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Tuesday 10th October 2023 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

# FOUR WILL DIE ON N11

Sinn Fein TD John Brady has accused Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan of ignoring warnings in a report from Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) which projected that a failure to invest in road improvement projects would result in an additional 77 deaths and 381 serious injuries on Irish roads in the next five years. Four of these deaths and seven of these serious injuries are anticipated on the N11/M11, which had its planned Upgrade Scheme shelved by the Minister.

“As catastrophic as these figures appear, they do not take into account figures released by the Road Safety Authority (RSA) which claim that data compiled from 2018 to 2022 indicate that for every fatality on our roads, there are an additional 10 serious injuries,” said Deputy Brady, “which would more than double the

number of anticipated serious injuries from collisions. And when we use the term serious injuries, let us be clear, in the main we are talking about life changing injuries, head, neck, back injuries, the fall out of which people are often left to cope with for the rest of their lives.

“So, according to the TII, there are four people

in Wicklow, walking around today, who will die in the next number of years as a consequence of Government strategy relating to the N11/M11,” said Deputy Brady, “with anything up to several dozen more if we take the RSA figures into account who could potentially be left with life altering serious injuries. This does not take into



Calum and Tanya Doyle with Murphy at the Newcastle Parish Dog Show in aid of Will's Playground, a new playground for St. Francis National School. Pic: Michael Kelly

account the additional carnage that will accrue on the N81. I have asked the Minister to respond to these revelations. I have asked that he make the TII report public.

“TII have previously stated that it would take €2.5 million to facilitate the progression of the N11/M11 Junction 4 to Junction 14 Improvement scheme through to the next two phases - phases 3 and 4 - which represents a relatively small figure in terms of an infrastructure project. But this project has not been able to proceed due to a lack of funding. This begs the question what price the Government are prepared to place on a human life. Also in Wicklow, the N81 is one of the most dangerous roads in the state. Despite the fact that a major plan was put in place to upgrade 31Km of the N81, to make it safer, Minister Ryan has

shelved these plans. Despite a briefing document showing that the N81 has seven more times head on collisions than the national average, and there are twice as many single car collisions.”

Meanwhile, at last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council, Independent councillor Joe Behan asked that councillors make a submission as part of the consultation process (and also send it to the Transport Minister) requesting that full funding be provided for the main N11 Upgrade Scheme and that the proposed closures of the Herbert Road N11 junction and other vital N11 exits to facilitate a Bus Priority Corridor be halted.

“One of the things I am concerned about is that what has happened is a non-statutory public consultation process,”

said Cllr Behan. “People are looking to us as public representatives to

voice their concerns and yet we never had an opportunity at a Council

meeting to voice those concerns.

*Continued on page 3*

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Eoin O'Driscoll, Collette Burns and Dr. Paul Horan at the Build with Wood conference in Avondale. See page 6 for more.

## West Wicklow Historical Society

West Wicklow Historical Society kicks off their autumn programme of events on Tuesday, 17th October with a lecture from author Jimmy O'Toole from Tullow, Co. Carlow. The title of the lecture is 'The Homes of the Carlow Gentry', the subject of a book written by Jimmy O'Toole.

In August of this year, members of the WWHS visited the ruins of Ducketts Grove. This was one of the most prominent of the homes of the gentry in Co. Carlow. Jimmy has researched the Carlow gentry and their houses over many years. As well as his published material on these houses, he has continued to gather interesting stories about the families and the people associated with their estates.

The lecture will begin at 8 p.m. in The Lalor Centre, in Baltinglass (W91 XW57). All are welcome to attend. Members €5, Non-member €8.

## East Coast Nature Reserve

Every Thursday morning there is an opportunity to join the enthusiastic volunteers at ECNR to do conservation work under the guidance of new ECNR Warden, Stuart Cossey. If you wish to get involved, please email your contact details to Stuart info@birdwatchireland.ie.

## BirdWatch Ireland talks

Tuesday 10th, 7.30pm at Ashford Heritage Centre. Indoor Talk - 'Wild Waters: The Magic of Ireland's Rivers and Lakes' by author Richard Nairn. Signed copies of Richard's book will be available to purchase at the event.

Saturday 21st, 11am at Arklow Ponds. Birding for Beginners: An outdoor workshop at Arklow Ponds for anyone, young or not-so young, who

wishes to get to grips with some basics of bird identification (until 1pm). Meet at the car park at the end of Seaview Avenue.

## Soup & Sandwiches

The first Soup and Sandwiches Lunch for this season will be held on Tuesday, 17th October in St. Patrick's Church, Greystones from 12.30 until 2.00. Everyone welcome, so do come, bring your friends and enjoy the home cooked food and lots of chat. Suggested donations of €7 will be given to support the flood victims of Libya.

## Lions Quiz Nights return

The Wicklow & District Lions Club series of Quiz Nights has been running continuously for almost 30 years. The very popular Quiz which supports all local charities kicks off on November 16th 2023 and will continue until March 2024 with a break during the hectic Christmas period. The quiz will take place at various venues in Wicklow Ashford and Rathnew

The quiz team is now inviting all charity clubs who would like to take part and importantly have lots of support to register as soon as possible as the slots will fill very quickly.

Contact Wicklow Lions Club on Facebook and Instagram or any Lions member as soon as possible.

## Bicycle repair and maintenance

Wicklow County Council and Bray Wheelers will hold bicycle repair and maintenance workshops in Bray Recycling Centre on Wednesday 11th October (6pm to 8pm) and Saturday 28th October (2pm to 4pm). Places are limited, please book by sending your name, contact details and venue to eao@wicklowcoco.ie. Adults and youths welcome. Youths under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

## Anam Cara Wicklow Monthly Meeting for Bereaved Parents

Monday, 16th October, Parkview Hotel Newtownmountkennedy; 7:30pm to 9pm. Anam Cara supports all bereaved parents, regardless of the age of their child or the circumstances of their death. This informal and gentle evening gives an opportunity to meet with other parents. Meeting is in a safe and comfortable place with people who understand the milestones and challenges of grief and loss.

The evening is free and open to all bereaved parents. Anam Cara is the only organisation of its kind in Ireland with services to bereaved parents. Full details from 085 2888 888, info@AnamCara.ie.

# Community Alert groups encouraged to reconnect

This October is national Community Alert month and over 1,000 Community Alert groups around the country are being encouraged to Participate. Community Alert is a crime prevention and community safety programme run by Muintir na Tíre, in partnership with An Garda Síochána.

Muintir na Tíre President, Jackie Meally, said "Community Alert is one of the most proactive grass-roots programmes in the country. There is a group in nearly every rural parish, helping to keep the residents safe and secure in their homes. The value of this work was very evident during the COVID pandemic."

CEO Niall Garvey said "October has traditionally been Community Alert Month, but COVID had an impact on this. Some groups remain as vibrant as ever but others face challenges in reengaging post-COVID. This year we are encouraging groups to reconnect with their communities, their Gardaí, and ourselves. For some this might just involve holding a public meeting and assessing the new needs of the communities. For others it might involve launching new initiatives. Details have been sent to all registered groups."

Examples of activities carried out by Community Alert groups include Text Alert, Seniors Alert Scheme (socially monitored alarms), Bottle in the Fridge, Personal Information Pack, and property recording. The Muintir mobile app, Cairde, goes from strength to strength, having proven its worth in community communication during COVID.

In the last few months, Muintir has held two pilot events in its new Community Comeback programme. These very successful events saw over 35 organisations and 400 individuals participating in two rural communities. This is an initiative from Muintir na Tíre to encourage community groups to reactivate and re-engage after the COVID pandemic. It recognises that community groups are the lifeblood of rural Ireland and are the best vehicle for ensuring community viability in areas which may not have many other supports. It also recognises that community groups need support in re-establishing themselves after the pandemic, as do the vulnerable residents in those communities. Finally it recognises that many organisations can provide supports but do not have the direct access to vulnerable persons that Community Alert Groups can provide.

In conclusion Niall Garvey said the only ask is that groups use October as a first step on a renewed journey.



Wicklow men Dave Harvey and Eugene Duff running towards Belmont during EcoTrail 2023. See page 14 for more.

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Shay Fitzmaurice, Managing Editor - shay@localtimes.ie

Ian Colgan, News Editor - ian@localtimes.ie

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# South Wicklow 'Super dump' refused

An Bord Pleanála (ABP) has refused permission to Kilsarin Concrete for a 'superdump' at Ballinclare Quarry in South Wicklow. The controversial application would have seen the creation of the largest landfill in the State through backfilling the Quarry, which is located near Kilbride and Glenealy, with over 6 million tonnes of inert waste.

The 'Strategic Infrastructure Application' was made to An Bord Pleanála by Kilsarin Concrete Unlimited in the summer of 2021, which took the decision out of the hands of Wicklow County Council.

The application sought permission for the "development and operation of an inert landfill facility to backfill the existing quarry to original ground level; progressive restoration of the backfilled quarry to long-term grassland/scrub habitat; establishment and operation of a construction and demolition waste recovery facility; and installation and operation of a soil washing plant".

In its decision ABP stated: "It is considered that the proposed development would be in accordance with European waste policy, the National Planning Framework and the relevant provisions of applicable regional and local planning policy and would be acceptable in principle in terms of its contribution to Ireland's national strategic policy on sustainable waste management and the move to a circular economy. However, having regard to the previous use of the site for quarrying and to the lack of survey information submitted with this application and the appeal under ABP regarding the existing environmental and ecological status of the subject site and surroundings, the Board is not satisfied [...] that it can be demonstrated that adverse impacts on water quality, habitat and species can be avoided, managed and mitigated or that the extent of such impacts have been identified with certainty. In this regard, it is considered that

the proposed development would have unacceptable direct and indirect impacts on biodiversity and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area."

Independent councillors Peir Leonard from Arklow Municipal District and Mary Kavanagh from Wicklow Municipal District welcomed the news and paid tribute to the local community who made submissions voicing their objections, and also to their fellow councillors for their backing and support.

They were among the many who made a submission to ABP outlining their objections relating to the size and scale of the facility, the potential damage to the water table, the effects on a local river, the amount of dust that would be created by large vehicles that would impact local residents, concerns for road safety due to the large numbers of trucks visiting the facility on a daily basis and the potential negative effects on the environment and ecology of the area.

Councillors were outraged two years ago when they belatedly learned of the plans. The proposal would have seen 700,000 tonnes of waste per year transported to the quarry (with 300 movements of Heavy Goods Vehicles per day) down the L1157, a small rural road, and the M11. It was estimated that it would take over a decade to fill the quarry in this way.

The quarry was in operation since the 1960s, but activity was suspended in 2016 following the discovery of naturally occurring asbestos in the rock.



Orla and Evan Hamilton with Copper at the Newcastle Parish Dog Show in aid of Will's Playground, a fundraiser for a new playground for St. Francis National School.

## FOUR WILL DIE ON N11

Continued from Page 1

"The people who are on the committee who are making this decision are made up of engineers and officials from the Kildare County Council Roads Office, officials based in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Council, people in the NTA, people in TII and just a small number from Wicklow, who are going to be making a decision that is going to have huge ramifications on the people of our county.

"We want to see the main N11 road improvement scheme funded by the Department of Transport, but it has been brought to a standstill by the Green Party Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan. We want that funding to be restored, because if that happened we would have a scheme that would help people on the N11, help to install bus lanes, and ensure that the people of Bray, Enniskerry and Kilmacanogue can still move freely in and out of the N11. That's being stopped. And what we got, in a cynical move in my opinion, at the beginning of July, was the Minister saying you can go ahead and have your bus lane - a bus lane on the N11 that would be put on the hard shoulder, that would mean that

all the main entrances that I have mentioned would have to be closed. I just don't think it is good enough."

