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Tuesday 30th January 2024 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

BEWARE DANGEROUS WATERS!

Ireland has been found guilty of failing to fulfil its obligations under EU legislation to ensure drinking water complied with standards relating to dangerous chemical compounds in water supplies. Two of these supplies were Bray and Greystones. Uisce Eireann were also found to have given dangerous advice regarding Boil Notices.

The Court of Justice of the EU ruled the concentration of trihalomethanes (THMs) in drinking water in a large number of public water supplies in the Republic had persistently exceeded recommended safety limits since at least 2012, while the deadline for compliance had been 2003.

The CJEU said Ireland could not fully justify the persistent failure to fulfil its obligations as excessive levels of THMs had

been found in drinking water in Ireland 'over a considerable time period'.

THMs are chemical compounds found in drinking water, especially in water treatment systems that use chlorine to remove bacteria and other contaminants. They are formed as a result of interaction between organic materials such as soil and rotting vegetation and chlorine.

THMs are considered dangerous to both human

health and the environment with high levels of THMs linked to diseases of the liver, kidney and central nervous system as well as bladder and colon cancer. They can also cause gastrointestinal problems and skin irritation.

The European Commission claimed the creation of Irish Water (now Uisce Eireann) merely demonstrated that Ireland had been slow to act given its deadline for



Pictured are Partners, Solicitors and staff of Benville Robinson Solicitors, at the opening of their new office in Newtownmountkennedy last Thursday evening. Pic: Michael Kelly

compliance with EU standards was 10 years earlier. The Government was first informed by Brussels in May 2015 that it was not meeting the requirements of an EU directive in relation to THMs. The European Commission issued a reasoned opinion in May 2020 that Ireland was failing to meet its obligations relating to drinking water standards, with legal proceedings initiated after unsatisfactory responses were provided by the Government in progress reports supplied between September 2020 and June 2021.

The European Commission may also bring a further action seeking financial penalties for any ongoing delay in complying with the EU directive on drinking water standards.

While welcoming the Court ruling, Friends of the Irish Environment (FIE) Director Tony Lowes said that FIE had again written to the Commission in 2016

when the Carraroe public water supply which was on the Remedial Action List for THM was subject to a Boil Water Notice from Galway County Council.

This complaint highlighted research published in the USA 'Environmental Health perspectives' in 2005 by government and academic researchers which 'adds to previous evidence that dermal absorption and inhalation of THMs associated with everyday tap water use can result in significantly higher blood THM concentrations than simply drinking the water. It recorded THM blood concentrations rising 5- to 15-fold as a result of showering in subjects.' The study states it 'also provide[s] evidence that other THM exposure scenarios, such as washing dishes by hand and being exposed to a cohabitant's shower steam, may also be important'. FIE pointed out that 'It is universally

accepted that THMs are volatile chemicals that present a specific and particular danger through inhalation. Yet this is

exactly what Irish Water has instructed consumers to do by bringing THM laden water to a 'vigorous, rolling boil'. Irish Water

must ensure that when Boil Notices are issued, consumers with THM in their water are advised of the dangers."



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Fundraising campaign to help young man following devastating cancer diagnosis

21 year old told he has just a few years to live after cancer went undetected



Lee with his mum Laura and sister Amy.

A GoFundMe campaign has been created for young Greystones man Lee McGuirk (21) who received a devastating stage 4 cancer diagnosis just before Christmas. The campaign was created by Lee's sister Amy and mum Laura, who hope that the funds will help Lee to tick off his bucket list and make memories.

Amy writes on the fundraising page: "Primarily, our mission with this platform is to shed light on the challenging battle my brother Lee has been experiencing since his diagnosis of Ewing Sarcoma. Sarcoma is a family of bone and muscle cancers. Lee's journey began with extreme pain, leading to multiple hospital visits. Doctors have difficulty detecting this type of cancer and unfortunately in my brother's

case, like many others, it was caught too late. The months it went undetected the cancer cells were rapidly growing and aggressively spreading throughout Lee's body.

"The prognosis of Lee's diagnosis was the hardest thing we as a family, and his close friends who care deeply about him had to go through. Being told at 21 your life will end in the next few years 'at best', is something no one could ever prepare you for, we were all in complete shock and still are. Despite the challenges, Lee, a resilient fighter has undergone spinal surgery and started his chemotherapy.

