, comprising of a pair of ewe lambs and ewe hoggets. A single Cheviot hogget ram and an aged ram make up the Cheviot classes.

Horse and Pony entries need to be completed in advance and both online and postal entries are accepted. Entries for these classes close Wednesday 20th July. For all

other classes, to help with show administration, it is preferable that entries are completed online but entries and payment can be accepted on the day.

Throughout the years the show has changed and evolved. What started out as a Horse Show and Pony Gymkhana in 1972 has now become a hugely successful event for the Community that is a key date in the calendar.

There have been many iterations of the show committee over the years but the show's current president Harry Williams has been involved since the 1st show in 1972, has been on the committee ever since and has never missed a show.

Harry remembers the early days and recounts that 'The idea of a Kilmacanogue horse show was first thought of by a local farmer Mervyn Kavanagh back in 1971, resulting in the first Annual Kilmacanogue Horse Show and Pony Gymkhana being held on Saturday 26th August 1972 in Bushy Park, Enniskerry' He also adds, that 'When the show was founded in 1972 the main purpose was to raise money for charity.

"In the beginning the funds were targeted towards the purchase of a mini-bus for



Harry Williams, President of the Kilmacanogue Show Committee, with Seamus Maguire, Treasurer, and Liam Allen, Chairman.

Duffcarraig House in Wexford, a home for children with intellectual disabilities- which was the first site of the worldwide Campbell Movement to be established in Ireland."

Although many aspects of the

show may have changed there is one thing that remains constant, that is the support that it continues to provide to local charities. This is something the committee, which is run entirely by volunteers, is very proud of and privileged to do.

## Share your 'home truths' about Wicklow

FRS Recruitment is calling on people in Wicklow to share their 'Home Truths' about the county for a new campaign aimed at the Irish abroad who might be considering moving back home.

Whether it's where does the best coffee in Blessington, what the traffic is like in Bray during rush hour, where's good to go for a walk in Arklow or how easy is it to secure accommodation in Greystones, they are aiming to provide insights you simply can't find without local knowledge.

The 'Home Truths' will be shared online through FRS Recruitment's social channels, and some will also feature within new videos which will be broadcast during GAA matches to members of the Irish abroad, as part of FRS Recruitment's partnership with GAAGO.

To take part all people need to do is submit an insight/home truth about their local area at [www.frshometruths.com](http://www.frshometruths.com).



Sorcha Byrne at the launch of the Tinahely Show which takes place on August Bank Holiday Monday

## Bray harper joins Harps Alive Festival in Belfast

Co Wicklow harper Rachel Duffy was performing as part of the Harps Alive An Chruit Bheo Harps Leevin festival in Belfast over the weekend, which brought together harpers and historians from all over Ireland to celebrate the 230th anniversary of the assembly of harpers in Belfast. The event also served as a recognition of the renowned legacy of organist and collector Edward Bunting.

Rachel played at the commemorative concert, 230 Years a-Harping, on Saturday, July 16th, alongside many other renowned harpers. The concert invited harpers from all over Ireland to gather to recreate the Belfast Harpers' Assembly held around this time 230 years ago. From Bray, Rachel holds a First Class Honours Degree in Music Education from Trinity College and the Royal Irish Academy of Music and is currently pursuing a PhD in TU Dublin.

A prize winner of the Fleadh Cheoil and the Feis Ceoil, she has played at festivals including An Chúirt Chruitireachta, the Wales International Harp Festival, Creative Connexions in Spain and the Hainan World Tourism Expo in China. She enjoys performing with groups and is currently a member of the National Folk Orchestra and the TU Dublin Harp Ensemble.

Rachel now works as a composer and tutor with the Music Generation Wicklow Rithim orchestra as well as with Bray CCÉ where she directs a harp ensemble.

Organised by the Harps Alive partnership, the festival brought together the finest harpers from across the island to recognise the landmark event that collected music more than two centuries ago for future harpers to learn from and perform.

The partnership between Harp Ireland and Reclaim The Enlightenment is to mark 230 years since the Belfast Harpers' Assembly in Belfast. In 1792 the Harpers' Assembly in Belfast brought together 11 harpers, seven of which were blind and the eldest Denis Hempson was 97 at the time.

Aibhlín McCrann, Chair of Cruit Éireann Harp Ireland, said that celebrating the anniversary presented a unique musical opportunity for the harping community. "Our harping heritage transcends boundaries and has really connected the partners, north and south," she said. "It is wonderful to hear the harpers' music reflecting our living tradition and to see that there is so much interest in it.

John Gray, Chair of Reclaim the Enlightenment said it was "a celebration of the heritage of the harp and the contemporary revival of harp playing, and when it concludes we hope to have created more awareness of the harp tradition with the public and leave a lasting legacy."



Rachel Duffy



# Craft Strategy launched for County Wicklow

The County Wicklow Craft Strategy 2023 - 2027 was officially launched by Minister Simon Harris on Friday 8th July at Russborough House in Blessington.

