

WATER WORRIES

Green Party TD Deputy Steven Matthews has expressed concern about the recent pollution related algal bloom in the beautiful Blessington lakes and Roundwood Reservoir. 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 sources.

"Algal blooms happen when there are excessive nutrients in the water such as nitrates and phosphates. 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 performing 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 (Cyano-bacteria). "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 freshwa-



Charlie Burke (Wicklow Mental Health), Tom Byrne (Wicklow IFA), Pat Neville (Coillte) and Patrick Hipwell (See Change) are pictured at the Green Ribbon Walk at Avondale Forest Park, Rathdrum, organised by IFA in partnership with See Change, Coillte, and Mental Health Ireland. The 'walk and talk' campaign aims to spread awareness about mental health struggles. Pic: Michael Kelly

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ter 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.

"I have written to the chief executive of Wicklow County Council to ask for an immediate assessment and investigation into the matter. When I was studying Planning & Environmental Management, I worked at the WCC laboratory testing water quality across Wicklow so I know they are very capable and experienced in investigating, monitoring and testing water quality and can quickly mobilise to determine

the extent of this algal bloom and issue warnings to lake users if necessary.

"I have further concerns regarding the reported algal bloom in the Vartry Reservoir in Roundwood which supplies drinking water to Dublin and Wicklow. Although drinking water is treated to high standard after extraction, these outbreaks point to the general deterioration in water quality and can impact human, animal and aquatic ecology. We simply must address the causes such as agriculture run-off, forestry practices and poorly performing wastewater treatment systems."

TD Jennifer Whitmore, the Social Democrats spokesperson for Climate Change, has also raised concerns about the appearance of a second algal bloom in Wicklow in less than a week.

The latest bloom has been found in the Vartry Reservoir

near Roundwood. Deputy Whitmore said: "The occurrence of

a second algal bloom in Wicklow waterways in
Continued on page 3



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John Jr and John Boland at the Wicklow Hospice Dip in the Nip at Greystones South Beach

Bray Cualann Historical Society

Brian White will present 'Early Motoring in the 20th Century' at 8pm on Thursday October 19th in the Royal Hotel, Main Street, Bray. All are welcome - admission for visitors / non-members is E8.

Bereavement support for parents

As we face into dark evenings and the long winter months, Anam Cara are encouraging bereaved parents to avail of their services whether it be face to face or online. On Monday 16th October, Anam Cara will hold their Wicklow meeting in The Parkview Hotel, Newtownmountkennedy at 7:15pm. All bereaved parents from the Wicklow area are welcome, regardless of the age their child died or circumstances of death. There is no need to register, just arrive on the evening at 7:15pm. For more information on the support services offer by Anam Cara, please call 085 2888888, email info@anamcara.ie or see www.anamcara.ie.

Mobile Library

A mobile comes to Laragh every second Thursday from 12.15 to 12.50pm and parks at the back of Lynhams Hotel. Phone on 087 9135229 or email library@wicklowcoco.ie. Next dates are Thurs 19th Oct and Nov 2nd. For people who have difficulty accessing their nearest public library, the Mobile Library Service gives them the opportunity to avail of a public library facility. The mobile library carries approximately 2,500 items with free access to many online resources including downloadable audio books, newspapers and more.

Fighting For Blindness

The 15km long course has 550+m of gain/loss. TrailShoes are Strongly Advised. This route has an 11am start. The 8.5km short course (jog/walk option) has 270m of gain/loss mainly on forestry tracks. This route has an 11.30am start. Race sign-on is from 9am at Brockagh Centre in Laragh. Sign-on closes 30 mins before race start (Long Race starts 11:00 and Short Race starts 11:30). Registration and further details can be found at: <https://glendaloughtrail.ie/>.

BirdWatch Ireland

There was a great turn-out of both people and birds at the recent outing to Kilcoole on September 23rd. The bird list had 49 bird species including departing summer visitors (Swallows and Wheatear) and arriving winter visitors (Godwits and Greenshank). A juvenile Hen Harrier also made an appearance. If you are new to birdwatching, the Murrrough Wetlands at Kilcoole are a great place to visit, there is parking at Kilcoole Train Station carpark or public transport close by (84 bus route) and a host of birds within a short distance, just cross the railway and head south.

Every Thursday morning there is an opportunity to join the enthusiastic volunteers at ECNR to do conservation work under the guidance of new East Coast Nature Reserve Warden, Stuart Cossey. You will find more information here. If you wish to get involved, please email your contact details to Stuart ? info@birdwatchireland.ie

Shape Up exhibition

There is currently an art exhibition by senior pupils from St. Catherine's Special School on display in Wicklow Library. The exhibition, entitled 'Shape Up' is on display throughout the month of October.

Fundraiser for Wicklow woman fighting cancer

A GoFundMe fundraiser has been created by the friends of Wicklow woman Bridget Waldron who recently got an aggressive cancer diagnosis. Bridget and her family currently face an uncertain immediate future and the fundraiser is in the hope of helping them through this difficult time. See www.gofundme.com/f/bridget-fight-against-cancer.

Redford blessing of the graves

Collections (permit granted) will be held on Sunday 5th November at 3pm at St.Kilian's Church, Blacklion, Holy Rosary Church, Greystones and at Cemetery gatesto help with the upkeep and maintenance of the Cemetery.

Community Water Development Fund grants available for local communities

Your local community or voluntary group can now apply for a Community Water Development Fund (CWDF) grant to deliver a project in 2024. This Fund helps local communities deliver projects and initiatives that enhance your local water environment, delivering multiple benefits for water quality, biodiversity and climate action.

The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) administers the Fund on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. There will be €520,000 available in grants under the 2024 Call.

The fund was launched by Minister Malcom Noonan, TD on 28 September during European Sustainable Development Goals Week, which runs from 23 September to 1 October 2023.

The launch was attended by Sadhbh Burt Fitzgerald and Kaethe Burt O'Dea from Bí Urban, a previous recipient of a CWDF grant. Bí Urban, a social enterprise in Stoneybatter, Dublin showcased one of their rain gardens funded under the CWDF - rain gardens are a nature-based solution addressing storm water runoff in urban areas.

Interested community and voluntary groups can download the Guidelines and complete the grant application form online at LAWaters.ie. An information video is available which explains all about the Fund and use of the online portal - see here [Local Authority Waters Programme \(vimeo.com\)](http://Local Authority Waters Programme (vimeo.com))

The Fund is open to all community and voluntary groups to help in the protection and management of water quality, both locally and in the wider catchment. Grants awarded will range from €1,000 to €25,000.

The closing date for receipt of applications is 12 noon on Wednesday 6th Dec 2023.

If you experience any technical difficulties on the website, please email funding@lawaters.ie.

For support with your application contact Justin Ivory Community Water Officer for Wicklow at jivory@lawaters.ie.



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Local Property Tax to remain at increased rate

Councillors last week voted to keep Wicklow's Local Property Tax unchanged for 2024, maintaining the 6% increase they introduced two years ago.

In a special meeting held last Monday, 9th October, councillors voted (20 for, 7 against) to leave the LPT charge at the same level.

Fine Gael councillor Edward Timmins voted to maintain the LPT at the 2023 level, however he also criticised the 'unfair' system and the baseline which he said should be abolished. Though the Equalisation Fund has been eliminated, he said, this has made "no difference at all", as Wicklow will only get to keep little more than a fifth of LPT collected above the baseline.

He said "The main problem is the baseline figure which restricts the amount of money that we collect that we can keep. It did go up but it's still far too low. Counties with half or less of our population and similar area (eg. Offaly, Sligo, Cavan) have similar baselines. This makes no sense. The baseline - which is a number which is created in a flawed way by giving very low weighting to population - should be abolished. It is just a way of stopping us keeping what is collected. It is used to deprive Wicklow of €4.1 million in 2024.

"In addition to the flaw with the baseline the other restriction is that we are only allowed keep 22.5% of any property tax raised over the baseline. So if our property tax collection went up by €1m next year we could only keep 225k. That is completely wrong and unfair.

It's unfair that for every extra euro we raise in property tax in Wicklow we can only retain 22.5 cent."

Independent councillor Peir Leonard put forward a proposal (seconded by Cllr Mary Kavanagh) to reduce the LPT rate back to the baseline level.

"People are just not seeing where the Local Property Tax is being spent in their local communities," said Cllr Leonard. "I don't mean the money that's handed out to the Municipal Districts for small little projects. They want to know where the main bulk of the Local Property Tax is being spent in their local communities as they see services being reduced all around them."

Cllr Tom Fortune also criticised the LPT: "It's not equitable. If I live on the east coast I am charged a certain rate, but if I happen to be lucky enough to live in the midlands or the west coast, I can live in a much, much more expensive home, bigger home and pay less. It is not a fair tax. And it is not that many years ago since our Taoiseach of one of our main parties stated very publicly that the family home should never be taxed. And I absolutely fundamentally 110% agree with that. So on a point of principle I cannot support this process and will be voting against it."

Cllr Joe Behan said that retaining the 6% increase was "unaccept-

able": "While this is presented to us as being no increase because the people won't have to pay any more next year, they actually have had to pay the increase over the last two years. So what we are actually being asked to do is retain the increased rate rather than not ask people to pay more. We have asked them to pay more for two years in a row and this will be the third year that this has passed.

"We're being told that that we should retain a 6% increase at a time when people are suffering the greatest increase in cost of living that they have witnessed in many years. There is no consideration for the people who are being hit with increased mortgage rates - the same people who are being hit with the 6% increase in the property tax."

Following last week's meeting, Wicklow County Council released a statement saying "This decision [to keep the LPT at the same level] means that householders in Wicklow will face no increase to their LPT payments in 2024 while it generates €1.2m in funding for the Council. This funding is ring-fenced for discretionary use by the Elected Members of the five Municipal Districts to support local projects in these areas, including footpath repairs, public realm initiatives and supporting local community organisations."

Bray Municipal District will receive

€297,370 with the other four Districts - Arklow, Baltinglass, Greystones and Wicklow - each receiving €223,028.

"Local Property Tax is an important funding source for local authorities and contributes towards the cost of providing a range of Council services including libraries, public lighting, road maintenance, housing services, fire services, community grant scheme, littering and tourism development initiatives.

"Projects supported directly through the Discretionary Fund include among others: Footpath upgrade at Conary - Arklow MD; Road resurfacing at Woodview Park - Arklow MD; Footpath upgrade at Donard Graveyard - Baltinglass MD; Lawn-mower purchases for various community organisations - Baltinglass MD; Accessibility works at seaford playground - Bray MD; Painting of Victorian seatbacks on Bray Promenade - Bray MD; Footpath renewal in Seaview Estate, Kilcoole - Greystones MD; Pedestrian route public lighting, Pigs Hollow - Greystones MD; Installation of benches on the Wicklow Port Access and Town Relief Road - Wicklow MD; Provision of defibrillators for local housing estates - Wicklow MD. The full €1.2m generated will remain entirely within the local district areas for allocation from their Discretionary Fund."

Speaking at last week's meeting about the discretionary funding in his own Municipal District of Wicklow, Cllr John Snell

said "Pre-2019 there was 60 metres of footpath to be put in at Merrymount Hill in Rathnew, and it still hasn't been done. The money was set aside from the discretionary funding. We as members had voted that particular year that we wouldn't decrease the property tax (which was proposed by some members, and I have never supported that, but all members here did not go against that). But the reality is that footpath is still not done. We have three schools there, over 2,000 pupils use that section of roadway. We as a local authority put in a housing estate of 147 houses. Children still have to use that roadway minus the 60 metres of footpath. The easiest thing for me to do would be to support the 6% increase here today and go with the flow, and be one of the boys and girls that's going to appease the senior management here. But the reality is, I can't. I can't go against my principles, because I believe that it's an unfair tax."



Cllr Tommy Annesley and Patrick Hipwell at the Green Ribbon Walk in Avondale Forest Park, Rathdrum.

WATER WORRIES

Continued from page 1

a week is extremely worrying. It is clear we have a serious problem with the enrichment of our waters. This reservoir is a vital local source of drinking water for homes and businesses in Wicklow.

"These blooms are impacting our lakes and drinking waters, and this problem is getting worse. We cannot downplay the seriousness of this for our local environment. These algae can poison fish-hand plant life, pose a serious health threat to dogs and other animals, and put the quality of drinking water in Wicklow at risk.

"An Taisce have warned that is yet another indication of the decline of our water quality. We have to heed that warning and work to restore water quality in Wicklow.

"Government must immediately outline measures it is taking to prevent any more important water supplies, recreational waters and important biodiversity systems being impacted by a man-made problem.

"Following the news from Blessington last week, I contacted the Minister's office to ask them what they intended to do. I am still awaiting a response, and I will continue pursuing the Department on this issue."

Elsewhere in County Wicklow Uisce Éireann, in partnership with Wicklow County Council, continues to progress works to lift the Boil Water Notice in place to protect the health of approximately customers supplied by the Knockanarrigan Davidstown Public Water Supply. The boil notice is in place due to the detection of E.coli, enterococci, and

coliforms in samples collected in the supply. The notice impacts all areas supplied by the Knockanarrigan Davidstown Public Water Supply.

While drinking water experts from Uisce Éireann are working to implement measures to lift the Boil Water Notice, all customers on this supply are advised to continue to boil their water before use until further notice. Customers are reminded that the water is safe to consume once boiled.

Water must be boiled for: Drinking; Drinks made with water; Preparation of salads and similar foods, which are not cooked prior to eating; Brushing of teeth; Making of ice - discard ice cubes in fridges and freezers and filtered water in fridges. Make ice from cooled boiled water.

