

LOCAL Wicklow Times

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Tuesday 9th January 2024 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

REPAIRING THE SUGARLOAF

A public consultation has been opened by Wicklow County Council on a plan for the future use of the Great Sugarloaf in the Wicklow Mountains. Access to the Sugarloaf is currently 'unattractive and uninviting, the Council says, and 'immediate' repairs are needed.

Wicklow County Council proposes to carry out the Sugarloaf repair project which will include the following works: Re-fencing of carpark, marking parking spaces, upgrade 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. The 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.

The Council's outline of the project states: "Great Sugarloaf is a much loved and much

used landmark in Wicklow. More than 20,000 climb it annually. The route is short but dramatic, giving the experience of a real adventure within a 90-minute timeframe. Due to the heavy usage, the mountain has suffered severe erosion from the car park to summit. The approach trail is almost 50m wide and water damage to gullies means that parts of the route are in stone



Ruby McEvoy, Ali Jameson and Caia Byrne at the St. Pat's GAA New Year's Eve Friendly in Dunbar Park, Wicklow. Pic: Michael Kelly

gullies almost 5 feet deep. The landscape is damaged, as is the biodiversity of the area.

"This project aims to provide a sustainable, hard wearing trail surface to the upper shoulder of the mountain using various techniques outlined by UPAG (Upland Path Advisory Group - Scotland) from a reverse turn trail, to turf drains to stone pitching. These various techniques will be used as a showcase for trail building techniques in the eastern part of the country.

"Access to the great Sugarloaf is currently unattractive, the car park entrance is uninviting, the surface in disrepair and no demarcation of parking spaces is in place. Additionally, there is very limited space for busses to park roadside. The Sugarloaf has the

potential to provide a high quality, sustainable, recreation experience for many years to come, but it requires immediate repair and attention. The project has been discussed in detail with local grazing rights holders who are in full support of these plans."

The project has been divided into five stages, starting with re-fencing the car park and erecting signage, and finishing with habitat restoration. Spruce saplings and small trees will be removed from the mountain to encourage growth of native species. Heather and gorse will be protected. Stone required for the project will be sourced from the mountain using "borrow areas" where no more than 15% of stone in each area is used. Interpretive panels will be situated throughout

the route alongside waymarking.

Plans and particulars

of the proposed development may be inspected by the public up to

12th January and submissions can be made up to 29th January.

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GARA kickstart 2024 with Christmas lunch

Greystones Active Retirement Association (GARA) finished the Christmas Season and got the New Year off to a great start with their Annual Christmas Lunch last week.

Held in the Parkview Hotel in Newtown-mounkenney, over 80 GARA Greystones members and supporters dined and danced the afternoon away.

They were welcomed by Chairman, Kathleen

Redmond, who hard worked hard organising and promoting the event. Old friends, and new, gathered to say hello, to catch up with each other and to plan events for the coming year.

A big feature of the

afternoon was the raffle, with Pauline Kenny offering over 25 prizes !! Congratulations to Frances McGuckian, who won the First Prize of a magnificent hamper.

As always, Tommy Carroll provided the

music which included rock and roll, old time waltzes, quick step, polkas and line dancing. There was music and dance with a broad appeal, which meant the dance floor was never empty.

Speaking after the event, Kathleen Kelleher said "Special thanks are extended to all who helped to make the afternoon a success, to the Parkview Hotel, to John McGowan for the photos. But especially to those who came along and joined in the festivities. If even one person had stayed at home, the afternoon would not have been the same without them."

GARA Greystones activities are resuming this week. New members are most welcome to come along, as well as those who have been Members previously.

Membership for



Pauline Kenny who organised the raffle at the GARA Christmas dinner held in the Parkview Hotel. Pic: John McGowan



The Committee of Greystones Active Retirement Association at their annual Christmas Dinner; Pat Riordan, Elsie Kelly, Kathleen Redmond, Kathleen Kelleher, Maureen McKeown, Anne O'Neill and Hilary Taylor. Pic: John McGowan

GARA Greystones is always welcome and new ideas for activities and events are always encouraged.

GARA details and trips, talks and information are available from GARA Greystones Members are

Information also available each second Tuesday of the month.

Kilian House, behind Holy Rosary Church; 10.30 am to 12 pm. Or from Kathleen Kelleher, 087 2845465.

The next GARA Greystones Coffee Morning & Talk will be held on Friday, 26th January 2024, in Kilian House, behind Holy Rosary Church; 10.30 am to 12 pm.

Bray New Year Sea Swim aids local charities



Bray Lions Club annual Charity Sea Swim, held on New Year's Day, this year supported four local charities - Bray Area Rough Sleepers Support (BARRS), Bray Lakers, Ardmore Rovers and Bray Lions Club Breakfast and Reading Clubs project.

The Charity Swim has been part of the New Year tradition in Bray since 1984 when it was established with the dual purposes of having some fun and raising funds for local charities. The annual event has to date realised more than €80,000 for a long list of worthy local causes.

This year the swim took place in a new location opposite The Martello. A team of Bray Lions provided stewarding, communications and safety services and Lions also took up a bucket collection on the seafront. Bray Lions President Peter Doyle said "We are honoured to continue to organise this traditional event in Bray again this year."



Will's Playground Committee thank the local community

Will's Playground Committee in Newcastle would like to take the opportunity to wish the community every good wish for 2024.

As 2023 came to a close, Will's parents Andrew and Julie Leeson said "we are delighted to announce that an amazing €50,000 has been raised for Will's Playground, which means that we are only 15,000 off our fundraising target of €65,000. We have had a busy year with so many amazing fundraising events including Will's Colour Run, a dog show and more, all of which have been greatly supported by the local community. The great news is that we expect to break ground on the construction of Will's Playground in the grounds of St. Francis National School in the Summer of 2024! We are very grateful to the many people who have donated to help us to build a lasting legacy in memory of Will."

The Committee have some more fundraising events planned for early 2024 to help bridge the €15,000 gap, but if anyone would like to donate to Will's Playground, please visit <https://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/willsplayground>.



Pictured is the handover of a cheque from the patrons of Country Cottage Stables for €1400 which was raised from sales of a calendar.

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183 vacant social homes across County Wicklow

Figures released to Social Democrats 2024 Local Election candidate, Aaron McAllorum have revealed that there are 183 vacant social homes across County Wicklow that are unoccupied.

In a freedom of information release to Mr. McAllorum, Wicklow County Council disclosed that 80% of the vacant units are three bedroom homes, with a further 10% in the two bed category. Commenting on the figures, Mr. McAllorum said: "Government has time and time again failed to meet its delivery targets for the provision of social and affordable housing. "Bringing vacant stock back into use is one of the fastest and most sustainable ways to increase the supply of homes. There can be no excuse to leave houses vacant amidst a crisis in accommodation, the range of units vacant in this county beggars belief, there's a mix of properties here that could be allocated to a broad spectrum of people that need housing urgently. "The Department and Local Authority must work more effectively to turn vacants into homes." In Arklow Municipal District there are 13 vacant homes, in Baltinglass 23, in Greystones 7, and in Wicklow 41, according to Council figures. Across the county there are 47 houses that are in progress of being brought back into use. In total, 114 houses were brought back into use in 2023.



Alannah Nic Craith, Emily Earls and Zoe O'Leary who performed in the Arklow Panto Creations' 'Beauty and the Beast' in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow.

House prices fall in last quarter of 2023

In Wicklow, prices in the final three months of 2023 were 2% lower than a year previously, compared to a rise of 7% seen a year ago. The average price of a home is now €400,000, 18% below its Celtic Tiger peak. Nationally, housing prices during 2023 rose by an average of 3.4%, the smallest increase since 2019, according to the latest Daft.ie House Price Report released last week.

The typical listed price nationwide in the final three months of the year was €320,046, 1.5% lower than in the third quarter and roughly 14% below the Celtic Tiger peak.

There remain significant differences in price trends across the country. Prices in Dublin rose by an average of 2% during 2023, while in the rest of Leinster, the increase was 0.8%. Cork City saw prices rise by 3.7% during the year, while Galway city saw an increase of 4.1%. Increases in Waterford and Limerick cities were larger, though, at 6.1% and 9% respectively. Outside

the cities, prices were 6.8% higher in Munster and 8.3% higher in Connacht-Ulster in the final quarter of 2023 than a year previously.

The number of homes available to buy nationwide on December 1st stood at just over 11,100. This is down 27% year-on-year and is the lowest since March 2022. It is also less than half the 2019 average of 24,200. The fall in availability, which started in the middle of the year, can be seen in all major regions of the country, although it's proportionately largest in Dublin (down 33% year-on-year).

Record number of home commencements in Wicklow for first 11 months of 2023

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has published its monthly data on the number of Commencements Notices (residential construction starts) for November 2023.

The data show in the first eleven months of 2023 there have been commencement notices for 1,477 homes in Wicklow, a 36.1% increase on the same period in 2022 (1,085 units) and a record when compared

to similar periods since the data series began in 2015.

Nationally, the strong uptick in commencements this year has continued and 29,634 homes have been commenced nationally in the first eleven months of 2023. This is a 17.7% increase on the same period last year (25,162).

Overall, the data show that the number of commencements in the first 11 months of 2023 (29,634) already exceeds the total number for the whole of 2022 (26,957).



Gareth McRory, Janette Webster, Noel Morahan, Conor Kennedy, Martin Healy and Bill Maher at the Colaiste Chraobh Abhann 20th Anniversary celebration lunch which was held in the school.



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

PREPARATION OF THE GREYSTONES-DELGANY & KILCOOLE LOCAL AREA PLAN – PUBLIC INFORMATION DAYS

PRE – DRAFT PLAN PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Wicklow County Council intends to review the existing plan and prepare a new Local Area Plan for the settlements of 'Greystones-Delgany' & 'Kilcoole'. An online consultation portal has been created, which makes reference to the significant planning topics that the Local Area Plan will address. The portal can be accessed by scanning the QR code here or through the consultation hub at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/ConsultationHub> and is accepting submissions up to 31st January 2024.

PUBLIC INFORMATION DAYS

Everyone is invited to public information days with the plan team on the following dates:

Tuesday 16th January 2024: 10am to 1pm and from 4pm to 7pm in Kilcoole Community Centre, Lott Lane, Kilcoole, A63 X862.

Thursday 18th January 2024: 10am to 1pm and from 4pm to 7pm in Greystones Municipal District Offices, Mill Road, Greystones, A63 TX86.

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions regarding the review of the existing plan and the preparation of the new Local Area Plan are invited from the public and interested bodies up to 31st January 2024. Submissions may be made in either of the following ways:

1. Write to: 'Greystones-Delgany & Kilcoole LAP', Administrative Officer, Planning Department, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96.
2. Through the online consultation portal via the QR code here or at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/ConsultationHub>

NOTE

All submissions should include your name and an email address/contact address and, where relevant, details of any organisation, community group or company etc., which you represent. Please make your submission by one medium only, i.e. hard copy or through the portal. The planning process is an open and public one. In that context, all submissions are a matter of public record, and may also be placed on the County Council's website.



Christmas Decoration prizegiving celebrates creativity and sustainability



Pupils who took part in the Wicklow County Council Recycled Christmas Decoration competition with Environment Officer Jim Callery, CEO of Wicklow County Council Emer O’Gorman, and Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Aoife Flynn Kennedy.

The Annual Christmas Decoration Prize-giving Ceremony took place in County Buildings on Wednesday last (December 20th). The event, a testament to innovation and environmental consciousness, brought together young makers from over 20 primary schools across the County.

The evening was a showcase of artistic flair and fun as students presented their handmade Christmas decorations, fashioned from a diverse array of recycled materials ranging from clothes pegs, wine bottles and socks to coathangers and the ubiquitous toilet roll insert. Each creation reflected a unique approach to repurposing discarded items in innovative ways.