Seconding Cllr Behan's proposal, Cllr Tom Fortune said "That these things land on us without us getting to have any kind of discussion about it has gone beyond a joke at this stage. It is really, really serious and out of control. Local public representatives are being totally ignored and it seems that bodies such as the NTA can do what they like."

Speaking last week, Fine Gael councillor Derek Mitchell said "Closing the Enniskerry and Kilmacanogue road connections to the N11 will produce traffic jams in Bray, Enniskerry and on the N11. The 'bus lane only' scheme does not provide any place for the displaced traffic. The main scheme, which has been worked on for five years, provided a lane parallel to the N11 to take this traffic from the two closed junctions. I have made a submission (to N11M11@arup.com) saying the main J4 Loughlinstown to J14 scheme, which includes a bus lane and a parallel lane, should go ahead quickly. I would urge anybody who agrees to write to that Email address."

"Minister for Transport

Eamon Ryan has postponed/cancelled the main scheme by not funding it for 2022 or 2023. The population has expanded along the N11, both in Greystones and Wicklow Town by 15% from 2016 to 2022 and many more houses are being built. 3 million euro is needed to take the project to the next stage, and it must be funded in 2024."

Leonora Earls from the Council's Transportation, Water & Emergency Services Section, informed councillors that WCC is "taking every opportunity that we possibly can to keep the main N11 Upgrade scheme on the agenda and within the radar of the people who might be able to assist us. Recently we met with the Minister for State for Transport, Jack Chambers, and again put forward our view that the main scheme can address the deficiencies both from a safety point of view but also from effective operation of the N11. But the interim bus scheme is a scheme that we have funding for at the moment, so that is what is being progressed."

Cllr Behan will this week (Monday 9th October, 7:30pm, Glenview Hotel) hold a public meeting on the proposals to close the Herbert Road and Enniskerry junctions.

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# Political participation encouraged among Traveller women



Wicklow Women Councillors Caucus, Wicklow Traveller Women and staff of Wicklow County Council at a joint event in the Council Chamber.

Wicklow Women Councillors Caucus held a joint event with the Wicklow Traveller Women's Group in the Council Chamber on Tuesday 3rd October.

The aim of the event was to demystify the workings of the Council and encourage Traveller women to participate in local politics and promote their causes.

The Wicklow Women Councillors Caucus is to address the barriers to female participation in politics and to strengthen cooperation between women across political and ideological lines and strengthen their capacity to effect change.

They hope that through the work of the Caucus they can help build the capacity of women councillors, through formal and informal mentoring and to promote women's equality in Local Government in Wicklow.

Speaking about the event, Caucus Chair, Cllr Lourda Scott, stated, Today we had the honour of hosting women from Wicklow's Traveller group for the first time. It is a significant moment, not just for our County Council but also for our women's Caucus. Since being elected I can see how important it is to ensure that all voices, all experiences and all

perspectives are present and heard in decision making spaces. It was a pleasure to chat to everyone today. I hope that we can continue this relationship and continue to build our relationship with the Traveller community."

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, added: "I hope that being more visible as women Councillors we will also act to encourage more women from all backgrounds to run for election in the future."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council, welcomed the Traveller women to the Council Chamber and spoke about her career in Local Government and the opportunities it had provided to her. She said: "It is important we celebrate the role of women. Wicklow County Council has strong female representation throughout the management team, staff and Elected Members and I welcome engagement on every level with members of the Traveller community."

## Council welcomes NOAC performance indicator report

Wicklow County Council has welcomed the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) Local Authority Performance Indicator report 2022. The indicators show Wicklow County Council improved its performance across a range of indicators during the year.

NOAC's role is to independently oversee the local government sector by reviewing the financial and operational performance of bodies within its remit, overseeing implementation of national local government policy, and identifying opportunities for best practice.

Wicklow County Council has been invited to make a presentation on its recently constructed solar car port at County Buildings, Wicklow at this year's 2023 NOAC/CCMA Good Practice Event. This annual event allows selected local authorities to showcase good practice within the sector.

According to the report, Wicklow County Council is making progress in the following areas:

- At the end of 2022, Wicklow County Council owned 4,922



Wicklow County Council Chief Executive Emer O'Gorman

social housing units, having added 141 units to its housing stock in 2022

- The overall percentage of Wicklow County council housing stock that was vacant at the end of 2022 was just 3.23%

- In 2022, a total of 502 private rented dwellings were inspected

- Wicklow County Council's library visitor numbers continue to increase with 572,820 borrowings in 2022 with a huge increase to 30,958 registered members

- The rate of participation in Comhairle na n'g scheme is high across the County at 80% with the number of schools participating

- The percentage condition surveys for local secondary roads was greater or equal to 98% over a 2-year period.

- In 2022 99.14% of the registered private water schemes in County Wicklow were monitored by the local authority.

- Environmental pollution cases in respect of which a complaint was made during 2022 was 1,645 and Wicklow

County Council closed 1,804 cases during that same period.

- Of the 54 Wicklow County Council planning decisions appealed to An Bord Pleanála in 2022, 75.93% confirmed (either with or without variation of the Plan) the decision of the Council.

- As Wicklow County Council continues to focus on energy efficiency and climate targets, the percentage of the public lighting using energy efficient LED lights in the county represented 53.73% of a total billable wattage of 5183.

- The number of jobs created per 100,000 of population was 41.1615, while the number of trading online vouchers approved per 100,000 of population was 43.0910.

Welcoming the report, the Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, acknowl-



Council Buildings, Wicklow Town

edged the improvements in service delivery and stated the report is evidence of the vast range of activities the Council is engaged in, adding: "I would like to thank the entire staff of Wicklow County Council across the five municipal Districts who continuously strive to deliver improved services to the citi-

zens of County Wicklow, the elected members and I look forward to working closely with the Executive to identify and implement service improvement across the districts in 2024."

Commenting on the report, Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive, paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of

Wicklow County Council employees, saying: "We are continually seeking to improve services and increase efficiencies and we made significant progress in a range of areas last year. We will build on our progress, continue to innovate and deliver quality public services."

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People from Rathnew held a 'Save Tinakilly' protest walk on Saturday 30th September. Locals walked from the village to the site at Tinakilly where it's proposed to build a large residential development consisting of apartment blocks.



# Capacity issues plague 133 bus service

**Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has called on Bus Eireann to urgently meet with her regarding ongoing capacity issues on the 133 bus service which goes from Dublin to Wicklow Town.**

Deputy Whitmore has been in touch with the bus provider on behalf of constituents who are frequently left stranded along the 133 bus route.

Deputy Whitmore said: "There have been concerns among locals about the service provision on the 133 bus route for some time now, but it is progressively getting worse. I hear from people who rely on this service but who regularly struggle get a seat on the bus due to capacity issues. In many instances buses do not stop at all, leaving commuters frustrated. This services is clearly no longer meeting the demands of passengers, and Bus Eireann must urgently review this service.

"There is a clear need for additional buses along this route. This could be something as simple as putting in place double-decker buses to meet the demand, rather than the single decker buses currently being used.

"I have heard from people who have missed hours of work, students who had missed lectures because the bus did not turn up or was already full when it went to their stop, and most concerning, I have heard from students who needed to make a 20-minute bus journey on the 133 route. She was waiting at the bus stop at 6 p.m. and was not home until 9 p.m. It is just not acceptable.

"We hear a lot from this government that they want to see more of us using public transport as our primary means of transport, but that will only become a reality if we run



*Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore and Local Area Representative Danny Alvey*

enough services to keep pace with demand. Public transport has to be reliable and convenient if we want to see more car journeys taken off the road.

"I will be raising these concerns with Bus Eireann at the soonest available opportunity and relaying the concerns of Wicklow constituents who use the 133 regularly."

Local Social Democrats Representative Danny Alvey said: "I got the 7am 133 service last Thursday, which gets to Newtown at 7.40am. Just after our stop the bus was full and wouldn't stop to pick up anyone else! It drove straight past Kilpedder without even pulling in, leaving anyone waiting there stranded without even information as there is no real-time sign there. I was lucky as well because

my partner was waiting on an even earlier departure that day and it wouldn't even pick her up, she had to wait 30 minutes for the next service. I believe there were at least three buses in a row that morning that became full and couldn't pick up additional passengers. I'm not surprised as I get the 133 into work at least twice a week and the bus has been getting busier and busier.

"The 133 should meeting the demand of commuters from Wicklow Town, Newtown Mount Kennedy and the surrounding areas, but recent issues with capacity are causing major problems. I have experienced this myself as a regular public transport user. I will continue to work with Deputy Whitmore to delivery better services for Wicklow Town."

## 'Greystones needs better weekend DART service'

**Following the launch of the draft DART timetable consultation, Steven Matthews TD has contacted the NTA and Irish Rail to ask them to consider how to implement a half hourly Saturday service for Greystones.**



*Deputy Matthews outside Greystones Train Station*

"I am seeking a better weekend service for Greystones," he said. "The service Monday to Friday is around half hourly but on Saturdays it reverts to an hourly service. I've contacted the NTA pointing out that a half hourly service is possible on Saturdays with a little bit of rescheduling across the DART south timetable.

"Seeking views from interested parties is what a draft timetable consultation is for and I would urge Greystones residents to submit a similar request to the NTA. Greystones station is right in the town centre, well served by bus and easily accessible by cycling and walking from many parts of the town. We should be providing a better service to encourage use of public transport and in my view, a one-hour Saturday service is not good enough. I understand that driver recruitment and training is ongoing and that this service improvement will require extra services and drivers, but the improvement should be implemented as soon as possible.

"The DART south coastal project will increase the service to 6 trains per hour. That project requires some fairly significant engineering works and will take some time but it's relatively easy to now improve the weekend service and I'll work with the NTA and Irish Rail to deliver that for Greystones residents," said Deputy Matthews.



*Amber Dillon and Ben at the Newcastle Parish Dog Show in aid of Will's Playground, a new playground for St. Francis National School.*

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Darcy Smith braved the bad weather to take part in the 'Save Tinakilly' protest walk on Saturday 30th September. Locals from Rathnew walked from the village to the site at Tinakilly where it's proposed to build a large residential development consisting of apartment blocks. The planning application from Keldrum Limited, if granted, would allow for 352 residential units. The proposed development would connect to the Tinakilly Park residential development and Rathnew Village via a new section of the Rathnew Inner Relief Road. Those in opposition to the plans have raised concerns about the proposal to restrict vehicular access along Tinakilly Avenue, a right of way that's been used for generations, and many also have concerns about the environmental impact and the high-density nature of the proposed development.

# 'Build with Wood' conference held in Avondale

Coillte and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine brought over 200 national and international experts together last Wednesday from the construction industry, scientific community and regulators to explore how to increase the use of wood in construction in the face of the climate and housing crises. The second annual Build with Wood conference was moderated by architect and broadcaster Dermot Bannon at Beyond the Trees Avondale.

Wood products have the lowest embodied carbon of any mainstream building material. Ireland's use of wood in construction is extremely low compared to other European countries, and without increasing its use in the built environment, it will be difficult for Ireland to meet its embodied carbon reduction targets. Last week's event builds on the momentum from last year's inaugural conference, exploring the carbon benefits of using more wood in construction and the key actions needed to achieve this by Government, industry, and other key stakeholders.