"We have marked Halloween, Christmas and new year's in the hospital, hoping to celebrate easter in the comfort of our home to ease this transition we aim to make Lees move home as comfortable as possible with the help of this GoFundMe campaign.

"Initially we were all lost and confused about what we were fighting for, the doctors left us with no hope. Our strength was tested during this difficult time. Lee had so many questions, like how he could continue living when he knows his future is being taken from him. We have come to understand the significance of every single moment we spend together even if it's in a hospital room. Most importantly no one's life is guaranteed and every day is unpredictable, but for now our focus is to create memories and tick off Lee's bucket list of life through this GoFundMe initiative.

"Lee's cancer is terminal and incurable, we wish we were raising funds for experimental trials or potential treatments. Regrettably none are accessible in Ireland currently, however with the GoFundMe support we will send Lee's scans worldwide, seeking more

answers. However, me his little sister and my mother Laura will go to the end of the earth to make sure Lee has the best memories with the ones he loves the most over the next while. For those familiar with Lee, his infectious smile and personality and ability to make anyone laugh, have earned this campaign the title of 'Lee's Retirement fund'.

"We encourage every-

one who experiences unusual pains to get them checked out. If dismissed by hospitals, persist and advocate for yourself, you know your body best. The strength we have today to share Lee's story is indebted to the support of our family, friends and community, please in honor of Leroy McGuirk, share and help raise awareness."

Started just last week, the fundraising campaign

raised over €20,000 in just a few days.

Lee said "After 4 months of lying in a hospital bed with a broken back, I am absolutely blown away by the support and love from all of you, I cannot emphasise this enough.. from the bottom of my heart thank you all so much."

To donate, go to [gofundme.com/lf/lees-retirement-fund](https://www.gofundme.com/lf/lees-retirement-fund)



Ellen Schmitt of Bray Runners Athletic Club pictured at the Leinster Cross Country event in Avondale Forest Park

Briefs

First Saturday Book Sale

The February 2024 First Saturday Book Sale, which supports the Shankill Old Folks Association, will take place in the Shankill Day Centre, Lower Road, Shankill, from 10am to 1pm on Saturday February 3rd and all are welcome to attend. This will be an excellent opportunity to obtain some first class reading material for over the St. Brigid's Holiday weekend. Donations of books are appreciated but must be in a clean and good condition, are limited to two bags per donor, and will be gratefully accepted only on the day of the book sale.

Tea at Ten

Bray Chamber has announced the return of the Tea at Ten event on Thursday 8th February in the Martello at 10am, with talks from Declan Rogers (AI and Commercial Strategist) and Olivia Knight (Enterprise Engagement Officer KWETB).

Declan Rogers - AI & Commercial Strategist presents Tenacious AI Insights. Actionable strategies and real-world examples of utilising AI and machine learning for Business. He will chat about practical low cost and low risk sustainable AI tools and show a cost benefit analysis proving the investment justification.

KWETB is the driving force of education and

training in the county, offering part-time and full-time education options for Wicklow. Certified and uncertified, daytime and evening courses, giving you and your employees an opportunity to upskill and expand your knowledge. Enterprise Engagement Officer, Olivia Knight will chat about Training and Education options available to businesses. There will be an opportunity to network and enjoy a coffee afterwards. Tickets are Free and available to members and non-members, through Eventbrite.

Lambing season

As the lambing season approaches in the picturesque Wicklow & Dublin uplands, the Wicklow Uplands Council is making a heartfelt plea to both recreational users of the uplands and local dog owners to prioritise the safety of pregnant sheep and new born lambs. The council emphasises the importance of leaving dogs at home and ensuring that local dogs are not left to roam freely, as this can lead to distressing situations and even fatalities among the vulnerable sheep population.

By fostering a collective sense of responsibility among dog owners, the Wicklow Uplands Council hopes to create an environment where everyone can coexist harmoniously, appreciating the beauty of the uplands while safeguarding the well-being of its inhabitants.