The purpose of this Craft Strategy is to provide a strategic framework to support the ongoing development of a thriving, mature and sustainable craft economy within the county of Wicklow. It will aid a collaborative and visible infrastructure for craft and a support network which encourages and nurtures Wicklow's diverse group of fulltime and part-time Craft Makers, Designers, Artists, Artisans, Educators and Mindfulness Craft Practitioners.

Speaking about the launch of the strategy, County Wicklow Partnership's Chairperson Ian Daly commented: "Wicklow has strong connection with the tradition, discipline and practice of craft in all its forms and processes. With an estimated 400 craft makers, designers and practitioners calling Wicklow their home they are certainly a valuable resource that offer a huge contribution to the economic and cultural wealth of the county, as well as

its tourism offering.

"The launch of this Craft Strategy is a hugely significant moment for Wicklow's diverse craft practitioners and I'm sure that the positive impact of the proposed initiatives will be felt for many years to come. County Wicklow Partnership is proud to be launching this strategy, which is the culmination of extensive research and consultation on a local, national and international level."

It is without doubt that, a considerable number of renowned full-time Craft Makers & Designers proudly reside in the Garden county with significant numbers of part-time Craft Practitioners dotted throughout the county. Through the research carried out in developing this strategy the process has highlighted a vibrant, diverse but somewhat fractured Craft Community. The strategy has revealed some of the many challenges facing Craft Practitioners in Wicklow, and ques-

tions the economic metrics through which the Craft & Design Sector is generally understood and represented in Ireland.

The County Wicklow Craft Strategy was commissioned by County Wicklow Partnership, Wicklow County Council and the Local Enterprise Office. Following an open tender, the project was awarded to Wicklow-based arts and cultural consultancy, Arts Leaders Associates.

This strategy aims to bring the fractured facets of Wicklow's craft sector together, to create a more cohesive, collaborative and supportive network which provides opportunities for growth and synergy, combining existing resources and enhancing the current offering within the sector.

The strategy proposes Five Strategic Priorities, and these include a network of Craft Clusters, a county-wide Craft Trail, a new brand for Craft & Design in Wicklow, the appointment of a Craft Liaison Officer and the introduction of a new Education, Training & Development programme aimed at complementing, rather than replacing, the existing supports which are already available.

One of the key groups which have been instrumental in the development of this strategy is the Wicklow Craft Foundation, which is also being launched today alongside the Craft Strategy. This group will be one of the main drivers behind the implementation of this Craft Strategy, and a Craft Strategy Group will also be assembled to provide additional support.

Speaking about Wicklow's Craft Strategy, one of the Wicklow Craft Foundation's founding members, Chaim Factor said: "The Wicklow Craft Foundation and the Craft Strategy present a unique opportunity to place Wicklow at the fore-



Olivia Knight with Sophie and Lucinda Nicol at the launch of the Wicklow Craft Strategy 2023-27



Mary Whelan and artist Eleanor Swan at the launch of the Wicklow Craft Strategy 2023-27

## Cinema at Mermaid Bergman Island

Monday 25th July, €9 Full Price / €7 Concession Price  
Duration: 112 minutes | 8pm. Cert:15A



Married filmmakers Chris (Vicky Krieps) and Tony (Tim Roth) travel to the Swedish island of Fårö, where Ingmar Bergman lived and filmed several iconic films.

While Tony attends a Bergman conference, Chris explores the island and is inspired to start writing a screenplay. In a film-within-a-film structure, we then see that screenplay come to life. Chris' film focuses on former lovers Amy (Mia Wasikowska) and Joseph (Anders Danielsen Lie), who are reunited at a wedding on Fårö after many years apart. But that story might reflect some of the cracks forming in Chris and Tony's own relationship...

French filmmaker Mia Hansen-Løve's first English-language is a relaxing, subtle drama that's part celebration and part critique of Bergman's cinematic legacy.

**Director:** Mia Hansen-Løve

**Cast:** Vicky Krieps, Tim Roth, Mia Wasikowska, Anders Danielsen Lie

### Festivals

Cannes Film Festival, 2021 - Official Competition  
Telluride Film Festival, 2021 Toronto  
International Film Festival, 2021 BFI London  
Film Festival, 2021 Dublin International Film Festival, 2021

## Steely Dan tribute

Hot Spot Music Club, Greystones, Saturday 30th July

You got to shake it baby! AJA recreates the sounds of one of rock's most legendary and enigmatic bands, Steely Dan, with stunning precision and energy.

The joint will be rockin' to all the Dan classics from Reelin' in the Years to Hey Nineteen and beyond. This 8-piece ensemble features former members of Pretzel Logic and includes some of Dublin's finest jazz, rock and session musicians. No static at all!

Their live set opens with the entire classic album Aja, hence the name. Featuring : Gerry Farrelly - Keyboards, Colm Lindsay - Guitar, Tommy Moore - Bass / Vocals, Alan Cunningham - Drums, Johnny Graham - Vocals, Sinead Stone - Vocals, Mark Wilde and Serge Stavilla - Saxophones.

## Neil Delamere: Liminal

Mermaid Arts Centre,  
Saturday 10th September, €25 Full Price | 8pm

Neil Delamere, star of BBC's *The Blame Game*, *Fighting Talk* and the *Newsquiz*, hits the road again with his riotous new stand-up show, *Liminal*.