Cllr Aoife Flynn-Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, recognised the support of parents and teachers, saying: "We're thrilled to see the incredible creativity and imagination of our young participants. This event wouldn't have been possible without the dedication of our teachers and the encouragement from parents. This competition also aligns with the wider Green Schools Programme, which has been instrumental in fostering environmental stewardship among our students, and we commend everyone involved."

Emer O’Gorman, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council, emphasised the Council's dedication to sustainability, stating: "The forthcoming Local Authority Climate Action Plan, slated for adoption in early 2024, is a pivotal step towards a more sustainable future for County Wicklow. This plan underscores our commitment to nurturing a circular economy, reducing waste, and promoting sustainable practices across our community. The young participants in tonight's event have exemplified how creativity can lead us towards a more thoughtful and sustainable way of celebrating the festive season."

The event highlighted not only the artistic abilities of the young maker's minds but also emphasises the significance of sustainable living and creative giving during the Christmas season. The County Council applauded the efforts of all participants, acknowledging their role in inspiring a more mindful and eco-conscious community.

The Christmas Decoration Prize-giving Ceremony serves as a reminder that creativity and sustainability can go hand in hand, shaping a brighter, greener future for County Wicklow.

Launch of sustainable coffee cup initiative in Blessington marks shift towards circular economy

The Blessington community has taken a significant step towards a circular economy with the introduction of a sustainable coffee cup initiative. Led by 2GoCup in partnership with Blessington Tidy Towns and Wicklow County Council, this endeavour aims to reduce single-use plastic waste while fostering collaboration between local businesses and the community.

Participating outlets have united to integrate reusable cups into their daily operations, offering customers an eco-conscious alternative to single-use plastics. These reusable cups, designed for multiple uses, can be conveniently picked up or dropped off at any of these four outlets. After each use, the cups undergo thorough cleaning, ensuring their reusability. Customers are given the choice to opt for a fresh cup or receive a refund of the initial deposit paid, emphasizing the sustainable cycle of this initiative.

Cllr Aoife Flynn-Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, lauded the collective effort, stating: "The introduction of this sustainable coffee cup initiative in Blessington signifies our commitment to building a circular economy. It's inspiring to witness local businesses like Pistachio, Moody Rooster, VDA Coffee, and Greenway Café and the community collaborating to tackle plastic waste, showcasing our dedication to a more sustainable future."

Emer O’Gorman, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council, echoed this sentiment, saying: "This partnership between 2GoCup and local businesses exemplifies the power of collective action in waste reduction. By embracing reusable alternatives, we're fostering a stronger, more sustainable community in Blessington."

This initiative not only adheres to environmental best practices but also strengthens community bonds, emphasizing the shared goal of preserving the town's natural beauty and resources.



Caleb Railton at the Rathdrum Vs Hound Dogs annual rugby match in aid of Rathdrum First Responders

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- ZD** IPO medical Computer Assistant (Level 5)



Lucas at the Rathdrum Vs Hound Dogs annual rugby match in aid of Rathdrum First Responders.

Wicklow communities to benefit from new community hub and outdoor recreational area

The Housing Finance Agency (HFA) has announced funding of €250,000 to support Approved Housing Bodies and Local Authorities in the delivery of community-enhancing initiatives and facilities. Thirteen initiatives across 11 different counties were chosen.

In Wicklow, funded initiatives include:

- The construction of a community hub in a new Respond housing estate in Rathcoran, Baltinglass. The space will be used for activities such as parent/toddler groups, arts and crafts classes, coffee mornings and tenant/support service meetings. The pavilion will also be home to Respond's Brain Health Initiative.
- Outdoor recreational area for St. John of God's at a community home for people with intellectual disabilities, located in Bray. The property will provide a home for four individuals who are moving from a congregated setting. HFA funding will go towards the cost of works to enhance the enclosed outdoor area with a decking area, a dedicated wildflower meadow and a grass path to allow for a continuous loop.

The HFA, which provides financing to support the delivery of social and affordable housing, awards community project funding to customers each year through its Social Investment Fund. The aim of the fund is to support initiatives that will complement the communities in which HFA-financed homes are built.

Announcing the funding awards, Housing Finance Agency CEO, Barry O'Leary, said: "We had great interest in our Social Investment Fund this year, with a range of creative and well-thought-out applications coming from customers across the country. The HFA is committed to supporting customers, not just in the delivery of housing, but also in the enhancement of communities around those homes with this fund. I look forward to seeing positive impacts these latest projects delivery for local residents."

Wicklow Town Courthouse roof to be repaired by February

Minister Simon Harris last week welcomed the start of roof repairs on Wicklow Town Courthouse to be completed by February of this year. Minister Harris has been in regular contact with the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the Courts Services enquiring about the Wicklow Town Court House which has been vacant for 14 years.

After speaking directly with the Courts Services last week, Minister Harris confirmed that works are planned to have the roof of the Court House repaired by February of this year.

The Court House has been vacant since 2010, back then the district court moved to Bray due to health and safety concerns at the courthouse. Circuit court sittings had already relocated from Wicklow town to Bray in 2008.

Minister Harris said: "I'm glad to say we're starting the year with some good news and that the roof of the vacant Court House is to be repaired by the end of next month. The roof as I understand it requires significant works so I'm delighted that this is being worked on as a priority. We've been waiting way too long for any form of progress regarding the Wicklow Town Court House. After having spoken to the Courts Services I understand representatives from the Office of

Public Works as recently as November last.

"The Courts Services have also confirmed to me that a courthouse comprising of an appropriate number of courtrooms and related facilities is envisaged as being required to meet current and future demand in Wicklow. This is extremely welcome and something I will be keeping a close eye on over the year.

"In more positive news the OPW have agreed to provide a high-level assessment of the Wicklow campus as a whole and these works are included in the OPW workplan for 2024. I look forward to the next update with regard to the Wicklow Town Court House. When it is fully repaired and deemed safe it will undoubtedly be of huge benefit to the local community once again, especially given its ideal location."

Minister Harris concluded: "I will continue to engage with the County Council, the OPW and the Courts Services in a bid to get this project expedited in the coming months."

New benches in Burnaby Park

Four new benches have been installed by Wicklow County Council in the Burnaby Park, Greystones. Cathaoirleach of the Greystones Municipal District, Cllr Stephen Stokes has warmly welcomed their delivery.

Cllr Stokes stated: "I raised the need for more benches at a Greystones District meeting. One particular area I highlighted was the Burnaby Park. I would like to express my thanks to the Greystones District Engineer and the Council staff for making this happen."

Cllr Stokes said he believes that local residents support the installation of the new benches, and the need for more amenities. He also pointed out that the Burnaby Park receives a particularly high volume of use in the summer, especially during activity days. Cllr Stokes added: "The feedback has been positive about these benches. I met a local resident who was sitting on one of them, and they thought they were a great addition. These are the types of simple amenities that make a big impact in the community."

Reflecting on the the Wicklow Age Friendly Strategy, Cllr Stephen Stokes believes that these benches align with this strategy. Cllr Stokes noted: "The strategy outlines the importance of embedding universal access in all open spaces. I believe additional benches, and other measures, open up the community to further access and use. I am supportive of positive amenities that will appeal to people over 65. At the 2023 census, this age group increased by 27% to 23,661 in Wicklow. It is vital that we develop amenities that benefit the community widely."

Developing more amenities and resources for tourists is another positive benefit according to Cllr Stokes. He outlined that the more facilities that are available, the easier it is to attract visitors.

Cllr Stokes remarked: "If we have easy access to benches or similar amenities, it makes it more appealing for local residents or visitors to spend a day out. On a sunny day, someone could pick up a bite to eat or

a coffee, and easily enjoy some time in the Burnaby Park or another similar locations. I will continue to press for more amenities across Charlesland, Delgany, Greystones, Kilcoole, Killadreenan and Newcastle."



Cllr Stokes in Burnaby Park, Greystones



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Starting January 22nd, 2024.**



- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| ■ Art Painting and Drawing.
7:00-9:00pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €125 | ■ Pottery/Ceramics.
5:00-7:00pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €170 |
| ■ Oil Painting.
7:00-9:00pm. Duration 10 weeks. NEW | Fee €140 | ■ Pottery/Ceramics improvers.
7:00-9:00pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €170 |
| ■ Adobe. 6:45-8:45pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €160 | ■ Spanish Beginners.
6:40-8:10pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €100 |
| ■ Bridge Beginners.
7:30-9:30pm. Duration 8 weeks. | Fee €115 | ■ Spanish Improvers.
8:15-9:45pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €100 |
| ■ Beekeeping for Beginners.
7:30-9:30pm. Duration 9 weeks. | Fee €115 | ■ Crochet. 7:30-9:30pm. NEW
Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €130 |
| ■ Conversational Irish 1.
(Beginners-Intermediate) 6:40-8:10pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €100 | ■ Yoga Beginners. 6:45-8:00pm.
Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €80 |
| ■ Conversational Irish 2.
(Intermediate) Duration 10 weeks. 8:15-9:45pm. | Fee €100 | ■ Yoga Beginners & Beginners Plus.
8:00-9:15pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €80 |
| ■ Dressmaking 7:30-9:30pm.
Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €125 | ■ Pilates 7:30 Class.
7:30-8:30pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €100 |
| ■ English for speakers of other languages. Fee €125
7:30-9:30pm. Duration 10 weeks. | | ■ Pilates 8.30 Class.
8:30-9:30pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €100 |
| ■ Filmmaking and Special Effects: Fee €130
An introduction. 7:00-9:00pm. Duration 10 weeks. | | ■ Tai Chi. 7:00-8:15pm. Duration 10 weeks | Fee €100 |
| ■ First aid and cardiac first responder. Fee €125
7:30-9:30pm. Duration 10 weeks. | | ■ Leaving Certificate Irish.
7:30-9:30pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €130 |
| ■ French Beginners. Fee €100
6:40-8:10pm. Duration 9 weeks. | | ■ Digital Photography. Fee €130
7:30-9:30pm. Duration 10 weeks. | |
| ■ French Improvers. Fee €100
8:15-9:45pm. Duration 9 weeks. | | | |
| ■ Furniture making: woodwork for beginners. 7:30-9:30pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €175 | | |
| ■ Guitar. 7:30-9:30pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €130 | | |
| ■ Italian Beginners. Fee €100
6:40-8:10pm. Duration 10 weeks. | | | |
| ■ Italian Improvers. Fee €100
8:15-9:45pm. Duration 10 weeks. | | | |

DAYTIME HOBBY COURSES (Mondays)

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| ■ Crochet (Daytime).
1:30-3:30pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €125 |
| ■ Pilates for Beginners (Daytime).
11:00am-12:00pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €100 |
| ■ Art Painting & Drawing (Daytime).
11:00am-1:00pm. Duration 10 weeks. | Fee €125 |



Classes begin Monday January 22nd 2024
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Celine Mitchell, Stephen McGuinness, Sheena Cullen and Yvette Doyle pictured at the Colaiste Chraaobh Abhann 20th anniversary celebration lunch, held in the school.

New Defibrillator Grant for Bray Municipal District

During the 2024 discretionary budget meeting, Councillor Rory O'Connor proposed the creation of a new Defibrillator Grant for the Bray municipal area, allocating €10,000 for this initiative.

The grant aims to cover the cost of purchasing defibrillators for estates. Estate Resident Committees or residents wishing to participate in the scheme must complete the Expression of Interest form, obtainable by contacting roconnor@wicklowcoco.ie.

The Bray Municipal District plans to consult local First Responder Groups and the HSE to ensure the defibrillators are placed in the most suitable locations. The decision on awarding grant support for defibrillator purchases rests with the Bray Municipal District.

Councillor O'Connor stated "This grant is just the start in my opinion and if successful, I believe as a council we should be looking at ensuring that every estate in the Bray has access to a defibrillator. Overall, I believe this new grant will ensure an increased level of peace of mind within residents' estates and increased level of safety."

