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Tuesday 5th December 2023 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowned@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

BAD NEWS AND SOME GOOD NEWS

For those seeking to rent a home in County Wicklow last week's RTB Report brought bad news, but the Council Chief Executive brought good news to some first-time buyers.



John Brady TD

Sinn Fein TD John Brady said that staggering 13.2% annual rent increases in Wicklow show the longer Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are in government the worse things get.

Deputy Brady called for the Government to urgently ban rent increases for all existing and new tenants. The report from the RTB showing massive increases in rents is shocking. Families, workers and young people deserve and need affordable housing and affordable rents.

"Sinn Fein's proposal to cut rents and freeze them would have prevented these massive increases in rents. In our own County of Wicklow, the average rent for new tenancies in Wicklow is now €1,584 per month. This is simply unsustainable. When will it end? Renters in Wicklow cannot keep taking these kinds of rent hikes. They need a break.

"But this Government does not care about renters. That much is clear. They tell



The winners from SSE Renewables' Design a Christmas Decoration from Recycled Materials competition, pictured in Arklow Library with Santa's helpers and Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager with SSE Renewables. See page 12 for full details. Pic: Michael Kelly



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us they are making an impact on housing. Unfortunately, that impact is just putting affordable housing and affordable rents further out of reach for people. No wonder so many young people who cannot afford his level of rents are emigrating.

"Government must urgently introduce a ban on rent increases for existing and new tenancy. They must also put a full month's rent back in every private renter's pocket. Government also needs to increase and accelerate the delivery of social and affordable homes, including cost rental homes, so that renters are not left at the mercy of an expensive and insecure private rental sector.

"The longer Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are in government the worse things get. Nowhere has this been

more evident than from this report that shows massive rent increases over the last 12 months. Only a change of government, a change of housing policy and Eoin Ó Broin as Housing Minister will allow us to start cleaning up the mess of decades of bad Fianna Fail and Fine Gael housing policy."

On a good news story for first-time buyers in Wicklow, Independent

councillor Joe Behan said "I warmly welcome the news that the

impasse preventing the sale of affordable houses to 24 first-time

buyers in Wicklow has finally been resolved. Continued on page 3



Cllr Joe Behan



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Enjoying their apples at Ravenswell National School, Bray are (from left) Bogdan Vrajtof, Sifat Kaur Khurand, Joshua Buckley, Liviu Gheorghiu and Adveka Senthil Kumar.

Bray Lions Club mark World Diabetes Day

Bray Lions marked World Diabetes Day on 14th November by distributing apples, as a symbol of healthy eating, to 400 primary school children in the Bray area, together with a Diabetes information letter for parents.

In response to the growing incidence of Diabetes worldwide, the 1.4 million members of Lions Clubs International have adopted Diabetes as a signature project.

While several types of Diabetes exist, the Lions Signature Project aims to specifically address the risk of Type 2 Diabetes. Eating healthily, increasing the level of physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight, all play a role in preventing or delaying the onset of Type 2 Diabetes.

Bray Lions Club President Peter Doyle, highlighted the importance of this initiative "Diabetes is the 8th leading cause of death in the world and it is estimated that worldwide more than 460 million people have Diabetes, and this number is growing," he said.

Diabetes Ireland and Diabetes UK (NI) estimates that there are 340,000 individuals with Diabetes in Ireland of which approximately 80% have Type 2 Diabetes.

Interactive Workshop Cancelled

The Interactive Workshop planned for Wednesday 6th December at Signal Arts Centre has now been cancelled. Signal said "We hope you will be able to visit the exhibition during the regular opening times".

'light of Love' bereavement support

Christmas brings much joy and laughter but can also bring a lot of sadness. Days can be long for those bereaved, but nights can be longer. Anam Cara are encouraging people to reach out if they need support, whether it is a friend, a colleague, or a support organisation like themselves.

Many will struggle over the weeks ahead so look out for those who may need a listening ear, be present for them, amongst the madness of the festive season.

This Christmas, Anam Cara is asking everyone to light up their virtual Christmas Tree with a very special 'Light of Love', in memory of a loved one. By donating, you will be helping Anam Caras work with bereaved parents all over Ireland. To get involved, check out their website www.anamcara.ie

On Monday 11th December, Anam Cara will hold their Wicklow meeting in The Parkview Hotel,

Newtownmountkenedy at 7:15pm. All bereaved parents from the 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 to support services offer by Anam Cara, please call 085 2888 888, email info@anamcara.ie or see www.anamcara.ie

Annamoe Christmas Tree Lighting

The Christmas Tree Lighting will take place at 4pm on Sunday 10th December at the Annamoe Christmas Tree followed by festive treats and santa at Plantbox coffee/food dock beside the Annamoe bridge. Non-alcoholic mulled wine and mince pies for adults €5. Hot chocolate and cookies for children €4. Kindly supported by Annamoe Centre and Wicklow County Council.

Rathmichael Historical Society

Lindi Naughton will present "Herbert Simms, Dublin City Architect" at 8 p.m. on Wednesday December 6th in Rathmichael National School, Stonebridge Road, Shankill. All are welcome. Admission is £5 for non-members.

Bray Rotary's Giving Tree

Bray Rotary Club's Christmas Giving Tree is at the Holy Redeemer Church's forecourt on December 9th and 10th. The tree has gift tags with the first names and ages of local needy children and older people. These names are supplied by the four local St. Vincent de Paul Conferences, the Five Loaves Soup Kitchen, and Bray Cancer Support Group.

The public is asked to take a gift tag and buy that child or older person a present and return it to the Giving Tree. The toys and presents are then given to the charities who distribute them to the relevant families.

Over the years the people of Bray have been extremely generous, and have helped approximately 200 - 300 children each year and many older lonely people receive a very welcome present. The Rotary Club is handing over the reins of the Giving Tree to the Soroptimists, but they will run it in conjunction with them this year.

Greystones Christmas Market

The Greystones Tidy Towns Christmas Market at the Harbour Marina Plaza & The Boat Yards back in town. Continues every Saturday and Sunday until 23rd December, 11.30 am to 5.30 pm. Lots to see and do. Wonderful items available. Stalls change each week.

Aware Webinar Series

Aware has a webinar series with a different theme each month. This month's webinar (13th December, 12pm to 1pm) is on 'The Benefits of Peer Support in Managing Depression'. You must register in advance for each webinar individually. If you cannot attend live, you can still register and receive a link the next day to watch back. The webinar link can be found at aware.ie.

Wicklow Pride marks World AIDS Day with candlelight vigil

World AIDS Day was Friday, December 1st. In 2022, there were 884 HIV notifications in Ireland. This represents a 68% increase in 2022 compared to pre-pandemic year 2019.

Wicklow Pride held a candlelight vigil to help shine a light on the impact of HIV-related stigma, to stand in solidarity with people living with HIV and to remember those who have passed away from AIDS related illnesses. The vigil took place at the Billy Byrne Monument in Market Square, Wicklow Town.

The monument lit up and vigil were part of HIV Ireland's "Glow Red for World AIDS Day" campaign. The aim of the campaign is to eliminate HIV-related stigma by 2030. The Billy Byrne Monument was one of many buildings and statues across Wicklow County

Council lit up the Billy Byrne Monument red to commemorate World AIDS Day.

Other buildings included Leinster House, The Convention Centre, and Cork City Hall. Speaking ahead of the event, Conor Kirwan, Wicklow Pride Chair, said "At Wicklow Pride, we want to end HIV-related stigma and to support people living with HIV. We also want to remember those who

have passed away from AIDS related illnesses. Our vigil on World AIDS Day will help shine a light on the stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS, whilst supporting those living with HIV. Thank you to Wicklow County Council for recognising the importance of HIV awareness and for making the Billy Byrne Monument glow red."

Wicklow County Council for recognising the importance of HIV awareness and for making the Billy Byrne Monument glow red."



Beau, Jude, and Tadhg Lambe with Irish rugby star Josh van der Flier at the book signing event for 'Josh the Flyer', in Bridge Street Books, Wicklow Town.

WICKLOW
LOCAL Times

Shay Fitzmaurice, Managing Editor - shay@localtimes.ie

Ian Colgan, News Editor - ian@localtimes.ie

Sales / General enquiries - info@localtimes.ie

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Dept of Education makes commitment on Greystones school places

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has welcomed a commitment she received from the Minister for Education in the Dail that all children in the Greystones area will receive a first-year place in secondary school for September 2024.

This commitment was given to Deputy Whitmore during a debate on the issue, where she raised the shortage of first year places for students of the area. This shortage has been highlighted recently by the principals of the local secondary schools, when they announced that they would be offering 72 less places for September 2024 than was available for the September 2025 intake due to limitations on school building capacity. Deputy Whitmore has been calling for clarity from the Department and Minister of Education on this since early October when the shortfall became apparent.

Speaking after the debate, Deputy Whitmore said: "I welcome the commitment from the Department of Education that every child in the Greystones area will have a secondary school place made available for them. For the many parents who have contacted me and who are very concerned that their child has not been offered a place for 2024, this is an important commitment



Jennifer Whitmore TD

and will go some way to alleviate their concerns. It is also welcome that the Department is actively engaged with the school bodies to deal with this issue.

"However, what we need to see now from the Department is an urgent response to this problem, and full clarity for parents as to how this shortfall in places will be resolved and when it will be resolved.

"Ultimately, parents want to know what school their child will be going to. And it cannot be the case that parents

and students have to wait months and months before this information is available. This will only cause additional unnecessary stress for everyone.

"The Department must work with urgency on this so solutions can be provided over the coming weeks. The Department must also move away from this heavily reactive mode when it comes to the provision of classrooms and class places. This shortfall should have been apparent to the Department long before now, and it should never have become this crisis

issue that it has. This causes a huge amount of stress to both the students and their parents. Having a school place is the most basic requirement of an education system and unfortunately, we have seen time and time again in Wicklow that parents have to fight for even that most simple of services.

"It is also critical that the Department expedite the school building programs for Greystones Community College, Templecarrig and Colaiste Chraobh Abhainn. All three schools are waiting for building projects to be completed, but these all appear to be taking far longer than anticipated. I made the point to the Minister that these projects must be fast-tracked, or we will be back in the same situation again for the 2025 intake."

Deputy Whitmore concluded "Finally, while the Minister's comments last night were very positive, I will continue to stay on top of this issue and advocate on behalf of the parents, students and schools in Greystones."



Tracey Walker with Santa at the switching on of the Christmas Lights in Arklow.

Jennifer WHITMORE TD

Working for Wicklow

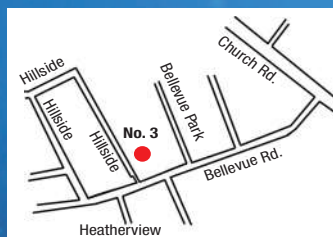
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BAD NEWS AND SOME GOOD NEWS

Continued from page 1...

"I congratulate the Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman, on her successful action in ensuring that Homebond Certificates were issued for the houses in question and that the purchasers of the houses can now complete their purchase and move into their new homes in the next few weeks.

"The Greenhill Road scheme was the first of its kind in the country and was advertised a year ago. The fortunate successful applicants had hoped to complete their purchases months ago but an inter-agency roadblock over Homebond Certificates held everything up. The first-time buyers are now set to move into their forever homes, hopefully, before Christmas and I know from speaking to a number of them it will make this a very Happy and memorable Christmas for them and their families.