Expect an evening perhaps best described as Schrodinger's chat as our wisecracking comedic hero struggles to figure out this strange new world.

'One lean, mean, comedy, killing machine' -  
*The Herald*

'A wryly brilliant live performer' -  
*The Sunday Times*

'You'll be hard pressed to find a more gifted comic' - *The Scotsman*





# Success for Wicklow musicians at Leinster Fleadh Ceol

Last week saw great success for Wicklow musicians in the Leinster Fleadh Ceol Irish traditional music competitions held in Portlaoise. The festivities and competitions ran over three days from 8-10th July and Wicklow came out strong with a total tally of 17 medallists, 8 of which progress to the All-Ireland Fleadh Ceol in Mullingar taking place from 5-7th August.



The Boathouse Wicklow Town u12 group rehearsing in the sun (above), and Lily Breen, Zoe Goodbody and Oliver Powderly settling their nerves before the u12 group competition (below)

Wicklow medalists included brothers Cian and Ryan Harper, brothers James, Darragh and Padraic Lambert, Denis Nolan, Donagh McElligott, Sarah Thompson, Holly Byrne, Bronwyn Crummy, Siun Ni Dhalaigh and Grace O'Ceidigh Hayes.

One of the most notable highlights for Wicklow from the weekend was the outstanding achievements of the Lambert family from Wicklow Miners CCE. James Lambert featured strongly in the u15 winner's circle, with a total of 5 first place titles in Flute, Tin Whistle, Melodeon, Tin Whistle Slow Airs and Trio competitions.

His younger brothers were also to be seen in the podium positions, with Padraic Lambert receiving a 3rd place medal in the u15 Melodeon in his first year competing in the higher age bracket, and 10-year-old Darragh Lambert progressing to the All-Ireland u12 tin whistle with an impressive 2nd place medal against musicians 2 years his senior in addition to 3rd place in the ceili drumming.



Leah Bolger warming up her fiddle

## Wicklow Winners

**Trio:** 15-18, 1st, Cian & Ryan Harper & James Lambert, Wicklow Miners

**Flute:** 12-15, 1st, James Lambert, Wicklow Miners

**Tin Whistle:** 12-15, 1st, James Lambert, Wicklow Miners

**Melodeon:** 12-15, 1st, James Lambert, Wicklow Miners

**Tin Whistle Slow Airs:** 12-15, James Lambert, Wicklow Miners

**Concertina:** o18: 1st, Donagh McElligott, The Boathouse

**Tin Whistle:** u12, 2nd: Darragh Darragh Lambert, Wicklow Miners

**Mouth Organ:** o18: 2nd, Denis Nolan, Anne Devlin CCE

**Bodhran:** 15-18, 3rd, Sarah Thompson

**Button Accordion:** 12-15, 3rd, James Lambert, Wicklow Miners

**Button Accordion:** 15-18, 3rd, Ryan Harper, Wicklow Miners

**Piano Accordion:** u12, 3rd, Holly Byrne, Anne Devlin CCE

**Piano Accordion:** 12-15, 3rd, Bronwyn Crummy, Wicklow Miners

**Drumming:** u12, 3rd, Darragh Lambert, Wicklow Miners

**Melodeon:** 12-15, 3rd, Padraic Lambert, Wicklow Miners

**Comhra Gaelige:** 9-11, Qualified, Siun Ni Dhalaigh, Bray

**Comhra Gaelige:** 13-15, Qualified, Grace O'Ceidigh Hayes, Bray



U18 Trio champions and cousins, Ryan & Cian Harper and James Lambert

## Enniskerry author's book thrills with deadly influence

Enniskerry resident Judith Cuffe's new novel is out July 20th and touches on the cult of the influencer, the veneer of 'perfect lives', cancel culture and the undeniable danger when the search for followers can ultimately bring them to your door - with terrible consequences...

'Unfollow Me' tells the story of how a single photo taken in college defined Eve Kelly's entire life. The iconic image of the falling girl in a red dress brought her unintentional fame. Twenty years later, @beli'EVE, a successful model turned influencer, is a reluctant leader. Over a million people follow her every move but sharing images of a #perfectlife can be dangerous, especially when you have secrets.

When someone begins to scratch beneath the glossy surface she presents to the world, Eve's past starts to close in. Is it time to take the fall? To at last pay the price of success.

Eve is about to discover how many other lives one photo defined. A picture never lies. Or does it? At the peak of her fame, it seems there's only one way down for Eve. If you're going to share, be sure you have nothing to hide.

"During Lockdown, I began sharing honest tidbits of life as what might be conceived as the stereotypical fashion-



Judith Cuffe

obsessed, struggling writer and I uncovered a community of wonderfully supportive people amongst my small audience," says Cuffe.

"It got me thinking about the other side of social media, the pressure to be perfect that we place on the accidental celebrities of our genera-

tion - the idea of over-sharing, the risks, the so-called cancelling of people who put a foot wrong - people who in reality are as normal as everyone else.

Throughout my research, I found people who believe that you deserve what you get in the form of harsh criticism and scrutiny by putting yourself on a platform. Any of the content creators I spoke with said the same. In what can oft be a lonely profession, those who choose to "influence" are never authorities on everything in life, but we somehow expect them to be.