Expressions of interest forms must be completed and sent to the Bray Municipal District by February 7th.



Cllr Rory O'Connor

'We need to show the best of ourselves in 2024'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has said that his 2024 wish is that is a year that heralds change.

"We began 2023 anxious about the impact which the spiraling cost-of-living was having on each of us and our families," said Deputy Brady. "The challenges faced by businesses, workers, and their families were compounded by rising inflation. Energy costs, rents, and even an ordinary food shop have become much more expensive."

"The ongoing housing crisis continues to wreak huge social costs across the state. We have record numbers of homeless. Ordinary workers and families crippled by eye-watering rents, and a whole generation excluded from owning their own home as a result of failed government policies."

"We need a health service that is fully

resourced and equipped to serve the needs of ordinary people. There is a need for increased mental health services for young people across the county. People need timely access to a GP. Dental services cannot be allowed to become the preserve of only those who can afford to pay."

"I want to see 2024 to be the time that we reimagine what kind of county we want as community. With better sports facilities and other

activities designed to enrich the lives of the young and old alike. I believe that 2024 can become a year when ordinary people refuse to listen to excuses and demand answers to the delays in the provision of services to our county."

"We need to see work begin on major projects such as the upgrade of the N11, N81, and the West Wicklow Swimming Pool. This coming year we face into at least two elections. The EU election, and of

course the local elections. With the possibility that we may have a general election later on in the year."

"I hope that every person eligible to vote does so. It is a right that was granted to us by those who fought for it in our name, and we have a responsibility to use it. I believe that if you don't vote, no matter who you support, or participate in the political process, you are surrendering your voice. So please get out there and vote, for the

very best which you wish for, for your family and community."

"My hope is that is that these elections take place free from a background of fear and apathy. That people embrace the opportunity for change, and the potential that offers

for our communities. There are a lot of problems out there which need to be addressed, and quickly. But I believe that we can resolve these difficulties. I believe that we can

begin a process of change this year.

"My number one wish for 2024 is that we will look back on it in the future as the year that Irish people showed the very best of what we are about. I want to see our future marked by positivity. One where every Irish citizen is given the opportunity to contribute. Where we work together to better our communities, and above all ensure that we bring about a better future for young people."



John Brady TD

Third Level Katie Taylor Bursary opens for applications

Wicklow County Council and Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership have opened the application process for the Third level Katie Taylor bursary award for 2023/24.

The Katie Taylor Bursary is a third level award to support students who excel at sport to complete their college education. The award of €1,500 per year of college, to a maximum of four years is open to students who live in Wicklow now entering first year of third level education.

Students are not required to study a sports related course, but will need to demonstrate their involvement, commitment, and achievements in sport.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, acknowledged that the scholarship programme reflects Wicklow County Councils commitment to supporting high achieving young athletes to continue their education while also taking part in high performance training.

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman, encouraged students to apply for the bursary and commended the high-quality athletes that have been past recipients of the award.

Further guidelines and the application form can be downloaded from the Wicklow Sports & Recreation Partnership website at www.wicklowlsp.ie and any queries can be directed to wicklowlsp@wicklowcoco.ie.

Closing date for applications is Thursday the 1st of February 2024.

Sinn Fein selects candidates for Greystones

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has offered his warm congratulations to Esther Kelly and Brian Fogarty who have been selected to contest the 2024 local elections as the Sinn Féin candidates in the Greystones Local Electoral Area.

Deputy Brady said: "I am absolutely delighted that the local Sinn Féin party has selected two candidates of the calibre of Esther Kelly and Brian Fogarty."

Both of whom are formidable advocates for their local communities and are two people who I believe have real potential to make a big impact on local politics here in Wicklow."

"They will contest the local elections for the Greystones area in June 2024. The fact that they will form part of the largest ever Sinn Féin team put forward at a local election in County Wicklow, is a measure of the demand for change that is growing across the county."

"The local elections, which will take place on the same day as the EU elections, represent the first opportunity that the electorate in Wicklow has had since the general election of 2020, to send a clear and unambiguous message to the government."

"A message that lets them know that the people of this county have had enough of the failure to address the housing crisis, the cost-of-living crisis, and the neglect of our health service. Esther and Brian will be at the forefront of that campaign to bring about change."

Speaking following her selection

Esther Kelly said: "It is an absolute privilege to be given the honour by my party colleagues of going forward as one of our two local election can-

didates here in the Greystones electoral area. I am passionate about my local community and will continue hard to make Kilcoole, Greystones and Newcastle a better place for all."

Brian Fogarty said: "I want to echo the sentiments expressed by Esther. It is absolutely an honour, and one which comes with a great

sense of responsibility to our local community. Having successfully represented workers for many years my attention is now drawn to improving our local communities. My main objective is to listen to people, give them a voice and tackle local issues which affect people's everyday lives."



John Brady TD, Esther Kelly, Brian Fogarty (local election candidates for Greystones LEA), and Cllr. Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien

Calls for urgent expansion of School Transport Scheme in light of CSO figures

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has called on the Department of Education to urgently review and expand the School Transport Scheme in light of recently published figures by the CSO which demonstrate that the majority of children in Ireland are travelling to school by car.

"The figures speak for themselves and make for startling reading. In a time when we are trying to cut our carbon emissions to combat climate change and encourage people out of their cars, the car is the number one mode of transport getting children to school in Ireland. In my constituency of Wicklow over 57% of primary school children and 43% of secondary school students are travelling to school by car every day," commented Deputy Whitmore.

"I am calling on the Department of Education to urgently expand the School Transport Scheme so that more families are eligible for the scheme, and we can get children out of cars and onto school buses for their daily commute. Every year my office is contacted

by hundreds of families frustrated by the School Transport Scheme and its narrow eligibility criteria. Many of the children who do not get school bus places end up being driven to school by car, so it is having a direct impact on our carbon emissions and our environment.

"According to the CSO figures only 1,403 primary school children in Wicklow, that's only 7.7%, travel to school by bus, which is lower than the national figure of 9%," explained Deputy Whitmore, who is the Social Democrats spokesperson for the Environment and Climate Change as well as Children.

"The figures for secondary school students in Wicklow are similar with only 23.16%, that's

2,920 students out of 12,604 travelling to school by bus, which is again lower than the national figure of 26%. Wicklow was one of the counties worst effected by school transport issues this year, with some school children still waiting for their school bus routes to start as we near the end of the first school term. The number of children being able to travel to school by bus is worryingly low both in Wicklow and nationally. Parents will start to apply for their children's 2024/25 school bus places in less than four months. The Department must start work now to expand the School Transport Scheme and make the bus the most accessible and viable travel option for children to get to school."

Interim Fire Safety Measures Scheme opens

Green TD and Chair of the Oireachtas Housing Committee, Steven Matthews, has welcomed the opening of the Interim Remediation Scheme for apartment owners impacted by fire safety issues in units built between 1991 and 2013.

The Interim Fire Safety Measures Scheme will fully-fund fire alarm upgrades or replacements as well as ensuring that escape routes are safe, adequately lit, and free of obstacles. The costs of conducting an initial fire safety assessment and managing the process will also be covered.

"As Chair of the Housing Committee, I have engaged extensively with representative groups and families impacted and it is very positive to see this coming to fruition after significant consultation. I have spoken with a number of families from Wicklow that have been impacted including many that had relatives that moved to various parts of Dublin and they have faced huge challenges in recent years related to the fire safety problems in their homes.

"The level of stress and worry that this has caused

residents cannot be underestimated and some of the stories have been truly heart-breaking and is one of the worst remaining legacies of poor building construction control during the Celtic Tiger.

"It is intended that a whole building approach will be taken to remediate relevant defects and to improve the safety of all occupants in the building rather than individual apartment owners applying. The Scheme will be administered by the Housing Agency and opened for applications from Owners' Management Companies (OMCs) on December 11th.

"I further welcome the Minister's commitment that this scheme is just an interim step in advance of full remedial works, which will include all necessary fire safety measures and structural damage, which will be funded under a statutory scheme that will be legislated for next year," concluded Deputy Matthews.

New GP recruited for West Wicklow

Jennifer Whitmore td has welcomed the news of the successful recruitment of a new GP for the west Wicklow town of Baltinglass. Deputy Whitmore has, however, called on the government to take on a more proactive approach to addressing the shortage of GPs in Wicklow and around the country.

Deputy Whitmore said: "It is a great relief for families in Baltinglass to know that a new GP has been appointed to fill the vacancy left after the retirement of one of the town's GPs, who had operated their one-doctor surgery in the area for many years. I know that many people in West Wicklow are struggling to even get on waiting lists for local GP Practices at the moment, so the thought of an entire GP Surgery patient list being without a doctor was very worrying.

"However, this does speak to the fact that West Wicklow, like the rest of country Wicklow, is massively impacted by the

shortage of local GPs available to them. I conducted a survey of all the GP practices in Wicklow over the summer, and I found from speaking to Practice Managers, Receptionists and GPs that 70% of Wicklow GP Practices are not currently taking on new patients. This is staggering, especially given the growth in population we have seen all over the county in recent years."

Deputy Whitmore also noted that the government are taking a wait-and-see approach when it comes to addressing the shortage of GPs. She went on to say: "I raised this issue with the Minister for Health in

the Dail. The Minister for Health's response to the question was less than satisfactory. He noted an increase in those training to work as GPs in Ireland, but that will not translate into any immediate relief for families who cannot find a GP in the county of Wicklow.

"I want to see the government address this issue urgently. The Social Democrats believe in a public health model, including local GP care. Often, private practices who cannot get a GP to take up vacant contracts are left in the lurch, as are their patients. We need a steady and reliable supply of GPs in a public system

which ensures continuity of local care for everyone."

Social Democrats Local Area Representative for West Wicklow, Deirdre McCormack, also welcomed the news that the vacancy in Baltinglass had been filled. "This is great news for the Baltinglass community and will hopefully ensure a seamless continuity of care for patients. There is a chronic shortage of local GP availability across West Wicklow with many families depending on out-of-hours GP services in Kildare or Carlow for their medical needs. This situation needs to be urgently addressed."



Mary Healy with Lily at the Rathdrum Vs Hound Dogs annual rugby match in aid of Rathdrum First Responders.



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Greystones man wins two Irish Red Cross awards

Frank Kelly, an Irish Red Cross volunteer with the Greystones Delgany Branch of the organisation picked up two awards at the Irish Red Cross National Volunteer Awards at a ceremony held in Croke Park on 11th November. Frank was nominated from a pool of over 3,000 volunteers nationwide and won the Community Support Volunteer of the Year Award as well as a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Frank has been a volunteer with the Irish Red Cross for over 50 years and has been particularly active in supporting refugees and migrants, from assisting refugees from Northern Ireland during the Troubles in the 1970s to providing humanitarian care and assistance to people displaced from Ukraine as they arrived at our ports and airports throughout 2022.

In 2022, Frank was part of the core team running a Humanitarian Assistance Hub at Maynooth University, which supported 841 refugees to meet their basic needs - from distributing welfare packs and voucher aid, to assisting with

access to services with a particular emphasis on access to medical care. In 2023, Frank also led a team to run a similar Hub at the University, at which him and his team helped over 294 International Protection applicants with a multitude of requests, all on a voluntary basis. He has also provided transportation support for many displaced Ukrainians, supporting them to get to their accommodation all around the country.

As well as his support to refugees and displaced people, Frank also provides first aid training to his fellow members and, over his 50 years with the Irish Red Cross, has been an instructor

to generations of the same family in some cases.

Speaking about Frank and his commitment to the Irish Red Cross, Deirdre Garvey, Secretary General, said: "Frank is one of our longest-serving volunteers and has demonstrated outstanding commitment to the Red Cross Fundamental Principles. He has demonstrated time and time again that he is a true humanitarian at heart and his support for his local community and refugees to this country has been unwavering. On behalf of the Irish Red Cross, I would like to extend a heartfelt 'thank you' to Frank for his commitment."