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A Vision for Bray Municipal District

Melanie Corrigan is an Enniskerry native from a farming background. She is a hardworking individual and mother of four children. Before embarking on a life as Fine Gael Councillor, Melanie ran a business in Bray with her husband and was actively involved in the community working with many volunteer groups, schools and sports clubs. It wouldn't have been unusual to see her chairing a meeting or helping organising a school fundraiser one day, picking up litter or training a GAA team the next day before heading off to run a 5 or 10k race to help raise funds for a local charity. Melanie certainly had her fingers on the pulse of the challenges and opportunities for both individuals and businesses the area and working as an elected official to represent the needs of the Bray West community was an obvious fit for her. A sentiment that was also shared by the electorate of Bray West as Melanie was elected on the first count of the local elections in 2019, a great result for a rookie on her first electoral campaign.

When asked what her role as a Councillor meant to her, Melanie stated 'Becoming a Councillor has given me the chance to have a greater impact in my community which is something I feel privileged to have been able to do. I love this community, I have lived here all my life and chose to bring my family up here, I believe in the people, the beauty of the natural area, and in everything it has to offer. My campaign vision on 2019 was to make Bray, Enniskerry and Kilmacanogue a better place to work in, live in, and visit. A vision, I still feel committed to'.

In her role as Cllr. Corrigan, Melanie has certainly worked hard to achieve her 2019 vision, below is a snapshot of some of the work she has been involved in since she was elected in 2019.

Keeping our community safe

Throughout Covid Melanie co-ordinated the Community response group in Enniskerry, and helped set up the group in Kilmacanogue. She worked with east Coast mask makers and obtained funding for their work. Melanie has also championed Road safety ini-

tiatives, such as creating safer footpaths, pedestrian areas, improving access for people with disabilities and imposing speed restrictions in areas where it is needed.

Improving and enhancing our Community

Melanie has worked closely with community groups to improve sports facilities, helping them navigate funding opportunities, including a leader funded feasibility study of sports facilities in the Bog Meadow, to create play areas, and was instrumental the approval of the new long awaited playground which work is to start on very shortly in Enniskerry.

She has also led the way in creating green spaces and building community values, by being a hands on member of the tidy towns committee, securing funding for a bio diverse community garden of edible herbs and plants and wild flower meadow and working closely with pure mile and leave no trace to keep our rural areas clean.

Promoting Wicklow as a destination

As a board member of Wicklow tourism, Melanie has had the opportunity to work with local and county wide tourism providers to help them promote their work and to boost their business through innovation and knowledge sharing supports. She has actively put

the Cead míle fáilte into action through her involvement with the Enniskerry Welcomes group and working with Bray area partnership and voluntary community groups to help Ukrainian families to integrate safely into our community. Providing supports such as safe accommodation, community supports and the provision of English classes. She was also appointed to the Board of county Wicklow Partnership which has allowed her to further expand her work in this area.

When asked what she has learnt throughout her term as a Councillor, Melanie paused before adding 'Looking back over the last 4 1/2 years, if life in Politics has taught me anything it's to assume nothing and expect the unexpected, and what a 4 1/2 years we've had. No one could have foreseen a global pandemic or a war in Ukraine that have presented challenges at global, national and local level. My time in politics has also taught me to be agile and creative in response to challenges. I've learnt that you need to listen to people, but not just listen to hear, but to really listen to understand, it is through understanding the real challenges that enables me to be the voice of the

electorate and advocate on their behalf. I learnt pretty early on that being a Councillor is not a 9 to 5 job, and I realise now that I am more resilient than I thought I was, and that sometimes the work that goes unnoticed is the most important work of all, and it is the outputs of this work that motivates me the most. Life as a local Councillor can be very demanding at times and I am especially lucky to have the support of my family and friends, living in the countryside, close to the sea I can balance my work with getting outdoors and going for a long run with my dogs or meeting friends for a swim'.

Melanie has certainly lived up to her reputation of being a hardworking, can do individual who has worked well with and earned the respect from her fellow Councillors from all parties in Bray West. She was voted in as Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District in June this year and thanked her fellow councillors for their support quoting the African Proverb 'If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far go together', a quote which sums up her approach to the need for a collaborative approach to politics at a local level to get things done.



Pictured are Cllr. Melanie Corrigan, Bray Municipal District and Wicklow County Council, along with daughter Rebecca Corrigan, plus playground committee members Roisin Briggs, Aisling Vickers, Derola Cotter and local children looking for a playground.



Pictured are Cllr. Melanie Corrigan, Bray Municipal District and Wicklow County Council, with Joe Kelly, Manager of Bray Lakers.



Pictured are Cllr. Melanie Corrigan, Bray Municipal District and Wicklow County Council, with sister Sharon Williams.



Pictured are Cllr. Melanie Corrigan, Bray Municipal District and Wicklow County Council, with family at her election of Cathaoirleach for Bray Municipal District.

Cllr. **MELANIE CORRIGAN**

Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District

Working for you in Bray West

(To include Kilmacanogue & Enniskerry)

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FINE GAEL

Submission deadline extended for N11 Bus Priority Interim Scheme

In response to recent requests from the public, Wicklow County Council have decided to extend the public display consultation period for the N11/M11 Bus Priority Interim Scheme by an additional three weeks.

Submissions will now be accepted up to Friday 3rd November 2023. Submissions will be accepted via the online feedback form available on the project website www.n11m11bpis.ie or by email to n11m11@arup.com or by post addressed to N11/M11 Bus Priority Interim Scheme, Transportation Department, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Whitegates, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96.

More than 300 people attended a public meeting organised by Independent councillor Joe Behan in the Glenview Hotel last Monday evening.

"There was not one speaker in favour of the proposal to close off the main junctions to the N11," Cllr Behan said. "The message is clear: We say no!"

The Council stated: "Wicklow County Council values the opinion of the community on this project and welcomes feedback and submissions from the public and interested parties. The knowledge gained from the engagement will be considered by the project team as part of the next stages of the development of the scheme."

Welcoming the extension of the deadline, Minister Simon Harris urged people to voice their concerns regarding the closure of Herbert Road junction.

Minister Harris said: "I'm pleased to hear that

the public consultation deadline for the N11/M11 Bus Priority Interim Scheme, including proposals regarding the closure of the Herbert Road Junction and Enniskerry Junction, have been extended by a few weeks. The current proposal is completely unacceptable, would add significant difficulties. It cannot be accepted.

"Every resident's voice must be heard and taken into account regarding these proposals before any final decision is made. The Herbert Road Junction provides vital traffic relief between Bray North and South. The proposal to close the Herbert Road Junction has been met with fierce opposition from local residents, and I am in complete agreement with them. Local residents were only recently subject to this road closure when the road was getting resurfaced, and traffic conditions across Bray dramatically deteriorated over those few weeks. A permanent closure would do this and worse.

"The fact that this road was closed less than a year ago for its resurfacing is only adding to the residents' agitation as the two successive closures which demonstrates a serious lack of forward thinking from the Council.

"Bray commuters already experience large queues from the N11/M11 so these pro-

posals are naturally leading to severe unease and frustration among Bray commuters and residents."

In September Minister Harris wrote to Wicklow County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland to voice his own opposition to these proposals after having spoken to residents directly on the issue.

"I am once again urging local residents to email n11m11@arup.com and have their voice heard on the current proposals. We must stay united as a community in opposition to this. I will always back the residents."

Sinn Féin TD John Brady last week reiterated his strong opposition to plans to close the Herbert Road Junction and to remove the roundabout at Hills Garage, and put in place a traffic lights system in order to facilitate the Bus Priority Corridor on the N11, which he described as "a disaster which will bring the whole of Bray to gridlock" if the plans are permitted to go ahead.

A recent traffic survey showed that 25,000 vehicles use the Herbert Road Junction during working hours.

Deputy Brady said: "Look, I absolutely recognise and support the need for Bus Priority Corridor. But, the plans as they currently stand to put this in place, are not just unworkable, they are going to result in a disaster for motorists and residents who currently use the Herbert Road Junction, and the Hill roundabout. We all know that this project is being pushed by the Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan and his colleagues in the Green Party. I believe that their position is an ideological one. And this approach is blinding them to the full implications of their plans."

"I recently debated this issue on East Coast Radio with a government representative, who was adamant that the closure of the Herbert Road Junction with have no adverse effect on other junctions in the town. This is just ridiculous. A recent traffic survey provides clear and unambiguous evidence of the volume of traffic through the Herbert Road Junction.

"To take just one twelve-hour period from 7am to 7pm, some 25,000 vehicles were recorded passing through the junctions. This is close to an average of 2,100 an hour, or more than one car every two seconds.

"To put it another way, we have evidence to show that twelve hours a day high volumes of traffic are going through the Herbert Road Junction in a workable way. Those 25,000 vehicles are not simply going to disappear. They will be forced to seek out other routes in and out of Bray.

"There are three other



Will Fox from Calary in Roundwood celebrated his 50th birthday on Saturday, 7th October in the Brass Fox in Wicklow Town. His mother Laura, father Des, brothers and sister, son Ben, girlfriend Isabelle and wide circle of friends all had great time and they wish him a great 50th year. "Happy birthday Will, we love ya lots!" they said.

Whitmore meets with Bus Eireann regarding 133 issues

Jennifer Whitmore TD met with representatives from Bus Eireann last Wednesday regarding ongoing capacity issues with the 133 bus route on the eastern corridor, the 132 in west Wicklow and issues with school transport provision in the county.

Following the meeting, Deputy Whitmore said: "The meeting was very useful. I am glad to have had the chance to directly raise concerns from constituents across the county with Bus Eireann. I clearly communicated the frustration of Wicklow commuters trying to use these services and this was taken on board by Bus Eireann."

"The primary concerns of commuters are issues of capacity and frequency on the service. There has been a growth of population in Wicklow, and the reality is that the bus service has failed to keep pace with this increased demand.

"I was glad to hear that Bus

Eireann has taken on board representations from my office, and concerns of service users, and is conducting a capacity review on the ground at key points along the 133 route, including in Newtown-mounkenney, just this week.

"Clearly, adjustments must be made to the number of double-decker buses assigned to operate on both the 132 and 133 routes, as too often passengers are being left behind at stops by passing buses which are already full. There must also be an improvement in frequency on the route.

"However, the wider issue of capacity must ultimately be

addressed by the National Transport Authority as their licencing regulates the number and type of buses operating along these routes. I have requested a meeting with the National Transport Authority in the coming weeks to discuss issues relating to transport in Wicklow, and in that meeting, I will raise these concerns directly them."

Deputy Whitmore went on to say: "Regarding school buses, unfortunately there are still considerable number of school bus services which are not operational and I will continue to advocate for the students and families affected. The Minister for Education must act swiftly to address these continued disruptions to school transport services. I will continue to represent the needs of Wicklow commuters in my capacity as TD for the county."



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

N11/M11 BUS PRIORITY INTERIM SCHEME EXTENSION OF SUBMISSION DEADLINE

NON-STATUTORY PUBLIC DISPLAY OF THE PREFERRED OPTION (PHASE 2)

Wicklow County Council welcome the public's ongoing and thorough engagement on the public display of the preferred option for the N11/M11 Bus Priority Interim Scheme. In response to recent requests from the public, Wicklow County Council have decided to extend the public display consultation period by an additional three weeks.

Submissions will now be accepted up to Friday 3rd November 2023.

Submissions will be accepted via the online feedback form available on the project website www.n11m11bpis.ie or by email to n11m11@arup.com or by post addressed to N11/M11 Bus Priority Interim Scheme, Transportation Department, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Whitegates, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96.

Wicklow County Council values the opinion of the community on this project and welcomes feedback and submissions from the public and interested parties. The knowledge gained from the engagement will be considered by the project team as part of the next stages of the development of the scheme.

knowledge gained from the engagement will be considered by the project team as part of the next stages of the development of the scheme.

Children And Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss present report containing 58 calls to action

A report with 58 calls to action has been presented by the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity to Wicklow County Council.

Receiving a presentation on Biodiversity Loss from the Assembly, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman, commented: "Wicklow County Council will continue their ongoing support and engagement with the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss. Their report which contains 58 Calls to Action has been heard and taken into account within our draft Climate Action Plan which has gone on public consultation for six weeks up until the 15th November. The actions will be given further consideration within the Review of the Biodiversity Action Plan."

In October 2022 Ireland held its first Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss. The project was led by Dublin City University, involved University College Cork and brought a random 35 volunteers aged from 7-17 across Ireland to explore, discuss and create calls to action on how to protect and restore biodiversity in Ireland.

The Assembly created six key messages as follows:

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Climate & Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee, Cllr Lourda Scott, welcomed the report and said: "Wicklow has been leading the way as both the first local authority in Ireland to declare a climate and biodiversity emergency and also to have a dedicated Strategic Policy Committee. I welcome

1. We must treat the earth like a member of the family or a friend.
2. Future generations must live in a world where there isn't a biodiversity crisis and where children don't have to take action because of the inaction of past generations.
3. Every decision must take biodiversity into account.
4. Children and young



Mark Costello, Associate professor in the School of Law and Government at DCU, Diarmuid Torney, Hannah O'Kelly, CEO of WCC Emer O'Gorman, Heritage Officer Deirdre Burns, Jackie Carroll, Senior Executive Officer at WCC, and Green Party councillor Lourda Scott with students Siofra Scanlon and Olwyn Costello.

people must be included in decisions being made about biodiversity.

5. Biodiversity protection must be a shared responsibility

and a global, collaborative effort.

6. We must consume resources in a sustainable, moderate way that neither

diminishes the environment / biodiversity or our rights, wellbeing and livelihoods.

The report contains 58

actions based around seven themes as follows:

- Education & Raising Awareness
- Governance

- Energy & Transport
- Waste & Consumption
- Restoring & Rewilding
- Habitat & Species Protection

- Over Exploitation

The report is available to view on the CYPA website on <https://cyp-biodiversity.ie/>.