Greystones-Delgany-Kilcoole Local Area Plan

The local area plan is the main public statement of planning policies for the local community. It sets out the objectives of the planning authority for the development of land. The plan includes objectives for land use. This includes zoning, infrastructure, community facilities, design and environmental/heritage protection. The plan consists of a written statement and a series of maps, including the land use zoning map for the area. Full details can be found at greystones-delgany-kilcoole-lap-wicklow.hub.arcgis.com. Making a submission to the Local Area Plan is encouraged. Closing date for submissions is 31 January 2024.

Holy Rosary Soup And Sandwiches

The next lunch is on Wednesday, 31st January in Kilian House Family Centre from 12.15 to 2pm. Everyone is welcome to come along to enjoy good home-made food and a friendly chat. Suggested donation €7. All proceeds are given to local charities.

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*In contentious business, a solicitor may not calculate fees or other charges as a percentage or proportion of any award or settlement

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Are the fares fair?

The National Transport Authority has published its 2024 Fares Determinations, showing that fares for Wicklow commuters are to be reduced. However, while Wicklow Town commuters travelling to Dublin will see their fares reduced, those travelling between Bray and Greystones are facing increased fares.

Journeys from Wicklow to Connolly Station reduced by a whopping 43% or €4.45 down to just €6 from €10.45. This is part of a restructuring of fares that will see a consistent cost per kilometer for the distance between the origin and destination journey.

Green TD Steven Matthews announced that following his discussions with the NTA, Leap tickets will be extended to Wicklow town later this year. This means that commuters in Wicklow Town will be able to avail of all the money saving benefits of the Leap system.

Deputy Matthews said, "The NTA published their new strategy with the aim of equalising fare costs across the country. This means that a journey of for example 20km will cost the same regardless of where in the country it is. The aim of these changes is to introduce fairness and transparency to the fee structure, and it will be income neutral for the company."

"It's huge news for commuters in Wicklow Town with the journey from Wicklow to Connolly Station reduced by almost half, now down to just €6 from €10.45. The introduction of the Leap card to

Wicklow later this year will provide further savings for those living in Wicklow Town.

"These changes will come into effect later this year. I will continue my work in the meantime to have the DART extended to Wicklow Town. As our county town where rapid growth has been taking place over the last number of years commuters in Wicklow have been crying out for measures to address public transport issues in their district. These measures will give a real boost to those living in or visiting Wicklow Town."

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has said that the recent announcement of a 15% fare increase on the DART between Bray and Greystones has sparked considerable dismay among commuters, and he said that it should be reversed.

Deputy Brady said "This decision appears to lack consideration for the financial strain already faced by individuals, especially in a time of economic uncertainty and a cost-of-living crisis. Public transportation is a vital service, and such a substantial fare hike disproportionately affects those who depend on the DART for their daily commute."

"This move risks making public transportation less accessible and

undermines efforts to encourage its use as a sustainable and efficient mode of travel. The rationale behind the decision remains unclear, leaving commuters frustrated and uninformed about the factors driving this significant increase."

"The timing of this fare adjustment raises questions about its necessity. In an era where promoting environmentally friendly modes of transportation is a priority, discouraging the use of public transit through increased fares could have counterproductive effects on both traffic congestion and carbon emissions."

"In the interest of fostering a collaborative and sustainable transportation system, reconsideration of this fare increase is warranted. Priority must be given to increasing DART frequency between Bray and Greystones, not further punishing commuters for a service that badly needs improving."

Fine Gael councillor Derek Mitchell welcomed the fare reductions. "However", he added, "the rail service is the worst in the Greater Dublin Area with only two trains at rush hour. I produced a plan six years ago to provide three longer trains at rush hour from



Isla Staunton, Aoife Hogan and Saorla Doyle of the Bray Runners Athletics Club at the Leinster Cross Country event in Avondale Forest Park.

Gorey as well as more Greystones DARTs but nothing has happened to implement this. We need to provide an alternative to commuters using cars on the N11."

Social Democrats Local Election candidate Aaron McAllorum said: "This is a radical overhaul of national fare structures, there will be benefits for some but not all.

The NTA are claiming that for short distance trips crossing the 'Dublin City Zone' boundary (e.g. Greystones to Bray), passengers will get the benefit of the National Fare Structure and the associated lower fare reflective of the short distance traveled, however I find that a touch disingenuous because the reality is, the train fare from

Bray to Greystones will increase this year by 15%, that's 30 cent extra for the trip. The rail journey from Wicklow Town into Dublin city centre will see a 43% reduction, which is welcome but is this reduction being subvented by higher fares for the Bray - Greystones trip and other national fare increases? The fare is not fair."