"I am particularly grateful to the Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman, who demonstrated



Wicklow County Council Chief Executive Emer O'Gorman

exemplary leadership in how she resolved this extremely difficult issue. She listened carefully to the concerns of the purchasers and the Councillors when the problem first arose, she worked tirelessly with her own Council staff colleagues, with the Minister for Housing and senior

civil servants in his Department, with representatives of the Banks involved in providing mortgages for the houses and crucially she worked directly with the Homebond Organisation to bring the entire scheme over the line. In doing this, she communicated consistently with the elected members of the Council at every stage which allowed us to keep the purchasers fully informed. It was an excellent example of collaboration between elected Councillors and Council Management, and will help build a good working relationship into the future.

"Of course, I am very conscious that there are still many thousands of young families and single people in our county who are completely locked out of home ownership because of disastrous housing policies of successive Governments. These hard working, taxpaying citizens of our county should all be able to buy their own forever home in their own county and I will not rest until that dream becomes a reality for them as well."

Council wins 'Excellence in Government' Award

Wicklow County Council was pleased to announce its success at the recent Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards 2023 where the Council was shortlisted for four prestigious awards and came through as winners in the Age Friendly Initiative category.

The Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards is an annual ceremony that highlights standards of best practices in Irish Local Government nationally.

Wicklow County Council was shortlisted for the Samuel Hayes Bridge in the Supporting Tourism category; the Solar Car Park in Wicklow County Buildings under Local Authority Innovation; the Hidden Disability Sunflower Initiative under Health and Wellbeing and the Intergenerational Digital Learning under Age Friendly Initiative.

In recognition of this collective achievement, Wicklow County Council Cathaoirleach, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, said: "This award is a testament to the hard work and community spirit that define Wicklow County Council. We hope to build on the success of the Intergenerational Digital Learning project and replicate its positive impact into the future. Our commitment to creating an age-friendly environment will continue to drive our efforts in fostering innovation and inclusivity."

Wicklow County Council Chief Executive, Emer O'Gorman stated: "We

are immensely proud of the innovative projects that earned Wicklow County Council recognition across four categories. Each initiative demonstrates our commitment to enhancing community life. The Samuel Hayes Bridge, the

Solar Car Park, the Hidden Disability Sunflower Initiative, and the Intergenerational Digital Learning, showcase our dedication to fostering tourism, driving local authority innovation, promoting health and wellbeing, and creating an age-friendly environment. Together, they reflect our holistic approach to community development."

Wicklow County Council's winning initiative under the Age Friendly category focused on Transition Year students taking on the role of tutors, guiding adults in using their digital devices. Through personalised guidance, the students empowered adults to navigate the digital landscape with confidence.

In response to the win, Director of Services for CC&SD, Michael Nicholson, said: "We are thrilled to receive the Age Friendly Initiative Award, which acknowledges the dedication and creativity of Wicklow County Council Library Service and the students involved."



Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council; Ian Talbot, Chief Executive, Chambers Ireland; Margaret Birchall, Senior Executive Librarian, Wicklow County Library Service; Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Cathaoirleach, Wicklow County Council and Clodagh Whelan, Age Friendly Wicklow.

Civil Defence Volunteers honoured at awards ceremony

Over 40 Civil Defence Volunteers were honoured on Friday 24th November for their dedicated service to the community of County Wicklow. This annual event is an opportunity to recognise and pay tribute to long-serving Volunteers across the county.

Long service awards were presented by the Wicklow County Council Chief Executive, Emer O'Gorman, and Cathaoirleach, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, to Volunteers who had 10, 20 and 30 years' service.

An outstanding award was presented to Sheila O'Neill who received a long service award for a remarkable 60 years' service with Wicklow Civil Defence. These awards demonstrate the commitment and enthusiasm of the volunteers to the Civil Defence organisation.

A number of Covid 19 medals were also presented to volunteers as a recognition by Government for their voluntary service during recent Covid times.

The presentation of certificates for courses attended, which is an important part of the Training & Development of Volunteers, also took place on the night.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy stated: "As Cathaoirleach I acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by the members of Civil

Defence, to the people of County Wicklow. It is reassuring to know that you as Volunteers are always available to respond to calls for assistance from the Gardai, Local Authority and other Agencies.

"Your assistance and response over the last number of years has helped to support and maintain essential services to the public in times of great need and distress. I would like to wish you every success for the future and to assure you of my contin-

ued support and that of the Elected Members of Wicklow County Council."

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman, congrat-

ulated those receiving awards saying: "I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate those of you receiving Long Service Awards, Covid 19 Medals, and Training Certificates here this evening. I am delighted to be attending this Awards

and as Chief Executive it gives me an opportunity to personally thank each one of you for the great work that you have undertaken throughout the year.

"Civil Defence as an organisation provides a wide range of extremely

important services to local communities by volunteering in events throughout Wicklow and indeed offering services to our neighbouring Counties, you the volunteers are our most valuable asset."

The event was also

attended by Aidan Dillon, Assistant Principle Civil Defence Branch throughout Wicklow and Department Of Defence; Leonora Earls, Director of Services Transport, Water & Emergency Services, and Mike Carroll, Wicklow Civil Defence Officer.



Charlotte and Isaac Downey with Irish rugby star and Wicklow local Josh van der Flier at the signing of 'Josh the Flyer' in Bridge Street Books in Wicklow Town.

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North Beach access being restored in Greystones



Cllr Stephen Stokes at Greystones North Beach

The access ramp to Greystones North Beach was washed away in recent storms. Sispar Limited has said that repair works to the North Beach ramp are scheduled to commence on Monday, 4th December and continue until Friday, 8th December. It is envisaged that access will reopen on the evening of Friday, 08th December 2023.

Welcoming the news, Cllr Derek Mitchell said "This is a much used place and I am pleased it is being restored quickly."

Cllr Stephen Stokes stated: "This is good news. I have been pressing for this work, and raised North Beach coastal erosion at the full meeting of Wicklow County Council. Protecting the North Beach is vital."

Cllr Stokes called for more work to be actioned along the North Beach. He added: "The coastal erosion seems to have accelerated in recent years. A recent study of coastal erosion in Ireland talked about managed retreats. This is simply not an



Cllr Derek Mitchell

option for our area. Protecting the North Beach is vital for the train line, cliff walk, residential areas and more. Beach nourish-



This aerial photograph shows the pedestrian diversions during the works. Signage will be in place.

ment is one part of a strategy that should be implemented."

The immediate ramp

repair work is to be carried out by Sensori FM on behalf of Sispar Limited. During this

time pedestrian diversions will be in place. Cllr Stokes concluded: "This work is need-

ed. I am pressing for more North Beach and Cliff Walk improvements as a priority."

Work begins on new DART Station at Woodbrook

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Iarnrod Eireann and the National Transport Authority (NTA) last week announced that construction has now started on the new DART station at Woodbrook. The station, located between Bray and Shankill, is set to become the essential transportation hub for communities in Woodbrook and Shanganagh and will open in 2025.

Cllr Denis O'Callaghan, Cathaoirleach of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council said: "I

am delighted to see the start of the construction of Woodbrook Station, which is located between

Bray and Shankill, and is set to become the essential transportation hub for communities in

Woodbrook and Shanganagh. By providing this modern station, we aim to reduce the dependence on

private cars and will assist us towards meeting our climate action targets. This new station will enrich the lives of residents and enhance the attractiveness of the Woodbrook-Shanganagh community for growth and prosperity."

The Woodbrook Station project is part of a larger development that will see the creation of a new residential community comprising up to 2,300 homes. As a 'Future Development Area' identified in the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council County Development Plan Core Strategy, this project aligns with transport and land-use policies, fostering a sustainable and compact living environment for the Woodbrook-Shanganagh community. The funding for this project is provided by the National Transport Authority.

The commencement of construction was marked with a sod-turning ceremony attended by Cllr O'Callaghan; Eamon Ryan TD, Minister for Transport; Anne Graham, CEO of the National Transport Authority, and Jim Meade, CEO of Iarnrod Eireann.

Minister Ryan said: "There was a train stop here in Woodbrook on the former Dublin and South Eastern Railway so it's great that we are bringing a new age of rail back to thriving communities like this, as Iarnrod Eireann's



Illustration of new DART station at Woodbrook

newest DART Station. This station will be of great benefit to the local community, where new housing is also being developed. It is a good example of transport and planning working in step and a clear indication of the Government's commitment to strengthening public transport for more people. I'm delighted that construction has started and I look forward to its completion."

Anne Graham, Chief Executive of National Transport Authority said: "The commencement of construction at Woodbrook represents a significant milestone and is another indication of the real progress that is being made in developing a public transport service that will meet the transport requirements of people in the Dublin region for years and decades to come. I have no doubt that plans for investment in rail, including the

DART+ programme, will prove to be transformative for the entire region."

Speaking at the ceremony, Chief Executive Jim Meade of Iarnrod Eireann said: "This is a great day for Iarnrod Eireann as we commence construction on our 147th station on our network. The need to be more sustainable has never been more important given the climate challenges that we face. This station will serve the new and existing community with a fast, frequent, reliable and sustainable service, reducing the necessity for private car journeys."

Woodbrook Station will feature two 174m long platforms, complete with passenger shelters, seating, lighting, CCTV, customer information, bicycle parking, and ticketing facilities. A new pedestrian bridge with both ramped and stepped access will connect the station, facilitating safe

passage across the railway tracks. The design also considers future plans for improved pedestrian and cycling access routes in the station vicinity. To ensure smooth operations, modifications to the existing overhead-line equipment are necessary. Access to the station will be provided via Woodbrook Avenue, a road currently under construction.

Existing DART services are set to serve the new station with a frequency of approximately every 10 minutes in each direction on weekdays. Commuters will enjoy a convenient journey time of approximately 40 minutes to Dublin city centre.

Enabling works commenced on the station site in 2022 and included the replacement of an existing bridge deck to allow construction access and the relocation of railway infrastructure to accommodate the new station.



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We are delighted to offer you this coupon which entitles you to 10% discount over most of our range of health and beauty items at Hiltons Pharmacy Bray (Clarins, medicines and prescriptions exempted). Coupon valid until March 31st 2024. Only one voucher per purchase.

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Hiltons Pharmacy opens new store in Bray

After a long wait, Hiltons Pharmacy in Bray has now opened its beautiful new store, located at No.8 Bray Main Street, just two doors down from Dubray Books.



Serving the local community in Bray since 1990, hiltons just moved to a bright, new and spacious premises at number 8 Main Street, just two doors down from Dubray books.

The bright, new and spacious premises is the perfect new home for hiltons, who have been serving the local community in Bray for over 30 years, since 1990.

There's plenty of room to browse, with lots of exciting new brands along with favourites such as Clarins' range of beauty and skincare products, and it all comes with the great personal service customers are familiar with.

Hiltons' staff members Kate, Becky, Karl, Lucy, Jean, Rose, Sandra, Olga, Lorraine and Aoife are looking forward to seeing you in their new premises.



The friendly staff in Hiltons that you've known for years

Dangerous Structures Notice served on Anvil owners

A Dangerous Structures Notice has been served by Wicklow County Council on the owners of the former Anvil store on Main Street Bray.

Sinn Féin TD John Brady welcomed the news, saying "Over the last number of months I have been engaging with Wicklow County Council in relation to the danger that the former Anvil store on the Main Street in Bray poses to local residents and members of the public. I welcome the confirmation that the council has now served a Dangerous Structures Notice on the owners of the property.