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'Govt has sat back on Ash dieback emergency'

Sinn Fein TD John Brady has called on the government to take immediate action on the issue of ash dieback, rather than sitting back.

Prior to last week's Budget announcement, Sinn Fein launched its 'Alternative Budget' for 2024, which set out a number of key proposals intended to support forestry, including a €20 million fund to provide improved supports for site clearance costs as, in some instances this cost is not being met under the existing scheme.

Deputy Brady said: "The government has failed to address the issue of ash dieback for over a decade, to the point that it now constitutes a national emergency. It is a health and safety risk to motorists and pedestrians, and a cause of financial loss and frustration for affected farmers and forestry owners, which is set to worsen if measures are not put in place immediately.

"Farmers and forestry landowners have made it clear that the current reconstitution scheme is not adequate to assist them in addressing the extent of this issue. The independent review published by Minister Pippa Hackett last week and commissioned by her refers to the scheme as flawed.

"It is incredibly disappointing that Minister Hackett's response to the ash dieback review report is to conduct another review - an



John Brady TD

implementation plan that has no publication date. So again, those affected wait and wait.

"It is also important to say that the report published last week told us nothing new. The issues contained within the report have repeatedly been raised by those affected for years. Yet, instead of consulting directly with those affected and acting on what is required - which again is long known, the government continue

to waste time.

"Sinn Fein raised this with Minister Hackett and Minister McConalogue and pressed the need for an urgent response on ash dieback. It is also worth noting that Minister Hackett is insisting that, instead of consulting with farmers and forestry owners to adjust the existing reconstitution scheme and get it right now, those affected should sign up to the flawed scheme and it might or might not be changed at some unknown time in the future.

"This approach will not work and will not build confidence in the sector or encourage uptake. In our Alternative Budget, Sinn Fein put forward a proposal for an immediate €20 million which would be provided with a view to supporting farmers and forestry owners with site clearance costs. This is just one element. The ash dieback review report suggests an ex-gratia payment for farmers and forestry landowners who have been affected by ash dieback. This needs to be looked at urgently and despite the limitations due to State aid rules on compensation, we want the Government to explore if any such financial support could be provided at EU level."

McManus stepping down from Council

Sinn Féin Councillor for Bray East, Grace McManus, has announced that she is stepping down from Wicklow County Council and will not contest the next local elections. She has forwarded her resignation letter to Wicklow County Council where she will step down at the next meeting.

Making the announcement on Friday, Grace said "Today I have submitted my letter stepping down from Wicklow County Council. I did not take this decision lightly, and have been considering this change for several months. The conclusion I have come to is that it is the right time for me to step away."

"While it genuinely has been an enormous privilege to sit in this seat, my truth is that I cannot continue to give this role the time and energy that it requires. Being a good activist sometimes means realising that you are no longer the person needed in certain positions, and that is true for me now."

"I will continue to be

a Sinn Féin activist locally, support my replacement on the council, and remain as committed as ever to compassionate and positive politics. In 2019 we ran on the platform of 'if you change nothing, nothing changes', and in the spirit of living my values, it is time for me to make a personal change."

"I want to convey my deepest gratitude to every person who voted for me, who shared their story with me over the years, to family and friends who were endlessly supportive in the tough times, and to all the amazing people who work to make Bray and Wicklow a better place."

Sinn Féin TD John

Brady said: "Grace McManus has been a tireless worker and advocate on behalf of the people of Wicklow. A strong believer in justice and equality, she took these qualities with her into her Council work."

"On a personal note, I valued her qualities both as a person and a Cllr. Her personal warmth, humour, and good character continue to be appreciated by all who have the opportunity to work with her."

"Grace was a political activist before she was a Cllr., and will continue to be so into the future. I know that she has spoken of her ambition to continue to work with Sinn Féin, and her replacement in the coun-

cil.

"Next year we will face local and European elections, where Grace has committed to using her skills and experience to work with what will be the largest ever contingent of Sinn Féin candidates in the County of Wicklow."

"I want to finish by offering my warm thanks for her tireless work on behalf of Sinn Féin and the people of Wicklow, and to wish Grace the very best of luck in her future endeavours. And to say that I am looking forward to getting round the doors with her on the canvass as we face into the busy election year ahead."

Sinn Féin Councillor Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien

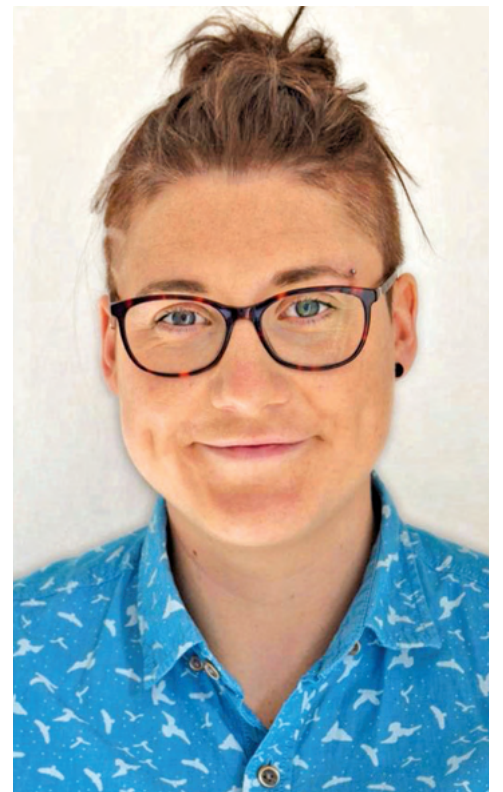
said "I'm devastated, I'm delighted, I'm proud, I'm reflective. I'm devastated because this is a loss for me. My colleague, my comrade, my friend is moving on. Things are changing in a dramatic way and our team of two who have been together for four and a half years will be no more. At the same time I'm delighted because Grace is shifting her focus to an area of work that is very precious to me. This makes me so happy because she is so perfect for the role she has taken up and Grace will contribute to such positive change in that environment."

"I am so proud of how she made this decision and how she considered it so deeply and so sincerely. Her integrity is woven into this decision so authentically that I can only be proud of her."

"And of course I am reflective. Wondering about the political arena and how it isn't viable for

young woman who is trying to put the scaffolding in place for a life that includes a good salary, secure housing, good work life balance and stability and security. I am also reflecting on what Grace has done and the story she leaves behind which I hope will inspire others to consider stepping into the arena, bringing their diversity, their sensitivity, their compassion with them because we need it!"

"Wicklow County Council and Bray Municipal District are not the better for having lost Cllr Grace but with that being said she has honoured those who elected her and fulfilled her role with a unique



Grace McManus

and consistent commitment to the most vulnerable in our community and for that I salute her."

"We campaigned with a tagline about change and I guess now I must accept that the only constant in this life is 'change'."

"We will no longer sit beside each other in the Chamber but I know Grace will be fully immersed in the campaigns and activities across the County and country in this unprecedented phase of the Sinn Féin journey."

Progress made on re-opening Cliff Walk

Wickow County Council is making progress in re-opening the Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk. The Council is currently negotiating the acquisition of land from four individual landowners to allow it to move the popular walking route further inland away from the cliff's edge.

Lands have been identified, valuations have been carried out and the Council is hopeful of concluding the process by the end of this year as we too are anxious to have the walk reopened to the public safely.

In an update to councillors, the Council stated: "From the Greystones side of the walk, there were two

major slippages some years ago, resulting in the collapse of two substantial parts of the work into the sea which cannot be repaired. Also the areas adjacent to these sections are very unstable. As a result of the collapse the walk from the Greystones side had to be closed and sturdy barriers were erected on the Greystones side to

prevent access. Warning signs were also erected to warn members of the public of the dangers and giving notice that they refrain from taking the walk until measures to make it safe could be put in place. In addition regular messages were placed on social media. Notwithstanding these efforts, some walkers are still accessing the walk

from the Greystones side and climbing over the barriers thereby risking their own safety."

On the Bray side of the walk, in October 2022 - due to a rock fall - it was necessary to close the route. Consultants were engaged by the Council to carry out an inspection of the site and prepared a detailed report setting out the remedial works which would be required to make the cliff walk safe and usable by walkers. This report was prepared and submitted to Wicklow County Council. The remedial works include the installation of rock bolts and associated rock netting.

The consultants, Cundall Ltd, were further engaged this summer to prepare the relevant and appropriate contract documentation in advance of going to tender. Cundall is currently working on these documents and the Council has been advised that they are nearly complete.

"Once the appropriate contract documents are received from Cundall the documentation will be forwarded to Iarnród Éireann for their input and observations and this is expected to happen in the coming weeks," the Council said.

"The agreement of Iarnród Éireann will be required for the works to proceed. Wicklow County

Council municipal districts Bray and Wicklow staff will continue with our efforts to move forward with all works and necessary measures to ensure the walk is re-opened safely for all users, and acknowledging the huge benefit to the community, businesses and visitors."

Meanwhile the cliff walk remains open from the Bray side up to the vicinity of the rock fall. Walkers can walk out and back the same way, or loop back over Bray head and this is still popular with walkers."

Welcoming the progress, Green Party TD Steven Matthews said "Having engaged with Wicklow County Council and Irish Rail earlier this year to ask that they redouble efforts to make the path safe and re-open the Cliff Walk, the solutions to both issues are now progressing at much speedier pace. I am very pleased that Wicklow CoCo has really stepped up and, has now confirmed that they have made progress on both issues."

"Works on the cliff walk will require the consent and co-operation of Irish Rail and I am continuing to work closely with Wicklow County Council and Irish Rail to ensure that contracts and agreements will be progressed to start the works. This progress by Wicklow is very welcome and I have offered my ongoing assistance with the Department

of Transport and Department of Local Government to ensure that funding and co-operation

can be maintained to get the cliff walk back up and running as soon as possible for the thousands of Bray,

Greystones residents and visitors to that enjoy this beautiful scenic walking route."



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL
(Electoral Act 1992)

POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES
NOTICE OF THE MAKING OF A
DRAFT POLLING SCHEME

Wicklow County Council has prepared a draft Polling Scheme dividing the County into Polling Districts for the purposes of elections and referendums and appointing a Polling Place for each Polling District.

Copies of the draft scheme are available for inspection during office hours at Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Whitegates, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow A67 FW96. The draft scheme is also available online at www.wicklow.ie

The Council will furnish a copy of the draft scheme to any person making application therefor on payment of a fee of €20.00.

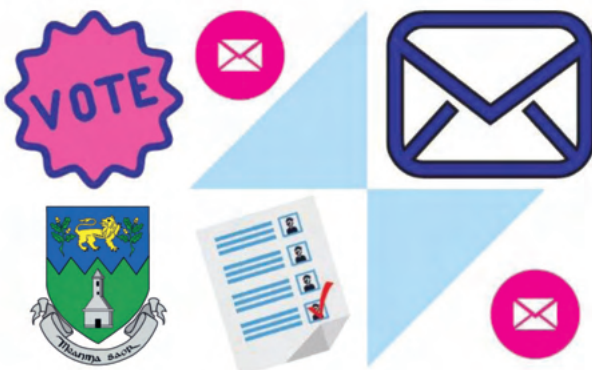
The Council will consider any representations in relation to the draft scheme made to it within the period up to and including Wednesday, 22nd November, 2023.

Any representations should be submitted in writing to the undersigned.

Lorraine Gallagher,
Director of Services,
Enterprise & Corporate Services,
Wicklow County Council,
County Buildings,
Whitegates,
Wicklow Town,
Co. Wicklow,
A67 FW96.

Dated: 18th October, 2023.

**Do you Qualify
for a Postal
Vote from
Home?**



If you are unable to vote in person at your polling station due to illness or disability, you may qualify for a postal vote from home. The PV4 form can be downloaded via www.checktheregister.ie or can be requested from franchise@wicklowcoco.ie or 0404 20161



Minister Simon Harris congratulates Tony Lawlor on his appointment as a Peace Commissioner by Justice Minister Helen McEntee. Mr Lawlor will serve as a Peace Commissioner for Counties Wicklow, Dublin, Carlow, Kildare and Wexford. Mr Lawlor also serves on the board of Bray Credit Union and is a member of the Visitor Committee at Shelton Abbey prison and a former Director of Greystones Resource Centre.

The sweet scent of success

Brooke & Shoals Fragrances scoops national award

A national award win, for “Best Irishmade Gift”, is the latest accolade for local business Brooke & Shoals Fragrances in Greystones.

Alison Banton the Founder, CEO and creative driving force behind the brand, speaking at the Awards sponsored by Guaranteed Irish and Irish Country Magazine, said: “We are thrilled with this high profile award, because an external validation like this, rewards all the hard work that we put in. We have a great team at Brooke & Shoals and I want to thank them for their tireless dedication”

Brooke & Shoals gorgeous gift shop on Church Road beside the DART station is very familiar to local residents of Greystones since it opened its doors back in 2004, but the fragrance manufacturing side of business might not be as familiar. Alison started the fragrance business in 2010, in one of the worst recessions in decades, with a passion for fragrance blending and a focus on product quality. It grew slowly and organically beyond Greystones as other retailers asked if they too could stock her scented candles, fragrance diffusers and body products.

Now there are over 300 retailers around Ireland stocking Brooke & Shoals Fragrances, such as Meadows & Byrne and Dublin Airport. There are

over 70 different products in the range. The company employs 15 people locally between its manufacturing business based in Kilcoole, and its shop in Greystones

Alison and her team design everything from scratch. From the ingredients formulas, to the scents, to the packaging, it all gets the benefit of her creative touch. The home scent collection boast 14 different fragrance blends. The brand is known for having innovative scent blends, such as “Lavender Cyclamen & Sea Salt”, and “Jasmine Patchouli & Cashmere Woods. They

have just redesigned their packaging giving it a fresh new look with on-trend colours and a new collection of gift sets have been introduced.