"We live in a generation of online stalking - often harmless, but we all do it to some degree, too ready to criticize people who share. It's the modern-day curtain-twitching or keeping up the Jones'. It bodes the question if you don't like what you see, don't follow. Social media gives us all a voice, a way to instantly connect with these modern-day celebrities who have a right to a past, mistakes, and secrets."

## Wicklow Stories Film Festival

The Whale Theatre is hosting the first of its kind Wicklow Stories Film Festival this autumn. On Saturday, the 8th of October Greystones will see filmmakers from all over Wicklow and the rest of the country come together to celebrate not only Wicklow Filmmaking, but visual arts and music as well

Wicklow is so often used as a filming location, but all these stories are never about Wicklow and her people. The Wicklow Stories Film Festival aims to change that focus, to showcase everything that Wicklow has to offer," explains festival co-founder Ronika Merl

The Greystones Town Team, aided by Marlena Murphy brought the festival, devised by producers Brian Matthews Murphy, Ronika Merl, and Conor McKenna to fruition.

Several short films, including the film "The Ferry" by Emmy award winner Niall McKay, the award winning film "Reflection" by the widely known Baz Black ("Kin"), the celebrated film "The Forgotten" by Sam Uhlemann will all be featured in the lineup.

Local musicians Cian O'Melia and Dylan E Crampton will delight with an intimate performance of their original songs, while the visual arts will be represented by talents such as local sea glass artist Violine Deane and Gina McKenna who will stun with her gorgeous Greystones Seascapes.

The festival will conclude in the World Premiere of the widely anticipated, one of a kind anthology "Wicklow Stories: The Pier", written by Ronika Merl. This extraordinary short film brought together 5 up-and-coming directors, who all worked on an individual part of the film to create a unique experience for audiences.

Tickets are on sale now at <https://whaletheatre.ticketsolve.com/shows/873627833>



Some of the crew





SSE Airtricity has provided the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) with a donation of €1,000,000 that aims to support households in need of financial assistance during the current cost of living crisis. Pictured at the announcement are: Klair Neenan, Managing Director of SSE Airtricity and Nichola Mullen, Head of Fundraising, Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Picture Jason Clarke.

# Farmer convicted and fined following the poisoning of protected birds in Wicklow

On Monday 11th July, Mr Christopher Thomas Noel Doyle aka Noel Doyle Senior, a farmer with an address at Crehelp, Co. Wicklow, was before Carlow District Court charged with a breach of Regulation 4(1)(i) contrary to Regulation 4(2) of the Birds and Natural Habitats (Restrictions on the Use of Poisoned Bait) Regulations 2010.

Mr. Doyle pleaded guilty to the offence. The case was prosecuted by Mr John Ryan BL and Alan Millard, State Solicitor for Co. Carlow.

The court heard that a National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) Conservation Ranger discovered a dead Buzzard on lands at Athgreany. After further investigation, the Ranger found a second dead Buzzard, a dead Raven and a sheep carcass placed near a fox den. Following post mortems carried out by the Department of Agriculture, Dublin Regional Veterinary Laboratory and extensive testing by the State Laboratory, the birds were found to have died due to high levels of poison (carbofuran) in their systems. The sheep was found to have been cut open and the wound

laced with large amounts of the extremely toxic carbofuran.

In his evidence to the Court, The Conservation Ranger stated that the levels of poison were extremely hazardous to all forms of life and it was very lucky that no humans were poisoned accidentally.

He also said it was likely that other wild animals scavenged the carcasses, suffered and died from poisoning but were never found.

Judge Marie Keane in her summation commented that there was an "astonishing amount of poison" used in what she viewed as a "serious crime" and "a deliberate enterprise" to try persecute the local wildlife.

Judge Keane said she that she wouldn't be imposing a custodial sentence due to Mr. Doyle's age but

imposed a fine of €500 and €1,500 expenses with four months to pay.

Welcoming the conviction, Minister Malcolm Noonan said:

"I strongly welcome this conviction for what is a particularly heinous and disturbing wildlife crime. I'd like to acknowledge the sterling efforts and dedication of the NPWS staff involved in bringing this prosecution, and indeed the efforts of staff all around the country who successfully closed 21 prosecutions in 2021 and 19 more to date in 2022, and are currently progressing a further 49.

"I'd like to remind everyone that the NPWS has more rangers than ever, and that it's never been more focussed - or more effective - on wildlife crime."

## 'Government needs to give grants to convert cars to electric'



Cllr Rory O'Connor

Independent Councillor Rory O'Connor has called on the Government to give grants to people to convert their cars to full electric vehicles.

Councillor O'Connor said, "At the moment the Government offer grants to buy Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) of up to €5,000. But offers no grant to convert cars to electric ones.

"Ava Electrifi, based in Enniskerry, is an example of an Irish company which converts classic cars to fully electric vehicles. It was reported that Ava Electrifi was booked out on its launch in 2019 for the next eighteen months.

"We need to see real ambition in how we achieve net zero in Ireland. The green agenda can create new, long standing and well-paid jobs in every village in the country.