Last year, Coillte launched a new forestry strategic vision, designed to capture up to 28m tonnes of CO2 from the environment by 2050 and which aims to balance and deliver the multiple benefits of its forests for climate, nature, wood, and people. In the period to 2030, Coillte plans to produce 25 million m3 of certified Irish wood to

support the delivery of Ireland's climate action plan which seeks to cut the embodied carbon emissions for materials produced and used in Ireland by at least 30 per cent. It will also continue to promote the increased use of wood products to raise the level of wood use in the construction of housing from its current low level of 20% to 80% by 2050.

Following Build with Wood 2022, a new Interdepartmental and Industry Timber in Construction Steering group was established to examine the regulatory challenges and changes to building standards needed to increase the use of timber in Modern Methods of Construction.

Imelda Hurley, CEO, Coillte, said the Interdepartmental and Industry Timber in Construction Steering group "will play a pivotal role in increasing the use of wood in construction. With a collaborative approach, a framework can be created to work through the current barriers, unlock regulatory constraints support demonstrator buildings, and develop the guidance and training materials which our architects and design specifiers need to move this critical agenda forward.

"It is abundantly clear that accelerating the use of wood in our built envi-

ronment is critical to meeting Ireland's climate targets. Modern methods of timber construction offer a valuable solution to several issues facing housing delivery in Ireland - increasing the speed of delivery,

delivering more sustainable homes, and reducing the need for onsite labour, decarbonising our built environment, and supporting our country's Net Zero ambitions."

Conference moderator Dermot Bannon said "It's been great to bring so many of the key people here today to focus on this important issue. In my experience, Ireland lags other European countries significantly in terms of the use of wood in construction and given



Architect Dermot Bannon speaking at the 'Build with Wood' conference.

our need for large scale housing construction, this discussion couldn't come at a more important time. The barriers to increasing the use of wood in our built environment are not insurmountable, and for

the sake of Ireland's climate action agenda, it is imperative that we overcome them. We can learn from the experience in other countries and deploy best practice here."



Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity Pippa Hackett and Coillte CEO Imelda Hurley at the 'Build with Wood' conference.

## Public consultation on Council's Climate Action Plan launched

The public is being invited to have their say on the draft Climate Action Plan launched by Wicklow County Council. Public consultation commenced on 3rd October and is open up to 4.30pm on the 15th November. Submissions are invited from all.

The plan is available to view on Wicklow County Council's online consultation hub [www.wicklow.ie/Living/ConsultationHub](http://www.wicklow.ie/Living/ConsultationHub) by email to [climatepolicy@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:climatepolicy@wicklowcoco.ie) or in writing to the Climate Action Coordinator, Wicklow County Council, Station Road, Wicklow Town A67 FW96.

Copies of the plan are also available to view at County Buildings in Wicklow and in County Wicklow's Public Libraries (Arklow, Balinglass Blessington, Bray and Greystones).

Submissions can be

and challenges.

Through the plan Wicklow County Council will provide leadership on climate action and become an exemplar in decarbonising its services and operations. The plan also addresses how Wicklow County Council will engage with other stakeholders at national, regional and local level on the delivery of climate action.

The Council will seek to mobilise the engagement of businesses and communities working together to create a pathway towards a low carbon future for all in Wicklow.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, said: "Wicklow was the first local authority in

Ireland to declare a climate and biodiversity emergency. This plan calls for further transformative action on climate with the goal of progressing actions that deliver on our ambition to decarbonise the county by 2050."

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman, commented that: "Over the lifetime of the plan the ambition is to achieve a 51 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases from all local government buildings, assets and infrastructure. Our county, our people and our planet are at the heart of the plan which aims to have a strong decarbonised economy and resilient natural systems as the outcome."

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# Algal bloom spotted on Blessington Lakes

Green Party TD Steven Matthews has expressed concern about the recent pollution related algal bloom in the Blessington lakes. This comes on the back of the recent highly publicised 'green sludge' in Lough Neagh. While not as severe as Lough Neagh, Deputy Matthews believes action must be taken to protect Wicklow's vital water source. Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore says she has been contacted by several constituents from the Blessington Lakes area of the county who are alarmed at the high level of algal bloom visible on the lake.

An algal bloom is a rapid increase or accumulation in the population of algal in freshwater or marine water systems and is usually the result of enrichment through nutrients and run off following rain. It is recognisable by the discolouration of the water which may appear to be a bright or neon green colour.

"Algal blooms happen

when there are excessive nutrients in the water such as nitrates and phosphates," said Deputy Matthews.

"The main sources of this nutrient enrichment is from agricultural run-off of slurry and animal wastes and from overloaded or inefficient waste water treatment plants. In some cases groundwater can be impacted by poorly per-

forming septic tanks. The impacts of this water pollution, known as 'eutrophication' can be quite serious on aquatic life, animals or human health where they come in contact with the toxic blue-green algae (Cyanobacteria).

"The excessively warm September and continuing warm October increases water temperature which assists the excessive nutrients to further de-oxygenate the water which has severe impact on fish and other aquatic life.

"This is another obvious warning to us that our water quality is deteriorating. We have seen the worst effects of water pollution in Lough Neagh our islands largest freshwater body where it has in parts become a toxic green sludge in a hypertrophic condition. Blessington lakes are beautiful, they are a source of drinking water for Dublin & Wicklow, vitally important for tourism and recreation for visitors and local residents and every action must be taken to prevent further environmental damage.



Steven Matthews TD

"I have written to the chief executive of Wicklow County Council to ask for an immediate assessment and investigation into the matter."

Deputy Whitmore, Environmental and Climate spokesperson for the Social Democrats, said "I have seen a number of pictures of the bloom and it appears to be quite severe. This is very concerning as high levels of algal bloom can be harmful to both humans and animals. I have contacted Uisce Eireann (Irish Water) and have asked them to immediately ascertain the impacts of this bloom on

drinking water and the potential impact it could have on the recreational use of the lakes, as well as an ecologist with expertise in the area of freshwater algae."

Deirdre McCormack, Social Democrats Local Area Representative for west Wicklow, advised locals to be cautious when out walking near the lakes while the bloom is present: "The algal bloom can be toxic for animals, especially if ingested. I would urge all dog walkers to keep your dogs on lead and away from the water while we can see the algal in the lake. People should also keep their distance from it and wash their hands thoroughly if exposed to the algal bloom."

"This algal bloom has been spotted at several areas across the lake including Russelstown, Baltyboys Bridge and Knockieran. I will be following this situation closely as it develops and keeping locals updated of Uisce Eireann's response to my queries," concluded Deputy Whitmore.



Deirdre McCormack, Social Democrats Local Area Representative for West Wicklow, and Deputy Whitmore



Laura Dunne heading over Bray Head during the EcoTrail 2023 event. See page 14 for more.

## Motorists urged to be vigilant during deer breeding season

It is autumn and, in our forests, and across our mountains, tensions are rising as the rutting or deer breeding season gets under way, the time of the year when male deer are driven by an urge to reproduce.

From late September until early November the clash of antlers will be heard as males show off their virility to potential mates and, like gladiators entering an arena, they parade around showing

off their armoury of antlers. While the rut is an amazing experience to witness it is also a time when there is an increased incident of road traffic accidents involving deer as male deer go

in search of females and younger males are ousted by dominant males forcing deer to cross public roads and motorways.

The Irish Deer Commission are calling on motorists to be vigilant

at dawn and dusk, when deer are most active, particularly in high risk areas such as woodlands and mountains. What should drivers do in high risk areas? Reduce speed where they see a warning sign and stay alert. Prepare to stop, never swerve as you could hit another obstacle or oncoming vehicle. When you see a deer "dip your headlights" as the full beam may cause the deer to freeze. If a deer has crossed in front of your vehicle, be aware that others may follow. Do not approach an injured deer.

If you are involved in a road traffic accident involving a deer or come across a deer that has been involved in a road traffic accident, immediately contact the local Gardai. The Irish Deer Commission operate a humane deer dispatch scheme with 135 trained volunteers assisting agencies and charities who deal with an increasing number of deer vehicle collisions nationally.



A County Kerry Red Stag during the rut. Photo by Peter O'Toole

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# Running in the rain for Pieta

*Bray pharmacist dedicates run to memory of friend and Darkness Into Light coordinator Danny Bohan*

**So many families are visited by the dark cloud of depression. It changes everything. Thankfully Pieta House is there to help by offering family support and counselling.**

Paul Burns from Dargle Valley Pharmacy in Bray knows how these thoughts can affect so many around us. When he saw that Pieta had a new fundraising challenge to run two miles every day during the month of September with all participants getting a free T-shirt, he thought it would be easy.

On a wet Sunday afternoon two weeks before September, he applied for his free T-shirt. The next day it dawned on him that he'd never run in his entire life. He was fifty something and had spent the last thirty years filing his nails

looking out the window of his Pharmacy. Panic set in when he realised after downloading an app that he couldn't even run for one minute.

"That wasn't going to stop me," says Paul. "The more I trained every day the more I grew to respect the pain."

After Paul got into his stride (despite more pain) he realised that if he was going to succeed in this challenge he should try to raise as much money as he could during this journey.

With the help of all his staff, he went looking for

sponsorships and was stunned by the support and generosity of his local customers and other local businesses. Everyone had some story to tell about Pieta House and knew of somebody or family member who had used their services.

Amongst Pieta's many fundraising activities is Darkness Into Light, which is run every year by the hard-working Lions Club. One of the late members and Presidents of the Lions club, Danny Bohan, was well known for running this event in Bray. Over the years he co-ordinated the

event and helped to raise over €600,000 in aid of Pieta House. Sadly, Danny passed away in July from cancer. Paul approached the family of Danny, who was his friend, to ask if he could dedicate his final run to Danny. The family were very moved by this offer and Danny's partner Tresi suggested he wear Danny's 'Darkness Into Light' hat and hoodie on the final day. Holding back tears Paul agreed even though Danny was several sizes larger than Paul.

After a gruelling 60 miles, Paul completed the challenging task. His 60-mile run challenge took place in his local Kilpedder, along the Bosphorus in Istanbul, around the People's Park Bray, in sunshine, with emergency physio (by Martin of Muscles Mechanics, Egan Centre), in rain and amber alert storms.

"I couldn't have done it" says Paul, "without the help and care from Catherine and all of our team in the shop, our lovely and supportive customers, Sunbeam House and St John Of Gods and The local businesses who helped us on our corporate runs."

Paul says he would like



Paul Burns with the Bohan and Kinsella families

to thank some business for their generous sponsorship: Fred O Toole Electrical, Sundrelle, Hayes Butchers, So Amazing, Lawlor's Wholesale, Bray Footwear, Absolute Graphics, La Belle, Photocraft, Four Star Pizza, Puca Paranormal, Boon Anong Thai Massage.

The final run was an emotional day as Paul

completed his last run in Danny's hoodie and hat, arriving in the shop to be welcomed with a roaring cheer from the whole Bohan family (all 20 of them), friends and customers of the shop and The Lions Club. Sinead from Pieta House handed a bouquet of flowers to Danny's Partner Tresi on behalf of Pieta House. Sinead gave a

moving speech about the passion Danny had for the charity and the commitment of the Lions Club to help raise funds.

Paul and his Team are all delighted to announce that they have raised over €6,000 for Pieta House. So, what's next for Paul?

"Well, after so much exercise I've never been fitter, I think I'll audition

for Love Island!"