“This latest award brings our total awards to 16 awards in 13 years” commented Alison after the win. The retail environment this year is very challenging with ingredients costs increasing for us, as well as cost of living increases for our customers. But with the Christmas Gifting season just around the corner, our high quality Irishmade products make perfect gifts and are very well

priced. But don't take our word for it, we just won a national awards that proves it” laughs Alison

Fragrance Memories

Alison's interest in fragrance goes back to her childhood. “I have always been interested in scent and how it can make you feel and how it can bring back memories. When I smell the petals of beautiful roses, this conjures up happy memories of my childhood and picking pink rose petals as a little girl in my great-aunt Mollie's circular rose garden to try to make perfume. Mollie used to say that the “babbling brook and the whispering shoals” would help to turn

my petal mixture into perfume. But overnight the kind old lady would add real perfume to the mixture, so fooling me into thinking I had designed the wonderful scent creation! My great-aunt and the mysterious “brook and shoals” awakened my interest in perfumes, so when I decide to start my own fragrance business, I added an “e” and turned “Brooke & Shoals” into a name that has wonderful fragrances memories for me!”

Brooke & Shoals Gift shop is open 6 days a week from 10am to 6pm and from 1pm to 5pm on Sundays, or buy on-line from www.brookeandshoals.ie



Brooke & Shoals winning the 'Best Gift' category at the Irishmade Awards. From L to R: Fiona Ryan, Clara Romano, Kay Desmond, Colman Seaver, Alison Banton, Guy Banton, Mia Banton, Lara Banton, Aoife Murray and Marie Claire Seaver

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FREE PARKING

2,000 Wicklow students in line for increases in grants

Minister Simon Harris has confirmed that at least 70,000 students, including close to 2,000 in Wicklow are in line to benefit from student maintenance grant increases thanks to Budget 2024 announced last week.

Budget 2024 has a significant number of measures that will reduce the cost of education and the cost of living for families and students including:

- Significant increases in student maintenance grants
- Cuts to the student contribution fee for undergraduate students
- Increased and extended renters' tax credit
- Extended public transport fare discounts for young people.

Minister Harris said: "Cost should never be a barrier when it comes to education or when it comes to someone trying

to reach their full potential.

"Budget 2024 breaks down the barriers to opportunity and supports families and students.

"As Minister for Further and Higher Education I have put forward a package of budget measures for students that will have major and positive impact on their education and their well-being.

"The SUSI maintenance grant which is the main support for students attending higher education will increase from January 2024, and will increase by up to €615 over the course of the year and

€342 in this academic year between January and May.

"This means that close to 2,000 students in Wicklow are in line for an increase in their student maintenance grants which will be welcome news to them and their families.

"Eligible undergraduate students will also receive for a second year in a row a €1000 reduction in the student contribution fee.

"If not for Budget 2024 and its focus on reducing the cost of going to college over 140,000 students would have to pay for the full €3,000 contribution fee.

"On top of this and in recognition of the cost of living, people with a household income of below €100,000 will see their fees halved as they will not only get €1000 off but will also get the €500 student contribution grant from SUSI.

"Parents of students will also be glad to hear that the renters tax credit has been increased to €750 next year.

"Not only is the credit being increased but it's being extended. Indeed, parents who pay for their child's digs accommodation will be able to apply for the renter's tax credit



Moya Dempsey, Aoife Devosce, teacher Miss Lipsett, Makayla Wolohan and Fainne Kenny at the recent St. Mary's College open day in Arklow.

retrospectively for the years 2022 and 2023 where both credits were worth €500 each.

"Public transport half-

price fares are also being extended to people up to their 26th birthday, making the cost of commuting to and from university for

instance much cheaper for our young people."

Minister Harris concluded iWith the strong economy Fine Gael has

built in Government, we will continue to reduce the cost of getting an education and help support families putting their kids

Students to benefit from tertiary education package

From September 2024, a part-time fee grant scheme is being developed to provide support for students who are undertaking eligible undergraduate part time programmes leading to a major award, both in-person/ blended and online.

Speaking last week, Minister Simon Harris said: "One of the priorities for Budget 2024 is reducing child poverty. The expansion of supports to part time has the potential to transform how education is accessed by those most in need.

"Education has the power to transform lives, lift people out of poverty and break down cycles of intergenerational poverty. The fees

associated with part-time programmes are a key barrier to higher education access. This will benefit vulnerable cohorts including low-income families including lone parents, teen parents, widows and carers.

"We will work towards maintenance grants in future years. However, this is a great first step. I am really pleased we have secured

funding for an increase in the PhD stipend for researchers under the remit of SFI and IRC. This is the third increase we have introduced for PhD researchers and it goes a significant way to addressing the challenges they face.

"Ireland wants to be an Innovation Island and an Island of Talent. To do that, we must support our researchers. This increase will bring the stipend to €22,000 a year and will be effective from January."

In addition, the Department will introduce a new scheme aimed at assisting small and medium enter-

prises with the cost of upskilling their staff. An additional E1 million is being provided to design and pilot a scheme to incentivise SMEs to participate in lifelong learning. This pilot will focus on areas of particular challenges including digital skills, climate skills and transversal skills.

"This is an exciting development. The OECD Review confirmed that Ireland performs relatively poorly in terms of investment in workplace training and people in employment engaging in lifelong learning. This will change under this new scheme. We will work with businesses to

design a scheme that works for them."

Minister of State Collins also confirmed PLC fees are to be abolished for further education students with effect from September 2024. Minister Collins said: "While we abolished the €200 PLC levy already, students continue to face various fees such as student services charges, application fees, exam fees and professional registration fees. The fees charged vary across the Education and Training Boards and while some ETBs have moved to reduce their fees, this additional fund-

ing will ensure all 24,000 learners across the country do not face fees, when pursuing a PLC course from September next. We have prioritised further education learners in this Budget and will continue to do so."

Minister Collins also confirmed funding would be provided to roll out the Further Education Strategy Future FET:Transforming Learning 2020-2024.

The Strategy focuses on building skills and fostering inclusion and facilitating pathways to deliver a more strategic and integrated FET system.



Budget 2024

Dear Wicklow Resident,

This week we announced the budget with a number of measures to help families and businesses.

If you would like any information on any aspect of the budget or to receive my detailed budget overview leaflet, please contact me.

Simon

WORKING
FOR
WICKLOW

MINISTER Simon
HARRIS TD

(01) 2813727

simon.harris@oireachtas.ie

DeputySimonHarris

@SimonHarrisTD



Deirdre Madden and Pat O'Sullivan at the Green Ribbon Walk in Avondale Forest Park, Rathdrum, organised by IFA in partnership with See Change, Coillte, and Mental Health Ireland. The 'walk and talk' campaign aims to spread awareness about mental health struggles.

'Budget 2024 secures the wellbeing of our economy for generations to come'

Wicklow Fianna Fail Senator and Spokesperson on Finance, Pat Casey, has welcomed the progressive measures announced as part of Budget 2024 which focuses on supporting people, families and businesses, across Ireland and locally in Wicklow, especially those that are finding it tough at the moment and delivering improvements for households at all income levels.

Senator Casey said, "This is a significant Budget of progressive and protective measures which further supports individuals, families and businesses both nationally and here in our local community at a time when the cost of living is high, while strengthening public services on which we all depend. Budget 2024 also focuses on investing in the infrastructure we need for the future, including the largest home building programme for many decades. It will include a €2.7 billion cost of living package among a €14 billion budget that will deliver real help for people while preparing us for the future.

"Fianna Fail is acutely aware of the effect the energy crisis is having on families and businesses across the country. We have listened to people who are really worried about their energy bills and this Budget is about putting more money in people's pockets and help people face those challenges by reducing the bills that people have to pay. Budget 2024 aims to ease the pressure with 3 x €150 electricity credits for all households, to be paid between the end of this year and April of next year.

"Fianna Fail in Government is committed to addressing the high cost of childcare for families and making it accessible to all children. Following a 25% reduction in last year's Budget, today as part of Budget 2024 childcare fees are being reduced by a further 25%.

"Building on the revolutionary introduction of free school books at primary level by Minister Norma Foley, €67m has been made available under Budget 2024 to support the expansion of the scheme for students in the first three years of secondary school.

"I am particularly pleased to see the priority placed on the provision of housing in the Budget. Just under €7 billion of funding has been allocated to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, showcasing Fianna Fail's commitment to Housing for All which will see us deliver 300,000 new homes by 2030.

"Budget 2024 will deliver better outcomes for those who need it most. The threshold for paying the higher rate of tax will be raised by €2,000 to €42,000. A full time worker on the minimum wage will see an increase in their net take home pay of approximately €2,300 per year. Minister McGrath also announced cuts to the USC. The 4.5% rate is being cut to 4%, the first reduction in USC rates in 5 years.

"Fianna Fail has always been committed to helping those that need it most and we keenly understand the financial pressures felt by many right now across the country. Budget 2024 marks a step change in how we plan for the future and will ensure there is opportunity for all while providing a safety net for those that need it."

Some of the key measures include:

- Renters tax credit increases from €500 per year to €750 per year for 2024
- Up to €1,250 Mortgage Interest Relief for eligible households
- Extension of 9% reduced VAT rate for gas and electricity for another 12 months
- National minimum wage to increase by €1.40 an hour
- A social welfare Christmas bonus payment - a double payment in December, benefitting almost 1.5m people
- A double child benefit payment for 1.2m children before the end of the year
- A €300 Fuel Allowance lump sum for 370,000 people before the end of the year
- A €200 Living Alone Allowance payment for 230,000 people.
- A once-off €400 payment of the Carer's Support Grant, Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, Invalidity Pension and Domiciliary Care Allowance. This will benefit 350,000 people
- €250m in supports for school transport, State exam fees, Higher Education Student Contribution fees
- A double Foster Carer allowance
- 20% fare reduction on public transport continued to end of 2024
- €1 million per day invested in cycling and walking infrastructure
- €1 billion for the development, protection and renewal of our road network
- Extension of Child Benefit to 18 years old in full time education

Dept of Housing unprecedented budget package of near €7bn announced

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning, Kieran O'Donnell TD, and Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan TD, last week unveiled a budget package for 2024 of €6.94bn.

Reflecting the importance placed on Housing for All, the Government's national strategy, there will be a record €5.1bn capital investment in housing in 2024 - made up of €2.6bn exchequer, €978m Land Development Agency (LDA) and €1.5bn Housing Finance Agency (HFA) funding.

The Minister for Housing also informed Cabinet colleagues today of his intention to seek Cabinet approval for an additional €6.75bn in funding for the LDA and the HFA. This is part of Ireland's long term investment in future housing need.

Minister O'Brien emphasised that Housing for All is taking hold, with record commencements, completions and first time buyer purchases seen across 2023 - and that this year's Budget will help add to the momentum created

over the last two years. Minister O'Brien said: "The capital funding being provided for housing in 2024, coupled with LDA and HFA investment, stands at a record €5bn - the highest ever in the history of the State. This funding will ensure we can continue to deliver new affordable homes for purchase and rent at pace.

"More than €760 million in direct affordability and home ownership funding will support the initiatives we have put in place such as Cost Rental, the First Home Scheme, the Affordable Housing Fund, the Secure Tenancy Affordable Rental investment scheme and the Help-to-Buy initiative. I am very glad to see that my colleague the Minister for Finance has extended the Help-to-Buy to the end of 2025 and made some technical amendments ensuring its opti-

mal interaction with local authority affordable purchase schemes.

"Our focus for capital investment in social housing will be on new build with the funding we have received supporting the delivery of 9,300 new build social homes in 2024. I'm pleased to be in a position to announce the increase of the single stage approval process threshold from €6m to €8 million meaning our local authorities will have greater autonomy in constructing social housing developments. Social homes will also be delivered through a continuation of the successful Tenant in Situ scheme.

"The Minister for Finance has announced an increase in the Renters Tax Credit to €750 and the introduction of significant changes to the tax treatment of landlords. This is something I have

advocated for and I believe is crucial as we scale up the supply of homes all across the country.

"Up to 10,200 new households will have their housing needs met under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), as well as continuing support for over 74,000 existing tenancies under these schemes. HAP and RAS are vital, direct, supports for households. Those without a home remain the top priority for this Government and for next year, I will be making funding of €242 million available for the delivery of homeless services to ensure that local authorities can provide emergency accommodation and other services to households experiencing homelessness."

FIANNA Fáil DELIVERING IN GOVERNMENT

Budget Hight Lights

INCOME TAX

- Income tax higher rate threshold raised by €2,000 to €42,000
- Reduction in middle USC rate band from 4.5% to 4%

HOUSING

- Extension of Help-to-Buy Scheme to the end of 2025
- Increase in Rent Tax Credit from €500 to €750
- Up to €1,250 Mortgage Interest Relief for eligible households

EDUCATION

- Free school books worth over €300 per child per year for Junior Cycle students in secondary schools
- Free Hot School Meals to be extended to a further 900 primary schools, bringing the total to 1,400 schools
- Fees for university students cut by €1,000 on once-off basis. Families whose household income is between €62,000 and €100,000 will also receive an additional €500 off their fees.
- From September 2024, student contribution fees will be abolished for all incomes under €55,924

SOCIAL PROTECTION

- €12 increase in weekly welfare and pension payments from January 2024
- Working Family Payment thresholds for all family sizes to increase by €54 from January 2024

CHILDCARE

- Further 25% reduction in childcare costs, bringing total reduction to 50% by September 2024



Scan the code Budget 2024



Senator **Pat Casey**

0402 42105 | 086 2649483 pat@patcasey.ie

'A wealth of measures in the budget to help people across the board'

Green Party TD Steven Matthews last week welcomed Budget 2024 which he says will introduce "a wealth of measures to help people across the board, from social welfare increases and bonuses to tax tweaks and help with school costs".