"The property, which has been derelict now for a number of years, represents an eye sore and a potential danger to passers-by, with store frontage and signage in a dangerous state of repair, and in danger of falling on pedestrians. Concerns have also been

raised by members of the public that the building is being used as a drug den by users in the town.

"There are specific regulations about dangerous structures. The local authority can direct that work, including the demolition of the structure and the clearing of the site, be carried out immediately if it considers it necessary. The owner of the property is required by law to make sure your property does not contain any dangerous structures. If it does, they must take steps to remedy the situation.

"Otherwise, they are liable for prosecution by the council. The immediate concern is that the building in its current state represents a danger to both pedestrians

who might be passing by and local residents. It is important that the owners take immediate action on foot of being served the notice.

"It is also a truth that our Main Street in the town is very much akin to the front door to Bray, it impacts on visitors, on shoppers, and on investors. There is a responsibility to businesses in the town to make the experiencing of and investing in business as attractive as possible. So again I call on the owners to take immediate action or I will be pushing for Wicklow County Council to use its powers under the Local Government (Sanitary Services) Act, 1964 and refer it to the courts."



John Brady TD outside the former Anvil store on Bray Main Street

Matthews secures commitment on Wicklow Town Courthouse



Steven Matthews TD outside Wicklow Town Courthouse

Green Party TD Steven Matthews has welcomed a significant step in the prospect of repurposing the courthouse, a heritage structure in Wicklow Town centre.

Deputy Matthews said, "I have been working constantly over the last three years with the Office of Public Works and the Courts Service to provide me with a construction and engineering appraisal of the old Wicklow Town Courthouse building. Whenever I asked about the old building, I was told it was derelict, dangerous and unusable but I couldn't find any evidence of reports on the building condition. I was determined to get a structural report, that would provide an idea of what works are required to bring some life and living back to this important building. I am delighted that I have gotten this agreement, and in my view, it is the most important first step towards repurposing the site."

Deputy Matthews has received a commitment from both the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the Courts Service that a structural and internal review will be carried out shortly and some immediate roof repairs, as part of a wider assessment of the whole campus.

"My initial proposal was to provide the Wicklow Towns Mens Shed with a new place to meet in the building to the rear and I hope this remains an option. When the necessary repairs, safety assessments and structural

reports are carried out, there is potential for further societal and economic benefit to Wicklow Town from the repurposing of the structure.

"It is an absolute shame that such a beautiful heritage building has been left vacant, neglected and rotting, severely detracting from the new Market Square. As with any large building refurbishment the important first step is to estimate the extent of works required to make it reusable. I was successful in having some superficial work carried out last year with painting and a general clean up to the front facade, however his latest progress is a step towards a far more substantial outcome for the site.

"Following the outcome of the engineering and structural assessment, I look forward to continuing recent talks with Wicklow County Council and the Town Team for ideas for the old building and to broadening the discussion with local councillors and other interested parties. The building has great potential, and from my work with the OPW and Courts Service, we will now have an idea of what work is needed before we progress ideas for revitalising this important corner of Market Square," concluded Deputy Matthews.

'More urgency needed to progress coastal erosion works on Wicklow rail line'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has expressed concern at the slow pace of efforts to prevent further coastal erosion along the route of the Dublin Rosslare Rail Line that runs along the Wicklow coastline.

While the National Transport Authority (NTA) previously confirmed that coastal protection works will take place along the Dublin to Rosslare Railway line running through Wicklow, as part of the East Coast Rail Infrastructure Protection Project. Which is intended to maintain the operational integrity of the line which serves the area as a key sustainable transport artery, coastal erosion continues unabated.

Deputy Brady said: "Having been commissioned by Irish Rail to conduct detailed design and planning services, including environmental assessments and statutory submissions, for the East Coast Railway Infrastructure Protection Projects (ECRIPP), Jacobis furnished their report in June 2022.

"And the latest response which I received from the NTA offered confirmation that they are engaged in the carrying out of several surveys in the area, which will inform their work on the Rail line.

"This includes non-intrusive ecological surveys, topographic surveys, and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) surveys, along with bathymetric surveys which are

water-based survey that maps the depth and shape of underwater terrain to illustrate the land that lies below. Following completion of which a public consultation will be carried out.

"While I welcome the confirmation by the NTA that coastal protection works will take place, along the East Coast Railway line running from Dublin to Rosslare along the coast of Wicklow, which is an important infrastructural lifeline which offers a much-needed transport hub to the region, I am concerned at the slow pace of work taking place. It is critical that this is not allowed to be delayed by bureaucratic entanglements or red tape.

"We have been waiting several years on the commencement of efforts of the necessary scale to address the impact of coastal erosion along the rail line and are still awaiting the commencement of public consultations which will precede major work. While intermediate work has been carried out, the situation along the coastline, and in particular at the Murrough in Wicklow Town is deteriorating.

"The impact of coast erosion has

had a serious impact on the integrity of the railway line. And with the advent of climate change and the further damage that we can anticipate in the years ahead. The impact of Storm Babet resulted in considerable damage to the Murrough coastal Walk in Wicklow. With large parts of the coastal walkway washed away.

"The environmental impact of global warming will pose further challenges in the years and decades ahead. If efforts were allowed to continue at the current pace, the whole coastline will end up being washed into the sea.

"The importance of this work cannot be overstated. The current Rail line carries two services, the Dublin to Rosslare line, and the DART. Both are crucial transport networks for Wicklow. There is almost 80km of the rail line running which is particularly vulnerable to climate change. The section running from Killiney through Bray and onto Greystones includes cliffside ledges and tunnels which have already undergone repairs due to erosion in the past, while the section between Greystones and Wicklow runs for some dis-



Ava and Ben Reynolds with Irish rugby star and Wicklow local Josh van der Flier, at Josh's book signing event for Josh the Flyer, at Bridge Street Books in Wicklow Town.

tance at a low level alongside a long shingle beach.

"We urgently need to see the allocation of sufficient funding from the government to ensure that

measures are put in place at the earliest opportunity. Climate change will not wait for the Government to respond. It will continue unabated. And it will be

the people of Wicklow who will be forced to pay the price, as we watch our coastline washed into the sea, as a result of government failure," concluded Deputy Brady.

'Land attached to former Ashford Garda station could be new playground site'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has said that the grounds attached to the former Ashford Garda Station which Wicklow County Council secured for a community centre, should be examined to see if a new community playground could also be developed there. This would be to replace the loss of local amenities following the closure of Ashford Park and playground.

Deputy Brady was instrumental in leading a campaign to have the former Garda Station transferred to Wicklow County Council in order to allow

the building to be refurbished and used by the local community as a community centre. Funding for the purchase of the building was subse-

quently secured by the Council in June 2022, which is now in public ownership.

Deputy Brady said "The closure of the former

Ashford Park and playground late last year has meant that the community in Ashford have been left without a children's playground despite an extensive search for an alternative site by Wicklow County Council. The loss of the park and playground represents a loss to the community. It represents the loss of a local focal point, and venue for children's play.

"I believe that this issue needs to be and can be addressed immediately.

The site of the former Garda Station in Ashford is now in public ownership. The station had been lying vacant and unused for almost 20 years since it was extensively damaged in a fire in 2003.

"The purchase of the former Garda Station following my campaign to bring it into public ownership for community use, means that we now have an opportunity to revamp the building into a vibrant and dynamic community center, I believe that the council



Deputy Brady outside the old Ashford Garda Station

must also explore the possibility of building a new community playground there too. It is frustrating that 18 months after securing the funding to refurbish the old Garda Station a masterplan for the site still hasn't been completed, this would allow work to begin on the development of a badly needed community center in Ashford. The masterplan must look at the possibility of including a playground also on the site.

"The former Garda station, situated in the center of the town, and already in public ownership, offers an opportunity to avail of a ready-made solution to the areas loss. I have been in touch with Wicklow County Council to push this plan forward, and it is my hope that we will see progress in this area from the Council in the near future."

The ideal Christmas gift - a great night out at Mermaid!

Upcoming events; The Ennio Morricone Experience, The Fureys, David O'Doherty, Enya Martin, Jason Byrne, Mikel Murfi & Jack Lukeman - to name but a few.

Gift vouchers are available too!

mermaid

mermaidartscentre.ie | 01 272 4030

Bone Marrow for Leukaemia Trust

We are proud to reintroduce our 'Light a Star for a Loved One Tree'. This year you can light a star for a loved one or in memory of a loved one and send this star to them.

We are also selling our Christmas Cards online. Visit our website for more details.

Bone Marrow for Leukaemia Trust
HOPE Directorate, St. James's Hospital,
Dublin 8. Phone: 01 428 4412
www.bonemarrowtrust.ie

CHY Number: 20024277

ReWild Wicklow launch tree certs and nursery

Local environmental charity ReWild Wicklow has just launched a new range of tree gift certificates in time for Christmas. It is giving the public of Wicklow the opportunity to purchase one of five types of native tree to be planted across Wicklow: Scots pine, oak, willow, rowan and hawthorn. The certificates have been brought to life by beautiful illustrations donated to the initiative by Wicklow artist Emily Robyn Archer from her Native Circles collection.

All funds raised will be used to purchase native trees and in a new tree nursery just setup by the group in Newtownmountkennedy. The nursery is located at Jacksmill Forest Gardens/Hub 13 and complements the community allotments and biodiversity reserve already on site. The group is working in partnership with NPWS to collect native tree seed from within Wicklow Mountains National Park and nature reserves such as Clara Vale and Deputy's Pass. On Saturday 18th November they had their

first volunteer day at the new nursery where 30 volunteers built raised beds and sowed over 2,000 acorns and other types of tree seed. These will be cared for by volunteers at the nursery for up to five years before being planted back out across the Wicklow Mountains, thereby giving them the best chance of surviving the grazing pressure.

"We've had a very exciting month at ReWild Wicklow," said chairperson Danny Alvey at the launch. "On Friday 10th November we were in Armagh for the IPB all-

island Pride of Place awards after a nomination from Wicklow County Council. We were delighted to be picked by the judges for a Special Award, it gave all our volunteers a great boost!

"Now we've just launched our new range of gift certificates for Christmas. This year we have increased the variety from three to five, including willow, which will be planted in river bank restoration projects, and rowan, which will be planted in Native Woodland Trust reserves. Some of this funding will also be used in our new

native tree nursery, to help us care for locally sourced oak and other species before they even-

ually get planted out into our National Park - a really exciting project! Thank you to everyone across

Wicklow for their continued support, I hope they will consider buying one of these gift certificates

for a loved one this Christmas, it's a perfect gift for someone who cares about nature and the

future of our planet." Gift certificates can be purchased at rewildwicklow.ie.



ReWild Wicklow volunteers at their new HQ and native tree nursery in Newtownmountkennedy

One Hundred Million Trees nationwide programme kicks off new season with small forest planting in Kiltegan

The One Hundred Million Trees Project (100MT) announced the commencement of its new nationwide planting season, which started on Sunday, 19th November. With an ambitious target of planting up to 250,000 native broadleaf trees nationally this season, the project team is gearing up for a season of growth, sustainability, and impactful environmental change.

Now entering its second year, 100MT Project founder Richard Mulcahy and his brother David, say they are even more committed to ensuring 100 million trees get planted in small-forest formation at thousands of locations nationwide, throughout the coming decade.