Frank Kelly (right) alongside two other winners of the Irish Red Cross 2023 National Volunteer Awards Lifetime Achievement Awards - Tommy Gray (Limerick) and Joe Millar (Dublin)

Arklow's legendary Olympian champions the RNLI



Ronnie Delaney

In 1956, Ronnie Delaney won a gold medal in the 1500m race at the Olympics in Melbourne. Now 87, and a Vice President of the RNLI, Ronnie takes pride in how he competed for an all-Ireland country as an athlete, and how through his work with the RNLI, he's supporting an all-Ireland charity.

On Wednesday 29th November, the Arklow athlete contributed to the highly acclaimed RNLI 200 Voices podcast with an episode entitled A Beautiful Thing. He talked of how the RNLI is apolitical in Ireland, of extraordinary friendships he's made through the RNLI, and commends the charity's commitment to saving lives at sea - in his words: 'a beautiful thing'.

The unique podcast series hears from people connected to the RNLI in Ireland and those whose lives have been touched by the lifesaving charity. The

series features locals with a special kinship to their lifeboat station, a crew member who's been on service for a generation, or the family of someone rescued by an RNLI frontline lifesaver - each episode is sure to take the listener on a journey through a touching story.

Launched in August the series already features several contributions of Irish interest including: • Niamh Fitzpatrick Remembers One of Our Own, a personal reflection on how after losing her sister Dara at sea, Niamh talks about how much the RNLI means to her.

• Fr. Tom Dalton, a Courtown RNLI crew member where the Co. Wexford priest describes what is like when rescue turns into recovery in Pulling Together. • In The Calm Before Force 10, Baltimore RNLI's Kieran Cotter remembers an event that was to change yacht racing forever, the 1979 Fastnet tragedy, the fateful call out and the response to the disaster. • The challenge of saving lives in a remote place is the theme of Outer Limits by Aran Islands doctor Marion Broderick. • In Home from the Sea Phil

Coulter talks of his relationship with the charity and writing a song that has been adopted as an RNLI anthem

• Former President Mary McAleese recalls a life lived close to the water and her relationship and work with the RNLI.

Available across all podcast platforms and the RNLI's website, listeners can hear from survivors, supporters, volunteers, lifeguards, celebrity ambassadors, historians and many more from across Wales, England, Scotland Ireland and beyond.

Wicklow Active Retirement team takes top prize at National Bowls Competition

Members of the Baltinglass Active Retirement bowls team have taken out the top prize at the 2023 Active Retirement Ireland national indoor mats bowling competition, which took place at the Gleneagle INEC Arena in Killarney, Co Kerry.

Baltinglass team members Bernie Doyle, Mary Hayes, Tony Norton and skip Jack Doran were pre-

sented with the 2023 small bowls plate by Active Retirement Ireland National President Kevin

Monaghan and Mayor of Killarney Cllr Brendan Cronin.

Over three days, 63

Active Retirement teams from across the country competed for the 2023 Active Retirement Ireland Cup in indoor mat bowls at the organisation's 11th annual flagship event.

Speaking at the awards presentation, Active Retirement Ireland CEO Maureen Kavanagh said: "Congratulations to the Baltinglass bowls team on their fantastic achievement at this year's National Bowls Competition and for taking home the 2023 small bowls plate. The 252 bowlers who have competed for the cup this week, alongside our volunteers who helped deliver the event, confirm the drive and desire of older people to do things for themselves, maintain social connections and be



Baltinglass Active Retirement bowls team members Tony Norton, Bernie Doyle, Mary Hayes and John Doran ahead of the finals of the Active Retirement Ireland National Bowls Competition finals in the INEC, Killarney on Thursday. Pic: Don MacMonagle



Active Retirement Ireland National President Kevin Monaghan, Baltinglass team members Tony Norton, Bernie Doyle, Mary Hayes and Jack Doran (skip), with Mayor of Killarney Cllr Brendan Cronin. Pic: Don MacMonagle

a part of life. Social events like the National Bowls Competition, where older people can get together, be active and enjoy a little healthy competition and camaraderie, are vital for positive ageing. We are grateful for the generous support of our event host the Gleneagle for making this event possible for so many of our members and for their recognition of the contribution that older

people make.

"Older people don't want things done for them; they want to be active in their own lives. It's time the Government instituted and implemented a comprehensive, whole-of-government positive ageing framework in Ireland, including an adequate state pension benchmarked against average earnings, so that they can."

There are 494 Active

Retirement Associations (ARAs) in local communities across Ireland of groups of older people who come together to organise social events and activities to reduce isolation and loneliness of supported by the national body Active Retirement Ireland, the largest membership organisation for older people in the country.

In 2019, Active Retirement Ireland had

25,000 members operating out of 550 local ARAs. According to latest figures, 90% of this number of ARAs are back up-and-running again, with membership numbers now strengthened to 84% of pre-pandemic levels. This is an increase on 2022 figures, which at the end of last year showed that 81% of ARAs had resumed activities and 74% of members had returned to their ARAs.

New HSE Stop Smoking Service in Carnew

HSE Community Healthcare East has opened a new Stop Smoking Service in Carnew Primary Care Centre. This free service, run by the Health and Wellbeing Division, is one of four stop smoking services now available to people throughout Wicklow. Stop Smoking Services are also located in Bray Integrated Care Hub, Wicklow Primary Care Centre and Arklow Primary Care Centre serving local communities across Wicklow.

The purpose of the service is to support people to quit smoking and stay quit. Those who attend the local Stop Smoking Service can also access free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) as part of their package of support. NRT are licensed medicines that

safely give you low levels of nicotine to help with cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Examples of NRT include patches, gum, lozenges and inhalers. Using NRT can double your chances of quitting for good. Providing access to free

NRT has encouraged many smokers, who may have seen the cost of NRT as a barrier to them quitting, to sign up for this valuable service.

Margaret (56) who attends the local Stop Smoking Service and is 12 weeks' quit reflects on her quit journey so far: "This is a great service. I would not have quit without it. It is the mixture of the FREE nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and the support from the Advisor that makes the difference. I was given the long acting NRT patch and also chose the fast acting NRT inhaler. Having two types of NRT made all the difference. I met with the Stop Smoking Advisor on a weekly basis and this helped keep me on track and really helped with changing my habits.

The team of Stop

Smoking Advisors who run the service help people in a friendly, non-judgemental way to set their quit date, develop coping strategies and support the person to stay quit for good. In a one-to-one session, which can be in person or over the phone, your Stop Smoking Advisor will:

- Assess your nicotine addiction,
- Help you identify your reasons for quitting,
- Discuss your best options for NRT, and
- Create a personal plan to help you quit smoking for good.

If you attend the Stop Smoking Service, your local Advisor will arrange for you to access NRT through your GP or participating pharmacy. Your Advisor will keep in touch with you weekly for the first six weeks after you



Carnew Primary Care Centre

quit and periodically for up to 12 months to help and support you throughout your quit journey.

Quitting smoking can be hard. This January, the HSE are encouraging people to try the 28 day no smoking challenge. Breaking down the challenge to 28 days to begin with can make it feel more manageable. Why 28 days? We know that people who quit for 28 days are five times more likely to quit for good.

Martina Queally, Chief Officer, HSE Community Healthcare East comments: "We are delighted to add Carnew to our list of free Stop Smoking Services in the Wicklow area. Quitting smoking is one of the best things anyone can do to improve their health. However, we know that it is not always easy. Having the support of Stop Smoking Advisors available close to people's homes, coupled with access to free nicotine replacement

therapy, will be of huge benefit to those who want to quit smoking in 2024."

Leanne Moriarty, Stop Smoking Advisor, HSE Community Healthcare East, speaks about providing the new service in Carnew and how to get in touch: "I'm delighted to be able to provide a Stop Smoking Service to people locally in Carnew and surrounding areas who may need some support to help them get started on their quit journey. I would

encourage anyone who is even thinking about quitting smoking to get in touch with us today to talk through the supports that are available to them.

"People can make contact with the service directly through the contact details below. Health care professionals can also make referrals to the service."

For more information or to sign up email cheast.quit@hse.ie, phone 087 0927225.

HSE warns of increase in flu and Covid

The HSE is seeing an increase in people with respiratory illnesses attending emergency departments - 538 people with flu and 282 with COVID attended its EDs last week, an increase from 312 (flu) and 144 (COVID) the previous week. While our system is responding well, this increasing pressure requires all to play their part in using the right options for care.

Increasing community infection rates will lead to increased risk of outbreaks in hospitals, nursing homes and residential care facilities, potentially affecting the most vulnerable people. There are currently 30 outbreaks of COVID in hospitals and 24 in nursing homes, again an increase from the last week of December.

The HSE stated "Our acute hospitals are as prepared as can be to deal with the expected rise in attendances and admissions over the coming period. On Thursday, December 28th there were 119 people on trolleys (87 in ED and 32 on a ward) compared to 443 on the same date last year. A further 124 patients were occupying surge beds compared to 375 on the same date last year. On 27th December there were 357 people in hospital ready for discharge and awaiting suitable non-acute care, compared to 475 people on the same date last year.

"Hospitals and community services around the country have put a sustained effort into ensuring hospitals are positioned for the traditional post-Christmas demand. However the rise in flu and COVID infection is very steep, and we would urge the

public to attend the ED only for major health emergencies. Use all other options in non-emergency situations.

"People should consider using services such as your local pharmacy, and HSE.ie, before going to your GP or Emergency Department if you have respiratory symptoms. It is still not too late to get vaccinated: people who have not done so should get vaccinated at their GP or pharmacy. If you are unwell you should stay home until 48 hours after your major symptoms have resolved; avoid visiting people who are more vulnerable if you are unwell, especially avoid visiting hospitals or nursing homes if unwell. And we remind people about good infection control practice, including washing hands regularly and covering nose and mouth if you have coughs and sneezes."

According to Dr James Gilroy, Specialist Registrar in Public Health Medicine with the Department of Public Health HSE Dublin and South East, Rates of COVID-19 and flu are rising now and over next few weeks, which will put significant pressure on hospitals and Residential Care Facilities in the short term.

"This increase in viruses circulating obliges anyone with respiratory symptoms to avoid visiting hospitals and nursing homes if we have respiratory symptoms. Every healthcare setting is assessing the risks locally and monitoring their own local risks, and this may lead them to take additional measures in certain settings, such as the wearing of masks if deemed necessary. Such measures will help protect those who may be more vulnerable to the effects of these infections and avoid impact on services at a very busy time of year. There is no room for complacency and I urge people to follow public health advice - stay at home if you have symptoms and get vaccinated - before we reach the peak of flu season in the very near future."

Martina Queally, Chief Officer, HSE Community Healthcare East, comments: "Children, older people, pregnant women, people with a disability and those with a long-term illness are particularly affected by winter viruses. Topping up your protection and availing of the flu and COVID vaccination if you are eligible remains the best way to reduce the incidence

of these respiratory illnesses. Knowing how to manage common illnesses and where to go if you need medical assistance will also make it that bit easier if you, or someone you care for, becomes ill or is injured. There are a number of options available to you depending on what medical assistance you need including an extensive GP Out of Hours service and local injury units. Please consider all the options that are available to you to help determine your best course of action."

The HSE is urging every eligible person to get vaccinated against flu and COVID as soon as possible. People with long-term health conditions, healthcare workers (HCWs) and children aged 2-17 can avail of free vaccination. See HSE.ie for more information on COVID and flu vaccination and to find where to get your vaccines.