If you would like to support Pieta house, you can donate at <https://www.pieta.ie/support-our-work/donate/>

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis or are having suicidal thoughts, contact Pieta House on their 24/7 helpline (1800 247 247) or text HELP to 51444.



Bray Lions Club members Peter Doyle, Norman Hegney and Joe Codyre at Dargle Valley Pharmacy, supporting Paul Burns' fundraising run for Pieta.



Paul Burns with Sinead Nolan and Tresi O'Brien

## Local heroes turn ocean rowing into charity gold

*Two brothers take on mighty Atlantic Crossing in aid of Make-A-Wish and FirstLight*

**Arklow brothers, Eamon and Andrew Breen, also known as 'Atlantic Bro-ing', are on a remarkable mission to conquer the World's Toughest Row - Atlantic, one of the most daring feats in ocean rowing.**

Their monumental journey will entail completing 1.5million oar strokes, over 4800 kilometres, from San Sebastian in La Gomera on the Canary Islands to Nelson's Dockyard, English Harbour in Antigua & Barbuda. This incredible endeavour, commencing on 12th December, 2023, will see them pitted against up to 30 teams from across the globe.

The Breen Brothers are embarking on this extraordinary journey with a deep purpose - to raise vital funds for two charities that are profoundly meaningful to them. The first is Make-A-Wish Ireland, a children's charity that brings hope, strength, and happiness to children living with life-threatening illnesses by fulfilling their wishes. The second is FirstLight, a charity that provides free professional support and information to families in Ireland who have experienced the sudden, unexpected loss of a child aged from 0 to 18 years.

Eamon and Andrew Breen made a special appearance at Bridgewater Shopping Centre, Arklow on Saturday, 7th October, where the

very boat they'll row across the Atlantic was on display.

To donate online see [idonate.ie/fundraiser/AtlanticChallenge2023](https://idonate.ie/fundraiser/AtlanticChallenge2023). Every cent donated will be split equally between the two deserving charities.

### Key Facts About the World's Toughest Row

- Each team will complete over 1.5 million oar strokes during the race.
- Rowers will alternate between rowing for 2 hours and sleeping for 2 hours, 24 hours a day.
- More people have scaled Everest than have rowed an ocean.
- Over €6 million has been raised for charities worldwide through the past 4 races.
- The Atlantic Ocean reaches a depth of 8.5km/5.28 miles at its lowest point.
- Waves experienced by rowers can tower up to 20 feet.
- Two safety yachts are dedicated to supporting the teams.



Arklow brothers Eamon and Andrew Breen



# Signs of progress at Bray Central



Cllr Eerika Doyle

Bray Central is showing further signs of filling out its units according to an update by Cllr Eerika Doyle who says that the fit out of anchor tenant units Penneys and Sports Direct will be completed later this year.

Cllr Doyle said, "Progress is being made on Bray Central and there will be new units open in time for Christmas. I've always said it's better to view this as a shopping district and not a shopping centre per se, as that description gave rise to the expectation that all units would open at the same time. With individual leases in place, it was never going to be the case that the entire area would go live simultaneously"

"The bigger units, Penneys and Sports Direct are currently being fitted out; this process is expected to be complete by the end of the year. Two of the other units are in the final stages of legal negotiation, and once this is complete their names will be announced," continued Cllr Doyle.

"The much-anticipated Stella cinema has just received its fire cert, and fit out work will begin in due course. Finally, three of the kiosks have been let, and negotiations are underway for the remaining three.

"The final piece of the jigsaw is the units on the first floor, with an appeal currently with An Bord Pleanála to convert to apartments. While initially envisaged as a commercial space, the economic toll of Covid and changing face of retail and increased move to online sales, has vastly reduced the demand for first floor retail space. It is my opinion that town centre living space at this location would be welcome, and would contribute to an increased sense of life and safety in the Main Street area after dark."



Deputy Matthews in Ashford

## 'Ashford needs safety upgrade'

"Ashford Main Street needs a new layout, upgrades to walking routes, better parking, cycle routes and a general safety improvement for all users," said Green Party TD Steven Matthews following a walking visit around the area with the council engineer and residents.

"It's a beautiful village, on a river, with a nice wide Main Street but it's a bit chaotic for cyclists, pedestrians and parking and I want to see that improved. I met with the Wicklow District Engineer and District Administrator, and we walked the entire road looking at some issues that could be improved, layouts that might assist better parking and safer walking for parents with children and older residents.

"Following that site visit, I and my Green Party colleague and local election candidate Mia Fahey-McCarthy organised a meeting with residents where further actions and improvements were discussed. It is clear from the meetings and further engagement with local businesses that there is a desire to carry out works to Ashford Main Street, to make it more inviting for locals and visitors, to attract footfall to support local business and to manage parking a little better and provide safe crossing points so that pedestrians and cyclists can get around in safety. I have now contacted Wicklow County Council to request that they apply for funding to carry out a design concept and feasibility study for improving the area and I will further support them through my engagement with the Departments of Housing and Transport and the National Transport Authority.

"Many of our towns in Wicklow are growing at a fast rate and it's good to see new housing being built but it is imperative that our Council has the funding to match housing delivery with enhanced public places, good local transport options and walkable, liveable and enjoyable town centres."

# Imaal Hall in dire need of repair

The roof of Imaal Hall in Dunlavin has seen better days. Decades of Irish weather have taken their toll, and the integrity of the roof is now compromised. Leaks, structural damage, and water infiltration are posing a threat to the building's overall stability and the safety of its occupants. It's clear that action is needed, and it's up to the community to rise to the occasion.

The Imaal Hall is a cherished gathering place that has been at the center of local life for over four decades. This community center has served as a hub for events, celebrations, meetings, and countless memories. Today, the Imaal Hall is in need of the public's support, as it faces a crucial challenge: a roof in dire need of repair. With a fundraising goal of €50,000, the Dunlavin community is rallying together to restore the Hall to its former glory.

The Imaal Hall Raise the Roof Fundraiser aims to raise €50,000 in addition to a grant given by Pobal for the much-needed roof repairs. The campaign is a testament to the community's determination to preserve a place that has brought people together for generations. The new roof will not only ensure the integrity of the building but also breathe new life into the Imaal Hall and help it remain at the heart of our community for future generations. With your support, this historic venue can continue to be a source of pride for Dunlavin and a place where future generations can create their own cherished memories. Imaal Hall Committee and Dunlavin's community thank each and everyone for any donation that they make big or small and for your support of our fundraisers and the hall going forward. To donate, see [GoFundMe.com/f/imaal-hall](https://GoFundMe.com/f/imaal-hall)



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# Concerning shortfall in secondary school places for Greystones



Jennifer Whitmore TD and Cllr Mark Barry, Cathaoirleach of Greystones

**Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has raised concerns about a shortfall of secondary school places in the Greystones area after it was confirmed last week to her that there will be at least 75 less school places offered for the 2024 academic year than for 2023.**

Deputy Whitmore raised this in the Dail with the Forward Planning Division of the Department of Education and asked them to work with schools to immediately address this shortfall.

Speaking after the Oireachtas Committee on

Education last Tuesday, Deputy Whitmore said:

"I'm very concerned at the news that there will be at least 75 fewer secondary school places in Greystones schools for Sept 2024. This news will cause concern among parents and is wholly unacceptable.

"The population has increased by over four thousand people in Greystones since 2016. This is putting pressure on our schools locally to provide places and the Department must forward plan to ensure that this demand is met.

"We have three school projects currently in the pipeline for the area but delays to these buildings and slow progress from the Department will result in over subscriptions again for the next school year.

"I welcome the news that the Department has confirmed a 2025 deadline for the delivery of a new school for Greystones Community College. However, there is still a lack of clarity on how the school will man-

age throughout 2024. Temple Carrig College are also awaiting sign-off on a new extension and have been for some time.

"Colaiste Chraobh Abhann is also waiting for an update from the department. They received planning nearly a year ago, and there's still no news on the next stage of building. Our school communities in Greystones are being left in limbo, as are students and parents.

"Wicklow parents are fed up with continually stressing about getting a secondary school place. It is now the expectation, not the exception, that there will be an issue in getting a school place for their kids.

"I raised these issues with the Department of

Education representatives at today's Oireachtas Committee on Education. Specifically, I asked them what they intend to do to address this shortfall of 75 school places. I will continue to work closely with our school communities, parents, and the Department to ensure this is addressed urgently."

Cllr Mark Barry, Cathaoirleach of Greystones, added: "One of the most frequently raised issues with me on the doors is school places for Greystones. It is very worrying to hear that we are due to see a reduction in place numbers for the 2024 academic year. I will continue to work closely with Deputy Whitmore on this issue to ensure the best outcome for schools in Greystones."

## New library initiative encourages early literacy

**Wicklow County Council Library is delighted to announce a new initiative aimed at fostering a love for reading and early literacy skills in the youngest members of our community.**

From October 3rd every child in the county aged from birth to 4 is invited to visit their local library with their parent, guardian or minder and receive a free bedtime story book.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, stressed the significance of reading with your child, saying: "Reading together not only nurtures a child's imagination but also strengthens family bonds, creating a foundation for a lifetime of learning. We invite parents and caregivers to join us in this exciting

journey toward fostering a love for books and reading in our youngest generation."

The heart of this project lies in the belief that reading with children from birth is a simple yet powerful way to enhance their development.

By providing parents with the opportunity to engage in bedtime reading, Wicklow County Council Library hopes to highlight the importance of dedicating a few moments each day to shared stories. These moments not only create cherished memories but also

significantly contribute to a child's confidence, closeness with their parents, vocabulary, and readiness for school.

"We are thrilled to launch this initiative and provide families in our community with the resources they need to promote early literacy," said Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council.

Wicklow's Library staff look forward to meeting lots of very young babies and toddlers in the coming weeks and have planned extra activities in their branches. These include tummy times, rhyme times and story times. Reading rhymes and stories together will give them a flying start!

## Harris meets with ETSS Politics and Society students



Minister Harris with Politics & Society students at ETSS, Wicklow

**Minister Simon Harris recently paid a visit to the Educate Together Secondary School in Wicklow Town to meet with 5th year who are studying Politics and Society.**

Minister Harris had the chance to outline his work, why he chose a career in politics, and a number of issues he is working on in both County Wicklow and nationwide.

Speaking after the visit, Minister Harris said, "I was delighted to have the opportunity to again visit Educate Together Secondary School in Wicklow. This is a really excellent and growing secondary school in Wicklow Town and I am so proud

of all the work they are doing. "I am very determined to help this school secure a permanent building."

"The Department of Education is currently examining a potential option in relation to a site, and I understand an architectural consultant has been appointed to conduct an assessment of this potential option. It is always a great opportunity to go into a school and to engage with the next generation."

## €5.4m for Further Education and Training sector

**Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD has announced funding of €5.4 million in further education capital grants for Education and Training Boards (ETBs).**

The new funding is in addition to €8 million issued in April under the Devolved Capital Grant to the 16 ETBs to invest in small-scale FET investment priorities at a local level under Project Ireland 2040.

Minister Harris said: "This funding will be welcome news to the FET sector and will help deliver on ETBs ambitious plans for the future.

"Over 120 projects across the country have been approved. Each will have a meaningful impact on students and their learning experience.

This extra cash injection adds to the €8 million euro my Department

issued to the ETBs in April under the Devolved Capital Grant."

In recognition of the impact the €8 million devolved funding in April has had at local level, further projects valued at €5.4 million have now been approved for delivery under the Devolved Capital Grant.

This approval follows an Expression of Interest process, approved by the Department in early summer, to identify further suitable projects in 2023 for funding.