Richard Mulcahy said "We were absolutely thrilled to meet our launch objective of planting 20,000 trees in year 1 but this year, we have much greater ambitions and aim to deliver over ten times that amount in 2024. By next April, we aim to have 200,000 to 250,000 new young native tree varieties planted in the ground at

over 75 different sites around the country. It's a huge step up but we have adapted to enable ourselves to do much more in the 23/24 planting season. We couldn't do it without the help of our loyal volunteers, our generous sponsors Uniphar Group plc and our partners at Bord Bia. Also Wexford County Council gave us great support over the past 12 months. We are also delighted this year to draw on the professional assistance of one of Ireland's leading private forestry management companies Forestry Services Ltd who will be central to our scaling up of activities.

Paddy Bruton, MD of Forestry Services Ltd and

Euroforest Ireland said "We are very excited to be involved in this project and proud to have been selected by the 100 Million Trees project team. As well as the important benefit of helping absorb CO2, this project has so many upsides in terms of improved biodiversity, landscape, water quality and providing new habitat for wildlife. It also sends a very important message to the wider public about the positive legacy they can create for future generations."

The 100MT project will be planting 17 sites in the weeks coming up to Christmas including Fairyhouse Race Course in Meath, Limerick Race Course, Glenstall Abbey, Limerick and Festina Lente in Bray.

The first site to be planted was a memorial mini forest in Kiltegan. Dedicated to the late Pat Blake, the One Hundred Million Trees Project planted on a family owned site that held special significance to Pat and

his loved ones. A dedicated nature enthusiast, Pat died prematurely in August 2022.

Pat's wife, Deirdre, has expressed her gratitude for this unique and eco-friendly memorial: "When his brother Martin suggested we plant 2000 trees for Pat, I thought this was a great idea. It really helped me with my grief because at a time of great sadness and this really gave me hope. Pat loved trees, he loved the bright greens in spring and then the autumn colours. He was born in Belfast and raised in the Troubles, so all he wanted was a peaceful life and so I would love this forest to be a peaceful place where people can just sit and just be calm and tranquil. It will also be a safe place for nature to thrive."

The One Hundred Million Trees Project encourages community members, environmental enthusiasts, and volunteers to join together in achieving this season's ambitious goal. Planting up to 250,000 trees over the coming months can only be achieved with collective effort and great dedication, but with huge spirit behind the campaign from supporters and sponsors alike, the project aims to make a very significant impact on reforestation and environmental conservation.

Wicklow people shortlisted for Ocean Hero Awards

Clean Coasts has announced the groups and volunteers that were nominated for the Ocean Hero Awards 2023. Winners will be announced in an in-person ceremony on 7th December.

The Clean Coasts' Ocean Hero Awards pay tribute to the exceptional contributions made by Clean Coasts volunteers, groups, and communities in safeguarding our coast and marine life.

Established in 2006 as

the 'Clean Coasts' Merit Awards, the accolades initially featured a single category, 'The Clean Coasts Group of the Year.' Over the years, the program has evolved, engaging over 2,000 Clean Coasts groups and 40,000 volunteers,

becoming an integral part of coastal communities nationwide.

2023 was a year like no other. This year, the Ocean Hero Awards take on special significance as Clean Coasts marks its 20th Anniversary. For the past

20 years, Clean Coasts has grown from strength to strength expanding and creating campaigns and initiatives aimed at enjoying, protecting and celebrating the beauty of our coast. None of that would be possible without the

groups and volunteers all across Ireland that have helped make and grow the programme into what it is today.

In County Wicklow, Greystones Green Party councillor Lourda Scott was shortlisted in the

Individual of the Year Category.

Lourda Scott is the co-ordinator for Clean Coasts North Wicklow and contributes to Greystones Tidy Towns and Junior Tidy Towns. As a proactive Councillor, she fosters alliances among these groups, joining initiatives like the Big Beach Clean, supporting campaigns like 'Think Before You Pour' and piloting a campaign against cigarette butts being littered in her area, by installing ad-hoc cigarette bins to help combat the issue of smoking related litter. Her commitment extends to national platforms, supporting the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss. Lourda aims for Green Coast awards in 2024, emphasising the need for Co. Wicklow to achieve Green Flag beach status.

Blessington Tidy Towns were shortlisted in the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Award. This group has made commendable efforts in creating a welcoming space for



Cllr Lourda Scott

all in the area no matter what. In particular, Blessington Tidy Towns' commitment to inviting the local refugee community to participate with the group's activities and events. Notably, the organization conducts regular English classes, breaking

down language barriers and fostering a more inclusive community.

This nomination is a recognition that underscores the organisation's unwavering commitment to fostering a diverse, welcoming and inclusive community environment.



Clean Coasts volunteers

Arklow Wind Park could generate up to €800m and support 2,300 jobs

New socio-economic research on the potential benefits of Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 estimates an economic benefit to the Irish economy of up to €800m during the project's lifetime, of which over half a billion euro could directly benefit counties Wicklow and Wexford.

The preliminary data is contained in an independent report commissioned by SSE Renewables, which is due to be published in the new year. The report, compiled by BiGGAR Economics to support the project's ongoing development ahead of submission to An Bord Pleanála, details the national and regional benefits that the proposed 800MW offshore wind project off the coast of South Wicklow would create. The final report will be published in the coming months to coincide with the submission by SSE Renewables of a planning application to An Bord Pleanála for the project's associated offshore infrastructure.

that approximately 2,300 direct and induced jobs would be created throughout the project's lifetime, from development and construction through to operations and decommissioning.

Upon commencement of commercial operations, Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 would create around 130 jobs, direct and induced, over its expected 35-year operational lifetime. Additionally, the wind farm would generate an economic contribution to the Irish economy of up to €19m annually, up to €13m of which would benefit the Wicklow and Wexford economies.

Overall, it is estimated Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 could generate a total lifetime spend across

national and international markets in excess of €4.8 billion, from early-stage development and construction through to 35 years of expected operations, and eventual decommissioning.

Speaking at the Enterprise Ireland Offshore Forum at Croke Park, Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Project Director James O'Hara said: "I am delighted to share the key findings of this new socio-economic impact report today. The benefits that large scale offshore wind projects can bring to local and regional economies are well documented, but it is invaluable to have current data on the potential economic value of Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 project to the regional economy."

"The renewables industry already plays an important role in supporting rural and regional economies around the country, but as we look towards the development of the offshore wind industry in Ireland, the possible economic benefits could be transformative. The data we're publishing today on the Arklow project demonstrates that offshore wind infrastructure can play an important role in supporting job creation and delivering more balanced regional development. The data is particularly heartening, especially in light of global macro-economic challenges for the industry."

"This report will form part of our upcoming offshore infrastructure plan-



SSE Renewables is expected to submit its final planning application seeking consent for the offshore infrastructure for Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 to An Bord Pleanála in the coming months

ning application to An Bord Pleanála and details the potential benefits to the regional and national economy in terms of job creation and GVA, as well as to the supply chain."

SSE Renewables is expected to submit its final planning application seeking consent for the

offshore infrastructure for Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 to An Bord Pleanála in the coming months. The leading renewable energy developer, owner and operator already holds two consents in relation to the project,

the first for the onshore grid infrastruc-

ture, including the underground cable route and substation at Avoca River Park, and the second for the operations and maintenance facility (OMF) at South Dock, Arklow Harbour.

Final delivery of Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 is subject to the project receiving planning con-

sent for the offshore infrastructure, securing a route to market, and a final investment decision. Should the project be delivered, SSE Renewables intends to administer a multi-million-euro Community Benefit Fund throughout the project's operational lifetime.

Access denied in Bray

There have been no accessibility audits carried out in Bray town for over a decade it has been revealed.

Aaron McAllorum, Social Democrats Local Election candidate recently queried Bray Municipal and Wicklow County Council in relation to accessibility audits.

The scope of the query spanned the past eight years. The freedom of information request by Mr. McAllorum was refused on the grounds that the records do not exist. However, it was disclosed that there has not been an audit of this type done since 2008.


Reacting to the revelation Mr McAllorum said: "To be honest, I am gobsmacked. It is incomprehensible that a 15-year gap in an accessibility audit exists. I was very happy to see the launch of Wicklow's first ever Disability and Inclusion Strategy recently and that Accessibility & Universal Design is a key action area."

"In order to move forward, a priority must be to undertake that accessibility audit, review it and learn



Aaron McAllorum at Bray Dart Station

from it. The public realm belongs to everyone, but so much of it is not useable or accessible to everyone. There's a litany of examples around Bray town."



**COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENTS ACTS 2000 (AS AMENDED) &
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENTS REGULATIONS 2001 (AS AMENDED)**

NOTICE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

THE SUGARLOAF REPAIR PROJECT

In accordance with the provisions of PART XI, of the Planning Acts 2000 (as amended) and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2000 (as amended), notice is hereby given that Wicklow County Council proposes to carry out the Sugarloaf repair project which will include the following works:

- Re fencing of carpark, marking parking spaces, upgrading archway, drainage, steel gate, signage.
- A Family friendly area -Trail construction and planting of native species.
- Ground works and manual stone pitching of an ascent and descent route.
- Habitat restoration to encourage growth of native species.

In accordance with Article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), Wicklow County Council has concluded from a screening determination that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.

Where any person considers that the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, they may, at any time before the expiration of 4 weeks beginning on the date of publication of this notice, apply in accordance with the provisions of article 120 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), to An Bord Pleanála for a screening determination as to whether the development would be likely to have such effects.

Plans and particulars of the proposed development may be inspected (or purchased at a fee, not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy) at the offices of Bray Municipal District, Civic Offices, Main Street, Bray, Co. Wicklow, or Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Station Road, Co Wicklow, during opening hours Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays, for a period between **6th December 2023 and 12th January 2024**. Plans and particulars of the proposed development are available to view on www.wicklow.ie/Living/consultationhub

Submissions and observations with respect to the proposed developments dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development would be situated can be made at www.wicklow.ie/Living/consultationhub or in writing to the undersigned clearly marked "Sugarloaf Repair Project".

All submissions must be received on or before **29th January 2024 by 12 noon**.

Caroline Fox, Acting Senior Executive Officer, Community, Cultural and Social Development Section, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow.

Email: Part8ccsd@wicklowcoco.ie Dated: 29/11/2023



SSE Renewables Community Engagement Manager Deirdre Keogh and Odhran Doyle at the switching on of the Christmas Lights in Arklow.

Arklow children get creative and festive with recycled materials

SSE Renewables announces winning competition entries for its 'Design a Christmas Decoration from recycled materials competition'

School goes throughout Arklow Municipal District showed their commitment to an eco-friendlier festive season as they took part in the SSE Renewables 'Design a Christmas decoration competition from recycled materials 2023'. Now in its second year, the competition was run with the help of Arklow Festival Committee, Arklow Municipal District and Arklow Library.

The competition was divided into four age categories: 7 and under; 8-10; 11-12; and 13 years and over, with an overall winning entrant chosen to help Santa at the tree-lighting ceremony.