Dr Eamonn O'Moore, Director of National Health Protection, said "We are now seeing a sustained rise in the levels of infection with both COVID-19 and seasonal flu, including among people attending emergency departments and being admitted to hospitals. The new JN.1 variant of COVID is fast becoming the dominant strain. This variant may be more transmissible than previous variants, resulting in more infections. We are still collating data in

Ireland and internationally on whether it will result in more illness requiring hospital care but at this time we are not seeing that signal. However, with

more infection around, there is greater risk some people who are vulnerable could become ill and require hospital care and we still need to protect

our vulnerable members of society, children and adults, by doing what we can to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses."

See the HSE website

for useful advice on common illnesses such as colds, coughs, flu, earache and sore throats and information on how to keep well in winter.

Your local health services

For health information, advice, supports and services visit hse.ie

HSELive is here to answer your questions. Open Mon - Fri, 8am-8pm, and Sat 9am-5pm. Freephone 1800 700 700

HSE Injury Unit - St Columcille's Hospital

Loughlinstown, D18 E365. Open 7 days, 8am to 6pm, ages 14 and over.
For broken bones, sprains, minor burns and other non life-threatening injuries.

Check hse.ie/injuryunits before you go to see if you can be treated there, and for phone numbers and Eircodes. Opening hours for holidays may vary.

GP Out-of-Hours Services - Call ahead to book an appointment

North Wicklow	South Wicklow	West Wicklow
EDOC 01 223 4500 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Columcille's Hospital Loughlinstown, D18 E365. St Michael's Hospital Dún Laoghaire, A96 D628. 	Caredoc 0818 300 365 or 059 913 8100 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wicklow Primary Care Centre, Wicklow, A67 K5C7. The Health Clinic, Arklow, Y14 AE10. 	KDOC 045 848 701 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vista Primary Care Campus, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 E6H2.

Call 112/999 for serious or life-threatening emergencies

Name change for Ballsbridge College

Open Day Open Day, Thursday, 18th January 2024, 1.30pm - 5.30pm

2024 brings a name change for Ballsbridge College, which is now known as City of Dublin FET College Ballsbridge Campus.

The College continues to offer a wide range of QQI level 5 and 6 courses that provide a route into employment and progression to further and higher education.

The College offers one-year full time programmes in the following areas: psychology; criminology; business; accounting; marketing and advertising; social studies; auctioneering; event management; web design and multimedia; human resources; interior design; law; financial services and international relations and development.

The College also offers course in healthcare; health, nutrition and fitness; community development; administration for business; business with entrepreneurial skills; foundation teaching; digital marketing and English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Starting in September 2024, three new programmes will be offered in the College: Applied Psychology and Social Science (QQI level 5); Applied Social Psychology (QQI Level 6) and Sustainability and the Built Environment (QQI Level 5).

All courses are QQI certified and provide students with the knowledge and skills required to work in their chosen employment sector or to use their qualification to progress to higher education. Courses include a work placement component. Students can also avail of internships opportunities abroad through the College's Erasmus+ programme.

In addition, the College offers a two year 'earn and learn' QQI Level 6 Auctioneering and Property Services Apprenticeship programme which combines on-the-job training with academic study.

Ballsbridge College welcomes all students and strives to provide a learning environment that is inclusive and supportive of all ages, background and experience. Mature students and social welfare recipients are particularly welcome. The College offers student supports such as career guidance and counselling, student tutoring and a virtual learning environment. Student maintenance grants are available to eligible students.

The college is located in Ballsbridge and is easily accessible by bus, Dart, and Luas from all parts of the city and surrounding areas.

For further details on the college's courses and to apply online, please visit the college's website at www.ballsbridge-college.com



Cllr Tom Fortune and Margaret McCormack at the Colaiste Chraobh Abhann 20th anniversary celebration lunch which was held in the school.

More than half of people surveyed learned a new skill in 2023

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD has encouraged everyone to consider learning a new skill as research revealed that more than half of those surveyed have taken on the challenge over the past year.

The Year of Skills was launched by Minister Harris in May with a call to action for everyone in the country to put skills at the centre for this year - and to take the opportunity to learn a new skill.

Research carried out by Amarach on behalf of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, found that this message had resonated with many, with 54 per cent of those surveyed saying they had learned a new skill this year.

Minister Harris said: "We are now more than half way through the Year of Skills, and I'm delighted that so many people have taken the opportunity to pursue something new."

"As we begin 2024, I am once again issuing our call to action - take some time to consider something you always wanted to do or learn, and go after it. It could be a change of career, or something that will help you in your current one, but it just as easily could be something you are passionate about but never had the time to take on before now."

The launch of the Year of Skills in May coincided with the publication of the OECD Ireland Skills Strategy Report, which found participation in lifelong learning here, while above the EU average, is not enough to make Ireland one of the world leaders in this area.

Dr Vivienne Patterson, Head of Skills in the HEA said: "Providing affordable, flexible, agile options for upskilling is key to ensuring that opportunities are available for everyone no matter what stage you are in your life. The Higher Education system will continue to contribute to

increasing Ireland's lifelong learning metrics by delivering relevant skills training informed by research and enterprise engagement in 2024."

Nessa White, Executive Director of Transformation at SOLAS, the Further Education & Training Authority, said: "We welcome the strong participation in the call to learn something new during EU Year of Skills. Lifelong learning is for everyone, with the Further Education and Training (FET) sector playing a vital role in providing learners with the opportunity to engage in learning within their local communities regardless of any previous levels of education, with pathways to take them as far as they want to go."

"There is no better time to upskill and reskill close to home through smart and flexible FET courses delivered nationwide by Education and Training Board network and eCollege. This new year, we encourage everyone to explore the wealth of opportunities to learn a new skill in their local area."

Skillnet Ireland Chief Executive Paul Healy said: "Our Skillnet Business Networks and dedicated talent initiatives, deliver the skills solutions businesses need to compete and grow. Fostering greater participation in lifelong learning across Ireland is essential and will only increase in importance over the coming years. Globally, the digital transformation, climate change, and other issues - are rapidly transforming the skills individuals need to effectively participate in work and society."

"We look forward to engaging more businesses, and their talent, in upskilling, reskilling, and developing talent in their teams."

Safe Routes to School programme installed at two Arklow schools

Two new Safe Routes to School schemes (SRTS) have been installed at SS Michael and Peter Junior National School and St John's Senior National School in Arklow.

An initiative of the Department of Transport, the programme is co-ordinated by the SRTS Team, which is part of the Environmental Education Unit at An Taisce, in partnership with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and the local authorities.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national programme focused on improving safety at the front of schools and facilitating active travel to schools. It has three overarching aims:

- To accelerate the delivery of walking/scooting and cycling infrastructure on key access routes to schools.
- To provide front of school treatments which will enhance access to school grounds.
- To expand the amount of bike parking available at schools.

The two Arklow schools were amongst 932 schools across the country who applied for the programme. This was in response to safety concerns being experienced in the vicinity of the schools over the last number of years.

Ultimately, they wished to create a safer environment for the children attending these schools. Both were selected to participate in Round 1 of the programme.

As part of the process engagement took place with the school community and a parent survey was conducted in 2021 to establish the main concerns for parents and students when traveling to the schools:

- 68 per cent of parents surveyed thought safety was a problem at the front of school.
- 97 per cent said they would you support works at the front of school that improve student safety, putting pedestrians and cyclists first.

Over 40 per cent of respondents commented on issues of illegal or dangerous parking. A Safe Route to School delivery plan was reviewed and agreed with the school, the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Wicklow County Council.

Speaking of the programme, the NTA stated: "We support the work of Wicklow County Council in delivering the national Safe Routes to School programme which aims to increase safety outside schools and encourage active travel for those who can walk or cycle to school."

"School Zones are designed to improve safety for students at the school gate by freeing up footpaths, reducing indiscriminate parking and engine idling, increase

visibility and prioritise children walking and cycling. The Zones are very popular initiatives and have now been installed at 33 schools throughout the country with another 33 currently under construction, and another 109 in design. The NTA hope to continue to work with Wicklow to deliver School Zones throughout the county."

The project has been designed by consultant engineers based on current guidance and the provision of bollards, high friction road surfacing, signage and narrowing of carriageways, with the aim to reduce the number of illegally and dangerously parked cars at the front of school, and make it more accessible for those walking, cycling, scooting, and wheeling to school.

The introduction of the pencil bollards is a design solution which has been implemented in many other Safe Routes to School schemes already installed around the country. The pencil shape and bright colours make it clear to motorists that they are entering a school zone, which can help reduce the likelihood of accidents. The children attending these schools have appreciated the safety these bollards afforded, as they warned drivers a school was

nearby, and they needed to slow down.

While the scheme along Castle Park resulted in a net loss of seven car parking spaces, three new spaces were installed on Dunnes Lanes and two new spaces further down the hill near M & C Grocery shop.

Arklow MD are also currently carrying out a review of the layout of Castle Park carpark and the preliminary design shows a possible increase of 12-14 parking spaces. This will result in an overall gain of five to seven additional car parking spaces within the vicinity, above what was in place, prior to the scheme being implemented. In addition, there are existing car parks with ample car parking available in the town.

The works, which have been carried out in Arklow recently, have been welcomed by both schools, are in accordance with national guidance to improve the safety of front of school areas.

The Safe Routes to School Programme is supported by An Garda Síochána, with Inspector Michelle Byrne from Arklow stating: "Any initiative that increases the safety of our road users, particularly our most vulnerable, our youth and our elderly is most welcome."

Cathaoirleach of

Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Cathaoirleach, welcomed the implementation of the scheme saying: "It is great to see the safety improvements which have been carried out as part of the Safe Routes to Schools programme. We thank all motorists for their patience while adjusting to the changes and we look forward to the construction of more school zones across the county."

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman, reiterated the need for the Safe Routes to Schools schemes stating: "As a local authority, Wicklow County Council have an obligation to deliver and implement road safety within our towns. It is vitally important that we encourage safer, more responsible attitudes from motorists in the vicinity of schools."

"By facilitating the Safe Routes to Schools schemes, we are ensuring that our most vulnerable road users will find themselves in a calmer, less congested setting while travelling to school."

The changes as a result of these schemes will naturally require adjusted behaviour by the public. However, the increase in safety around the schools for both parents, guardians and children is to be welcomed.

Calls for urgent study of Greystones' school capacity needs

'Long-term solution needed to address the problem'

The issue of the lack of secondary school places in Greystones remains a large concern among public representatives.

Cllr Derek Mitchell said "I am concerned that the rapid expansion of Greystones, much greater than the [County Development] Plan, could outpace the school capacity in the short and long term. The Census, almost two years ago, showed a population of 22,000 people which is above the 2028 target population. Since then many houses have been built and occupied and this is continuing. I estimate that it will be at least 3,000 over the Plan by 2028. School numbers are derived from the population so if that is 15% greater then we would need another 1 or 2 schools and I want to see land rezoned urgently for this."

"I put down a Motion and the Area Councillors have asked that the Department of Education and Council planners produce a report on this. Greystones has got five totally new schools in the

last 15 years but Councillors zoned land for them over 15 years ago as there is a long lead time."

Before Christmas, Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore called on the Department of Education to fast-track secondary school buildings for Greystones and Kilcoole urgently.

Deputy Whitmore was speaking following a meeting with the Department regarding the expected shortfall in school places for September 2024. Deputy Whitmore has been raising this issue of secondary school place shortages with the Department of Education since early October in response to learning that there is a shortfall of nearly 100 school places expected this coming September.

Deputy Whitmore said: "While I welcome commitments from the Department of Education

that every school child will be offered a place and that they are working with the schools to identify potential capacity within existing school buildings, this will only amount to a very short-term solution."

"What we need to see now is that three promised school builds for the area are completed as soon as possible. These include a new permanent building for Greystones Community College and school extensions for Temple Carraig and Colaiste Chraobh Abhann. These need to be delivered urgently to prevent this situation from arising again."

"There is a glaring need for more school places in the Greystones and Kilcoole area. This has been the case for several years and has been made obvious since October this year when we learned there would be a shortage of nearly one hundred school places for

the next academic year.