Some highlights that come directly from the work the Green Party is doing in Government include Energy credit, extension of public transport fare cuts, the Climate and Nature Fund, and a reduction in childcare fees.

Speaking last week, Deputy Matthews said "I welcome the announcement from my Green Party colleague and Minister for the Environment Eamon Ryan that three €150 energy credits will be provided to all households as part of Budget 2024. This is an extension of the supports introduced in the last budget and is essential to tackling energy poverty and helping all households to meet their energy bills this winter.

"The Green Party has ensured that the 20% cut in transport fares that we secured previously has been maintained and the 50% cut in fares for young adults has been extended to include 24 and 25 year



Deputy Matthews

olds. Improving the cost, provision and reliability of public transport is a core Green Party commitment and welcome news for all passengers.

"The €3.1 billion Climate and Nature Fund is a ground-breaking initiative that represents one

of the largest investments in protection of the environment in the history of the state. This Fund will support us to restore our natural environment and meet our commitments under the EU Restoration Law.

"My Green Party col-

league - Minister Roderic O'Gorman fought hard to secure a further 25% reduction in childcare fees as part of Budget 2024. This will provide an essential support to families facing cost-of-living pressures and benefit almost 150,000 children.

Deputy Matthews has also welcomed the announcement that free travel passes will be provided for those who are certified medically unfit to drive. This is a key measure proposed by Epilepsy Ireland that will be implemented as part of Budget 2024.

Following a statement confirming the allocation of funding for the measure, Deputy Matthews said: "I am delighted that the Free Travel Pass Scheme will be extended to those who are certified medically unfit to drive. I have engaged with a number of individuals and families impacted by epilepsy among other conditions and I recently wrote to the

Department of Transport in support of this measure. Lack of

access to transport is an issue that particularly impacts those living with epilepsy and can result in difficulties in attending the workplace and participating in social activities.

"This measure will help to combat social isolation in people with epilepsy and other conditions and is a step forward for disability rights. I would like to thank Epilepsy Ireland for their work in this campaign. There are an estimated 1,125 people living with epilepsy in Wicklow and I hope that this measure will directly benefit many of these individuals and their families. If anyone has any questions regarding the Free Travel Pass Scheme or supports for people living with epilepsy, please drop me an email and I will provide any assistance that I can," concluded Deputy Matthews.



Iarnród Eireann Chief Executive Jim Meade and Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan TD at Pearse Station to announce the company's corporate Climate Action Plan 2023 to 2030, to achieve emissions reductions of 51% by 2030. The ambitious plan will be delivered while rail services are expanded, with passenger journeys of 80 million per annum targeted by 2030, up from a pre-COVID high of 50.1 million journeys, and will be achieved through, reduced reliance on diesel through alternative fuels on existing fleets, Transitioning to electric-powered fleet, Green energy generation, Fleet and building works to reduce energy consumption. Picture Jason Clarke

Doyle welcomes budget measures for children and families

Green Party Councillor Erika Doyle has welcomed measures in the budget designed to support families. Cllr Doyle said that as a Green Party representative she is constantly feeding back the challenges faced by her constituents to her colleagues in Government, and is relieved to see measures presented in Budget 24 that will help support families.

Cllr Doyle said, "As a working mother, I am cognisant of the challenges faced by many working families. Chief among these is the cost of childcare. I'm delighted that after a 25% reduction last year, another 25% will be slashed, bringing the total reduction in 2025 to 50%. That was a Green Party commitment that many didn't think would be achieved. For working families this will be a significant saving. Not only that, but the National Childcare Scheme will be expanded from next year to include registered childminders. This is an area that many parents had rightly flagged with me as being in need of attention, for the many families that use childminders instead of or as well as creches.

"Core funding will be grown too, to keep track of inflation and ensure higher rates of pay for childcare workers and professionals.

"For families with school and college going

children and young adults at home, several new budget measures will help financially. These include the introduction of hot school meals to primary schools that express an interest and expansion of the free school book scheme to junior cycle. Having just started my son in secondary school the cost of 1st year books was shocking. This is a useful and tangible measure that will save families hundreds of euro.

"For older students, all college fees will be cut and SUSI grants will be raised for students and postgraduates. The Young Adult Leap Card will be extended to 24-year-olds and 25-year olds with a commitment to review further cuts for young people. A rent tax credit will be available to parents of students renting rooms and can be claimed from 2022.

"There are of course many families that are in need of additional supports, for a variety of reasons including disability



Cllr Erika Doyle

and/or socioeconomic circumstance. I pay particular attention to supports given to single parent families, having struggled financially as a single mother for many years. Barriers to education and employment are often complex and systemic. I was pleased to see measures in Budget to address some of the issues faced by more vulnerable families.

"From next year a new model of Early Learning Care will be introduced to support access for fami-

lies in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage. There will also be an expansion of the Access and Inclusion model, helping children with physical or intellectual disabilities access ECCE. Over 1200 new SNAs will be recruited to support children with special needs in schools.

"Finally, there will be a double payment of all social welfare payments in December and also of Child Benefit (which will extend to 18 year olds in full time education).

"There are many other measures that will impact families directly and indirectly such as energy bill credits, social welfare increases and bonuses and income threshold hikes.

"I'm happy to provide further information on any of the measures included in Budget 2024. I continue to work for the people of Bray on issues of local importance while advocating for them to my colleagues at national level."

STEVEN MATTHEWS TD

GREEN WINS BUDGET 24

FOR FAMILIES, CHILDREN, YOUR POCKET AND OUR PLANET

- ✓ Halving Childcare costs by 2024
- ✓ Energy credits - three €150 credits towards your electricity bills
- ✓ A €3.15 billion Climate & Nature fund
- ✓ Public Transport Fares - under 26s travel half price, further cuts to come



STEVEN MATTHEWS TD

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✂ @stevensgreen1

📘 STEVEN MATTHEWS TD

🌐 www.stevenmatthews.ie



green party
comhaontas glas

'Carbon tax increase designed to punish hard-pressed motorists'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has described the government decision to increase the carbon tax levy that will increase fuel costs by 3c per litre in last week's budget as "another act designed to punish ordinary motorists - the people forced to struggle through the cost-of-living crisis, who do not possess the resources to trade up to newer EV models, the same people who the Government have failed to provide with a viable public transport alternative to driving".

Deputy Brady continued: "The increase by 3c if the carbon tax levy on ordinary motorists is a punitive measure which will hit those without the means to purchase new state of the art EV motors the worst."

"On a daily basis there are literally tens of thousands of vehicles travelling up and down the N11

and N81. With many forced to commute outside the county, others to travel to medical appointments in Dublin, due lack of service in the county. Along with parents forced to drive children to school due to an inadequate school transport system.

"And the reality is that due to constraints imposed by the government's economic policies, and the failure of the Minister for Transport to put in place a viable public transport alternative, they have little choice but to be there. Very often stuck in vehicles forced to idle in traffic burning ever more expensive fuel, for hours due to tailbacks on a dangerous road that is crying out for upgrades. But

which the Green Party Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan refuses to sanction, for ideological reasons.

"This government has offered zero investment for the rail service in Wicklow. With carriages often overcrowded, and a limited reach, the option of travelling by rail is not there for most people in the county.

"We have bus routes such as the 133 to Wicklow Town, which have major capacity issues. And I know that I have been in what seems like a constant dialogue over the last number of years with GoAhead Ireland over the unreliability of services on the 45a, the 184, and the 185, routes which service the towns of Kilmacanogue,

Greystones, Newtownmountkennedy, Enniskerry and Bray. Which led to a public apology at the Oireachtas Transport Committee this time last year. In the period from July 2021 to March 2022 alone, GoAhead were fined €526,000 for failing to deliver an adequate service."

Brady concluded: "The carbon tax levy unfairly impacts on the worse off in society. It will mostly affect motorists who are already hard-pressed attempting to deal with an unprecedented cost-of-living crisis. Motorists who have no alternative than to use dangerous, overcrowded roads such as the N11 and N81 which are long since overdue upgrades and improvements."

"Yet, we have a Minister for Transport who has chosen to ignore the plight of ordinary motorists, and who instead is engaged in the pursuit of ideological objectives, which he is seeking to achieve by punishing the least well-off people on the roads of Wicklow."

"It is wrong, it is unfair, and it needs to end. We need to see an end to the carbon tax. We need to see major investment in roads such as the N11 and N81. And alongside this, we need to see the development of a comprehensive, wide reaching public transport system in the county, which will offer an accessible, affordable, and durable alternative to driving."



John Brady TD

Budget 2024 - Damning Evidence that the Government has thrown in the towel on Housing, Health, and Climate Action

HOUSING:

GOVERNMENT:

- No money for additional house builds.
- A budget for landlords – €160 million bonus
- Minimum respite for renters and mortgage holders

SINN FÉIN'S KEY HOUSING MEASURES INCLUDE:

- Building 21,000 social and affordable homes – 7,300 more than government target
- Putting one month's rent (up to €2,000) back into renters pockets and ban increases for three years
- Introducing temporary, targeted mortgage interest relief between now and April 2024 – This would cover 30% of increased interest payments up to a max of €1,500. There have been ten increases in interest rates with 40% of mortgage holders paying at least an additional €3,000 a year.

HEALTH:

GOVERNMENT:

- No funding for additional beds in hospitals.
- Almost one million people left on waiting lists.
- Patients to be left to remain waiting on trolleys.
- No funding for new cancer treatments

SINN FÉIN KEY HEALTH MEASURES INCLUDE:

- 1,800 hospital beds over three years
- Invest in GPs, pharmacies and community healthcare
- Increase investment in mental health services especially services for children and young people
- Additional training places to develop the health workforce
- Extend the medical card to an additional 400,000 people and reduce costs including prescription charges

CLIMATE ACTION:

GOVERNMENT:

- On a path to climate failure.
- Failure to introduce equitable retrofit scheme.
- Exhausted almost 50% of the 2021-2025 carbon budget in the first two years. On track to exhaust 123% of the allocated carbon budget by 2030.

SINN FÉIN'S KEY CLIMATE ACTION MEASURES INCLUDE:

- A new scheme to make retrofitting affordable for ordinary working families
- Increased investment in renewable energy – access to domestic Solar PV, rollout of solar PV across our schools.
- Establish a Nature Restoration Fund to enhance biodiversity by expanding publicly owned and accessible green spaces and natural areas and encourage voluntary rewilding.

John
BRADY_{TD}



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'Another regressive shift providing the least for those on lowest incomes'

"Budget 2024 follows the path of Budget 2023, with Government repeating last year's mistakes. Rather than spending this year's surplus to support those who most need it, for whom it would have the greatest impact, Government has chosen to channel money towards those better able to manage without it. A more appropriate increase in all core weekly welfare rates would have enabled households to buy essentials routinely and not as treats," stated Mr John McGeady, CEO, Social Justice Ireland in advance of the think-tank's launch of its Budget 2024 Analysis.

Social Welfare

"The increase of €12 in core social welfare rates falls short of the €25 needed to begin to address income adequacy among the poorest families, especially in the context of reduced purchasing power.

"Government has yet again reneged on the commitment it made in the Programme for Government (2020) to protect core social welfare rates; it has failed to benchmark social welfare or adequately compensate for inflation," said Susanne Rogers, Research and Policy Analyst, Social Justice Ireland.

"Income adequacy is not a temporary challenge, it is a problem that Ireland has failed to make progress on for a considerable period of time. While one-off measures are welcome, they are no solution to the challenge of poverty and income adequacy. Indeed, when the one-off measures are stripped out, households on fixed incomes have been left behind again. Enabling those on the lowest incomes to afford essentials and have a basic standard of living is not a luxury and neither is it unaffordable," she added.

Low paid lose out again

"The Budget has provided least for the large cohort of lower income workers; those earning around €15 to €20 per hour (€30,000 to €40,000 per annum). Year after year this large group of workers hears of 'gains' from the Budget but experiences little if any of them; something that cannot

persist both due to its distributive effects and the socio-political reality that we cannot keep ignoring these workers and families. Social Justice Ireland has continually highlighted the relevance of refundable tax credits as a means of making the taxation system fairer and helping this low income group. It is a regret that Budget 2024 did not make this change; it is overdue," said Colette Bennett, Economic and Social Analyst, Social Justice Ireland.

'Budget 2024 - another regressive shift'

"Budget 2024 follows a similar path to that adopted last year, with a mixture of immediate measures, one-off payments due before the end of this year, and changes to income tax and welfare payments from January 2024. Given the challenges that so many households face in making ends meet, particularly those on the lowest incomes, much of that assistance is welcome and badly needed. However, the presentation by Government of the Budget as progressive is misleading; unfortunately, it represents another regressive shift, building on a similar set of outcomes following Budget 2023," said Michelle Murphy, Research and Policy Analyst, Social Justice Ireland.

"This is because of the marked difference in the way that the Budget measures are being delivered to households with permanent changes in 2024 (tax and core benefits) favouring higher income working households. Temporary changes (one-off credits and payments) are more concentrated

among on lower incomes. Once these temporary measures are discontinued (from April 2024 onwards) what is left are the permanent changes to income taxes and welfare. These Budget 2024 decisions have skewed resources in favour of higher income individuals and households explained Ms Murphy.

Inadequate investment in housing

"Between 2012 and 2022, residential property prices rose by 75 per cent, private rents by 90 per cent, while wages rose by just 27 per cent. Rather than increasing housing stock, the extension of the Help to Buy and First Home schemes will simply maintain high house prices. Likewise, the Rent Tax Credit does not benefit low-income renters. At a time of record windfall surpluses, the investment in construction, particularly of social housing, is woefully inadequate," said Colette Bennett.