Ella Mai Browne Mordaunt, St John's SNS Arklow, was selected as the overall competition winner for her 'Mr Frost Tree the Snowman' creation. Ella Mai was the lucky child who helped Santa switch on the Christmas tree lights in St Mary's Park, Arklow, on Saturday, 25th November to mark the launch of Arklow Christmas Festival 2023. Her competition entry in

age category 8 - 10 years, was built around a salvaged plastic bottle and lollipop sticks, crepe paper, old Christmas ribbon and lights. The head was made from her brother's old ball which Ella carefully covered with wool adding goolie eyes. Her creation was topped off with an upcycled ribbon spool hat and lollipop sticks added as arms. The entry stood out for its creativity and the heart-warming feeling that made the competition adjudicators feel very cheerful and festive.

Allanah McDonald Browne, SS Michael and Peter Junior School, Arklow, was the winner

in the age 7 and under category for her 'Santa's Workshop' entry. Allanah used a variety of cardboard boxes, kitchen roll tubes, old buttons, pipe cleaners and lollipop sticks which were carefully painted, glittered, and decorated. A fabulous handmade sign was the focal point to make sure the accompanying Santa, Rudolf and snowman would be kept busy making toys for the world's children in the coming weeks.

Indie-Rose Dobson, St John's SNS Arklow, won the age 8-10 category for her festive arch decoration. The arch was upcycled from a disused

garden decoration and the Christmas characters were made from dog food cans, old light bulbs and hung with crisp packets, pasta and wool from an old blanket. This creation showed real imaginative cheer and a great use of recycling. It's one that will be treasured for years to come by his family.

Ethan Forde, Gaelscoil an Inbhir Mhóir, Arklow, came out tops in the age 11-12 category for his Santa's sleigh entry. Ethan's entry required such attention to detail and exceptional crafting. With reindeers made from cork and twigs and Santa's sleigh made from lollipop sticks adorned with candy canes to hold onto as he Santa takes off from the cotton wool snow, this creation could be patented and is sure to fly!

Niamh Farrell, Glenart College, Arklow, was the winner in the age 13 years and over category for her jolly snowmen in a bottle. Designed from a plastic drink bottle cut in half, Niamh painstakingly crushed old stori-form to form the snowy base inside the decoration. The snowmen's bodies were crafted from bottle corks. Donned with fabulous scarves fashioned from old wrapping paper and hats from upcycled cardboard, she carefully positioned both figures into the bottle base and melted an additional plastic bottle to seal the top of the decoration. The inclusion of tiny nail gems surrounding the neck of the decoration involved considerable patience, time, and care.

Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager, SSE Renewables said: 'SSE Renewables has partnered with Arklow Municipal District for a second year by sponsoring low energy street lighting for this year's festival and hosting the 'Design a Christmas decoration from Recycled materials'. The response to this year's competition surpassed all expectations.

Assisted by adjudication panel of staff in



'Mr Frost Tree the Snowman', created by Ella Mai Browne Mordaunt, St John's SNS Arklow, was selected as the overall competition winner and Santa's guest of honour at the switch on of this year's Christmas tree lights in St Mary's Park, Saturday, 25th November, marking the launch of the Arklow Christmas Festival 2023. She is pictured with Santa's helpers and Deirdre Keogh, SSE Renewables Community Engagement Manager.



Allanah McDonald Browne, SS Michael and Peter Junior School, Arklow, was the winner in the age 7 and under category for her 'Santa's Workshop' entry.

Arklow Municipal District, with oversight on the selection by Cllr Tommy Annesley, Cathaoirleach, Arklow Municipal District, we had a very difficult task in selecting from the huge number and wide variety of com-

petition entries sent into Arklow Library from schools across the district. Those who won in their respective age categories showed outstanding creativity in how they interpreted the competition to repurpose

and upcycle materials to fashion outstanding festive decorative creations. A special word of thanks goes to the parents, teachers, and staff, who encouraged all those who competed and to the staff at

Arklow Library, Arklow Municipal District offices and the volunteers on Arklow's Festival Committee'.

Category winners received a €50 'One for All' voucher as their prize.



Niamh Farrell, Glenart College, Arklow, was the winner in the age 13 years and over category for her jolly snowmen in a bottle.



Ethan Forde, Gaelscoil an Inbhir Mhóir, Arklow, came out tops in the age 11-12 category for his Santa's sleigh entry.



Indie-Rose Dobson, St John's SNS Arklow, won the age 8-10 category for her festive arch decoration.

A creative Renaissance at Bray Institute of Further Education

As the days grow shorter and the crisp winter air settles in, there's an exciting buzz in the community of Bray, and it's all centered around the vibrant offerings at Bray Institute of Further Education (BIFE). With a nod to both tradition and innovation, BIFE has launched a range of new part-time personal development classes on Mondays while reigniting the flames of their night school post lockdown.

New Daytime Delights:
Crochet, Pilates, and Art, Craft, Design

Mondays in Bray have taken on a new hue as BIFE introduces an array of stimulating part time classes. Whether you're looking to unwind, get

fit, or indulge your artistic side, there's a class to suit your needs. For those with nimble fingers and a penchant for craftsmanship, the Crochet class is a perfect choice. Guided by experienced instructors, you'll learn the art of weaving

threads into beautiful patterns, creating everything from cozy blankets to fashionable accessories. It's a timeless skill that's making a modern comeback.

Alternatively, if you're seeking a more active pursuit, Pilates is the

answer. Strengthen your core, improve flexibility, and find your inner balance in this rejuvenating class. Participants of all fitness levels are welcome, making it an ideal way to start your week with a dose of vitality.

But perhaps it's the

Art, Craft, and Design class that truly ignites the imagination. Walking into the classroom feels like a world of artistic expression, where you can explore various mediums, unleash your creativity, and create works of art that reflect

your unique vision. One member of staff describes it as a journey of self-discovery through the prism of art.

Night School: A Hub of Lifelong Learning

For those who prefer to embrace their creative spirit after the sun sets, the BIFE night school is back in full swing, offering a diverse range of courses that cater to all interests. The transition from daytime to nighttime at BIFE is seamless, as the institution welcomes adult students of all ages and backgrounds.

Oil Painting enthusiasts can now pick up their brushes and let their creativity flow under the expert guidance of accomplished artists, including staff with work in the National Gallery of Ireland! The night school also introduces a fascinating new class, Beekeeping, offering an opportunity to connect with nature and contribute to the vital cause

of preserving our pollinators.

In an increasingly interconnected world, language skills are more valuable than ever. With popular courses in Irish, Italian, Spanish, French, and English as a foreign language, BIFE's language classes provide a gateway to global communication, with courses tailored to beginners and intermediate learners alike. Whether you're brushing up on a foreign language or starting from scratch, these classes are a fantastic way to broaden your horizons.

While these new additions shine brightly, the night school continues to offer perennial favorites. Tai Chi and Yoga classes provide serene havens for relaxation and wellness, digital photography and filmmaking courses bring out the budding Spielberg in you, Bridge enthusiasts gather for their strategic duels, and ceramics classes mold timeless artistry from clay.

A Vision for the Future: Expanding the Night School

The BIFE night school, nestled in the heart of Bray, is not only thriving but also expanding as part of the wider project of the KWETB College of the Future. This ambitious vision seeks to enrich our community by providing accessible, diverse, and high-quality education that empowers individuals to reach their full potential. It's a testament to the commitment of BIFE and its dedication to lifelong learning.

Watching this exciting journey of self-discovery, creativity, and lifelong learning, we were certainly impressed by BIFE, where the days are filled with creative pursuits and the nights are alive with the buzz of personal development.

Sign up for the courses for the January term now through the BIFE website at bife.ie under the 'part-time' tab.

Equal Opportunities Project at St Kieran's School

Minister Simon Harris recently visited St Kieran's School in Bray to celebrate the school's participation in the Headlamps Project, a project that promotes all children have equal opportunities, ensuring a best start for every child.

The aims of the programme are to develop a support system in 4 designated Primary Schools in Bray that will address the developmental needs of children at risk from the effects of substance abuse in the wider community.

Minister Harris said "I was overwhelmed by the work of the project officers in the schools and delighted to meet the children benefitting from this amazing Headlamps project. This project works to ensure that children have equal opportunities and inspires young children in various subjects.

"I had the pleasure of getting a tour from the children around their school, visiting each project room where they learn practical skills on top of school education. In this school they learn to cook, play music and to talk about their feelings. All of these project rooms had visible impacts on the children of the school who were all very confident and articulate.

"I want to say thanks to the principals of the schools involved in the Headlamps project, Scott Vance of St Peters; Kate Breen of St Philomena's; Caroline Kennedy of St Kieran's and Tom Seargeant of St Feargal's and pay particular tribute to the Stadd of the Headlamps Project: Patrick Mullen, Niamh Whelan, Tracy Mansfield, Ciara Byrne, Jennifer Keely, and Audry.

"My job as Minister for Further and Higher Education is to make sure every individual in this country has access to education and that there are no barriers to opportunity. I am so heartened that projects such as the Headlamps Project are ensuring young children."

Minister Harris concluded: "I was truly delighted to spend time with the students and hope to meet them soon again."



Minister Harris meeting with St Kieran's pupils



Wicklow pharmacy technicians graduate at the Irish Pharmacy Unions Pharmacy Technicians Graduation 2023 which took place in the RDS, Dublin: Dermot Twomey President IPU, with James Kelly, Jackie White, Colette Doyle, Barbara O'Sullivan, Rachel Dunne, Emma Harper, and Anne Marie Whittle, with Derek Reilly, Acting Secretary General of the IPU



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY MONUMENTS FUND 2024

Wicklow County Council invites applications to the Community Monuments Fund 2024, as operated by the National Monuments Service of Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage.

The closing date for applications is 4pm, 30th January 2024.

The 2024 Community Monuments Fund will invest in our valuable archaeological heritage and help the owners and custodians of archaeological monuments to safeguard them into the future for the benefit of communities and the public.

The 2024 Fund will support the conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of archaeological monuments. It will: enable conservation works to be carried out on monuments which are deemed to be significant and in need of urgent support; build resilience in our monuments to enable them to withstand the effects of climate change; encourage access to monuments and improve their presentation.

Local authorities, private owners, community groups and custodians of monuments are eligible to apply under the following 3 streams;

1. Stream 1 will offer grants up to €100,000 aimed at essential repairs and capital works for the conservation and repair of archaeological monuments.
2. Stream 2 will offer grants of up to €30,000 for development of Conservation Management Plans/Reports that are aimed at identifying measures for conservation of archaeological monuments and improving public access.
3. Stream 3 will offer grants of up to €30,000 for enhancement of access infrastructure and interpretation (including virtual/) at archaeological monuments.

Application forms and further details are available at www.wicklow.ie under latest news. Applicants should read the CMF guidance carefully and ensure that method statements and relevant consents are included with the application.

Applications should be returned by e mail to wicklowheritage@wicklowcoco.ie or by post, clearly marked 'Community Monument Fund Application' c/o Heritage Office, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow Town by no later than 4 pm on January 30th 2024.

Hard copy application forms are available by request to above e mail or by Tel: 0404 20100. Other queries to Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer, Wicklow County Council via dburns@wicklowcoco.ie

Adult learners call for equal access to 'overwhelmingly positive' educational experiences

Unequal access to public transport, on-site facilities, and inclusivity and mental health supports causing regional disparities in learners' experiences

Adult learners of all ages from Wicklow have reported overwhelmingly positive experiences of Further Education and Training, but AONTAS new Learners' Voices Across Ireland report also reveals regional disparities in learning experiences due to inequalities in public transport, facilities, and inclusion and mental health supports.

The annual research report on adult learning in Ireland was launched at the AONTAS Adult Education Summit at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin this month.