The funding announced is in respect of 127 projects across 14 ETBs with a combined value of €5.4 million. Projects approved

cover health and safety issues, small-scale energy efficiency measures, equipment and requests relating to positive improvements for learning spaces.

Speaking on the announcement, the Chair of SOLAS, Sean Aylward said: "On behalf of the SOLAS Board, we warmly welcome the ongoing commitment by Government to capital investment in the Further Education and Training (FET) Sector.

"This funding in the form of devolved capital grants for the Education and Training Boards across the country will go a long way towards improving the facilities available to learners in the FET sector and to work towards achievement of the sustainability targets set forward in the Climate Action Plan."



Grace Doherty and Sorcha O'Neill at the Dominican College Open Night.



# KWETB looks to the future at annual conference

Delegates from Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (ETB) attended the annual Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) education conference in Cork City Hall recently. The theme for this year's conference 'The ETB of the Future' explored key topics such as the role of AI and technology in education, the importance of inclusion and diversity, and what learners want for the class of 2033.

Stephen Horan, tutor and IT specialist at Kildare and Wicklow ETB, was awarded 'best photo at the conference' during the conference. The event brought together over 300 representatives from across the sector and featured a line-up of over 40 speakers. Minister of State at the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Niall Collins TD opened the conference on Wednesday 27th

September giving the official Ministerial conference address.

Commenting on the future of education, General Secretary of ETBI, Paddy Lavelle said: "As we reflect on 10 years of ETBs in Ireland, it's time for us now to look to the future and focus on what lies ahead for our sector. Ireland is changing, and it's important that we move to adapt with it. We need to plan ahead and give real thought to who our learners of the future are:

what skills do they need; how do they need or want to be taught; and how can we ensure that we are delivering education to learners of all levels in Kildare and Wicklow and across the country that meets their needs, and the needs of their future employers?"

"It will come as no surprise that we have heard throughout the conference of the potential for technology to revolutionise education for both the teacher and the learner. However, it's

important that we also highlight other key considerations that will be vital in the future of education. As Ireland continues to become a more diverse and inclusive country, it is essential that we ensure that we have the infrastructure in place to support all learners regardless of any disability, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

"Kildare and Wicklow ETB and Education and Training Boards across Ireland are already providing multidimensional, coeducational and equality-based education and training services, so are well placed to expand on this delivery and meet potential increased demand.

"The learners of the future are tech-savvy, culturally diverse, environmentally conscious, and adaptable.

"It is our responsibility now to ensure that the classroom of the future evolves to support them on their learning journey."

The conference took place over two days, with a full line-up of keynote speakers and panel discussions.

Some of the highlights from the agenda include inputs from:

- Joanne O'Riordan, disability activist, writer and broadcaster;
- John Loneragan, writer and former governor of Mountjoy Prison;
- Anna Artemyeva, Head of Google for Education, UK & Ireland;
- Niall Collins TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Skills and Further Education;
- Bernie McNally, Secretary General of the Department of Education.



Photographed at the ETBI annual education conference in Cork City Hall was Stephanie Thompson, PhD student, National University of Ireland Maynooth; former Youthreach and Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) programme learner at Carlow ETB.

## Possible new Special Needs School for South Wicklow

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore received confirmation from officials at the Department of Education that a potential new special needs school for the South Wicklow/North Wexford area is currently being considered.

This was discussed as part of a wider discussion on school building proposals in the Oireachtas Education Committee last Tuesday. Speaking after the committee meeting yesterday Deputy Whitmore said: "I was very glad to hear directly from the officials from the Building Unit in the Department of Education that they are considering the need for a special school to serve the population of South Wicklow/North Wexford.

"I have been working with Newcourt School in Bray which is a school serving students with special educational needs. Whilst Newcourt it is a lifeline to many families; the reality is many of the children

who attend this school live far away in rural parts of Wicklow and must travel to Bray daily to attend."

Deputy Whitmore went on to say: "On a recent visit to Newcourt students conveyed to me that they must travel an hour and half to get to school in the morning as it is the only option for them. They told me that this can be very tiring and means getting home very late in the day. An additional school to address these needs is much needed and it would be a boon for families and students in Wicklow.

"I will continue to engage with the Department of Education on this matter and will keep constituents updated on the progress of this proposal."



Photographed at Early Childhood Ireland's pre-budget 'Meet the Members' event at Buswell's Hotel, Dublin were Susan Selfridge, Deputy CEO of Early Childhood Ireland; Michelle Lavelle, Curious by Nature Outdoor Preschool with Jennifer Whitmore TD. At the event, Early Childhood Ireland highlighted the need for a plan to create a unified, publicly-funded model of Early Years and School Age Care that incentivises the recruitment and retention of a graduate workforce, is affordable and accessible for parents, and places children's rights and their wellbeing at its heart.

## 'Schools should be given resources for smartphones ban'

Minister Simon Harris has said schools should be given resources to follow the lead of Greystones schools, which have agreed on a pledge of no smartphones until the children have finished primary school.

Minister Harris has recently written to the Department of Education on this matter. Minister Harris said: "Greystones and Delgany have led the way. The eight schools, parents and the communities have come together to agree this initiative. I believe the results will be transformative for the children, their families and our local communities.

"I really believe most schools want to follow the same path but maybe don't know where to start or how to do it. It is really important for the Government to step in and find resources to assist schools navigate this journey. Minister Foley has shown real commitment to this issue and I know this is something she will prioritise. The anxiety levels among our children can be driven and increased by smartphones and online activity. Most parents do not know what is happening online. Any attempt to assist and protect children and their parents is worth doing."

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Family Carers Ireland's Netwatch Family Carer of the Year Awards seek to recognise the exceptional dedication and selflessness of family carers and young carers right across the country. Now in their 16th year, the Netwatch Family Carer of the Year Awards shine a bright light on these individuals and the invaluable role they play. Ireland's family carers truly deserve to be recognised and supported by society. The annual awards ceremony will take place at the Westin Hotel in Dublin on Thursday, 30th November, and nominations close this week on Friday 13th October. Nominate someone you know today at [www.familycarers.ie](http://www.familycarers.ie) or call the National Freephone Careline on 1800 24 07 24 to request a nomination form by post.

# Petition started against potential work capability assessment for disabled people

Advocate and campaigner for disabled persons' rights, Dr. Margaret Kennedy from Greystones, has created a petition against Government plans which could result in the loss of benefits for people with disabilities. Independent councillor Joe Behan also highlighted the matter at last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council.

It is proposed by the Irish Government to have discussions about potentially categorising disabled people for the purposes of allocating social welfare payments.

"I am a seriously disturbed and worried about proposal that the Irish government have to tear into categories disabled people for benefits," says Dr Kennedy, who herself is a wheelchair user with a neuromuscular condition.

"My petition on Change.org ([www.change.org/p/stop-proposed-categorizing-of-disabled-people-for-welfare-payments-in-ireland?redirect=false](http://www.change.org/p/stop-proposed-categorizing-of-disabled-people-for-welfare-payments-in-ireland?redirect=false)) is there for a lifesaver; it is to save the lives of disabled people who get frightened and who worry about where the next penny is coming from. This is draconian and Dickensian and has no place in a social model of disability that the government professes to use. I urge you to stop this from going further. We are talking about human lives."

Dr Kennedy says the move by the Government "gives a message to the

general public that disabled people are falsifying the nature and extent of their impairment or illness. It breaches the UN convention on human rights for disabled people by using a medical model approach not a social model as enshrined in the UNCRDP. The lived experience of disability is of exclusion from the employment market due to discrimination and inaccessible barriers to employment. Thus 'tiering' into categories related to seriousness of disability will not foster increased employment of disabled people. It objectifies disabled people with scrutiny of their ability to work based on their physical and intellectual capacity rather than the unwillingness and prejudice of employers to increase numbers of disabled people in their workforce. It constitutes degrading and humiliating treatment under the UNCRDP it will necessitate a personal assessment which will not include societal ableism which blocks disabled people from employment. It assumes disabled people

can overcome oppression and discrimination in the workforce and denies these barriers to employment for disabled people. It sets out a categorisation of those 'deserving' of full benefits rights and those not. It is a value judgement. It blames disabled people for seeking welfare benefits and sets up public resentment towards those disabled people who claim welfare benefits. It will set disabled people against each other and will result in thousands of disabled people without monetary resources for daily living and cause hardship and despair."

Raising the matter at last week's Wicklow County Council meeting, Cllr Behan said "This Government decision to introduce a discussion about having a work capability assessment approach to payments for people with disabilities has the capacity to have major impacts on people with disabilities up and down this county and up and down this country. It may well end up mirroring what has happened in

England, where people with some disabilities are being denied their benefits because they're being told that they are able to work. Now, it is only a discussion at the moment, and I am only really aware in the last few days about what is being said about this, but I think we all, as

public representatives, and the people we represent, should be very clear about what is at stake here, and I think, as a Council, we may, and should at some stage in the future discuss this and whether we should be making a submission to that public debate."



Dr Margaret Kennedy

## 'Wicklow pharmacists at the heart of our communities need support'

Pharmacists are at the heart of the wellbeing of our towns and villages in Wicklow and should be supported in their work, says Green Party TD Steven Matthews, who recently hosted a briefing in Leinster House for the Irish Pharmacy Union to hear directly from pharmacists about the issues that impact them on a daily basis.

He will now discuss the issues arising with Health Minister Stephen Donnelly and ask that several areas of concern are prioritised. Deputy Matthews said, "Pharmacists are highly trained healthcare professionals who operate right in the heart of our communities. One of the main topics for discussion at the briefing was the expanding role of the pharmacist and how most people believe they should be able to prescribe to patients for minor ailments without visiting a doctor, thereby relieving the pressure on GP services. They could also potentially prescribe repeat prescriptions where a GP has made the initial prescription. I know from talking to my constituents around Wicklow, that a move such as this would be welcomed wholeheartedly."

"Among the other issues raised that pharmacists here in Co. Wicklow and beyond would like looked are:

- The development of a national strategy for pharmaceutical care including the appointment of a Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
- The proactive management of medicine shortages including greater engagement with the sector
- Review and increase the state dispensing fee to reflect the realities of increased running costs

"Community pharmacists occupy a position of trust in their communities. Every day in Wicklow people are turning to their pharmacists for advice, in fact it is estimated that almost half the adult population now visit a pharmacy over a typical week."

"I fully support their aims and believe these issues must be looked at as a matter of priority, not only to improve the level of healthcare available in our communities but to reflect the challenges experienced by pharmacists in providing this vital local service," concluded Deputy Matthews.



Deputy Steven Matthews outside Leinster House with members of the Irish Pharmacy Union

## Winter vaccines now available in pharmacies

*Public encouraged to book early in pharmacies nationwide to get their flu and COVID-19 vaccines*

**Both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines are now available in more than 850 pharmacies across the country. The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) is urging people to register for a vaccination early this year, stating that the earlier you are vaccinated the earlier you are protecting yourself and the wider community.**

Speaking in anticipation of the upcoming winter season, Dr Susan O' Dwyer, IPU's Head of Professional Services said, "It is important that we top up our winter protection. By protecting yourself, you are protecting those around you. Everyone should be aware that the flu vaccination, for instance, is required annually and that there is no guarantee that you will gain any protection from previous vaccinations. Annual vaccination is important because flu viruses are constantly changing and immunity from vaccination declines over time. Equally, the protection from previous doses or a COVID-19 infection may weaken over time. Booster doses help boost your antibodies and give you good protection from becoming seriously ill or needing to go to hospital if you get COVID-19."