"Following a meeting with the Department of Education this week, I am calling on them again to fast-track school buildings for Greystones and Kilcoole."

Whitmore went on to say: "The Department of Education is currently analysing the school application and enrolment data provided by the different schools in the area. They are also looking at the capacity of the schools in the area to see if they can take more students in 2024."

"I know that the uncertainty over the Christmas period will make for a difficult period for parents and students. I was advised that this analysis will be complete in January, and we will have an update then. I am going to stay on this issue, and I have requested a follow-up meeting with the Department of Education in January, where I will



Dianne Doyle, Deirdre Merriman and Hilda Collins at the Colaiste Chraobh Abhann 20th anniversary celebration lunch, held in the school.

again press the need for a long-term solution and fast-tracking of school builds in the area."

Also speaking in December, Green Party TD Steven Matthews said that the lack of foresight from the Department of Education on secondary school places in the Greystones district is extremely frustrating and leads to fear and uncertainty for parents.

Deputy Matthews said, "The lack of clarity on secondary school places is hugely disappointing and

is extremely unfair on those parents and students left in the lurch. Following a meeting that I arranged between the five Wicklow TDs and officials from the Department of Education - I was left frustrated by the lack of forward planning at a strategic level to ensure school places for all children in Greystones. We received various assurances but it shouldn't have come to this point."

"We have known for many years that Greystones has a young and rapidly growing population and this situation

with the lack of secondary school places was foreseeable. I have raised it every year since I was elected as a TD but it goes back further than that. I can't understand how on one hand the Department says they focus on census data and projected population but on the other didn't foresee a shortage of secondary school places in Greystones despite being told countless times and it now being an annual issue."

"The lack of forward planning is incredibly frustrating and I can only imagine the stress that it

is putting on families that still don't know where their child will be attending secondary school next September. This is a stressful and challenging time for families anyway so to have this added on is totally unacceptable."

"I have been assured that every applicant that qualifies for a school place in Greystones will be accommodated in September 2024 and I will continue to work with the Department and all each of the four secondary schools in the wider Greystones area to reach that goal."

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Arklow gymnasts on the Irish team for EUROGYM 2024



The Arklow Gymnastics Club squad members

Twenty-two gymnasts from Arklow Gymnastics Club are heading to Norway in July for EUROGYM 2024.

Arklow Gymnastics Club have announced that their senior display squad of 22 gymnasts, aged 11-18 years, will represent Ireland at EUROGYM 2024 from July 14th to July 18th. EUROGYM is an international gymnastics festival, featuring gymnasts from all over Europe. The event includes gymnastics displays, workshops and social events. The aim of EUROGYM is to promote gymnastics and foster friendships and cultural exchange between athletes from different countries.

EUROGYM is a fantastic opportunity for our young gymnasts to develop their gymnastics skills and make new friends and

experience other cultures. The event takes place in Bodø, 1100km north of Oslo in Norway. Bodø will be the European Capital of Culture in 2024. Bodø is surrounded by sea

and fjord, it is the capital of Nordland County and lies just north of the Arctic Circle. In July they will get to experience the mid-night sun in Bodø. Preparation and fund-

raising have already started. "We are working hard on the new routine for this event, which combines gymnastics, dance and acrobatic gymnastics," said the club.



Arklow Gymnastics Club members performing an acrobatic gymnast lift

Extra land for Greystones Rugby Club to expand

Greystones Rugby Football Club is set to expand their club grounds by .32 hectares. Councillors approved the land transfer at the December 2023 meeting of Wicklow County Council.

The land is a triangle of land that is currently not in use, and sits adjacent to the Charlesland Dual Carriageway. The price for the transfer is set at €25,000. Greystones Rugby Club plans to transform a 3/4 pitch into a full size one, to cater for the growth in women's rugby.

Cllr Stephen Stokes believes that this will make a positive impact in the community. Cllr Stokes stated: "Greystones Rugby Club is one of the clubs that are the bedrock of the community. They do amazing work, and engage people of all backgrounds. The growth of women's rugby is another exciting chapter for Greystones Rugby Club. With the

continued population growth in the area, this extra land for the club is definitely needed."

Greystones Rugby Club was founded on Friday, October 15th, 1937 in the Carnegie Library, Greystones. The rent for the land use in the 1937-38 season was initially £6, however after negotiation it was reduced to £4. The first taste of success came in 1944 when the Greystones Rugby Club won the Metropolitan League. Multiple Irish International players have lined out for the club. Today Greystones Rugby Club caters for 600 youth players from ages 6-18 every week.

Cllr Stokes has congratulated Greystones Rugby Club on its

continued success. Cllr Stokes added: "I saw the great work of the club first hand as youth player. The dedication of the coaches was superb, and made a lasting impression on me. However all of the volunteers and staff are critical to the success of Greystones Rugby Club. Like other clubs in the area, there is a real togetherness across the board. My Grandfather George Stokes was a friend of Dr. Hickey, and helped to get the first floodlights for the club. So it is a great personal honour to assist Greystones Rugby Club. I would like to wish Greystones Rugby Club many more years of success and positive development."



Cllr Stephen Stokes at Dr Hickey Park, Greystones



Cumann na mBunscol held a Young Whistlers referee course in Auhtrim for children in the south of the county. Well done to all the boys and girls who volunteered to be trained up as Young Whistlers and will be refereeing games in the future.

Two Wicklow sports projects to receive extra funding

Wicklow Swimming Pool & Leisure Centre and Charlesland Athletics Track are both to receive top up grant allocations worth over a million euro under the Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF).

The First allocations of LSSIF were announced back in 2020. Last week it was announced that additional funding is coming. Minister Simon Harris said "I am delighted to confirm both the Wicklow Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre and Charlesland Athletics Track are both in line for a major funding boost. Both the pandemic and construction inflation have slowed down the delivery of certain projects and it's crucial the Government steps in to provide some uplift and help deliver really important community projects like these sporting facilities in a faster manner.

"This top up payment speaks to our ambition to develop sport in the community and at an elite level. These grants will help develop and maintain really important public amenities in our county. I'm really proud as a Wicklow TD and a member of this Government that we were able to deliver this top up payment.

"Wicklow Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre originally received €864,177 in funding under the LSSIF in 2020, that allocation has now been topped up with an extra €932,423, close to an extra million, bringing the total allocation to €1,796,600. This is a major development which will be welcome by so many in the community and the County Council.

"Charlesland Athletics Track originally received €309,642 in funding under the LSSIF in 2020, that allocation has now been topped up by an extra €126,390, bringing the total allocation to €436,032. This is also a major sport project that will be welcome by residents is Greystones when it's completed.

"Investments like these in our communities are essential. These sport projects will get people out doing more physical activity, particularly it will help at a grassroots level develop the potential for elite sportspeople in the county."

Minister Harris concluded: "I'm also delighted to say the very successful LSSIF will be open for a new round of applications in the first half of 2024, with dates and terms to be published soon."

Applications invited for 'Support for Sport' funding

Applications from sports clubs in Co. Wicklow and beyond are now invited under the fourth Texaco Support for Sport initiative in which a fund of €130,000 will be divided in €5,000 amounts and distributed to successful applicants in each of the twenty-six counties.

Over the past three years, a gross figure of €385,000 has been divided amongst 77 sports clubs across Ireland, of which €5,000 each went to three successful Co. Wicklow clubs: Roundwood & District Athletic Club (2021), Vallemount LGFA Club (2022) and Wicklow Archers Archery Club (2023).

Open to all sports clubs irrespective of sporting discipline, size, membership, age, cultural appeal or gender (including clubs that may have been unsuccessful in their application previously), the initiative is one that 'recognises and supports the valuable contribution that sports clubs make to communities and throughout Irish society'.

Launching the 2024 initiative, James Twohig, Director of Ireland Operations, Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited - the company that markets fuel in Ireland under the Texaco brand - described the programme as one that "provides a route to vital funding for those clubs and communities that need it most."

Following lines similar to that which proved successful over the past three years, clubs wishing to apply should first register their

interest on [www. Texaco-SupportforSport.com](http://www.Texaco-SupportforSport.com), followed, before closing date, by a completed application that should include details of their sporting activity, the importance of the club in their local community, the purpose for which the funding is sought, and the use to which the funds will be put.

A sole qualifying requirement is that clubs must be properly constituted and supply confirmation of a valid Games & Sports Exemption number (GS number) issued by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

Closing date for applications is 31st January 2024 with adjudication taking place thereafter.

Leading the process once again is Texaco Support for Sport ambassador, broadcaster and former Irish rugby international, Donncha O'Callaghan. Clubs that received funding to date span the spectrum of Irish sporting activity - archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, bowls, boxing, camogie, climbing, cricket, diving, Gaelic football, golf, gymnastics, handball, hockey, hurling, kayaking, rowing, rugby, soccer and tennis amongst them.



Members of Wicklow Archers Archery Club - winners of the Wicklow County award in last year's Texaco Support for Sport initiative - joined with former Irish rugby international, Donncha O'Callaghan in encouraging Wicklow sports clubs to 'aim for the target' in the 2024 Texaco Support for Sport funding initiative just launched. Pictured with Donncha O'Callaghan (centre) are Wicklow Archers club members David Ferrie, Geraldine Griffin, Roxanne Anderson and Jamie Anderson (back); and Jane Ward, Linda Colbert and Aislinn Edwards (front).

National recognition for Blessington GAA Club

The prestigious Fionnuireacht Sheosaimh Mhic Dhonncha recognition awards were presented at a special ceremony in Croke Park on Friday night, 1st December.

This year 55 clubs from all over the country won bronze, silver or gold medals for their efforts, work

and commitment for the promotion of the Irish language. The event saw one Co. Wicklow club

being honoured for their outstanding contributions. Blessington CLG (Kinvara), was a bronze medal for its exceptional efforts.

Sports and entertainment broadcaster Grainne McElwain presided over the ceremony and announced the 7 clubs that won Gold Medals, the 15 clubs that won Silver Medals and the 33 clubs that won Gold Medals this year. Representatives from the clubs were present at Croke Park to proudly accept their awards, symbolising their dedication to promoting the Irish language both within their clubs and in their broader local communities.

Fionnuireacht Sheosaimh Mhic Dhonncha is a collaborative initiative between Glór na nGael and the GAA. The partnership is dedi-

cated to enhancing the presence and usage of the Irish language across GAA clubs nationwide.

These medals serve as a testament to the clubs' ongoing efforts

in integrating the Irish language into their activities and fostering its growth among their members and communities.

This event not only acknowl-

edges individual club achievements but also reinforces the importance of preserving and promoting the Irish language through sport.



Blessington CLG (Kinvara), was a bronze medal for its exceptional efforts.

€50,000 for Knockananna GAA Club

Knockananna GAA has been approved for funding of €50,000 toward the cost of making the car park and walkway around the sports pitches more accessible to the community.

The funding is being provided as part of the CLAR (Ceantair Laga Ard-Riachtanais) programme funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and forms part of the Government's ambitious new five year policy for rural Ireland, Our Rural Future.

Senator Pat Casey said: "It is fantastic to see this new funding be allocated to Knockananna GAA. It will go towards the resurfacing of the carpark and walkway around the pitch. Investing in Our Rural Future is a key priority of Fianna Fáil in Government and we want to ensure that local sports clubs, that are at the heart of pride of place, community and belonging, are supported."

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, congratulated Knockananna GAA stating: "I am delighted that the club is being supported in this way and I am sure that the funding will go a long way towards enhancing the amenities at Knockananna GAA for the whole community."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council, also offered her congratulations, saying: "Our sports clubs, schools and community groups are the lifeblood of rural Ireland. They are a focal point - places where people of all ages come together to socialise and meet up with friends. These projects are hugely important to our local communities. It is important that we continue to invest in rural communities is County Wicklow in as many ways as possible, and the CLAR program is a fantastic way that we can continue to do this."