During the 2022/23 academic term, over 3,000 Further Education and Training (FET) learners participated in focus groups and online surveys nationwide. Their experiences are shared with the Education and Training Board (ETB) to inform good practices, and to ensure that learners have a say in their own education.

Addressing 200 delegates at AONTAS' 'A Window to the World' Summit, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD said: "The power of adult

learning, especially community education, cannot be underestimated in its potential to transform people's lives. The theme 'a Window to the World', is a reminder of how adult education and lifelong learning is a crucial part of improving communities and making them more resilient. The 'Learners' Voices Across Ireland' Report is an important research project which gives learners of all ages, backgrounds and areas of FET the opportunity to share their experiences and recommendations in a solutions-focused way.

"No matter who you are or where you're from I'm committed to making sure there is access to the educational opportunity that you desire."

Also speaking at the event, CEO of AONTAS and Wicklow native,

Dearbhail Lawless said: "There are two principal narratives emerging from this year's report - that education has a hugely transformative impact on learners' lives, particularly those returning to education later in life and that issues around local infrastructure and facilities are creating inequalities and barriers for learners across the country to access, or take full advantage of, those transformative experiences.

"For many people in Wicklow, particularly those from under-resourced communities and groups that face the greatest challenges in accessing quality education, crossing the threshold of a college or training centre is a huge step, and for many even getting to the front door is proving to be the biggest barrier.



Pictured at A Window to the World: AONTAS Adult Education Summit 2023 at the Aviva Stadium, Dublin: (L to R) John D'Arcy, AONTAS Chairperson; Michelle McGoldrick, Maynooth University; Simon Harris T.D., Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Alan Anthony Quinn, Tipperary Education and Training Board and Dearbhail Lawless, AONTAS. Photo: Marc O Sullivan

Without affordable, reliable public transport, people in rural areas and people living in poverty continue to be at a disadvantage in accessing education and training opportunities."

In addition to public

transport, learners also highlighted a need for improvement in language supports, accessibility aids, and onsite facilities such as parking, heating and canteens.

Most commonly reported by adult learners

across Ireland were the positive impacts that learning experiences and environments had on their personal health, relationships and prospects. Examples of good practice highlighted included:

* Tutors - learners

acknowledged the quality of education, care and support provided by tutors, who were fundamental in building their confidence.

* Atmosphere - learners reported respectful treatment and positive

experiences in FET environments.

* Personal Benefits - learners reported significant improvements in self-confidence, new friendships, and a stronger sense of community, purpose and identity.

Student athletes celebrated at TCD Sport Scholarship Ceremony

Wicklow student athletes Leah Paul (Cricket) and Isobel Radford Dodd (Pentathlon and Fencing) were recently celebrated as Trinity College Dublin unveiled its sport scholars for the 2023 / 24 season on Monday, 13th November at an event for family and friends at the Dining Hall, Trinity College Dublin.

This year's awardees, comprising of 36 Trinity Sport scholars and 28 club academy scholars will represent Trinity this season across seven-

teen sports including rugby, basketball, GAA, soccer, rowing, and cricket. Maire Treasa Ni Cheallaigh presented the awards on the night and

Trinity student athletes Melanie Griffith (Wheelchair Basketball and Rugby player), Harry Sheridan (Ulster Rugby player) and

Kathryn Dane (Irish International Rugby player) took part in a panel discussion on the theme of 'Resilience in Sport' on the night.

William Mac Donald Hughes (Fencing), Thomas Connolly (Rugby) and Anna Jones (Gaelic Football) receive this year's Trevor West Scholarship which is awarded to exceptional athletes who have shown outstanding contribution to sport at Trinity and within their respective sport clubs.

Lisa Blaney (Basketball) receives the K.O. Lee basketball scholarship in association with Trinity Meteors. The scholarship was created in memory of Trinity alumnus K.O. Lee who coached the Meteors Ladies Basketball team at Trinity and contributed to the team's success in the 1970s. Juan Buekes (Rugby) received this year's Global Graduate Sport Scholarship in association with Trinity Business School while Shane Enright (GAA Football) received this year's GPA / Trinity Business School scholarship.

Michelle Tanner, Director of Sport and Physical Activity, Trinity College Dublin commented on the night, "We're thrilled to be here this evening to recognise the achievements and commitments



Leah Paul (Cricket)

of Trinity's student athletes. We are thrilled to celebrate this year's exceptional calibre of student athletes for the 2023/24 academic year. With representation from seventeen sports and a diverse array of internationally acclaimed and emerging athletes, Trinity College Dublin reaffirms our commitment to nurturing sporting talents."

Dr. Richard Porter,

Dean of Students, Trinity College Dublin commented, "I am delighted to be here this evening to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our student athletes who have been awarded a place on this year's Trinity Sport Scholarship Programme. This scholarship recognises your achievements so far, and importantly, your potential to go even further. The Trinity Sport Scholarship Programme

reflects our commitment to providing unwavering support to student athletes, enabling you to compete not only at regional and national levels but also on the international stage. We firmly believe that you can excel both in your academic pursuits and your chosen sports, and we are here to ensure you have the resources and encouragement to do just that."



Isobel Radford-Dodd - Pentathlon and Fencing

Strictly Come Dancing breathtaking extravaganza at Greystones Community National School

The Strictly Come Dancing fundraiser for Greystones Community National School was declared a resounding success following a sellout show on Friday 24th November in the Parkview Hotel, Newtownmountkennedy.

Organised by the Parent Teacher Partnership of Greystones Community National School with the support of Dance Greystones, hundreds of supporters flocked to see a wonderful, entertaining performance where twenty-four parents and volunteers daringly stepped out of their comfort zone and valiantly took to the stage for what turned out to be a breathtaking dancing extravaganza. The purpose of the event was to raise funds for sensory equipment and a sports track for the children of the school.

This will enhance the health and wellbeing of the children within the school, and many generations of children to come.

Inclusion is something this school is passionate about. The teaching professionals are continuously working to ensure all the children that attend GCNS are supported to achieve their very best in a holistic

sense, academically, physically, socially, culturally and morally, no matter what their sensory needs may be. We are also acutely aware of the importance and benefits of introducing sport in early child development.

Congratulations to the winners Cllr Mark Barry and Rachel Rigney, with their performance of Lady Marmalade, runners up Peter O'Sullivan and Nastassja Pretorius with Saturday Night Fever, and in third place Fiona Toolan and Paul Murphy with Chicago.

Fiona Toolan, Chair of the PTP (Parent Teacher Partnership), said: "I would like to commend all the dancers and organisers of this event, who put in such an incredible amount of time and effort into the preparation and holding of this wonderful evening. We began dancing practice 6 weeks ago with 24 amazing dancing volunteers, but also a host of other support people in the background. A

huge amount of teamwork between parents, the school staff and dancing volunteers over the last number of weeks has resulted in outstanding success for our amazing kids at the school. And of course, we would like to thank our main sponsors, Eire Og, South Beach Clinic, Nikafit and Storm Recruitment as well as the many local businesses for sponsoring our dancers and those that supported our raffle."

Alice O'Donnell, Chair of the Board of Management of the school said: "A huge thanks to the PTP for all their work in organising this amazing Strictly fundraiser. It was a really entertaining night, I was blown away by the talent both on and off the stage. The Board of Management is looking forward to seeing the new running track and sensory facilities in operation. The spirit of the parents and teachers in this school is second to

none and the local business community were very generous in their sponsorship. The children who attend CNS will benefit from the new facilities long into the future. Well done to all involved!"



The contestants Strictly Come Dancing fundraiser for Greystones Community National School. Photos by @vladbodarev_photography

Greystones student presented with Climate Ambassador Award



Shriya Mishra

Shriya Mishra from Greystones has been presented with a Climate Ambassador Award by An Taisce.

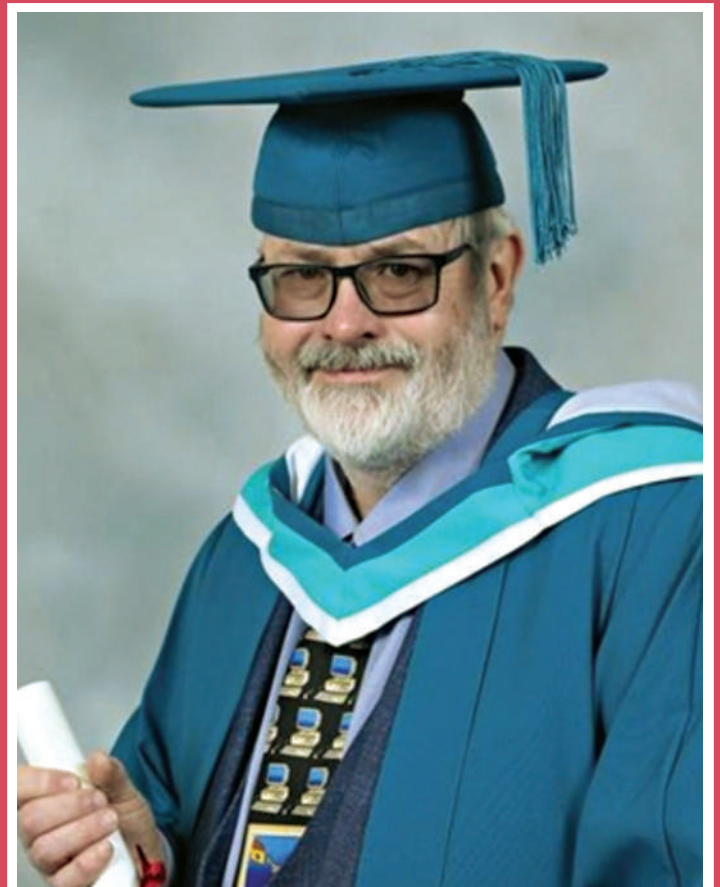
"Taking part in this programme was a huge step up for me in initiating more climate action in my local area. It exposed me to many new ideas and experiences, and I am putting these into action through a project on climate anxiety and working with various community groups to raise awareness about the co-benefits of climate action," said Shriya, a student at Dominican College Sion Hill.

An Taisce held the Climate Ambassador Awards on Thursday, November 23rd, in the Morrison Hotel, recognising the tremendous effort and dedication demonstrated by volunteers throughout the year. Each Climate Ambassador received a certificate and some sustainable gifts, with an additional ten awards presented to secondary school students, PhD students, a podcast duo, farmers market organisers, Tidy Towns volunteers, and employees from PwC, Vyra, and Microsoft.

In 2023, Climate Ambassadors completed 331 climate actions, directly engaging over 710,000 people, creating 2,013 climate communications, reaching an estimated 4.6 million people!

Climate Ambassadors receive training at the start of the year in climate science, solutions and communications which enables them to carry out climate actions. Throughout the year they are asked to undertake four key tasks: two climate communications and two climate actions, though many participants achieve a lot more. Out of 179 citizens, Hilda O'Grady from Kinvara, Galway, received the Climate Ambassador Award for going above and beyond.

Shriya Mishra from Greystones, has been heavily involved with the GLOBE citizen science air quality campaign for NASA, and she has also completed a project on climate anxiety. Pursuing many ideas all at once, this young Climate Ambassador has boundless energy from making pencil pots out of magazines, to presenting at European conferences, and having climate conversations with her elected representatives. She has sourced free trees from the local council, organised a nature walk, presented to peers at the local library and secured a grant for a bee garden and pond at school.