"Local pharmacies will be running vaccination clinics across the country from this week. We are urging everyone to book a vaccination in their local pharmacy."

"Each year respiratory infections,

including flu, cause significant pressure on our health service. Last year 4,604 people were hospitalised, with a sizable percentage of those coming from medically vulnerable groups and the over 65 age group. 198 people died last year alone from influenza related illness. By receiving your flu and COVID-19 vaccines you can reduce your risk of complications from these infections and also help alleviate pressure on our health system."

### Children's Vaccines

This year the IPU is also urging parents to register children for the nasal flu vaccine, which is available free of charge for all children aged 2 to 12 years and for those aged 13-17 who are more at-risk of flu. "Flu is a serious respiratory infection and what many people do not realise is that it disproportionately affects children. Children are twice as likely as adults to catch the flu and in the past 10 years in Ireland, almost 5,000 children have been admitted to hospital with complications of flu.

Sadly, almost 200 children have had treatment in intensive care and 40 children have died.

"Flu vaccines for children have been available free of charge for several years, but uptake has been low. Parents or children concerned about the vaccine should speak to their pharmacist who can provide advice and guidance. The nasal flu vaccine is given as a simple spray in each nostril. This is a quick and easy procedure that is not distressing for children."

Dr O'Dwyer concluded by emphasising the importance of children receiving the vaccine. "Thankfully, most children who contract the flu will only develop mild symptoms. However, children with chronic health conditions are at risk of serious complications from the flu. In some cases where a child catches the flu, it can lead to pneumonia, bronchitis, and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Please do take the opportunity to avail of the flu vaccine for your child to minimise these risks."



# Kunekune pigs abandoned in Wicklow mountains

**Last week saw the rescue of two 'Kunekune' pigs from the Wicklow Mountains.**

Singer Cathy-Davey, co-founder of My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue, was alerted to two small Kunekune pigs which had been abandoned in the Wicklow Mountains. The pigs, believed to be mother and son, were rescued and brought to the My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue pig farm

where they were given a late night snack and a luxurious straw bed. They were abandoned in this remote part of the country, surrounded by miles of heather and stone, with no food, and with the female injured. "The young female is disabled from deformities in her legs," My

Lovely Horse Rescue said. "She is unable to move across this rough and unforgiving terrain without a lot of pain. This is not a natural habitat for pigs. Shame on the person(s) who did this."

Kunekune pigs are a small breed of domestic pig that originated in New Zealand. They have become popular pets and hobby farm animals in

many parts of the world due to their friendly and docile temperament. Like all pigs, they're fiercely intelligent. Shelter from harsh weather conditions

(both hot and cold) is considered essential to keep them comfortable and healthy.

My Lovely Horse Animal Rescue, based in

Kildare, is an animal welfare organisation that rescues, rehabilitates and rehomes unwanted, neglected and abused animals with the aim of

giving them a life worth living. They frequently rescue equines, pigs, goats, sheep, dogs, cats and more more animals. To help other pigs res-

cued from around the country by My Lovely Horse Rescue, see <https://donate.mylvelyhorsescue.com/sponsor-our-pigs>



The rescued Kunekune pigs enjoying their new comfortable straw bed



Darmuid Kavanagh of Glendalough Athletics Club pictured during EcoTrail 2023. See page 14 for more.



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

## NOTICE OF THE PREPARATION OF THE WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL DRAFT CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2024-2029

On Display from 03rd October to the 15th November 2023

### A Chara,

Notice is hereby given that Wicklow County Council has, pursuant to Section 16 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, prepared a Draft Climate Action Plan 2024-2029.

The Draft Plan is accompanied by an Environmental Report, prepared in accordance with the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004 as amended by S.I. 200 of 2011) for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) Natura Impact Report, pursuant to Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

The Draft Climate Action Plan sets out how the local authority can promote a range of mitigation, adaptation and other climate action measures, to help deliver on the national climate obligations and the Government's overall National Climate Objective, which seeks to pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.

### Public Consultation

The Wicklow County Council Draft Climate Action Plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report and Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, will be on display from the 03rd October to the 15th November 2023 at the following locations:

- online at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/ConsultationHub>
- at County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96, Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) between the hours of 9:00am to 5:00pm
- Printed copies for viewing at Wicklow County Council Libraries (Arklow, Baltinglass Blessington, Bray and Greystones) during their respective normal opening hours.
- Members of the Climate Action Team will be at Public Consultation Drop-In Clinics to provide guidance on the Draft Climate Action Plan at the following locations:  
Baltinglass Library Tuesday 10th October from 3-5pm  
Blessington Library Tuesday 10th October from 6-8pm  
Arklow Library Tuesday 17th October from 6-8pm  
Bray Library Thursday 19th October from 6-8pm  
Wicklow Library Tuesday 24th October from 6-8pm  
Greystones Library Tuesday 07th November from 6-8pm

Any further public consultation events will be advertised during the consultation period through the Public Participation Network (PPN) and on Wicklow County Council's social media accounts.

### Submissions/Observations

Written submissions or observations regarding the Draft Climate Action Plan, SEA Environmental Report and AA Natura Impact Report, are invited from members of the public and other interested parties. You can make a submission or observation between 03rd October to 16:30pm on the Wednesday, 15th November 2023 inclusive, through the following options only:

- A written submission can be made electronically through the Council's Public Consultation Portal <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/ConsultationHub> up to 16:30pm on the 15th November 2023;
- or
- In writing to the Climate Action Coordinator at Climate Action Office, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings Station Road, Wicklow Town, A67 FW 96 or by email at [climatepolicy@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:climatepolicy@wicklowcoco.ie) up to 16:30pm on the 15th November 2023;

All submissions are to be concise, clear, succinct and to the scope of the plan.

The closing date for receipt of submissions or observations is 16:30pm on Wednesday the 15th November 2023.

Please make your submission or observations by one medium only i.e. online, email or hard copy.

Submissions or observations should include your name and address and, where relevant, details of any organisation, community group or company etc. which you represent. Children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children, are particularly encouraged to make submissions or observations regarding the foregoing.

Written submissions or observations with respect to the Draft Plan that are made within the period stated, will be taken into consideration before the making of the Plan.

Please note **LATE** submissions or observations will **not** be considered. You are strongly advised to make your submission or observation as early as possible.

### Data Protection

Wicklow County Council is subject to the provisions of freedom of Information (FOI Acts 1997 and 2014). Details can be accessed at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Your-Council/Governance/Freedom-Of-Information/How-To-Make-An-FOI-Request>.

Details of your privacy entitlements and obligations under GDPR can be accessed at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Your-Council/Governance/Data-Protection-GDPR>.

Is mise,

Dated: 29th September 2023

Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services  
Planned Development and Environmental Services.





47km race winner, Hillary Allen from the US



Yohann Stuck from France, winner of the men's 80km race

# Runners brave the elements at 2023 EcoTrail

In spite of the very rough elements EcoTrail Wicklow 2023 around 1,300 runners compete in one of the four races from Bray Seafront on Saturday last 30th September.

The 80km race was won by Deirdre O'Gorman from Ireland and Yohann Stuck from France. Having won the 80km EcoTrail Paris race in March of this year, Yoann established a new record completing the distance in 6h 34min.

The route saw competitors climb Bray Head, the Little and Big Sugarloaf then on the Wicklow Way, Lough Tay, Roundwood and back to Bray Promenade.

Present throughout the weekend was Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council: "The rain couldn't dampen the spirit of those taking part in this year's Wicklow EcoTrail with many having travelled from across the country and the globe to be in Wicklow and Bray for the weekend.

I was amazed with the excitement and determination on their faces setting off at 7.30 in the morning. Witnessing the satisfaction and joy as they returned was incredible: It was a privilege to witness it all."

Cllr Melanie Corrigan, Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District, braved the elements taking part and completing the 19km race over Bray Head and the Little Sugarloaf. After crossing the finish line, she said: "It was one of the most exhilarating runs I've ever done, a fantastic atmosphere. Despite the

weather, it was a very well organised event, with extremely friendly volunteers along the route: well done to all."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council, said: "Even in bad weather, Wicklow remains a great destination for Outdoor Activities. EcoTrail Wicklow is proving to be a fabulous brochure to showcase the fantastic playground that Wicklow is."

Race winner Yohann Stuck from France added: "I love this race! There is such a diversity of terrain including single tracks, forest trails and technical sections. I particularly loved the board walks up the Wicklow Mountains. I will have to come back next year and hope for better weather so I can enjoy the sceneries."

The American professional athlete Hillary Allen won the 47km race in 4h 57min and Irish athlete Enda Cloake won that same race in 3h 58mn. "Ireland, and Wicklow specially, is a fabulous destination for trail running," said Hillary adding: "Regardless of the weather, the event today was incredible. Over the past few days, I have been lucky to walk the various trails, cycle up the Wicklow Mountains and even squeezed a mountain bike afternoon at Ballynastoe: this is an

amazing Outdoor Destination!"

EcoTrail Wicklow 2023 attracted around 1,300 participants representing 47 different nationalities. With start and finish from Bray Seafront, the 80km run to Roundwood and back started at 7.30am. This was followed by the 47km start at 9am, the 30km at 10am and last wave at 11am with the 19k start. The various routes included some of the most iconic locations in Wicklow such as Bray Head, the Big Sugarloaf, Powerscourt Waterfall, the Wicklow Way at Lough Tay (Guinness Lake), and the Vartry Reservoir.

The EcoTrail concept, originating in 2007 in Paris' suburbs by a group of trail running enthusiasts, marries urban trail running events with a foundational commitment to eco-responsibility and sustainability, aiming not only to offer unique running experiences but also to underscore the paramount importance of environmental conservation. Swiftly gaining traction, local organisers across the globe began adopting the model to both highlight their regions and emphasise environmental stewardship, leading to its international expansion, commencing in Brussels in 2012 and subsequently spreading to diverse locations

## EcoTrail 2023 results

### 80km Race

#### Female

1. Deirdre O Gorman (Ireland)
2. Elaine Collins (Ireland)
3. Lou McLaughlin (Ireland)

#### Male

1. Yoann Stuck (France)
2. Cillian Fleming (Ireland)
3. Brendan Joy (Ireland)

### 47km Race

#### Female

1. Hillary Allen (USA)
2. Deirdre Galvin (Ireland)
3. Rachel Murphy (Ireland)

#### Male

1. Enda Cloake (Ireland)
2. Gavin Byrne (Ireland)
3. Donnacha Cassidy (Ireland)

### 30km Race

#### Female

1. Kaisa Laapas (Finland)
2. Sarah Flanagan (Ireland)
3. Jasmine Wonik (Germany)

#### Male

1. Luke Weldon (Ireland)
2. Joseph Bond (Ireland)
3. Johnny Conway (Ireland)

### 19km Race

#### Female

1. Erin Gillingham (USA)
2. Imogen McGuinness (Ireland)
3. Yani Cornthwaite (Australia)

#### Male

1. Des Kennedy (Ireland)
2. Rlan MacMaol-in (Ireland)
3. Derek Cram (Ireland)



Cllr Melanie Corrigan, Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District, presenting prizes to first and second in the women's 80k, Deirdre O'Gorman and Elaine Collins, both from Ireland



# Join the Fighting Blindness Glendalough Trail Run

The annual Fighting Blindness Glendalough Trail Run is open for registration and will take place in Co. Wicklow on Saturday, October 21st, at 11am. The challenge is open to people of all levels of fitness, with a 15km run as well as an 8.5km jog/walk option.