Michael Nicholson, Director of Service, Wicklow County Council, added: "The CLAR Programme has been very beneficial to eligible rural communities in County Wicklow, and it demonstrates that investment in these communities can make a big difference to the people who live there. This project, in particular, will improve accessibility for all members of the community in Knockananna and make sporting events more inclusive all, particularly for older people and spectators with mobility difficulties."

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Ruby and Norma Treacy at the Arklow Panto Creations 'Beauty and the Beast' at St. Mary's Hall, Arklow.

Dinner 2050: Future of Food in Ireland

Wicklow Chef, Tadhg Byrne, and Dublin Filmmaker, Max Barry, celebrated the launch of their Film 'Dinner 2050: Future of Food in Ireland' with a premiere last month. The screening took place in the cinema at UCD, Belfield. Guests were treated to a cocktail reception with canapes from WithTaste, and Fercullen Irish Whiskey cocktails provided by The Powerscourt Distillery. Music was provided by Wicklow harpist Rachel Duffy.

During the reception Tadhg, who was the Executive Producer on the film, explained his motivations for creating the piece. Having previously produced a series on the History of Irish Food which was screened on St Patrick's Day Festival TV, and a further series on contemporary Irish food, he was keen to ask the questions about what Ireland's food future holds. Tadhg also runs Críoch Catering, a Wicklow based catering company which specialises in featuring local, seasonal and sustainable produce.

The independently produced film is a 1 hour documentary exploring how Ireland will eat in 2050 - looking at issues such as how technology will change farm-

ing, food security, robot chefs, drone deliveries and sustainability in the food supply chain. Tadhg Byrne and Max Barry hope that the film will reach a large audience in 2024. Max thanked the donors who had made the film possible through their Go-fund me page.

Santina Kennedy, who is the former coordinator of the Wicklow Naturally, Wicklow's food and drink network, praised the film, saying that it gives viewers a voice in the conversation about the future of our food systems.

Contributors to the film included Tom Burgess who is a dairy farmer and award winning cheese maker from Coolattin. Margaret

Hector, Lamb farmer from Kilmullen Farm, Wicklow; Niall Sabongi, Restaurateur and owner of Sustainable Seafood Ireland; and JP McMahon, Michelin Star Chef, Food Historian and author, along with many other notable contributors from the Irish food industry.

The screening was well received by the audience which included many food journalists, sustainability activists, food, drink and hospitality lecturers from TU Dublin and well known faces from the Irish food and drink scene, as well as several Wicklow based farmers and food producers. Further screenings will take place in Wicklow and nationwide in 2024.

Tread Softly

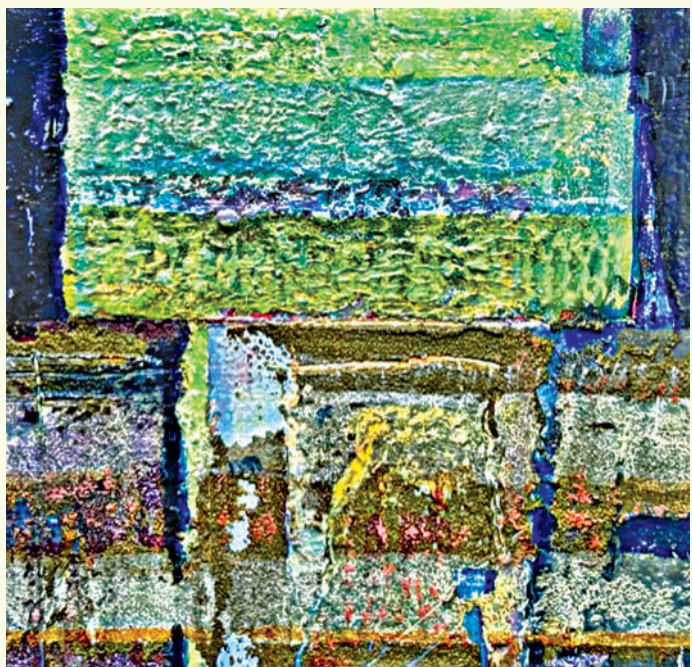
An exhibition by Noreen O'Hanlon. Signal Arts Centre, Monday 4th March to Saturday 16th March.

'Tread Softly' showcases Noreen O'Hanlon's evocative, atmospheric compositions. Each painting expressing her desire to visually communicate the things that sing to her, and the elements that resonate with her in her natural environment. Weather, sky, sea, stones, shells, plants and the natural cycle of growth, death, decay and renewal are all reflected in her work. Her art is a translation of her natural environment into an abstract composition, responding to nature in all its forms.

A two-week residency at Cill Rialaig artists retreat in Co Kerry kicked off this collection of paintings. The residency gave her the physical and ideological space to delve deeper into the work, allowing for complete immersion in the process of making art. Her paintings investigate both materiality and aesthetics. Her thought process is slow and considered, working in layers, combining colour and texture. Exploring, discovering, and learning new techniques and processes are all part of practice.

Noreen is an artist based in Dublin. Her painting practice has consistently evolved since 2005. She held a solo exhibition, The Symphony of Colour, at the Dun Laoghaire Art Gallery in 2015. Her paintings have been included in many group exhibitions. She is a professional member of Visual Arts Ireland. She is also a member of Artnet DLR.

Opening Reception: Thursday 7th March, 2024, 7pm to 9pm



Bogland Doorways by Noreen O'Hanlon

Auditions begin for Wyrd Sisters

Square One Theatre Group is auditioning for their adaptation of 'Wyrd Sisters' by renowned writer Terry Pratchett

A spoof comedy (like Blackadder or Life of Brian) with a big cast, most who audition should be able to appear on stage.

Auditions will take place on Monday 8th & Tuesday 9th of January with a 7.30pm start. A 3rd date to be announced to accommodate those who can't manage either.

Main speaking cast is, for women, the Three Witches (2 middle aged/old, and one young), The evil Duchess, and Mrs Vitoller, wife of the theatre manager.

For the guys, Death, the late King Verence, the evil Duke, Vitoller, Tomjon (an actor) Hwel (a playwright), and the Fool. The Fool and Tomjon need to be young.

There are also other speaking parts, which can to some extent be played by either gender: A Demon, Sergeants, Guards, Robbers, Actors in the play-within-the-play. Also at least one crowd scene.

Anyone interested in lights, please step forward! The first read-through will be on Monday 29th January.

Rehearsals will be on Mondays and Wednesdays plus some Sundays further into the rehearsal stage. The play is in about 25 small scenes, so not everyone will be needed for every rehearsal. The show will run from the 9th to 13th of April at the Mermaid County Wicklow Arts Centre.

Please contact Square One Theatre Group - Bray, via social media or email squareonebray@gmail.com to register your interest and learn more about audition details and script information.



Water, Light and Reflection: An Exhibition by Emanuela Carvisiglia

Signal Arts Centre, Tuesday 19th March to Sunday 31st March 2024

"Water, Light and Reflection" is a captivating ensemble of oils with the interaction between water and light as a common theme. Artist Emanuela Carvisiglia's goal is to paint colourful and very detailed pieces to bring the viewer into a dimension where the warmth of the sun is amplified by the freshness of the water and to do so she uses intense colours and a high level of detail.

Emanuela says, "I hope the viewers eyes will be enthralled by the colours and their souls will be nurtured by the same feeling of peace and relaxation I have while creating them. I try to create a synergy between the full picture and the small details I am so obsessed with."

Emanuela was born and raised in Italy and now lives in Wicklow where she is inspired by the sea and the way light plays with the water surface. She aims to produce captivating pieces of work where colours and shapes are reinterpreted by reflections and light refraction.

She has a degree in painting and visual arts from the Fine Art Academy in Naples where she had the chance to learn from renowned contemporary Italian artists.



'Mediterraneo' (left) and 'Pebbles can be Jewels' (right) by Emanuela Carvisiglia

St Saviours National School and Scoil Mhuire Realt Na Mara Brittas Bay winners in national art competition

St Saviours National School and Scoil Mhuire Realt Na Mara Brittas Bay are celebrating being named Junior and Senior County Winners respectively of the prestigious national art competition, Someone Like Me, which will see them join 46 other schools to compete for the much sought-after national title at the national awards ceremony to be held at Dublin City Hall on Wednesday 17th January 2024.



Junior entry

Now in its eighth year, the Someone Like Me art competition, which is organised by the National Disability Authority, attracted more than 2,200 entries from national schools across the length and breadth of the country.

The competition was created as part of the National Disability Authority's work to nurture more positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities and, to date, it has seen more than 17,500 children take part in lesson plans and pupil activities designed to challenge our young people to appreciate and respect similarities and differences in people.

The three-person judging panel comprising Ann Higgins, principal of Hospital School Children's Health Ireland; Dr Carly Cheevers, senior research officer at the National Disability Authority; and Laura McGrath, an autism class teacher was particularly impressed with the entries. St Saviours National School and Scoil Mhuire Realt Na Mara Brittas Bay, selecting them as County Winners based on their insightful and inspirational responses to the theme of 'Someone Like Me'.

Congratulating St Saviours National School and Scoil Mhuire Realt Na Mara Brittas Bay on being named County Winners, Minister of State with responsibility for disability, Anne Rabbitte T.D. said



Senior entry COVER

that the number of entries this year is a tribute to the commitment not just of the National Disability Authority, but also to Ireland's primary school teachers, who continue to play an important part helping to create an ever-more inclusive Ireland.

"Every year more and more of our young people take part in the Someone Like Me Art Competition, working their way through cross-curricular lesson plans and learning resources which have been specially designed to challenge and inspire. The number and standard of entries shows a real commitment on the part of

teachers and pupils to helping to develop a shared understanding of how we should treat others in a caring, sensitive and inclusive way, promoting a sense of belonging and connectedness," she said.

"This year we placed a special emphasis on nurturing a greater understanding



Senior entry inside

of non-visible and intellectual disabilities. Many people with a non-visible disability face the everyday prospect of having to explain to others that they have a disability; something they may not always want to do.

"Selecting the county winners was not an easy task for the judges and choosing an overall winner will be an even harder job. And, while I know it will be an anxious wait for the pupils and teachers to hear

which of the 48 county winners will be awarded the national title, every pupil should be congratulated for helping to enable each and every single person in Ireland to feel a valued member of society."

St Saviours National School and Scoil Mhuire Realt Na Mara Brittas Bay will now go on to compete with 46 other schools from around the country for the overall national Someone Like Me award which will be announced at the nation-

al awards ceremony to be held at Dublin City Hall on Wednesday 17th January.

The competition, which offers a range of prizes up to the value of €1,250, was open to all primary school pupils from junior infants to sixth class and more than 2,200 entries were received from individual pupils, class groups and whole schools right across Ireland. Entries ranged from posters and collages to large sculptural installations and multi-media pieces.

Rail station artwork hits all the right notes

Local Musician, Niall Woods of Greystones Music Academy & Cathaoirleach of the Greystones Municipal District, Cllr Stephen Stokes have congratulated local artist Lynne Reece Loftus on the painting of the Greystones Railway Station piano. Following the successful campaign to secure a public piano by Niall Woods and Cllr Stephen Stokes, an appeal was issued to secure the services of a local artist.

Thankfully local artist Lynne Reece Loftus heeded the call and joined the project. Cllr Stokes stated: "We are delighted with Lynne's work. She is a top tier artist known for amazing work. This will add a lovely splash of colour to Greystones Railway Station. We are very fortunate to have so many talented and creative people, like Lynne and Niall in the community."

Further piano enhancements are planned according to Cllr Stephen Stokes. He added: "Niall is a whiz at all things



Cllr Stephen Stokes, Cara Woods, and Niall Woods at the Greystones public piano in the train station.

musical. While we were preparing the artwork for installation, he was able to tune up the piano and fix several of the keys.

The next step is to add a coat of varnish, and add a chair. This is a special project which is the culmination of work over

several months. We are grateful to all involved including, Irish Rail who have allowed the piano in the station."