Child Poverty

"Billed as a budget to tackle child poverty, Budget 2024 failed to live up to expectations. Child poverty is a reality for one in every seven children in Ireland, a stark statistic which raises major questions for fairness and progress. By failing to adequately resource adequate adult welfare rates, child benefit, decent rates of pay and conditions for working parents, and adequate and available public services Government failed to deliver for low-income families," said Susanne Rogers.

'Budget highlights Government's lack of ambition for struggling families'

'Parents should not be expected to wait until September 2024 for further childcare cuts'

"After months of uncertainty over promised cuts to childcare costs, it is welcome that the further 25 per cent reduction is now confirmed. However, it has emerged that this measure will not be introduced until September 2024, which is completely unacceptable. These reductions must be brought in now," said Deputy Whitmore.

"Families cannot be expected to wait another year for help with spiralling childcare costs. Having a family is expensive and those extra costs kick in from the day a child is born, not just when they go into childcare.

"In our alternative budget, the Social Democrats proposed extending Parents' Benefit by 12

weeks, divided equally between each parent. This would have resulted in a total of 13 weeks' paid leave per parent for every child, in addition to maternity and paternity leave entitlements. We also called for an increase in the weekly rate for Maternity, Adoptive, Paternity and Parent's Benefit from €262 to €350.

"In Budget 2024, however, the Government did not increase the rate of payment and only announced an extra two weeks' paid leave - the bare minimum required under an EU Directive.

"We should be empowering parents to make better choices for their families to allow them spend more time at home with their babies during that critical first year.

"It is disappointing that the Government did not seize the opportunity to make meaningful, positive changes to family life in this budget."

Deputy Whitmore, who is the Social Democrats' spokesperson on children, called on the Minister for Children Roderic O'Gorman to action this reduction immediately in the New Year to give hard-pressed families a much-needed break in childcare costs.

Deputy Whitmore said: "Childcare is one of the most significant costs for young families. It often costs people as much as a second mortgage. While the initial reduction of 25% on average to fees was welcome back in 2022, parents were told they would have a 50% reduction.



Cathaoirleach of Greystones Cllr Mark Barry, Pat Sammon of Codling Wind Park, Jennifer Whitmore TD, and Tony Duddy at the 'Dip in the Nip' in aid of Wicklow Hospice, at Greystones South Beach

Now we learn that the long-promised remaining 25% reduction will not be coming until late next year at the earliest.

"This will be a blow for many families facing the winter, having just born the annual back-to-school costs in September and starting to

grapple with increased energy costs at this time of year. To now have to wait 11 months for further assistance with childcare fees will be very disappointing. Last year, the Annual Early Years Sector Profile Report found Wicklow had the second

highest childcare costs per month in the country, second only to Dublin. This is a significant issue for us in Wicklow, and we need action.

"The cost-of-living crisis has not gone away. Childcare costs are not an additional or discretionary spend. Families need quality childcare for their

kids so that they can work. This is why we Social Democrats believe it is time to move to a fully public childcare model. While we know the government will not adopt that position, it is more than reasonable to expect that what intervention they are willing to

make should be done now, not a year from now.

"Families I am working with in Wicklow who are pressed to the pin of their collar need this break now. I will continue to raise the concerns of hard-pressed parents from Wicklow to the government."

'Focus on retention of nurses and midwives missing piece of Budget'

Responding to the Department of Health measures of Budget 2024, the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation has said not enough focus is being given to keeping nurses and midwives in the Irish health service.

INMO General Secretary Phil Ní Sheaghdha said:

"Since December 2019, we have seen an insufficient amount of additional whole-time equivalent staff nurses recruited each year. Currently, we have over 400 vacancies in emergency departments alone, we have seen

an exodus of midwives from the public health service and there is a recruitment crisis in public health nursing.

The HSE has acknowledged that there is a higher than normal turnover in nursing and midwifery but Budget 2024 will clearly not allocate sufficient resources needed to fund the

numbers required to guarantee the safe staffing framework, which is the Government's own policy.

With an ageing population and record attendances at emergency hospitals, the need for a thriving nursing and midwifery workforce in both acute hospital and community settings has never been greater.

"Today at the departmental briefing, Minister Donnelly announced the establishment of a productivity task force, what is really needed is a retention task force. There is a real crisis facing the health sector when it comes to retaining our highly trained nurses and midwives who are leaving in their droves for better opportunities abroad or outside of the public healthcare setting.

"Traditionally young nurses and midwives went abroad for a year or two, now they are leaving for much longer periods, or indeed for good, because safe nurse and midwifery staffing levels are taken as a given in other jurisdictions. We are fearful that because of the conditions both in our hospitals and in the housing sector that safe staffing will not be a reality in our hospitals anytime soon.

"In order to ensure that young nurses and midwives see Ireland as a viable place to work and thrive on graduation, the Government must do more to reduce the cost of living near the large hospitals in Dublin, Cork and Galway. The government will have to go

further than a tax credit for renters to keep the future of our health service here.

"A laser-like focus on retaining nurses and midwives in the public health service is required now more than ever."

BUDGET 2024

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN GOVERNMENT WOULD INTRODUCE FAIR BUDGETS THAT INVEST IN THE FUTURE

We would address system failures in order to improve people's quality of living. It is time for a budget that unlocks our future potential as a nation.

A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC BUDGET WOULD:

- Fund 10,000 affordable homes next year
- Invest €5 bn in renewable energy and infrastructure
- Introduce a €1 off-peak fare across public transport
- Increase disability support payments to meet the cost of living
- Extend Parents Leave by 6 weeks per parent
- Increase parental leave payment to €350
- Deliver a national school transport scheme that leaves no child behind

Your local Soc Dem team:



Aaron McAllorum (Bray East)



Deirdre McCormack (West Wicklow)



Danny Alvey (Wicklow Town)



Cllr. Mark Barry (Greystones)



Deputy Jennifer Whitmore is your local Social Democrat TD

Social Democrats



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

Wicklow Gaol Comrades: A Civil War Autograph Book

Wicklow and Wexford County Council Archive services have collaborated on a new Decade of Centenaries project - Wicklow Gaol Comrades: A Civil War Autograph Book. The project consists of a publication, exhibition and video and tells the stories of the men held in Wicklow Gaol during the Civil War.

The prisoners feature sketches and cartoons, all recalling the men's humanity, courage and humour in the grim surroundings of Wicklow Gaol, where they faced an uncertain future.

The men hailed from Wicklow, Wexford, Carlow, Kildare, Westmeath and Dublin. As part of the project, relatives of the prisoners were traced and were

welcomed to Wicklow Gaol on the night of the launch and thanked for their invaluable contributions to the publication, video and exhibition.

This project is one of several Decade of Centenary projects by the Wicklow County Archives service, which is located at Wicklow Library in Wicklow Town. It offers a rich resource for researchers of wide and varying interests - students, teachers, local and family historians, academic researchers and those interested in the story of County Wicklow, the history and development of the county, of local communities, and the authorities who served them.

The project was supported by Wicklow and Wexford County Councils and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under their Decade of Centenaries funding.

Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Cathaoirleach, Wicklow County



Cllr Shay Cullen, Leas Cathaoirleach of Wicklow Municipal District, and Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, at the launch of the Wicklow Gaol Comrades: A Civil War Autograph Book, with the book's author Aaron Ó Maonaigh, in Wicklow Gaol.

Council, said: "County archives have proved a rich and fruitful source for Decade of Centenary research, particularly in relation to the stories of the ordinary men and women who were so much impacted during this time. This demonstrates the key role of archives in reassessing and understanding this pivotal period in our history."

Cllr Shay Cullen, Leas

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow Municipal District stated: "In his 'Machnamh 100' address, President Michael D. Higgins challenges us to engage with our shared past in a manner that is honest, authentic and inclusive, and as might assist a healing of conflicts that cannot be forgotten."

"I believe this project Wicklow Gaol Comrades: A Civil War Autograph Book has risen to that

challenge and I congratulate all involved."

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council Emer O'Gorman, added: "The Wicklow Gaol Civil War Prisoners Autograph Book, tells their story beautifully. This little item measuring just five inches by four - is brimming with salutations, sketches and poetry - evoking the personalities, humour and resilience of the men imprisoned in this very

building 100 years ago."

The exhibition will be on display in the foyer of Wicklow County Buildings for the month of October and will then travel to Wicklow library branches. The video will be shared on YouTube and social media.

For further information, please contact Catherine Wright, Wicklow County Archives at archives@wicklowco-co.ie



Members of Michael Gregan's family Mari Gregan (Granddaughter) and Dylan Lynch (Great Great Grandson) at the launch of the Wicklow Gaol Comrades: A Civil War Autograph Book, with the book's author Aaron Ó Maonaigh, in Wicklow Gaol.



Wicklow Sailing Club recently presented Wicklow RNLI with a cheque on behalf of the WSC Cruiser section which was raised at their recent annual Crusier RNLI Pennant Race. WSC Commodore Karen Kissane was on hand with Johnny Flood, Rear Commodore Cruisers, to present the donation to John Hayden and all the fantastic crew in the RNLI. "We appreciate all that you do for us, thank you for being there when we need you over the season," Karen said, adding that WSC were delighted to make the donation to support such an amazing voluntary organisation.

A talk on Robert Halpin in Wicklow Library

On Thursday October 19th, Wicklow Library Branch in Wicklow Town will host an insightful talk about the fascinating life of local man; Captain Robert Charles Halpin entitled 'The Remarkable Captain Robert Charles Halpin'.

Robert Halpin was born at the Bridge Tavern in Wicklow Town in 1836. He went to sea aged 11 and became a Master Mariner at 22. In his career, he captained the SS Great Eastern and laid marine telegraph cables linking four continents. He died at his home in Tinakilly House in Rathnew in 1894 at the age of 57.

Captain Halpin's rich legacy will be told by renowned Arklow historian and Jim Rees. The talk will take place at Wicklow Library, in the Exhibition Space on the third floor on Thursday 19th October at 7pm. Contact Wicklow Library on 040467025 or email Wicklowlocalstudies@wicklowco.co.ie to book your place.



CAPT. HALPIN

Harris pledges support for Newcourt School

Minister Simon Harris has visited Newcourt Special School in Bray and met with staff in the school. Newcourt is one of the schools being impacted by the lack of access to Special Needs Assistants (SNAs).



Minister Harris meeting with staff at Newcourt School

Speaking after the visit, Minister Harris said, "I was really pleased to again visit Newcourt School and meet with many staff to discuss how I can help ensure the school is better supported."

"I wanted to make sure the voice of staff and students is clearly heard in terms of extra resources which I believe are very much needed to support the amazing students in this school."

"I have always enjoyed working with Newcourt and indeed with schools across our county to support them. I am determined to closely work with Newcourt which is doing an excellent job providing education for many people from across our county."

Minister Harris concluded "The students and staff deserve the very best."



Hope Doyle and Claire Langton at the recent Dominican College open night in Wicklow Town.

Disappointment over 'slow response' to Greystones secondary schools accommodation crisis

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore last week raised in The Dail the shortage of secondary school places in Greystones Municipal District. A recent joint statement from the principals of the three secondary schools in Greystones confirmed that 75 less places would be offered for September 2024.

This is a time of year and a time in sixth class students' lives that should be exciting for them," said Deputy Whitmore. "They should hear in November which secondary school they will go to. They will know if their friends are going to the same school and they will be excited about making new friends. This should be an exciting time for them but, unfortunately, we are yet again going to have a large number of students in Greystones for whom this time will not be exciting. Instead, it will be very stressful for them and their parents. This is because a large number of children will not get a school place in November."

"This is something we have seen very regularly in the Greystones area, primarily because there has been great growth in the area. We have seen more than 4,000 new people come into our community since the previous census. However, it is not just because of the growth. It is also because investment in school infrastructure has not kept pace with that growth. That is the main problem. Of the three

schools that opened their doors a time in sixth class enrolments, two are unable to offer the same number of places they did last year. For this incoming intake, there will be 72 fewer places for secondary school students. This is a great deficit and there is a discrepancy in the numbers because there are more sixth class students coming out of the primary schools this year. This is going to be a big problem."

"To be fair to the schools, they have been incredibly proactive in this. The three schools came together and issued a press release informing parents that there will be problems with enrolment this year. One of the schools, Temple Carrig School, had to wait two years for four temporary Portakabins to be put in to help deal with capacity issues. The promised permanent extension for that school is nowhere to be seen. There has been no update on it so the school is having to reduce the number of children it can take in in September. The story is similar with Greystones Community College. It too is reducing numbers because it is waiting for



Jennifer Whitmore TD

a brand new school building. That will be fantastic when built but it needs to be fast-tracked."

In response, speaking on behalf of the Minister for Education, Minister of State Sean Fleming said "The provision of school places to meet the needs of children and young people at primary and post-primary level, including children and young people with special educational needs, is an absolute priority for the Department. The Department is aware

of pressures at post-primary level in the Greystones school planning area, which are partly due to the currently proposed reduction in first year places for 2024-2025, and is working to establish the true extent of any capacity issues across the school planning area through ongoing discussions with the relevant school patrons and authorities. This close engagement will also allow the Department to identify particular capacity requirements for the

coming years and put any required solutions in place to ensure sufficient school places to meet the needs of students in the area. The Department's projections of post-primary school place requirements in Greystones show an anticipated continued growth in enrolments until 2024. In response to the projections of school place needs in Greystones, the Department is providing significant additional post-primary capacity, including a new 1,000-pupil school building for Greystones Community College. Greystones Community College was established in 2020 as a regional solution for the Kilcoole and Greystones area. The project to deliver this new school building is at stage 3, the tender stage. In addition to this project, the Department has recently delivered a major building project to expand St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School and is also progressing a building project for Temple Carrig School in Greystones under the national development plan.

"Department officials will continue to actively engage with schools and patrons to ensure there is appropriate provision for all students in

Greystones for the 2024-2025 school year and into the future. Families can be assured that any necessary solution will be delivered so that all of the children in the Greystones school planning area will receive a first year place."