"The concept of using our existing cars and repurposing them brings recycling to a whole new level and reduces the amount of carbon produced by not buying a brand new car."

## Launch of Climate Conversation 2022

Green TD Steven Matthews is encouraging people in Wicklow to participate in Climate Conversation 2022. This is an online questionnaire which seeks to engage the views of citizens on the issue of climate change and how we can secure a sustainable future.

"I would encourage anyone in Wicklow who is interested in climate action to contribute. We need to hear from as many people as possible across all ages and from both urban and rural areas. You don't need to be an expert to participate, and there are some excellent online resources such as the Government's Climate Jargon Buster which explain many of the terms and language that are used when discussing climate change and environmental issues.

"If anyone has questions about the Government's policies in this area or would like to introduce a local initiative to promote climate action in Wicklow, I would encourage them to get in touch with me directly and I will offer any support I can", Deputy Matthews concluded."

The online questionnaire for Climate Conversation 2022 is available on the website of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. Everyone who is resident in Ireland and aged 16 or older can participate. The closing date for submissions is 9th September 2022.

## 'Govt must stop allowing removal of hedgerows on farmland'

BirdWatch Ireland has called on Minister McConalogue to stop allowing the removal of hedgerows on farmland, saying it poses a threat to a range of bird species including the Red-listed species Barn Owl, Kestrel, and Yellowhammer, and that it has no legal basis.

"In addition," BirdWatch Ireland stated, "we call on government to allocate sufficient funds to ensure that farmers receive ecological advice for hedgerow and other habitat management in the Space for Nature Ecoscheme."

The Department of Agriculture currently permits the removal of up to 500 metres of hedgerow on every farm outside of the breeding period for birds without any oversight, provided that the same length of hedgerow is planted elsewhere beforehand. This is despite the legal requirement under Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) 7 of the CAP regulation for every farmer receiving a CAP direct payment to retain landscape features such as hedgerows. There is no wording in the CAP regulation which allows for features to be removed and then replanted elsewhere,

which is what the Department of Agriculture is currently allowing.

Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan for the period 2023-2027 proposes to continue this practice but will require that if hedgerows are removed, twice the length of hedgerow must be planted within 10km of the location of removal. More than 3.6 billion euro will be given to farmers in the form of CAP direct payments between 2023-2027.

"It is critical that the environmental conditions for this substantial public funding are adhered to, and government should not be facilitating weak implementation of these conditions and loss of biodiversity," Birdwatch Ireland said.

"There is no ecological equivalence between removing an older hedgerow and replanting with young whips which can be as thin as a finger width. Hedgerows take

years to mature and to develop their tree, shrub, flower and grass layers. Often new hedgerows are also planted with just one or two species, such as Whitethorn and Blackthorn, whereas older hedgerows are often composed of several tree and shrub species which support a much wider diversity of wildlife. Removal of hedgerows eliminates an established component of the local ecology and results in fragmentation of habitats and consequential local impacts to bird life, insects and other wildlife."

Oonagh Duggan, Head of Advocacy at BirdWatch Ireland, said, "The European Commission will soon sign off on Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan. There is no legal basis for the Irish Government exemption to allow farmers to remove hedgerows on farmland and this fact has been confirmed by the Commission. We have no



A Barn Owl nesting box being fitted as part of the Wicklow Barn Owl Project, which hopes to improve the prospects for this endangered bird in the county.

idea how many kilometres of hedgerow under the 500m threshold have been removed in Ireland in the last decade. Removal of hedgerows can have significant local ecological impacts. There is no comparison between an old hedgerow and young, newly-planted one. Many bird species, and other wildlife, rely on hedgerows

and their margins for food and shelter. It takes years for their ecological value to develop."

BirdWatch Ireland is also concerned about the process surrounding the removal of more than 500 metres of hedgerow. In this instance, farmers must submit to the Department of Agriculture a screening report for Environmental

Impact Assessment. Research undertaken into the EIA screening of field boundary removal shows that between 2011-2016, 480 applications for EIA screening were received by the Department of Agriculture, with 411 approved allowing for removal of 155 kilometres of hedgerow. However, the research shows that 27.6% of screening applications for field boundary removal which were approved between 2011-2016 did not contain details of the length of field boundary to be removed. Almost a third of applications were approved based on no information on the length of hedgerow to be removed.

Oonagh Duggan continued "The CAP is funded by taxpayers and the minimum we can hope for is that government applies the rules properly and in line with the spirit of the regulations. Retention of landscape features means retaining them, not removing them and planting them elsewhere. It is also clear that the EIA screening process is very poorly implemented and not actually

assessing environmental impact. We have no faith in this process as it stands. The hedgerow removal allowance should stop and the EIA process should be disbanded.

"BirdWatch Ireland receives many phone calls and emails every year from people incensed with hedgerow removal and inappropriate hedgecutting.

These are activities that cause anger and upset in people who see the destruction, are aware of the biodiversity crisis and worry about the impacts to wildlife in their area. We call on the Department of Agriculture to get serious about protecting hedgerows and to fund their proper management for wildlife in Ireland's CAP ecoscheme".