Ballinaclesh resident, and former Government Special Adviser, Stephen Kearon PC has announced the successful completion of his academic journey at Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin), where he has graduated with a First Class Honours Degree in Digital Forensics and Cyber Security. Stephen's tireless efforts, combined with a thirst for knowledge and a keen analytical mind, have positioned him at the forefront of his graduating class. His dedication to the field bodes well for the future of cybersecurity, where skilled professionals like Stephen play a crucial role in safeguarding digital landscapes from emerging threats.

Signal Arts Centre's SOS fundraiser for repairs

Bray's longest serving and only dedicated visual arts space, Signal Arts Centre, is in dire need of funds to carry out urgent repairs. They are appealing to all their creative and artistic friends to donate their talent in a major effort to raise the funds and make the space more secure for all the artists it supports. Can you donate a small work(s) to Signal Art Centre?

To take part the work should be:

- 15cm x 15cm (6in x 6in)
- Any medium on a 2D surface ñ painting, drawing, printing, photography, embroidery, sculpture, textile, wood, ceramics, leather, glass, prose, poetry, etc.
- Work should be unframed.
- Your details on the back of the work: Artist Name, Title of work, Medium. Your contact details if desired.

Deliver/Post work to Signal Arts Centre by January 19th 2024.

If you have any questions please contact: sos@signalartscentre.ie

All works will be featured across Signal's social media channels and on their website, so the sooner you submit the work the sooner they can share the love.

Works will be priced at E50 each and as

with similar such sales the buyer will not know who created the work until they have bought it.

Public Exhibition and online sale of all works takes place on Valentine's Day, Wednesday 14th February 2024.

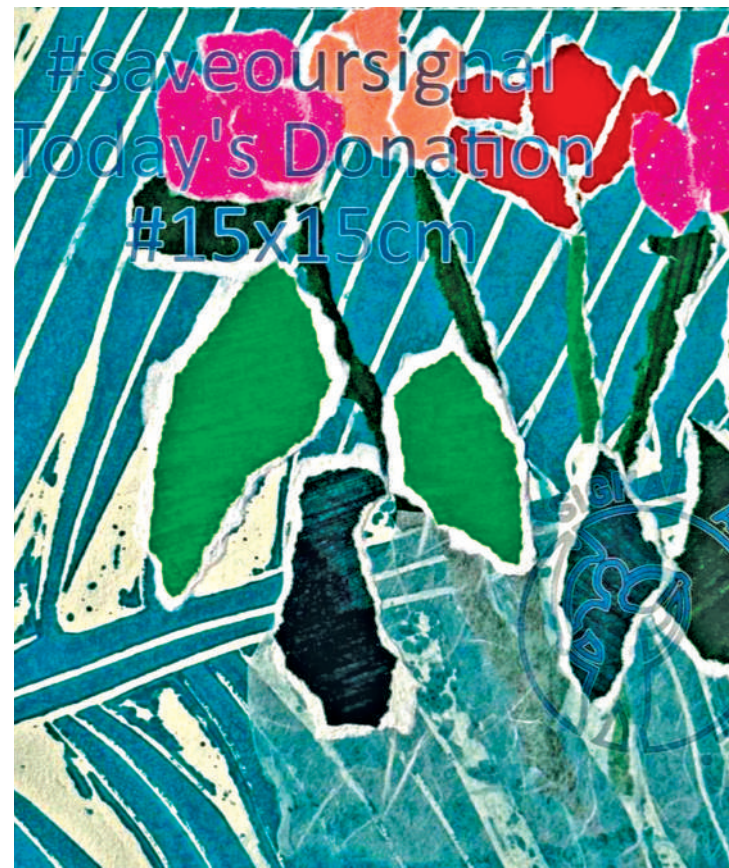
Signal has been in operation for over 32 years and in that time has facilitated over 600 artists to exhibit and/or work in the center.

"We facilitate artists and communities coming together to make art, provide workshops, talks, tell stories, screen films and even make music together. This all happens in a century old building that was once a chip shop with living quarters attached, which, by the way, we managed to get a mortgage on in 2010.

"Over the years we have altered and adjusted the space to accommodate a gallery and a variety of work spaces using our own collec-

tive DIY abilities and a few pub quizzes to cover the basic materials. But the building is in need of some serious TLC. We have no insulation, no double glazing and a variety of leaks coming from old pipes and old roof repairs. The problems add enormous amounts to our utility bills and make it uncomfortable to work during the winter. We'd prefer to be spending our time and budget on supporting artists not heating and patching a leaky building. Your contribution will go a long way to helping us do that.

Thank you in advance for your help and everyone in Signal is excited to see what work will be donated. P.S For those who would prefer to just donate money (or do both!) you can do so via www.paypal.com/paypalme/SignalArtsCentre. Or go straight to our website."



Video series marks 100th anniversary of WB Yeats Nobel Prize

Seanad Eireann and The National Library of Ireland (NLI) have launched a video series to mark the award of the Nobel Prize in Literature to WB Yeats. The poet and dramatist, who was a member of Seanad Eireann from 1922 to 1928, received notice of the award on this day 100 years ago.

A collaboration between Seanad Eireann and the NLI, the 'Yeats Nobel Centenary' series is a collection of 12 short videos featuring readings of a selection of Yeats' poems and excerpts from his Seanad speeches. Readers include current and former senators, past

winners of the NLI's Poetry Aloud poetry speaking competition for schools, WB Yeats' granddaughter Caitriona Yeats, and others across the cultural spectrum with a link to WB Yeats. Featured pieces include Yeats' Seanad debates about Irish manuscripts

and divorce, as well as readings of poems such as 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', 'When You Are Old', 'The Wild Swans at Coole', and 'The Second Coming'.

On 14th November 1923, via a phone message from The Irish Times, WB Yeats

received the news of his Nobel Prize in Literature award, to be conferred in Sweden a month later. In his citation, the Nobel Prize chair described Yeats as 'the interpreter of his country' while Yeats described the prize as 'Europe's welcome to the Free State'.

Commenting on the launch of the videos, Cathaoirleach of Seanad Eireann, Senator Jerry Buttimer said: "WB Yeats is recognised as one of

Ireland's greatest poets, but what is lesser known is that he was also an outspoken member of Seanad Eireann. A member of the first Seanad in 1922 and the 1925 Seanad, this coincided with the birth of the Irish Free State.

"As a senator, he was a frank contributor to debates. This included a motion on returning paintings from the Hugh Lane Collection from Britain to Ireland, and objecting to the use of the Irish language in parliamentary proceedings when it was not widely understood amongst its members. He was also a vociferous crit-

ic of the law that prohibited divorce in Ireland, arguing that it would alienate Protestants and create a barrier between the South and the North.

"On behalf of Seanad Eireann, I am delighted to partner with the NLI on this project, which brings the cultural and political parts of Yeats' life together and puts in context his award as giving expression to the spirit of a whole nation."

Director of the National Library of Ireland, Dr Audrey Whitty said: "The National Library of Ireland holds the world's largest collection of mate-

rial relating to WB Yeats. His Nobel Prize medal and manuscripts of many of his poems, including 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' and 'Easter, 1916' are just some of the items on display as part of our Yeats' exhibition."

She added: "Yeats frequently visited the National Library of Ireland, so we are always exploring new ways to share his work. We are delighted to collaborate with Seanad Eireann on this celebratory project. Yeats was awarded the prize 'for his always inspired poetry, which, in a highly artistic form,

gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation'. We hope that the poems selected in this series will showcase his extraordinary talent'.

The 'Yeats Nobel Centenary' series was produced by the Oireachtas Broadcasting Unit and will run on the NLI and Oireachtas social media channels, and on Oireachtas TV. The videos will be published on the NLI website here and across social channels on a phased basis between now and 10th December, the date on which WB Yeats accepted his Nobel Prize in Literature.



If you're looking for the perfect Christmas night out, then look no further! Step into the luxurious surroundings of the Whale Theatre for an unforgettable night of music, entertainment, banter and good old fashioned fun with The Camembert Quartet! Described as "the greatest five-piece quartet in the world", the Camembert Quartet were the Late Late Show's house band for 12 years, where they rocked out with celebrities including Robbie Williams and Rod Stewart. Throughout the evening, the band will be performing a selection of their own upbeat and often hilarious material alongside festive favourites and well-known tunes. There might even be a special guest singer, or two! Tickets also include a complimentary glass of mulled wine and a juicy mince pie! Saturday 16th December, 8pm (doors 7pm). Tickets €32 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

Celebrate Christmas with Classic Harmony

Whale Theatre, Sunday 17th December, 4pm (doors 3pm). Tickets €20/€18 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

Classic Harmony, our own international award-winning Vocal Ensemble from Ashford, Co. Wicklow, return to the Whale Theatre after two years to perform a concert to get your Christmas festival celebrations off to a wonderful start!

So much of the atmosphere of the season is associated with the music we hear and Classic Harmony will have something for everyone with their eclectic mix of carols; old and new and well-loved festive songs that will carry young and old into the World of Christmas!



Powerful exhibition in aid of Bray Women's Refuge



Cllr Stephen Stokes, Cllr Aoife Flynn-Kennedy, and Rebecca Molloy

ing. Many people go through difficult struggles, and this helped to underscore how important tackling domestic violence is. As a society we must rally around victims to support them."

'Behind the Veil - Our Journey to Freedom' was a powerful exhibit at the Whale Theatre on Saturday 25th November, organised by Greystones Family Resource Centre and Bray Women's Refuge together with ANU, Wicklow Domestic Violence Supports.

Speaking after the event, Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore said: "The Behind The Veil exhibition by domestic abuse survivors was truly, a powerful and moving experience. The powerful artwork and atmosphere created at the exhibit showcased the incredible strength and creativity of domestic abuse survivors.

"Art, whether it is sculpture, stories, poetry or mixed media works, has the power to evoke emotion, open dialogue, and challenge paradigms. It can be used to inspire action, call attention to injustice, and bring visibility to issues that would otherwise remain unseen. Beyond the Veil exhibition did that brilliantly. It is so important that the work is acknowledged, understood and supported.

"Everything on display served as a testament to the courage and resilience of their creators and in particular the 'hanging out the dirty washing' concept was so compelling. It was so real to read the reasons and go on the journey through why survivors don't leave, what happens when they do, the thought process that survivors go through, and the hope that survivors felt in the aftermath. In creating this space, the Beyond The Veil exhibition has allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of the impact that domestic violence has on individuals and communities.

"Christmas can be a dangerous time for women and their children experiencing domestic violence. I would encourage people in Wicklow to do what they can to support Domestic Violence Charities that can offer some light, hope and solidarity to women and their families experiencing domestic violence. Together, we can raise awareness and inspire positive change for survivors of domestic

abuse," concludes Whitmore.

Cllr Aoife Flynn-Kennedy (Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council) and Cllr Stephen Stokes (Leas Cathaoirleach, Greystones Municipal District) were also in attendance to support the event. Cllr Stokes praised the participants and organisers for bringing this exhibition forward. Cllr Stephen Stokes stated: "The stories of those affected were very moving."



Deputy Whitmore at the Beyond the Veil exhibition with Lynne O'Connor from Greystones Family Resource Centre



Ian Adams, an independent filmmaker living in Arklow, has made his third feature-length film. Titled 'The Feature', the film has just won the award for Best Independent Movie at the Underground Film Festival in Dun Laoghaire. The film follows a group of misfits who decide to make a feature movie on their own after being rejected again and again by investors and producers, and having no idea what they're doing. The trailer can be viewed on Ian Adams' YouTube channel.