Cllr Stephen Stokes and Niall Woods are seeking a chair for the station. Cllr Stokes concluded: "We are on the lookout for a chair with a back for the piano if anyone has one to spare. This will need to be fixed to the ground by Irish Rail, so we are looking for something sturdy." Cllr Stephen Stokes can be reached on stephen-stokes101@gmail.com to discuss the piano project further.

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When: 7 - 8.30pm, Tuesday 16th January 2024 for 7 weeks.

For more information or to register contact Karen Hammond

Phone: 083 334 2590 or 01 286 8266

Email: kerenhammond@brayareapartnership.ie

www.brayareapartnership.ie

Electric car sales jump 44%

Year-end figures released last week by the Society of the Irish Motor Industry (SIMI) show that the number of new battery electric cars sold in Wicklow jumped from 629 in 2022 to 904 in 2023 - a massive 44% increase.

Overall new cars sales in Wicklow increased by 7% - from 2597 to 2777.

A number of factors are contributing to the jump in battery electric vehicle sales (BEV). These include the host of new model introductions - including Continental Irish Car of the Year, the Hyundai Ioniq 6 and the amazing new BYD brand which went from zero in 2022 to over 500 units nationally last year.

Affordability is a factor and the stunning sales of the VW ID4 (fourth best selling car overall, nationally), with a list price starting at €54,930 - show that many will pay the premium to go all electric. The top Selling New Electric

by **Martin McCarthy**

Vehicles (EVs) Models 2023: 1.VOLKSWAGEN ID4, 2. TESLA MODEL Y, 3. SKODA ENYAQ, 4.HYUNDAI IONIQ 5, 5.MG MG4.

The best selling cars overall are SUVs in a feature of people having more 'stuff' in general and needing to transport a fair amount of it around. The Korean cousins of the Hyundai Tuscon and Kia Sportage were the best-selling car models in Ireland last year.

Toyota remains the best-selling brand in Ireland with VW, Hyundai, Skoda and Kia in hot pursuit. However a host of newly launched models

from Gowan Auto Group could change things a lot in 2024.

Representing the vast Stellantis Group, who make a fantastic range of Opel, Peugeot, Citroen, Alfa, Fiat, Jeep cars and with an amazing new state of the art support centre just off the M50 and strong dealers in Wicklow, they will tempt many Wicklow and Irish buyers in the coming year.

Automatic gearbox were favoured in 2024 by 65% in 2023 Irish buyers.

A trend towards buying cars locally is continuing with Wicklow being very well serviced in that regard.

Boggins are a premium Toyota Dealer in Rathdrum Trinity Motors in Wicklow Town are main dealers for VW Group cars - including Skoda John Linnane / Ian Morrison in Rathnew represent Gowan Group Opel, Fiat, Jeep and others

Windsor Motors in Bray have tagged Renault &

Dacia onto their long term Nissan franchise in mirroring a global integration of the two giants.

MSL Pottery Rd. and Deansgrange cover Wicklow for Mercedes and BYD, while Vartry Motors in Blainrow are main Peugeot and Kia dealers Castle Motors in Bray continue to successfully represent Honda, Subaru and the new Ora brand.

When it comes to getting a car serviced, its hard to beat using the dealer closest to you for convenience.



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PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Arc Design seeks full planning permission on behalf of Andrew King for the development at "Pretty Hill", Knockroe, Kilcoole, County Wicklow, A63 C998 which consists of amendments to previously permitted PRR 22/185 for:

- 1) Demolition of existing 105sqm single storey bungalow (plus non habitable attached 24sqm garage/ boiler house), 2 bedroom dwelling.
- 2) Construction of 309sqm two storey 5 bedroom dwelling.
- 3) Install proposed waste water treatment unit and soil polishing filter that meets current EPA standards.
- 4) Provision of surface water soakaway to meet BRE Digest 365 standards for the new detached house. All associated site development works, drainage and landscaping to accommodate new dwelling.

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 enquires.

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

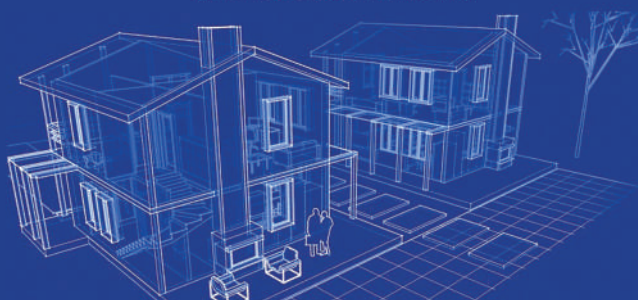
Arc Design seeks outline planning permission on behalf of Eimear Lynch for the development at Derrynane, Little Newtown, Enniskerry, Bray, Co. Wicklow, A98 VY53 which consists of:

- (A) Subdivision of family holding and construction of detached four-bedroom dwelling and vehicular entrance to private lane / R.O.W., together with all associated site works.
- (B) Application to include upgrading of sightlines at existing vehicular entrance from lane to public road by removal of some evergreen trees and fencing and setting back new fence and new replacement trees behind, together with all associated site works.
- (C) Proposed on-site effluent disposal system for new house and existing house along with soakaway to meet BRE Digest 365 standards.

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 enquires. 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.

ATTENTION Architects, Planners & Builders

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Call **01 286 9111** or email pauline@localtimes.ie



WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We St. Anthonys Kilcoole United FC seek planning permission for floodlighting of the soccer pitches at Wheeler Park including the erection of 6 x 15 m high lighting columns and provision of a generator adjacent to the site boundary at Wheeler Park, Knockroe, Lotts Lane, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

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 demolition, drainage and site works at Annacrievy 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.

RECRUITMENT



**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons to form a panel from which future permanent and temporary vacancies may be filled.

• IS PROJECT LEADER – OPEN COMPETITION

Salary: €55,847.00 – €72,602.00 per annum gross (Includes 2nd LSI)

REF: 59/2023

Application Forms and further details may be obtained from Enterprise & Corporate Services at 0404 20159 or by emailing recruitment@wicklowcoco.ie and on the Wicklow County Council website www.wicklow.ie

CLOSING DATE FOR RECEIPT OF COMPLETED APPLICATION FORMS HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO THURSDAY 1ST FEBRUARY, 2024 AT 12 NOON SHARP.

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

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Lorraine Gallagher,
Director Of Services,
Enterprise & Corporate Services,
Wicklow County Council,
County Buildings,
Wicklow.

Phone: 0404 20159

Fax: 0404 20112

e-mail: recruitment@wicklowcoco.ie



**COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

BEACH LIFEGUARDS SUMMER 2024

REF: 02/2024

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons for the position of Temporary Beach Lifeguard.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS IS FRIDAY, 23rd FEBRUARY, 2024 AT 4.00pm.

LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

Location: Arklow, Bray, Brittas Bay, Greystones Beaches & Wicklow Harbour

Duration: June-August/September 2024

Wages: €15.91 per hour, circa 40 hours per week

Minimum Qualifications:

1. Candidates should have as a minimum, a current Irish Water Safety "Beach Lifeguard Award" or equivalent qualification.
2. Have a thorough knowledge of the role of Lifeguard, resuscitation (incl. CPR) and basic first aid.
3. Candidates must be at least 17 years of age on May 1st 2024.
4. Candidates will be required to successfully complete a practical Beach Lifeguard examination test in basic life support (BLS), swimming ability, lifesaving techniques and a theory test. (Local Authority Test to take place in April or May 2024, subject to change.

Original certificates to prove the above requirements must be submitted with the completed application form. All original certificates will be returned.

Garda Vetting Process:

Successful candidates, when offered the position of Lifeguard, will be subject to Garda Vetting. Applicants under 18 years of age will need Parent/Guardian consent.

Application forms are available on www.wicklow.ie or from the undersigned, to whom completed forms must be submitted to not later than **4.00pm on Friday 23rd February, 2024.**

Phone 0404 20159 or email recruitment@wicklowcoco.ie

Lorraine Gallagher
Director of Service,
Enterprise & Corporate Service,
Wicklow County Council,
County Buildings,
Wicklow .

81 rivers open for salmon angling in 2024

The Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan TD, approved legislation that will govern the wild salmon and sea trout fisheries in 2024. These came into effect from Monday, 1st January 2024.

Minister Ryan said: "In all, 81 rivers will be available for salmon and sea trout fishing in 2024. This facilitates careful management of this important natural resource, for which conservation and sustainability are paramount. Of these rivers, 42 will be open, with a further 39 open to 'catch and release' angling. The general improvements in stocks from 2023 have been maintained for 2024. However, collective effort and persistence are required to see the state of all individual river stocks improve over time. The stocks themselves are completely dependent on everybody increasing our efforts in facing up to environmental, climate and biodiversity impacts from human interventions."

To support the legislation for 2024, Minister Ryan received management advice from Inland

Fisheries Ireland (IFI) in relation to over 140 genetically individual wild salmon stocks in Ireland, which was based on individual scientific assessments. The assessments are carried out every year by the Technical Expert

Group on Salmon (TEGOS) an all-island independent scientific group comprising experts from a range of bodies. IFI, supported by TEGOS, determined: which of the individual stocks were sufficiently above their specific conservation limit to be open to fishing; which rivers did not meet a sufficient level above the limit but met a sufficient percentage of the limit to be classified for 'catch and release' angling; and which rivers were so far below the limit as to close them to any exploitation.

The conservation limit is the number of adult spawn-

ing fish required to maintain a healthy and sustainable stock in each individual river. The key issue to support increased stocks is improvement in water quality. Many of our rivers are not at a sufficiently high-water quality level to support sustainable stocks, often caused by agricultural activities, and to a lesser extent, insufficient treatment of waste water. This year's advice was also made available as part of a statutory public consultation process during which written submissions from stakeholders (including the recreational and commercial fishing and the environmental sectors) were sought on the draft regulations.

Management advice based on the TEGOS assessment of rivers/estuaries/harbours is that:

• 42 rivers are to be open as a sustainable surplus has

been identified in these rivers.

• 39 rivers are to be classified as open for 'catch and release' angling.

• 66 rivers are to be closed as they have no sustainable surplus available.

Minister Ryan added: "Ireland has long been internationally recognised for embedding the conservation imperative as a vital component of our management of the precious salmon resource. While the policy has served us well for more than a decade, I intend, as part of a broader inland fisheries policy review to set out options for improvement, with an even greater focus on conservation, in our management regime and for modernising licensing requirements, to ensure access to the resource where its conservation and biodiversity needs are met."



David, Shay and Chris Jameson at the St. Stephen's Day swim in Wicklow Town

New guide to Irish swimming places will support the RNLI

'A Little Book of Happy Swimming Locations' is a guide to some of the hidden gems and well-known spots 'for taking a dip' all around Ireland.

Launched last month, this is the second book on the theme by open water swimmer Catherine Mulcahy. In 2021 her first book, 'A Little Book of Swimming Happiness' was a great success and raised over ten thousand Euro for the RNLI.

Speaking of her love for open water swimming the author says: 'as long as I remember I have loved the sea. My mother initially introduced me to sea swimming at 'The Strand' when I was a toddler, a local swim spot near our family home in Cork. This 'grá' for the sea has since evolved into a genuinely unconditional love.'

'A Little Book of Happy Swimming Locations' celebrates swimming around Ireland and features 50 contributors favourite swim spots. The book is beautifully presented with photographs and commentary from swimmers who share their favourite swimming spots with the readers.

The book has a cover price of €20 with 100% of the proceeds going to the RNLI. It is available online from Nourish at https://lnkd.in/e_TtXj42 and also available to purchase in-store at 64 Wine and Caviston's Glashule Village and Cafe du Journal Monkstown. All stockists are selling the book at 0% commission.



Some of the 'nippy dippers' at the St. Stephen's Day swim in Wicklow Town.

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