The Yellowhammer is put at risk by the removal of hedgerows from farmland, Birdwatch Ireland says. Photo by John Fox.



# Contractors asked to consider applying for new accreditation scheme

**Irish Water has launched a new Experience Based Accreditation Scheme that will be available for Experienced Contractors in Wicklow. The scheme will accredit Experienced Contractors to deliver new water services infrastructure in public roads for housing developers.**

The scheme supports the efficient delivery of essential water services infrastructure in the public road by Experienced Contractors while ensuring best practice procedures and standards. It follows the roll-out of Irish Water's self lay in the public road programme, whereby developers can deliver water and wastewater infrastructure in the public roads to service new housing developments.

The new scheme, which has been launched 18 months ahead of schedule, recognises contractors' adherence to Irish Water's Standard Details, Codes of Practice and Quality Assurance procedures. These best practice procedures and standards have been developed by Irish Water to prevent a reoccurrence of legacy issues that exist across the country.

Welcoming the self-lay programme and the new accreditation scheme, Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, said: "This latest initiative from Irish Water is another fantastic step forward in ensuring housing developments are completed efficiently across the country. I'm delighted to see such support for my Department's Housing For All strategy, and to see Experienced Contractors across Ireland support the efficient delivery of homes. Irish Water listened to industry calls and responded quickly. Through the Housing For All strategy, my Department aims to see an average of 33,000 homes provided each year to 2030, and to know these homes will be completed as efficiently as possible is a fantastic assurance."

The scheme, which is also supported by the Construction Industry Federation (CIF), the Irish

Homebuilders Association and Commission for Regulation of Utilities, is the latest in a number of initiatives Irish Water has implemented to support Government's Housing For All strategy.

Other initiatives include the publication of water and wastewater capacity registers which give an indication of the capacity of water and wastewater treatment plants all around the country, making it easier for developers and local authorities to prioritise areas with services.

As part of its commitment to open communication, Irish Water has also hosted several webinars for industry players to explain the application process and to highlight issues that may cause delays in the process.

The utility continues to support the housing industry through its dedicated connections and developer services team which offers a range of resources and support material, including extending a helping hand through the entire process from housing development pre-planning stage right through to construction.

These initiatives have resulted in strong progress being made in the delivery of housing, with over 32,000 housing connections offered by Irish Water in 2021.

Yvonne Harris, Irish Water's Housing Programme Director, said: "We are committed to supporting Government's drive in developing more homes across the country and ensuring these homes can be completed efficiently. We've launched our new Experienced Based Accreditation Scheme following calls from industry where, following a series of webinars with



industry members, many highlighted the need for self-lay of water services infrastructure in public roads for new housing developments. Irish Water listened and is now ensuring that Experienced Contractors across every county in Ireland can become accredited to deliver new water services infrastructure in public roads for new housing developments.

"We have ensured our Experience Based Accreditation Scheme is easy and hassle-free to register for, and we've already seen strong interest from applicants. It ensures safe and reliable water services will continue to be provided to new home buyers and existing residents, now and into the future."

James Benson, Director of Housing, Planning & Development with CIF, added: "CIF welcomes this

excellent initiative by Irish Water which will facilitate us to deliver housing in a timely and efficient manner. Our members are committed to meeting the highest standards in the construction of housing and associated infrastructure. This Experience Based Accreditation Scheme recognises this and supports the ongoing development of expertise in the water industry by developers and contractors through accreditation."

Shane Carty of Carty Contractors, a contractor who participated in the pilot self lay programme, said: "We welcome the proposal by Irish Water to establish an accreditation scheme that will recognise the positive engagement by Contractors with Irish Water's requirements since 2014."

# Experts weigh in on potential impact of Bray bridge on swans

**Wildlife experts have moved to dispel the view that the proposed Sustainable Transport Bridge in Bray will not be in the flightpath of Bray's Harbour swans.**

Wildlife Rescue volunteer Pearse Stokes said he was surprised to read the recent Letter to the Editor in the *Wicklow Times* (Tuesday, 5th July) which expressed the view that the bridge would not harm the swans.

"All the experts seem to agree that the proposed bridge will be directly in the swans' flight path," said Mr Stokes. "As early as 2010, local media were reporting on the swans colliding with the DART lines. In 2011 it was reported that between 50-60 swans have been killed or injured by hitting the lines over the last few years."

Pete 'The Vet' Wedderburn said "While the letter writer states that the proposed bridge will not be in birds' flight path, he does not present any evidence to support his claim. Meanwhile, there are many photographs of swans flying up and down the river, and as a vet in Bray, I have been informed about many swans that have crashed into the DART powerlines in exactly the same area as the proposed bridge. It seems to me that there is a great deal of evidence to show that the bridge will be in the swans' flight path, and no evidence to the contrary."

Mr Stokes continued, "For almost 20 years a team of people have dedicated a great deal of time and money to helping the Swan Sanctuary in Bray. These people know the behaviour of the swans very well. The have seen,

and photographed, the swans flying up and down the river regularly over the years. These people, who have put their money where their mouth is, so to speak, are actually qualified and should be trusted in this regard. Rain or shine, night or day, they are out there actually helping Bray's wildlife. These same volunteers work closely with Kildare Wildlife Rescue.