Over 250 trailblazers embraced the challenge in 2022, supporting research to find cures and treatments for blindness. Patient-led charity Fighting Blindness is calling on walkers, runners and joggers of all abilities to join them in this off-road experience, where they can enjoy the magnificent scenery along the green forest trails of Co. Wicklow.

The Glendalough Trail follows a carefully planned route through Co. Wicklow's most famous and beautiful valley and offers a great variety of underfoot terrain. This unique trail is challenging to all, but is also very achievable.

Spaces are limited for the Glendalough Trail because

of environmental restrictions in the area, so participants should register today at [www.GlendaloughTrail.ie](http://www.GlendaloughTrail.ie) to avoid disappointment. The entry fee is €25, with a further €100 minimum fundraising target.

All proceeds will support the quest for cures and treatments for blindness.

Fighting Blindness works with rare, genetic, age-related and degenerative eye conditions that affect an estimated 272,000 people in Ireland. The organisation also provides peer-to-peer support services for people and families affected by sight loss.

For more information, please visit [www.Fighting-Blindness.ie](http://www.Fighting-Blindness.ie) or [www.GlendaloughTrail.ie](http://www.GlendaloughTrail.ie).



*Glendalough Trail Action Photography.jpg: Caption: A previous participant of the Fighting Blindness Glendalough Trail Run. The run is now open for registration and will take place on Saturday, October 21st, at 11am. The challenge is open to people of all levels of fitness, with a 15km run as well as an 8.5km jog/walk option. <http://www.glendaloughtrail.ie> Photograph: Action Photography.*

# GOAL celebrates 35 years of community, camaraderie and charity



GOAL, an Irish international humanitarian aid agency, has announced the return of its national flagship fundraising campaign, Jersey Day, on Friday October 13th. This year, GOAL is celebrating 35 years of schools and businesses swapping out their uniforms for their favourite sports jerseys. All funds raised will go towards supporting GOAL's lifesaving work across the world.

Jersey Day is a household favourite, having raised over €5 million to date. Last year's contributions exceeded €160,000, all of which went towards supporting GOAL projects in 13 countries across Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Ukraine. The event will unite approximately 40,000 people from over 500+ primary and secondary schools, corporations, and state organisations, representing every county in Ireland. In Wicklow alone, seven schools will be participating. They're joined by Medisource.

Speaking about this fun national fundraising campaign, Eamon Sharkey, GOAL's Director of Fundraising and Communications said "Jersey Day's appeal lies in its simplicity - all you need to do is wear your favourite jersey and donate to GOAL's humanitarian aid

work. The fundraiser also offers participants, especially in a post-pandemic world, an ideal opportunity for reconnection, fostering a sense of camaraderie while supporting GOAL's mission to help some of the world's most vulnerable communities move from extreme crisis to resilience, where everyone has equal rights and opportunities."

Registration and fundraising have been simplified, with participants able to sign up and receive their event pack via Jersey Day's Website. Exciting prizes are up for grabs for those participating in Jersey Day 2023. Schools can win €1,000 towards new jerseys, and one lucky workplace will secure a session of Performance Leadership Coaching offered by McNulty Performance Coaching, providing an added incentive for engagement and participation.

## Children's fitness visits return to schools

An open invitation to Wicklow schools interested in participating in the forthcoming series of 'Fit Squad' interactive children's fitness visits has been issued.

Supported by banana distributor Fyffes and backed by World Para Rowing champion, Katie O'Brien and Irish Olympians, David Gillick and Phil Healy are inviting schools throughout Ireland to participate in the forthcoming series of 'Fyffes Fit Squad' interactive children's fitness visits running until next March.



World Para Rowing champion, Katie O'Brien and Irish Olympians, David Gillick and Phil Healy are inviting schools throughout Ireland to participate in the forthcoming series of 'Fyffes Fit Squad' interactive children's fitness visits running until next March.

fitness expert, Sharon Flanagan.

Carried out under the eye of teachers present, participants will be invited to take part in an active age-appropriate workout designed to improve their general fitness and receive advice on the importance of healthy eating.

Running until next March, the upcoming series will see some 10,000 pupils participate from schools throughout Ireland, north and south, increasing to almost 40,000 the number that will have taken part in the programme since it was introduced in 2018.

Schools can register their interest at [www.fyffesfitsquad.ie/register](http://www.fyffesfitsquad.ie/register)



*The Scoil Na Coroine Mhuire Ashford team who took part in the recent opening blitz of the Cumann na mBunscol fixture list in Bray Emmets GAA Club. 16 different schools were represented on the day, bringing 31 teams for a festival of football.*



# Good Craic Comedy Club returns to Bray

Good Craic Comedy Club returns to The Harbour Bar in Bray on Wednesday, October 11th with a stacked line up of the finest up and coming acts on the Irish comedy scene.

The audience are in for a great night's entertainment with guest co-hosts Elizabeth Redmond and the award-winning Patrick McLoughlin introducing the next crop of future stars to the stage.

Closing the show will be John O Keeffe who has established himself as one of the most exciting stand-ups emerging in the Irish comedy scene. Winner of the "Best New Act" Award at the 2019 Bray Comedy Festival, John has been featured on FM104 and is a contributing writer to The God Pod Twitter account. Praised for his likability, comedy writing and stage presence, he has performed on shows with top comedians such as David O'Doherty, Joanne McNally, and Scott Capurro, and regularly gigs at the best venues across Ireland. In 2019 he brought a show to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and debuted a new show at the Scene and Heard festival in 2022, and again in 2023. He recently brought two shows to the 2023 Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Catch John plus several other great acts upstairs at The Harbour Bar on October 11th.

It's Free entry as always but get down early to guarantee your seat. Doors 7.45pm, show at 8.15pm.



John O Keeffe



Cllr Pat Kennedy with artist Aidan Bolger at Culture Night 2023 in Arklow

# Music at Mermaid: The Irish Memory Orchestra

**Saturday 14th October, 8pm, €20 /€18**

**Four principal players of the renowned Irish Memory Orchestra join forces for a unique chamber music event, bringing together the worlds of classical music and Irish traditional music.**

Orchestra founder Dave Flynn (guitar) joins Aisling Agnew (flutes), Mark Redmond (uilleann pipes) and Aidan Dunphy (percussion) in a selection of music by composers from Bach to Carolan, Liz Carroll to Máirtín O'Connor.

The concert also features reimagined versions of compositions Dave Flynn created for the Irish Memory Orchestra. This is the final Irish Memory Orchestra event of its 10th anniversary season, one not to be missed!

Unique in its formation and approach, the Irish Memory Orchestra (IMO) has dazzled global audiences, spanning from London to Moscow, Clare to Korea, with its pioneering and inclusive orchestral music methodology. Since its inception in 2012, the IMO has dismantled traditional barriers by omitting sheet music on stage, thereby accommodating musicians and instruments typically absent from orchestral compositions. The ensemble is singularly distinguished in the Western world by its

unswerving dedication to memorized performances.

The foundation of the IMO consists of 20 world-class musicians, under the leadership of founder/composer Dave Flynn, conductor Bjorn Bantock, and orchestra leader Niamh Varian-Barry. This remarkable

ensemble harmoniously merges ancient Celtic instruments with orchestral strings, winds, and brass, additionally incorporating guitars and a jazz-inflected rhythm section.

Nationally and internationally, the orchestra has filled venues to full capacity, including per-

formances at the Catholic Cathedral in Moscow, Cadogan Hall in London, the Sori Festival in South Korea, and in collaboration with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra at the National Concert Hall in Ireland. The IMO is celebrated for its innovative partnerships with eminent traditional Irish musicians such as Liz Carroll, Martin Hayes, Mary Bergin, and Máirtín O'Connor, gaining applause from both audiences and critics.

IMO say in their

mission statement: "Inno-vative Irish Inclusivity lies at the heart of our operation. We reimagine orchestral music, consistently performing from memory, utilizing an unmatched combination of instrumentation and repertoire, which globally sets us apart from all other orchestras.

"Our aim is to collaborate with extraordinary musicians, especially those who might not typically engage with orchestral music. We

remain steadfast in our commitment to diversity and inclusion, maintaining a gender-balanced ensemble and providing opportunities across the community, including to blind/visually impaired musicians and individuals aged 10 to 90.

"To establish an award-winning orchestra in the West of Ireland-the sole ensemble of its type worldwide-unyielding determination, resolve, and an exceptional artistic vision have been imperative."

## Awards & Nominations

2023: Nominated and awaiting results for the National Lottery Good Cause Awards as the County Winner in Galway Arts & Culture.

2020: Achieved the Silver award at the All-Ireland Community and Council Awards for "The Vision Symphony," an unparalleled project that saw the IMO collaborate with 26 skilled blind and vision-impaired musicians to debut Dave Flynn's 'Vision Symphony' at glór. [More

on the Vision Symphony here]

2019: Nominated for 'The Vision Symphony' in Disability Services Provision at the Galway Arts & Culture Excellence in Local Government Awards.

2015: Received the Allianz Business to Arts Award along with ESB for the Concert in the Cavern.

2014: Nominated and commended with Clare County Council for 'The Clare Concerto' at the Allianz Business to Arts Award.



IMO musicians Dave Flynn, Mark Redmond, Aisling Agnew and Aidan Dunphy



# Wicklow poet shortlisted for second international award

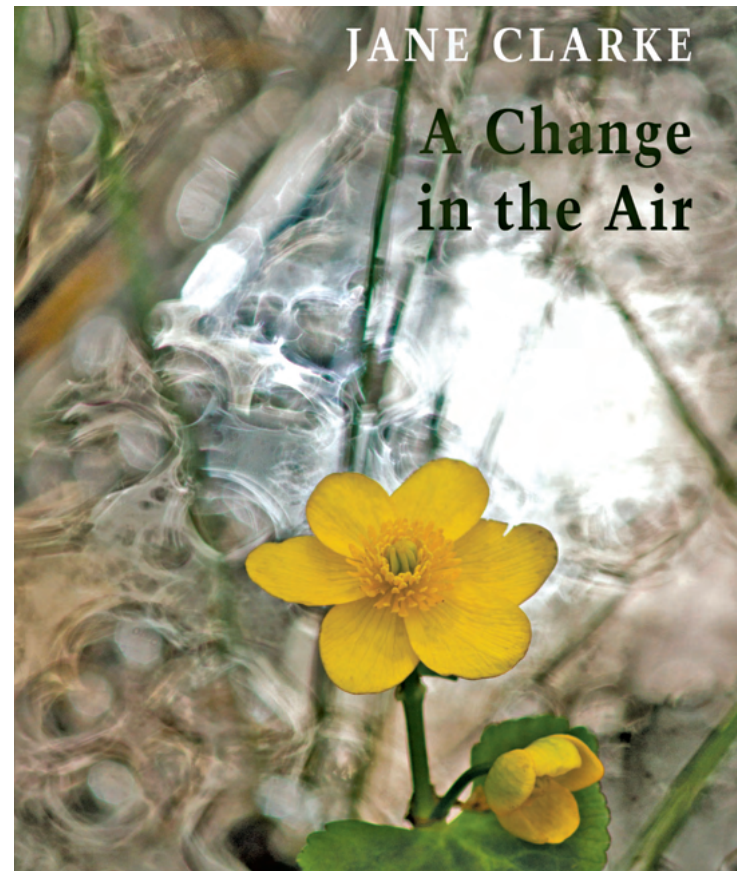
Wicklow poet Jane Clarke's third collection, *A Change in the Air*, is on the shortlist for the prestigious T S Eliot Prize, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year.