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International Volunteer Day - 5th December

The 5th of December marks International Volunteer Day. Dating back to 1985, it aims to recognise the power of socially engaged individuals and communities and the immense impact they make in society.

"Let's re-commit to ensuring that all people can lend their energies to shaping a better future for all people and the planet we share. Let's stand with volunteers, everywhere" - Antonio Guterres, Un General Secretary:

According to the UN there are 862.4 million volunteers worldwide engaging in voluntary work every month aged over 15. That's impressive! What would our world look like if 8 billion people freely offered a few hours of their time weekly? Kinder, more compassionate, more educated,

healthier, cleaner, more inclusive most probably!

On a smaller scale, the same goes for the Citizen Information Services (CIS) based in Bray and Arklow. Without the dedicated help of volunteers, the CIS would not be able to provide its free and confidential information, advice and advocacy services to our over 8,000 clients. That is why we are thrilled to take this opportunity to publicly thank our own volunteers and to encourage individuals of all ages to get involved with us where we can promise them that they can make



a difference.

Currently, in Bray we have 16 volunteers, out of which 6 have recently joined. 22 people of diverse ages and backgrounds volunteer with the CIS in County Wicklow while in South Leinster there are currently 70 people volunteering for the Citizen Information Service.

"I am elated to be able to contribute to Bray CIC with my writing & communications skills. I believe it's really

important to showcase more of the community and voluntary work people do for their fellows, as this brings optimism and a sense of community and reliance upon one another in these turbulent times we are going through globally. As a migrant, volunteering with Bray CIC allows me to be more embedded in the Irish community and also understand how the social system works here," declared Raluca Turcanasu, Volunteer PR Coordinator.

All volunteers go through comprehensive, mandatory training with the CIS to ensure they can provide an accurate and holistic information service to our clients equipping them to deal with a wide range of queries from Social Welfare, to Employment Rights to Medical Cards

and much more.

It makes me proud to see older and young people alike, Irish and non-Irish, get involved in CIS in various roles such as information provision, reception, form filling and public relations. Without their contribution we would be able to deal with fewer clients and our work would be less publicly visible. Togetherness is the backbone of a healthy, functional society, and I am thrilled to work together with these dedicated people," said Martina Cronin, Development Manager.

Funded by the Citizens Information Board, the range of areas covered by the CIS are wide including social welfare rights and entitlements and other social issues such as employment,

health services, housing, education, family matters and consumer rights on which people need access to information.

For anyone needing impartial, confidential, non-judgemental and informed advice and support the CIS is here to help. Its website www.citizensinformation.ie is packed full of helpful information. To find out opening hours or if you would like the CIC to address a specific query or to book an appointment with a member of the team please contact your local Citizens Information Centre. There are offices in Arklow and Bray where customers can drop-in, telephone or make an appointment. Telephone: Arklow - 0818 07 6750 and Bray - 0818 07 6780.

Christmas Road Safety Campaign launched



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Co. Wicklow. A98 C5D0.
Please contact Fahid Saleem
at bray@daata.ie / 01 286 3006

The Road Safety Authority (RSA), An Garda Síochána, and the Department of Transport and Department of Justice are together urging road users to act responsibly and safely when using the roads throughout the Christmas and New Year period.

The call was made at the launch of a new road safety campaign highlighting the benefits of 30km/h speed limits in urban areas.

As the festive period approaches, the RSA, An Garda Síochána and the Department of Transport are calling on people to refrain from driving while under the influence of alcohol and illegal drugs, and they will be also targeting other road traffic offences such as mobile phone use, speeding and non-wearing of seatbelts.

This year's road safety campaign focuses on 30km/h speed limit in urban areas, a strategic initiative aimed at reducing road traffic fatalities. There is overwhelming evidence that lower speed limits make streets safer and more pleasant places for children and adults to live, socialise, work and play. When parents and children can walk and cycle in their neighbourhood, families benefit from healthier children, less stress and more money in their pockets.

In addition, data consistently indicates that higher speeds significantly escalate both the incidence and severity of road accidents:

- If hit at 60km/h 9 out of 10 pedestrians will be killed.
- If hit at 50km/h 5 out of 10 pedestrians will be killed.
- If hit at 30km/h 9 out of 10 will survive.

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Mr. Jack Chambers said: "Altho-ugh we have made great strides in the past 20 years, it is clear from the current trends that we must redouble our efforts to restore the downward trend of deaths and serious injuries on our roads. We are working on multiple fronts to address this problem. My Department has published a speed limit review, containing a



range of recommendations focused on ensuring that we have safe and appropriate speed limits on all classes of roads. We are also drafting new legislation to introduce mandatory drug testing at the scene of serious incidents, amending penalty points legislation for motorists committing multiple offences, and continuing to work with An Garda Síochána to support it in its enforcement of road traffic legislation. I urge everyone to remember that responsible driving is not just a personal choice, but a responsibility we must all share. Let us make this festive season a safe one for everyone."

Mr Sam Waide, CEO of the RSA said: "The

Christmas period should be a time of joy and celebration, not tragedy. Slower speeds save lives, and by complying with these limits, every road user contributes to a safer, more responsible road environment. We implore all road users to slow down and adhere to speed limits, including those in urban areas like 30km/h speed limits where they are in place, avoid driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and respect all other road users. Together, we can ensure that this Christmas is remembered for the right reasons."

Paula Hilman, Assistant Commissioner, Roads Policing & Community Engagement, An Garda

Síochána said: "Today we are launching our Christmas and New Year Road Safety Cam-paign, which will run from 1 December 2023 to 4 January 2024. This campaign focuses on detecting known offences that contribute to death and serious injury on our roads - speeding and drink and drug driving. Our Roads Policing and Regular Members will be focusing on detecting those who continue to take risks on our roads and to play our part in making our roads safer. We want everyone

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Arc Design seeks full planning permission on behalf of Simon Ball for the development at Bellevue Hill, Delgany, Co. Wicklow which consists of amendments to previously permitted PRR 23/219 for new detached single storey three-bedroom dwelling with detached gym/games room structure. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours. The planning application may be viewed online at www.wicklow.ie, under planning online enquiries. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

to enjoy their Christmas, it is imperative we all do so responsibly - never get behind the wheel having consumed alcohol or drugs, drive at an appropriate speed to the road and weather conditions, do not get distracted, focus on what you are doing and wear your seat-belt. We do not want to

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Arc Design seeks full planning permission on behalf of Conor and Mary Miles for the development at 2 Waverly Avenue, Greystones, County Wicklow, A63 HC91 which consists of (A) Single storey side extension and conversion of non-habitable attic space into habitable fifth bedroom with ensuite with roof windows to front and rear roof slopes and window to eastern gable. (B) All associated site development works, drainage and landscaping to accommodate side extension. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours. The planning application may be viewed online at www.wicklow.ie, under planning online enquiries. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

be visiting your family with devastating news this Christmas or New Year."

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Arc Design seeks full planning permission on behalf of Rachel Jones for the development at 8 The Poplars, Delgany, County Wicklow A63 E166 which consists of: (A) Proposed part two storey, part single storey detached four-bedroom house to the south of the site including part demolition of dwelling which is on the same site as permitted PRR 22/986 for subdivision of the existing house for 'North House'. (B) Provision of surface water soakaway to meet BRE Digest 365 standards for the new detached house. (C) All associated site development works, drainage and landscaping to accommodate new dwelling to south of site. with the use of the existing private foul sewer connection into the public foul sewer in public road. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours. The planning application may be viewed online at www.wicklow.ie, under planning online enquiries. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.



WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

John O'Donoghue & Damhnait Ó Donnchú seek permission for (A) conversion of existing attic space to habitable accommodation and (B) addition of new first floor windows and rooflights to existing north, south & west elevations and all associated site works at 'Little Acre', Killadreenan, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow, A63 V225. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Ian & Louise Stanley seek permission for the redesign and reconfiguration of the existing entrance hall and roof to the existing entrance hall and the addition of a new master bedroom to the existing house together with any associated drainage and site works at Annacrivey Woods, Kilmolin, Enniskerry, County Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

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Wicklow ranked 9th best county to start a business

Procure.ie, business utility consultants, have uncovered the best Irish counties for starting a business. Procure.ie analysed five key metrics: average office cost, average office size, average salary, number of jobs available per capita, and the number of houses available to rent per capita. Wicklow was ranked 9th.

Using extensive research, Procure.ie, Ireland's leading business utility consultants, have rated the best counties for starting a business. When analysing all 26 Irish counties, Procure.ie considered crucial factors like population, average office rent per square metre, average square metre, average salary, jobs per capita, and houses to rent per capita, all crucial things to consider when running a business. The study generated an overall score, offering entrepreneurs and businesses valuable insights to make informed decisions about where to establish or expand their ventures.

With a population of 35,087, Leitrim emerged as a hidden gem for aspiring business owners. Despite its smaller size, the county has some attractive benefits one of them being average office rent of €122 per square metre. Leitrim earned a remarkable overall score of 3.1020. With 0.0057 jobs per capita available,

and one of the cheapest average rent prices for offices, this makes Leitrim a great place to run a business.

Mayo, renowned for its picturesque parts, came in second with its population of 137,231, it offers a perfect blend of opportunity and affordability. Mayo also has an average office rent per square metre coming to €116 and an average salary of €36,000, showing that it's a stable foundation for business growth. As a region with 0.0065 jobs per capita, the county offers an opportunity for business growth with an overall score of 2.5637.

Wexford comes in third place and proves that it could be a thriving business haven with an overall score of 2.4862. Wexford combines affordability with the average office rent being €177 and has the economic potential for growth with the number of jobs per capita being 0.0035.



Sandra O'Shaugnessy with Josh van der Flier at the book signing for Josh the Flyer in Bridge Street Books, Wicklow Town.

Wicklow companies recognised for Sustainability Excellence

Bord Bia has acknowledged the sustainability performance of 97 Irish food and drink companies that have attained Origin Green Gold Membership in 2023. Gold Membership is given to companies, which are members of the Origin Green programme, in recognition of their enhanced sustainability efforts. Three Wicklow companies were awarded Gold Membership at the event; Mienas, Powerscourt Distillery and Wicklow Way Wines.

The Gold Members were formally recognised at Bord Bia's annual Origin Green Sustainability Seminar last week, which was opened by Charlie McConalogue T.D., Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine.

Since the establishment of the awards in 2020, a total of 234 Irish food, drink and horticulture companies have been awarded Gold Membership. Overall, the 97 companies come from 21

counties and represent sectors such as dairy, meat, seafood and aquaculture, confectionary, beverages, and horticulture.

Deirdre Ryan, Director of Sustainability and Quality Assurance, Origin Green at Bord Bia, who

officially announced the 2023 Gold Members, said: "Origin Green continues to be a pioneering programme for sustainability in Ireland. We work with more than 300 companies to help them set and achieve sustainability

plans and set out to acknowledge companies which have performed exemplary in target areas through the annual Gold Member status. This year, we are thrilled to announce 97 companies which have achieved Gold Membership for 2023.

"It is particularly pleasing to see that 80% of our Gold Members are from the SME sector, as typically, smaller companies do not have large teams working in the area of sustainability."

CLASSIFIEDS

THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

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