"Dan Donohue, long time rehabber said "Over the 20 years I've been rescuing and rehabilitating Wildlife, swans hitting bridges remains one of the most horrific types of injury. Kildare Wildlife Rescue supports the diligent efforts of the Bray Swan Savers, who feed, protect and care for the Swans in the sanctuary. We regularly help with swans that have been lifted from the DART line after colliding with the power cables. Make no mistake, swans regularly fly up and down the river Dargle. It IS their flight path, and the bridge WILL pose a major threat to them."

Over 10 years ago, Bray Town Council passed a motion to install reflectors on the power cables in the interest of helping the swans, who have poor forward vision and are slow to manoeuvre.

"The council is already well aware that bridges in this area pose a hazard to the swans and that the bridge will be in the swan's regular flight path," concluded Mr Stokes.



**Above: Swans flying towards Bray bridge and below: A swan being removed from the Dart line in Bray.**

## PLANNING

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, the Scout Foundation, seek Planning Permission for the removal of a single storey 'portacabin' to the rear and the construction of a single storey extension to the rear and side, as previously granted Reg Ref 17/615, at the Scout Den, Trafalgar Road, Greystones, Co Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

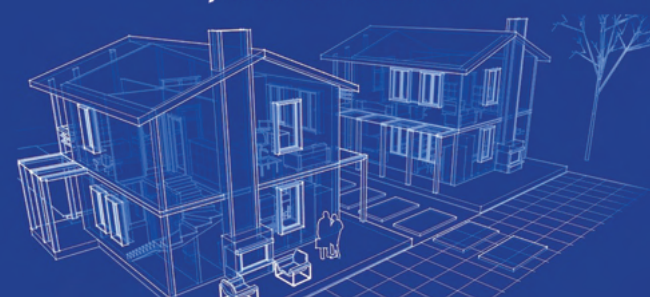
Dennis Ward seeks planning permission for RESTORATION, REFURBISHMENT AND EXTENSION OF WEIGHBRIDGE COTTAGE, TINNAKILLY UPPER, AUGHRIM, Co. WICKLOW. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Planning permission is sought for construction of new bungalow dwelling on site at Birch Grove, Kilfin, Laragh, Co. Wicklow, Eircode A98C1P3, for Rob and Talita Dagg. The application includes the provision of a gateway, driveway, soakaways, domestic wastewater treatment unit with soil polishing filter, and associated siteworks. 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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**pauline@localtimes.ie**







## Polestar 2 - the coolest of them all

A new brand, a new car, and a whole new design language that takes the best from the past to marry to the electric future. Polestar are a game changer - offering a lot of car for sensible money and aiming to give Tesla, especially, some serious competition.

by Martin McCarthy

In years past, we have often wondered how manufacturing everything come China never else, and cars are such a huge value market, it was amazing they never competed here. Of course, a Chinese firm, Geely Holdings has owned Volvo for a

decade or more, so they understand the merits of Scandinavian design - and probably that making space for their cars in Europe would be a hugely expensive task - and unless at the premium end, would not make sense.

They can use the existing Volvo infrastructure for service support but otherwise Polestar is a fully independent entity. Starting with the design, there are serious hints of the last Saab, the 9-5 Aero updated to 2022. Designed mainly in Gothenburg, Polestar 2 looks fantastic - especially in white.

Internally it's as space age as the best, - especially with the glass roof - but it's also way bigger inside than a lot of its competition. The boot can easily house golf

clubs and electric (what else?) trolley, without having to drop the back seats. Under the bonnet is significant space for recharging cables and other smaller items.

The base model Polestar 2 available now at €54,500 - has a range of close to 400km and tremendous power (400bhp) and vivid performance. 0-100kph in 5.4seconds is more than you can use in Ireland, generally. There is a longer range variant that will suit some and then a twin motor, four wheel drive version at the top of the range. This has a 1500kg towing capacity - if you could use such a beautiful car for such utilitarian duty.

The Polestar IT infrastructure is immersed in Google



Polestar 2 outside the iconic Davis Bros. Garage, Greystones

technology and highly intuitive and easy to use - including the voice recognition system. The driver display is a delight.

Polestar has a five-year plan and with Irishman Richard Molloy

in charge of European marketing, they will surely reach their goals. Coming soon is a PHEV and thereafter the large SUV Polestar 3.

Polestar are urging people to test drive their cars and are take book-

ings for it online, now. There is no doubt that this is a car that will worry every established maker of electric cars in Europe - and they are right to be worried. This is the cat among the pigeons.

## RECRUITMENT

**Woodlands Academy**  
IRELAND

Woodlands Academy, an International Boarding school located in Kilmacanogue/Bray, catering for secondary school students from abroad, are seeking two

### Deans of Discipline

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Send C.V. to: Lisa Homan, General Manager, Woodlands Academy, Wingfield House, Kilcroney, Bray.  
T: 01 286 63 23 E: woodlands@arcol.org

[www.woodlands-academy.org](http://www.woodlands-academy.org)

**COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN**  
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REF: 26/2022
- GRADUATE PLANNER**  
Salary €33,029 to €42,920 per annum gross  
REF: 27/2022

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

**CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF COMPLETED APPLICATION FORMS IS 12 NOON on THURSDAY 4TH AUGUST, 2022 SHARP.**

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

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## Doing good while doing well

Wicklow companies of all sizes can play their part in helping Ireland meet its national climate action targets in a profitable and sustainable way, says non-profit social enterprise Grow Remote.