Greystones Councillor and Chairperson of Greystones Community College (GCC), Lourda Scott also recently expressed disappointment at the Department of Education's slow response to the pressure on secondary school places in the area.

Cllr Scott said: "The difficulty in getting secondary school places for constituents was the subject on every door when I ran for election in 2019. There has been some progress since then but we seem to be back in the same position almost 5 years later. The news that secondary schools in Greystones have capacity issues is no surprise to anyone and shouldn't be any news to the Department of Education. These issues have been flagged for years, yet progress on school buildings remains at snail pace. One positive bit of news was regarding the permanent build for GCC. The tender process has closed and we have a projected completion date of 2025,

providing there are no more delays."

"I will continue to work with the school community and our TDs to push the Department of Education to address this shortfall in the meantime. The lack of planning and certainty for parents is simply unacceptable. There seems to be no accountability within the Department

for this failure to support children's access to education. I have already seen vulnerable children left without a school place in their community. It is absolutely unacceptable in this day and age that this should happen."

"Please contact me if you will be affected by this news and I will be writing to the Minister to raise these concerns."



Principal of Greystones Community College Ruairi O Farrell with Cllr Lourda Scott

Two new exhibitions at Mermaid Arts Centre

Main Gallery - Fintin Kelly - A Story of Art
Gallery 2 - aemi 2023 touring programme: SÚITÚ
14th October - 2nd December

Fintin Kelly - A Story of Art

Fintin Kelly's debut exhibition at Mermaid is curated by artist Dominic Thorpe, a regular collaborator with the inclusive art studio KCAT. Kelly has been a member since 2017, having previously had a passion for art going back over two decades. He often works with a fervent and positive embodied energy to create bright expressive acrylic works in which patterns, dots, swathes, and blocks of colour are vigorously applied to canvas, paper or sculptural objects.

At other times he takes a more serene approach, such as when he attentively works with paper to make collage-based works. For Kelly, the activity of art-making is guided by intuitively knowing and trusting what feels right for him moment by moment. In this way, his practice is an exemplary demonstration of creative flow that involves continually evading the parameters of initial intentions and methodological constraints.

As he said when interviewed about his work, "Art is my method, now have you any questions?"

He has shown in numerous exhibitions, including at the Kilkenny Art Festival, the Linenhall Arts Centre Castlebar, Farmleigh house Dublin and Uillinn: West Cork Arts Centre Skibbereen. His work is also featured in the publication: The Engagement Project KCAT 2014-2020

Dominic Thorpe is an artist working with KCAT

to mentor artists. He is a board member of Arts and Disability Ireland and has worked with a range of artist run, public art and art education projects, including the Performance Collective, Study Centre Kilkenny and the Creative Well Kildare.

Thorpe works in performance art, drawing, video, photography, and installa-

Dublin, and was the first artist in resident in Humanities at University College Dublin.

He frequently engages with inclusion and education-based initiatives and has work in several public collections in Ireland, including the collection of the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon. His recently completed a PhD

ing to demand and need since then.

The ethos of the work at KCAT is firmly committed to realising the artistic ambition of the individual artists at the centre, a flexible approach to their development, access and inclusion for all and sustainability and continuity. The Studio Artists from KCAT have a long history of

films by Fábio Andrade (Brazil), Susan Hughes (Northern Ireland), Morgan Quaintance (UK), Bárbara Lago (Argentina), Sofia Theodore-Pierce (USA), Lisa Freeman (Ireland) and Holly Márie Parnell (Ireland).

'Súitú' - an Irish language term pronounced 'Suet-two' - signifies the sucking in-and-out sound made as the sea moves through stones at the shoreline, pulling them into water before rolling them back onto dry land. Evoking the elemental, the programme's pacing picks up not just on the familiar ebbs and flow of the sea, but also the external forces that circumscribe contemporary lived experience. From inner psychological journeys to the phenomenological, the seven films in this programme together offer an emotional, embodied and sensory experience.

'Súitú' is an aemi programme that forms connections between contemporary moving image work by Irish and international artists.

Film information

Fábio Andrade, Contorno / Contour, 2021, Brazil, 10 minutes

Susan Hughes, Eyes Like Cats, 2022, Northern Ireland, 3 minutes

Morgan Quaintance, A Human Certainty, 2021, United Kingdom, 20 minutes

Bárbara Lago, Yon, 2021, Argentina, 8 minutes

Sofia Theodore-Pierce, Other Tidal Effects, 2021, USA, 7 minutes



Fintin Kelly - mount Everest, acrylic on wood board, 128 x 122 cm, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist

Lisa Freeman, Hook, Spill, Cry Your Eyes Out, 2020, Ireland, 3 minutes

Holly Márie Parnell, Cabbage, 2023, Ireland, 28 minutes.

Running time: 90 minutes (on continuous loop)

Fábio Andrade, Contorno / Contour

"Open the leaves I will see my body turned into flower." - Gabriel Joaquim dos Santos

Susan Hughes, Eyes Like Cats

After an encounter with bioluminescent phosphorescence, a line of enquiry begins into how humans have made sense of mysterious natural occurrences throughout history.

Morgan Quaintance, A Human Certainty

The inevitability of separation, loss and death are explored through an introspectively written monologue and a selection of stills, moving images and written text.

Bárbara Lago, Yon

Using archive material from their childhood, Bárbara Lago re-programmes their childhood's mythology and reflects on their body traversed by affections, fictions and the passing of time.

Sofia Theodore-Pierce, Other Tidal Effects

Catamenial seizures, tidal correspondences, a sonic EEG, and a lullaby in partial translation. Highlighting the seams with the darts. An exploration of epileptic rhythms and sensations through moving image practice.

"And there are other tidal effects, mysterious and intangible." - Rachel Carson, The Edge of the Sea

Lisa Freeman, Hook, Spill, Cry Your Eyes Out

The work touches on things that are inflated: bills, lungs, bellies, airbags, egos.

Holly Márie Parnell, Cabbage

An intimate film made in collaboration with Parnell's family, Cabbage looks at the complexities of bodily autonomy within an ableist paradigm. Through moments of reflection and observation, the film focuses on her brother's writings using eye tracking technology, and her mother's memories, to explore how we shape a sense of self under the pervasive weight of unspoken assumptions, categories and fixed definitions that get placed onto bodies. Dissecting layers of language, agency and power, the film is a subtle examination of how a human life is measured and valued.

'Súitú' is accompanied by a newly commissioned text by writer and film programmer Ruairí McCann, which is available to read here: <https://aemi.ie/touring-programmes/2023-suitu/suitu-text/>.



aemi: Sofia Theodore Pierce, Other Tidal Effects, 2021, USA, 16mm transferred to digital, 7 mins, image courtesy of the artist.

tion, as well as employing contextual and collaborative based processes. He has shown and performed extensively including at the Tasmanian Museum and Gallery, Bangkok Cultural Centre, Performance Space London, Galway Arts Centre, and Golden Thread Gallery Belfast. He has completed several residencies, including at Nordic Arts Centre Norway, Fire Station Artist Studios

at Ulster University explores how perpetrator trauma is addressed within performance art from Ireland.

KCAT is a multi-disciplinary Arts Centre based in Callan, Co. Kilkenny. It is dedicated to the fostering and nurturing of creative ambition and professional development in the arts. Founded in 1999, the centre has continued to grow, develop and evolve accord-

exhibiting work nationally and internationally.

For further information go to www.kcat.ie.

GALLERY 2 - aemi 2023 touring programme: SÚITÚ

This touring programme curated by aemi (Artists' & Experimental Moving Image) features

Never too old to learn - an exciting new music project



The Rossana Trio, Mark Redmond (uilleann pipes/whistle/flute), Robbie Walsh (bodhrán) and Lynda O'Connor (violin), help Liz Quinn, Eileen Whelan and Billy Quigley rekindle their love of playing music at the launch of the Wicklow Teaching Residency.

County Wicklow residents aged 55 and over are invited to pick up instruments they used to play and start playing again with the help of Making Music with The Rossana Trio: the Wicklow Teaching Residency, a partnership between Wicklow County Arts Office and Music Network.

The project is focused on helping participants return to playing an instrument and sharing the joy of group music-making. It provides participants with free tuition from professional musicians, access to instruments for the duration of the programme and opportunities to connect and learn with other budding musicians along the way.

This year's participants will receive tuition on uilleann pipes, whistle, flute, violin/fiddle or bodhrán with The Rossana Trio, comprising renowned musicians Mark Redmond (uilleann pipes, whistles, flute), Lynda O'Connor (violin/fiddle) and Robbie Walsh (bodhrán).

The project will run from November 2023 to April 2024. Participants will receive eight one-to-one lessons and three group lessons with others playing the same instrument. The project will conclude with three large ensemble sessions, where all participants will join together with the professional musicians to play music learned during the project. As well as playing together, participants will meet for coffee sessions and chats on wide-ranging musical topics and more.

Mary Walsh, a previous participant in the project, spoke about her experience of returning to playing an instrument through the residency: "I really loved the

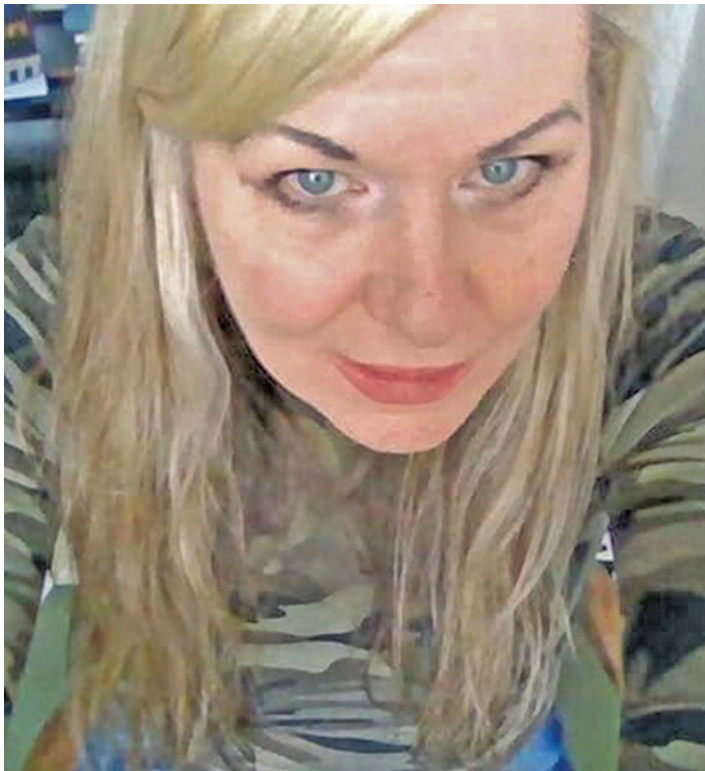
course and am so glad that I took that first step of applying. I think after the ripe old age of 65, you tend to lose a lot of your confidence in your musical ability, and I can truly say this project has brought my love for music back to life again."

Applicants must be aged 55 or over, resident in County Wicklow, and have some previous experience of playing music. Some experience of reading music is welcomed but not essential. The project will be based at Wicklow County Campus, Clermont House, Newrath, Rathnew.

Wicklow County Arts Officer, Jenny Sherwin said: "Drawing on the musical backgrounds of ensemble-in-residence, The Rossana Trio, the tuition programme will offer participants the opportunity to explore music across the classical, folk, pop and world music genres."

Places on the residency are limited to 15 and priority will be given on a first come first served basis. You can find out more about the project and apply to take part online at www.musicnetwork.ie or by calling Sarah Ledwidge on 01 475 0224. The closing date for applications for Making Music with The Rossana Trio: the Wicklow Teaching Residency is Wednesday 1 November 2023 at 2pm.

Good goth! Wicklow is the setting of new horror novel



Geraldine Comiskey (aka Aneeta Hall)

Wicklow and south Dublin are the setting for a modern horror novel, *unRIP* by Aneeta Hall. The notorious Hellfire Club, the Wicklow-Dublin mountains, Grafton Street in the nineties and the modern, multicultural suburbs feature prominently in the chilling story of a young woman on the cusp of fame who is brutally murdered - but refuses to RIP.