Jane Clarke

The prize is awarded annually to the writer of the best new poetry collection published in the UK and Ireland. Former winners include Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes and Carol Ann Duffy. *A Change in the Air*, published in May, is also shortlisted for the coveted Forward Prize for Best Collection, the winner of which will be announced on 16 October at a ceremony in Leeds.

The Judges for the T S Eliot Prize 2023 are: Paul Muldoon (Chair), Sasha Dugdale and Denise Saul. On behalf of the judges, Paul Muldoon said: 'We are confident that all ten shortlisted titles not only meet the high standards they set themselves but speak most effectively to, and of, their moment. If there's a single word for that moment it is surely 'disrupted', and all these poets properly reflect that disruption. Shot through though they are with images of grief, migration, and conflict, they are nonetheless imbued with energy and joy. The names of some poets will



be familiar, others less so; all will find a place in your head and heart.'

Jane grew up on a farm in Roscommon and studied and worked in Dublin for fifteen years. She began to write at the age of forty-four after moving to Glenmalur. Her highly acclaimed poetry reflects on how we are shaped by people, place and landscape and how our past informs our present.

Many of the poems in *A Change in the Air* are rooted in Co. Wicklow, including those that honour the mining heritage in the three valleys of Glendasan, Glendalough and Glenmalur as well as poems inspired by the Avonmore river and the recent experience of lockdown in the uplands.

The T S Eliot Prize Readings will be held at London's Royal Festival

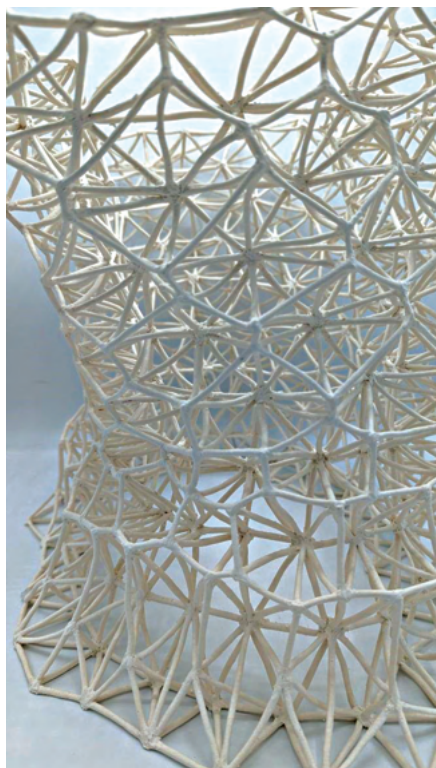
Hall on Sunday 14 January 2024 at 7pm, followed by a ceremony at the Wallace Collection on the evening of 15 January.

The winning poet receives £25,000 and all shortlisted poets receive £1,500. The T S Eliot Prize is the most valuable in British and Irish poetry and is the only major poetry prize which is judged solely by established poets.

## Networks: An exhibition by Nathalie Carnec and Magdolna Toth

*Signal Arts Centre, Tuesday 31st October to Sunday 12th November*

For 'Networks', Magdolna Toth has created sculptures capturing the concepts of overlapping grids and global networks that connect us, using the medium of paper porcelain which she moulds into intricate lattice frameworks, embodying the delicate balance between vulnerability and strength. Her work is tied to worldwide networks - each intersection of a sculpture represents a node in a vast network, reminding us of our interconnectedness and prompting reflection on collective impact.



Nathalie Carnec responds to Magda's alveolar paper clay grid by exploring a similar 3D structure which she then distorts using the principles of origami. The tactile quality of the materials is essential to her work, where she employs folding techniques with paper and industrial plastics to create organic, almost sensual expressions. Nathalie also uses video and digital tools to further extend her vision.

### Magdolna Toth

Magda is a multi-lingual artist with a broad background in ceramics. Clay is a form of self-expression for her and she describes her studio as "a place of retreat". She enjoys working with new and unfamiliar clays and techniques and takes her inspiration from the surrounding world: nature, science, architecture and network systems.

### Nathalie Carnec

Nathalie has been working with colour for over 30 years, exploring various mediums from samples on paper to textile fibres. She has even developed her own weaving technique. Recently, she has been exploring the realm of three dimensions to pursue the optical effects she previously achieved in her weaving pieces.

Works by Magdolna Toth (left) and Nathalie Carnec (right)

## MyCinema at Mermaid

*Running from now until 31st December*

Mermaid Arts Centre has announced a partnership with MyCinema - a new digital platform designed to support local independent cinemas and arts centres - which will enhance Mermaid's existing weekly cinema programming.

"Our film fans can now experience a range of new digital content features!" Mermaid announced.

Mermaid Arts Centre is one of the first venues to team up with MyCinema for the platform's initial launch.

MyCinema includes a new video-on-demand platform, curated to bring the best of European, world and independent cinema to viewers. A selection of high-quality event cinema content will also be available for viewers to rent. A share of the revenue from each rental will go directly to Mermaid Arts Centre so by viewing the online content you are directly supporting Mermaid.

The platform will also serve as a central hub to highlight some of the new & exciting in-venue events happening soon in Mermaid Arts Centre.

To access this additional cinema content, go to <https://mermaid.mycinema.ie>. You will need to register the first time you use it (on the top right hand corner of the screen) and you will then have a wide range of cinema content available to you. Enjoy!

MyCinema is operated by access>CINEMA, the resource organisation for cultural cinema exhibition in Ireland. The platform has been designed as part of the CINNOVATE project, which aims to re-engage audiences for the big screen experience and European film. The project successfully secured European Union investment in 2021. It brings together four of Europe's leading arthouse cinema networks - access>CINEMA, Folkets Hus och Parker, Folkets Bio (both from Sweden), and Art kino mre, a Slovenije (Slovenia).

The project is being coordinated by Cologne-based VOD and digital distribution experts Rushlake Media and independent consultant Jan Runge. Additional content and network partners are the Event Cinema Association (United Kingdom), Spielfabrik (Germany) and IMZ International Music + Media Centre (Austria).





# Brady commends extraordinary work carried out by the Samaritans across Wicklow



Deputy Brady with members of the Samaritans

Sinn Fein TD John Brady met with volunteers from the Samaritans last week, including some of the 86 volunteers from the East Coast Branch in Arklow. Following the meeting, he spoke of the importance of the work that the Samaritans carried out in communities across Ireland.

As a largely volunteer based organisation, the reach of the Samaritans stretches across the Island of Ireland. With its 2000 volunteers and 18 staff answering a phone call and providing help and assistance every 61 seconds.

Deputy Brady said: "I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet with members of the Samaritans this week. The work that they carry out in our communities is both extraordinary and noble. Across the 32 Counties of Ireland there are 21 branches of the Samaritans. Including one here in our county of Wicklow, the East Coast Branch, which is based in Arklow, with 86 volunteers.

"Every single day of the year, all day and all night, there are members of the Samaritans at the end of a phone to lend an ear for those who are struggling to cope. Volunteers spend an average of 25 minutes per caller, totalling almost 95,000 hours on

the phone last year in 2022.

"In the same period volunteers responded to half a million emails. The priority for the Samaritans is suicide prevention. And while the Samaritans carry out research on the issues of self-harm and suicide, they also have campaigns to raise awareness and to make suicide prevention a priority.

"In our alternative budget for 2024, Sinn Fein committed to investing to improve mental health services. Which would include restoring lost CAMHS capacity, investing in primary care mental health services, increased training for psychologists, and roll out universal counselling in primary care.

"We are also committed to the development of specialist services across early intervention in psychosis, ADHD, eating disorders, addiction, liaison psychiatry, and perinatal mental health.

Investing €75, 245, 844 in improved mental health services.

"I believe that it is important that local communities across the country, and particularly

here in Wicklow show their support for the Samaritans by sharing information, volunteering, and also signposting those in need towards their services."

## PLANNING

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Darragh Flynn, of Flynn and Flynn Global Trade Ltd., seeks Permission to erect 2 agricultural structures (polytunnels), to be used for organic horticultural activities (growing vegetables, fruit and herbs) on a 4-acre parcel of agricultural land at Darraghville, Kilcoole. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Mr. Keith Walsh am applying for Planning Permission for the Construction of a new flat roof dormer to the rear of the existing dormer bungalow to include two new opaque windows to replace the existing rooflights for existing bathrooms at First Floor level at Oolart, Cherry Orchard, Killincarrig, 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

Janet Nolan seeks planning permission for: Single Storey Extension to side and rear of existing dwelling at 56 Sea Court, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow. A63 Y058 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

Brian Larkin seeks planning permission for: Conversion of Existing Attic Space including introduction of roof lights to front and rear roof slopes along with 2no. frosted windows in gable wall to existing dwelling at 15 Eastmount Woods, Chapel Road, Delgany, Co. Wicklow A63 R7W6 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

Elaine Kennedy & Steven Culligan seek planning for: Attic Conversion including new roof lights to front and rear roof slopes along with new window in existing gable wall at 10 Archers Wood Avenue, Delgany, Co. Wicklow. A63HE40 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.



Pictured are Kathleen Redmond, Pauline Kenny, Pat O'Riordan and Hilary Taylor. Greystones Active Retirement Association held a Coffee Morning on Friday, 29th September for Wicklow Hospice. It was a great morning for a wonderful cause. The donations boxes were sent unopened to the hospice, so it is not yet known how much was raised. The GARA AGM will be held on Thursday, 26th October, in Kilian House, 2.30 pm. All most welcome to come along.

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A blue line-art illustration of a two-story house with a chimney and a tree next to it.



# Coillte recognised with Business Working Responsibly mark

Coillte has been awarded its first Business Working Responsibly Mark from Business in the Community Ireland. The Mark has recognised that Coillte is in-line with best-in-class sustainable and responsible business practices and is an organisation that fosters a culture of continuous improvement and ongoing accountability throughout its business.

The Mark is a leading standard for sustainability and responsible business in Ireland and is verified following an independent audit by the National Standards Authority of Ireland.

Coillte received the Mark for presenting, among other achievements, a comprehensive set of strategies to support the Government's 2050 targets, solid evidence of life cycle management, including carbon capture and sustainable use of timber as a durable building product, a strong dedication

to stakeholder engagement and a commitment to workplace inclusivity. Imelda Hurley, CEO of Coillte said: "The Mark represents the gold standard for corporate responsibility and is recognition of our continued commitment to imbed the four pillars of sustainability into our core business practices.

"As custodian of Ireland's State forests and an important stakeholder within our national response to the climate emergency, we have a deep understanding of the necessity to ensure that we are upholding the highest standards throughout our activities. This Mark allows us to showcase the good work currently being done, as well as providing a roadmap to continue to enhance our sustainable policies and practices into the future as we remain focused on delivering the multiple benefits from our forests for climate, nature, wood and people.

"None of this would be possible without our highly dedicated team. I want to thank every member of Coillte for their hard work and commitment in achieving this recognition."

Tomas Sercovich, CEO, Business in the Community Ireland

said: "We applaud Coillte for attaining the Business Working Responsibly Mark and for using it to drive sustainability across all three of their operating divisions. They showed leadership and commitment throughout the entire process. They successfully used the Mark framework to challenge, unite and drive themselves to deliver the ongoing transformation needed to address the sustainability challenge. We are delighted to have Coillte join our collective movement for change."



Imelda Hurley, CEO of Coillte, with Tomas Sercovich, CEO, Business in the Community Ireland

## 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. **H.M.**

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