How? By going remote. "Not only can implementing a remote working model in your business lead to increased profitability and significant cost savings, it can be a powerful tool for local impact and social change on a wider scale," says Kathy McKenna, Communications Manager for Grow Remote.

"By transitioning to a remote working model, your business can reap the proven benefits of increased employee productivity, reduced illness and absence, the opportunity to hire from a larger talent pool and lower staff turnover - all of which have a significant impact on your bottom line.

"The Government's data on this is contained in the recently published document, An Evaluation of the Impacts of Remote Working. Specifically, the researchers estimate that remote working has the potential to save almost 165,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year.

"In these times of worrying inflation, there are also potentially major cost savings in terms of allowing your company to move away from having to run one or many commercial premises, and reducing your spend on costs such as electricity, heating, cleaning, security, and more.

"In turn, this has the potential to translate into a sizeable reduction in the carbon emissions your business generates. Not only is this something Wicklow firms could be proud of, but it makes long-term financial sense as well.

"Businesses can take advantage of a suite of employer resources for transitioning to remote working on the Grow Remote website - [growremote.ie/employer-resources/](http://growremote.ie/employer-resources/)."

Towns and villages in Wicklow are invited to apply to host the third Grow Remote (www.growremote.ie) conference that will take place in April next year: [growremote.ie/nominate](http://growremote.ie/nominate)



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

**Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board** invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for part-time and full time posts which may arise from 1st September 2022 in the following schools:

### SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANT

- Athy College, Athy, Co. Kildare
- Colaiste Chill Mhantain, Wicklow, Co. Wicklow
- Colaiste Chraobh Abhann, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow
- Colaiste Lorcain, Castledermot, Co. Kildare
- Naas Community College, Naas, Co. Kildare
- Scoil Chonglais, Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow
- St Farnan's Post Primary School, Prosperous, Co. Kildare
- St Kevins's Community College, Dunlavin, Co. Wicklow
- St Conleths Community College, Newbridge, Co. Kildare

### CLERICAL OFFICER GRADE III

Athy College, Athy, Co. Kildare  
part time 17.5 hours per week

### ASSISTANT STAFF OFFICER GRADE IV

(confined competition; confined to members of the Education and Training Sector candidate pool, that is serving members of ETBs and former IOTs)

Naas Community College, Naas,  
Co. Kildare - full time

### CARETAKER

St Kevin's Community College, Dunlavin,  
Co. Wicklow - full time

All details and on-line application forms are available on KWETB website's recruitment page:

<https://kildarewicklow.etb.ie/recruitment/current-vacancies/>

Dr Deirdre Keyes,  
Chief Executive.



# Businesses reminded to be well prepared for gender pay gap reporting

Ifac, Ireland's farming, food and agribusiness specialist professional services firm, is advising Wicklow businesses impacted by the new gender pay gap regulations to make sure they are well prepared for the end-of-year reporting.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

### THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

Mary McDonagh, Head of HR & Payroll Services at ifac, said: "While this initially only affects public and private organisations with at least 250 employees, it will be rolled out further in the coming years. Companies that are affected by the new regulations need to start preparing now well ahead of the first reporting deadline at the end of the year."

Employers are sometimes confused about the difference between equal pay and the gender pay gap. Under equality legislation, employers must provide equal pay to men and women if their work is the same or broadly similar. However, a company providing equal pay to its employees can still have a gender pay gap if there is a percentage difference between the average hourly earnings of the men and women it employs.

Employers in the affected public and private companies are required to publish details of the gender pay gap in their organisation. The information in your report must include the mean and median hourly wage gap for full and part-time employees and employees on temporary contracts, data on bonuses paid, and a breakdown of male and female employees in the lower, lower-middle, upper-middle and upper quartile pay bands.

Employers will also have to publish a statement explaining the reasons for the gender pay gap in their company and what measures are being taken to eliminate it.

For further information and/or advice contact your local ifac office or visit ifac.ie.



*Congratulations to Conor Eglington who represented Cumann na mBunscol Chill Mhantáin and Scoil Chualann in the INTO Mini 7's in Croke Park recently.*

*Giving an account of the day, Conor wrote: "Táim i rang a cúig i Scoil Chualann Bré, an scoil is fearr ar domhain. Is breá liom a bheith ag imirt iománaíocht. When my teachers told us that there was a competition and a chance to play in Croke Park I was so excited and delighted when I heard I was chosen after the skills day down in Ballinakill.*

*"My day in Croke Park was one of the best days of my life. My family and my teammates from Bray Emmets came in to support me on the day. It was such an amazing experience. It has always been a dream of mine to play in Croke Park and hopefully in the future I will get another opportunity. Ba mhaith liom buíochais a ghabháil leis an INTO agus Cumann na mBunscol as an deis iontach a thug said dom."*

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