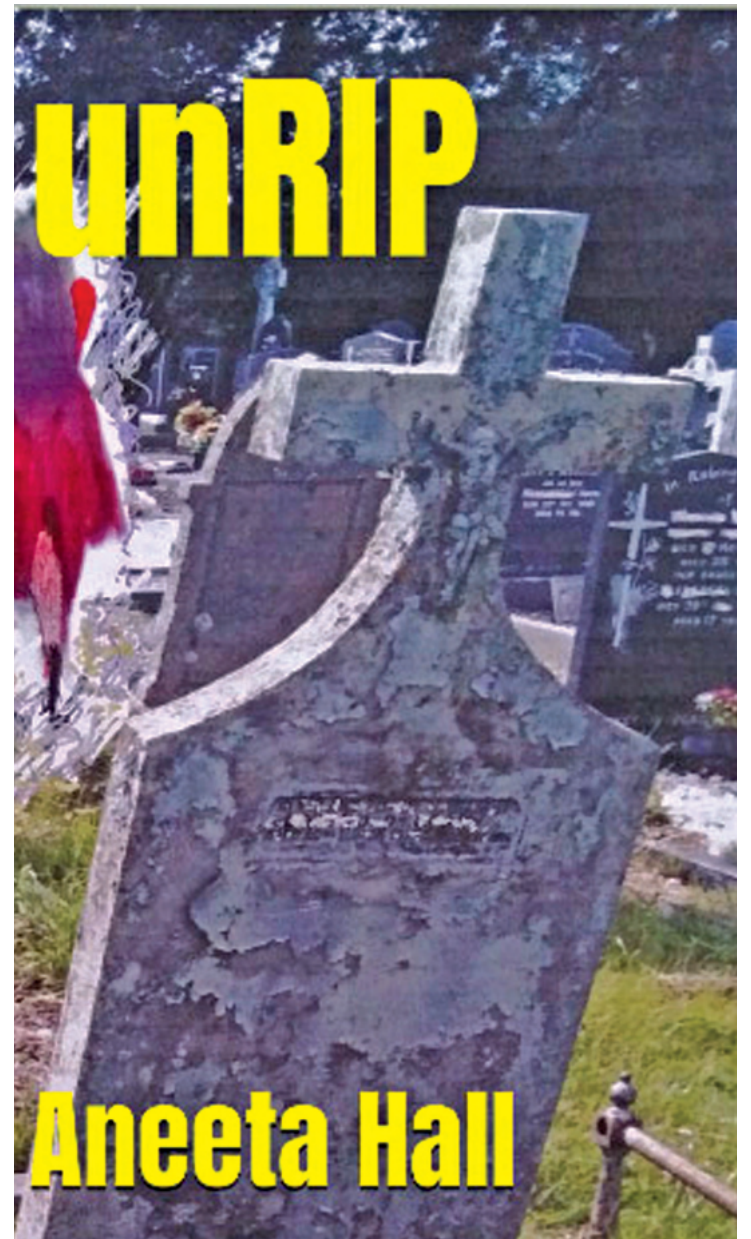
Death has given Karina Stark the fame she craved - and made her mother a monster. For the pseudo-goth pop star and fake animal rights activist left a diary in which she accused Gloria of being 'the Mum from Hell'. Envious of her daughter's growing success, bitter about her own broken dreams and struggling to recover from the trauma of domestic violence, Gloria wanted Karina dead - or so the girl claimed.

Now the grieving mum is under suspicion, up against the police, the press, the neighbours, the other members of Karina's band and the dead girl's morbid young fans.

As her followers perform Witchtok rituals on her grave, and a charismatic young exorcist seeks to put her soul to rest, the real Karina emerges through the eyes of her ex-boyfriend, an autistic schoolmate she bullied, a jaded tabloid journalist - and a macho detective who is increasingly falling under her spell...

The author, whose real name is Geraldine Comiskey, is a veteran tabloid journalist who has drawn on her experience writing about the paranormal, teen bullying, crime and popular culture to tell this story which is guaranteed to send a shiver down your spine at Halloween.

Available now on Amazon priced at €2.05 (Kindle), €5.77 (paperback) and €11.54 (hardback): <https://amzn.eu/d/tiKF8w>



Wicklow author shortlisted for Great Read Award

Wicklow author Sam Blake has been shortlisted in this year's Great Reads Awards. The Great Reads Award, now in its ninth year, is an award programme of the School Libraries Group of the Library Association of Ireland for debut writers of Young Adult fiction for which titles are shortlisted by the school library community and winners are decided by second level students across Ireland in schools and Youthreach centres. Schools in the ROI and NI are eligible to participate.



Sam Blake

Ten titles are shortlisted for the 2024 award (5 in the Junior category and 5 in the Senior category) and the list includes Wicklow-based author Sam Blake for her book *Something Terrible Happened Last Night*.

Sam Blake, the alias of Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin, is the author of the gripping Cat Connolly Garda police trilogy and graced the Irish Times No. 1 spot for 7 weeks. The trilogy and standalone thrillers, including notable titles like "Keep Your Eyes on Me" and "The Dark Room," aren't just figments of Blake's imagination but are drawn from the depths of Vanessa's seasoned writing prowess. Blake's creations have not only lingered in the Irish top ten for an impressive 28 weeks but also momentarily eclipsed the sales of venerable authors like Graham Norton.

O'Loughlin, while crafting these intense narratives through her alias, has been steering her ship through various literary avenues. She is the founder of Writing.ie, an award-winning writing resources website, and The Inkwell Group publishing consultancy. Furthermore, she breathed life into Murder One, Ireland's International Crime Writing Festival, manifesting a space where crime writing aficionados converge.

Her contributions extend to significant participation in renowned organizations. A seat on the board of the Society of Authors and fellowship at the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce (RSA), place her in an esteemed lineage alongside luminaries such as Charles Dickens, Nelson Mandela, and Stephen Hawking.

O'Loughlin, under Blake's guise, has also dipped her toes into the world of podcasts. 'Behind the Bestseller,' available on all platforms via Headstuff.org, offers listeners a tantalizing journey into the creative minds behind bestselling novels, traversing through their imaginative realms.

Film at Mermaid: L'innocent

Monday 23rd October, 8pm. Cert: 15A.

€9 full price / €7 concession price.

French, Spanish & English, with English subtitles

Aquarium worker Abel is furious when he learns his mother Sylvie is marrying a recently paroled inmate named Michel. Abel is determined to protect his mother, and is deeply suspicious about his new stepfather. He ropes in his friend Clemence to help spy on the newly-released Michel. They discover Michel is indeed still involved in crime, but before long they become embroiled in his plan to pull off 'one last heist' - a risky effort to steal a truckful of imported caviar.

Louis Garrel (*The Dreamers*, *Little Women*), directs, co-writes and stars in this enjoyable French comedy-thriller. Consistently funny without ever undermining its dramatic core, this crime farce playfully toys with expectations through an abundance of amusing twists and surprisingly nuanced characters.



Four new brands enter Irish Car of the Year race

The Wicklow Times will be one of the adjudicators for the Continental Tyres Irish Car of the Year 2024 awards, the shortlist for which includes no less than four new four brands among the 32 finalists. The winners will be revealed at a gala event in The Conrad Hotel, Dublin, on Friday November 3rd.

By Martin McCarthy the Motoring Media Association of Ireland (MMAI), a group made up of 33 of Ireland's most

experienced motoring journalists, the Irish Car of the Year awards highlight for Irish motorists the best cars that have been launched in the country this year taking account of the particular requirements of the Irish market.

Joe Rayfus, Chairman of the MMAI, said: "We have seen four new marques launch models onto the Irish market this year and all are in the running for awards - BYD, INEOS, Maxus and Ora. It is a foretaste of things to come as a raft of new brands will launch here in the next couple of years. However, alongside the offerings from those new names, we have some really excellent models from the more familiar automotive brands as ever, trying to predict who will win out in each category will not be an easy ask!"

Tom Dennigan of awards sponsor, German premium tyre brand Continental Tyres, said: "We are excited to again support the Irish Car of the Year awards which recognises the best cars launched



Joe Rayfus (L) of MMAI with Continental Tyres Tom Dennigan with four new brands (L to R) Ora, Maxus, Ineos, BYD

in Ireland each year."

The full field of candidates for the Irish Car of the Year 2024 awards is as follows: Alfa Romeo

Tonale, Citroen eC4x, Maxus Mifa 9, Peugeot 408, Audi Q8 E-Tron, Hyundai Ioniq 6, Mazda CX-60, Polestar 2 BST,

Audi RS 3, Hyundai Kona, Mercedes GLC, Renault Austral, BMW i7 / 7 Series, INEOS Grenadier, Mercedes-Benz, EQE

SUV, Subaru Solterra, BMW M2, Jeep Avenger, Mercedes-Benz EQS SUV, Toyota bZ4X, BMW X1, Kia EV6 GT, MG4, Toyota

Corolla Cross, BMW XM, Lexus RX, Nissan X-Trail, Toyota Prius BYD Atto 3, Maserati, Grecale, Ora Funky Cat, VW e-Up.

RECRUITMENT



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www.peacehaventrust.ie

Wicklow says 'ciao' in Rimini

Wicklow and Ireland were promoted by Tourism Ireland to thousands of Italian travel professionals attending last week's TTG Travel Experience in Rimini.

Nine companies from Ireland, including Powerscourt Estate, joined Tourism Ireland at TTG Travel Experience - Italy's key B2B travel show, which is attended by influential tour operators, travel agents and leading Italian travel journalists and bloggers.

Tourism Ireland is taking the opportunity to promote shoulder season short breaks to Cork, Galway, Belfast and

Dublin to the travel professionals attending the travel show - a key message in the organisation's autumn 2023 campaign, which went live in Italy in mid-September and will run until mid-November.

Marcella Ercolini, Tourism Ireland's Manager Italy, said: "Tourism Ireland is delighted to be back at TTG Travel Experience once again this year. Interest in visiting Ireland

remains strong among Italian travellers. Our presence here in Rimini this week provides an excellent opportunity for our partners to spread the word about the many great things to see and do right around Ireland. It is a great opportunity to promote shoulder season short breaks to Cork, Galway, Belfast and Dublin - a key message in our autumn 'Fill your heart with Ireland' campaign, which is live across

Italy until mid-November."

In 2019, Ireland welcomed 11.3 million overseas visitors to the island of Ireland, delivering revenue of over €5.9 billion. Tourism Ireland's international website is www.ireland.com, with 33 market sites available in 30 different countries in 11 language versions around the world.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Kirsten Myler, seek retention permission to 4 Claremont Terrace, Meath Rd., Bray, Co. Wicklow. A98 Y5C8. The development will consist of: 1) The removal of the staircase from a previously approved balcony and staircase to the rear of the property. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of 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.



(front, l-r) Cindy Chomat, Holiday Ireland Hotels; Karen Henderson, Visit Derry; Marcella Ercolini and Mary O'Connor, both Tourism Ireland; Vanda Oliveira, JacTravel; Darragh Mallon, Titanic Belfast; and Charlotte Salter-Townshend, OPW Heritage Ireland; (back, l-r) Vivienne Nyhan, Powerscourt Estate; Aislinn O'Driscoll, Failte Ireland; Giovanni Ciocari, Aer Lingus; and Niccolo Coppaloni Delfino, Tourism Ireland, at TTG Travel Experience in Rimini.



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Open Door is an equal-opportunity employer.

Octoberfeast is in full swing in Wicklow

Wicklow Naturally's October Feast is a celebration of Wicklow's food and drinks story, including farming, foraging, brewing, distilling, and much more.

The festival was launched at the beginning of the month at Powerscourt Distillery during their Harvest Festival. Co. Wicklow is set to offer visitors an exciting array of events throughout the month of October.

From mouth-watering food and drink festivals to thrilling cultural experiences, there is something for everyone to enjoy. Come and explore the diverse range of flavours and activities on offer and make lasting memories in this stunning part of Ireland.

On Thursday, October 19th and Friday, October 20th, the Hen's Teeth venue in Dublin will showcase the finest food from the Garden of Ireland at Ber Bia (which means Food Bar in Irish). The menu was created by Dylan Mullen,

head chef of Hen's Teeth who is a native of Wicklow. It was paired with a drinks list by Oisín Davis, a renowned expert in Irish beers and spirits. To attend this event, you can purchase tickets for €65 each (plus booking fee) which includes drink

pairings at <https://www.hensteeth-store.com/blogs/stories/bear-bia-a-celebration-of-irish-food-and-drink>.

Other member events include an interactive kid's Halloween-themed cooking class on Saturday, October 28th with Cool Food School while you can enjoy Halloween in the Woods with Tipi Adventures on Sunday, October 29th providing a perfect conclusion to the month of festivities.

These events provide an exclusive opportunity for our esteemed members to showcase their exceptional produce or experiences to consumers. You can find information about all of these events on the Wicklow Naturally website by visiting <https://wicklownaturally.ie/events/>.

October Feast is made possible through the generous support of Wicklow County Council, County Wicklow Partnership, the LEADER Programme, Wicklow Local Enterprise Office, and the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine under the Rural Innovation Development Fund.



Pictured are Tadhg Byrne, Santina Kennedy, Catherine Fulvio, Tom Burgess and Paul Smith at the launch of Wicklow Naturally's October Feast 2023 at Powerscourt Distillery.

Harris discusses anti-social behaviour with Blessington businesses

Fine Gael Minister Simon Harris recently visited Blessington to meet with local businesses and business owners regarding recent anti-social behaviour.

Speaking after his visit, Minister Harris said, "Recent reports of anti-social are completely unacceptable. I had a number of very productive and informative meetings with local businesses and business owners, particularly around the Newtown Shopping Centre who told me of the recent issues they have had to deal with.

"I have been in close contact with members of the local community and An Garda Síochána over the past number of weeks, and was assured that measures were put in place to address this problem. However, I will keep pushing on this issue and ensure that a long-term solution is found, as nobody wants to have to deal with anti-social behaviour in their business, or on their way to do their weekly shop."

Have you 'Export Growth Ambition'?

The Local Enterprise Office in Wicklow in conjunction with experts from HMC Global is now taking bookings for the next intake of their Export Development Programme. This high value and high impact capability building programme run by John Haran and his team is specifically designed for businesses with export growth ambitions - whether you are first time exporters, early-stage exporters or experienced exporters exploring new markets.

Eligible businesses based in Wicklow - will be established and trading for more than 2 years, engaged in manufacturing or providing a tradeable service with potential to trade internationally.

This programme will provide you with access to experienced mentors and practical support for developing your export plan. It will also provide a forum where ambitious entrepreneurs can share their exporting experiences and challenges, get new perspectives,

encourage collaboration, and provide an opportunity to focus on growth opportunities in international markets.

Commencing on November 1st, costing €200 per participant, modules running over 6 weekly morning sessions, followed by one-to-one mentoring and a day's market research activity participants will come away having learnt the key elements of their Export Action Plan.

Past participant comment O' Brother Brewing commented:

"Thank you Croia and Paul for a very well run and supported program. I really enjoyed the content and the interaction with everyone. It will definitely make us a bit sharper and strategic in our approach and I am already getting to put some of the learnings into practice."

For more information, registration and expression of interest please contact Business Advisor, Michelle Hegarty mhegarty@leo.wicklowcoco.ie Phone: 0404 30800

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