Council put the brakes on new Bray parking system

The newly implemented parking system in Bray's carparks, which requires drivers to enter their vehicle registration at ticket machines, is being paused. The new machines have been concerning and frustrating local residents and visitors to the town.

The current system has sparked considerable public concern due to the resulting delays and queues. This requirement has been identified as a major inconvenience.

Bray Municipal District entered into a new contract for the operation and installation of new parking metres in 2023 which would accept both cash and card payments. A commitment was given

to councillors that many parking metres would be replaced to facilitate card and cash payments as it is not possible to adapt the older machines to accept card payments.

Traffic Wardens had been instructed not to ticket a vehicle where a registration was wrongly inputted or where a ticket with time remaining on it and was shared with another vehicle.

The Council has now

requested that the new functionality be paused. There will now be further engagement and discussion with councillors.

Independent councillor for Bray Municipal District Rory O'Connor strongly criticized the system, stating, "As representatives of the local community, it is our duty to ensure public facilities are user-friendly. The current parking system hampers accessibility

and imposes unnecessary burdens on those wishing to use our carparks. Our goal should be to simplify parking in Bray, thereby supporting local commerce and enhancing the overall experience for visitors arriving by car. Their first encounter with Bray should be welcoming and hassle-free, which is why I am advocating for the modification of this new system."

Cllr O'Connor plans to raise the matter at the February meeting of Bray Municipal District.

Also addressing the matter last week, Green Party councillor Erika Doyle said that the spirit of common sense and discretion should apply to the policing of cars parked using new public parking ticket machines. She added that the current by laws do not appear to prohibit the 'passing on' of tickets with time left on them to fellow drivers.

Cllr Doyle said, "The new machines require the inputting of the car registration which seems to suggest that the tickets are not transferable. However having checked the by laws I cannot see anything prohibiting the passing of tickets. My interpretation is that if the time

has been paid for, it should be irrelevant who has paid the fee. We are talking about tiny amounts here, perhaps 50 cent or a euro left on a ticket. Drivers will often flag down and incoming driver and pass it on. It's a thoughtful, community minded action and I don't think it should be prohibited. If an inspector sees a paid up ticket in a car then that should be that."

"I understand the area codes will be replaced in the coming weeks. I know the absence of

these codes was making it difficult for people to use the new machines. I would urge those that are familiar with smart phones to use the parking app which is very handy and allows you to pay according to the time needed. I do welcome the fact that the new machines accept both cash and cards as I think it was well past the time we moved into card payments. I will be raising this issue with council staff and getting clarification for drivers in the coming days."

Social Democrats Local Election candidate Aaron McAllorum has queried the wisdom of the Local Authority in relation to the new ticketing arrangements.

Commenting on the situation, Mr. McAllorum said:

"I had my attention drawn to the situation by a regular user of the carpark over the weekend (20/21 January 2024) and committed to contacting the Municipal District (MD) in relation to it."

"I have asked the MD to provide the rationale

of the new arrangements and was there a commencement notice issued so people could prepare for the changes. In relation to the requirement to enter vehicle registration details, there's an accessibility issue here and add to that a technology literacy aspect. I'd ask the MD to reconsider their action here and come back with something that works for people. The town needs to fall in it to thrive and this situation could potentially be a barrier to achieving that."

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‘Price reductions needed on public EV chargers’

Green TD Steven Matthews has called on the ESB to pass on a reduction in rates for public Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers that they operate. This follows the reduction in unit rates for domestic users that will come in from March 1st that has not yet been passed on to public charger users. The ESB currently operate 18 charge points in Wicklow, and it is expected that this will increase in line with increased demand for electric cars.

Discussing the cost of charging, Deputy Matthews said: "The last couple of years has seen a huge uptake in the use of EVs and charge points and this is hugely positive as we move away from our reliance on fossil fuels.

"Access to reliable and affordable public charge points is incredibly important to make choosing an EV a viable option. It is not just about long-distance journeys or topping up the battery in emergencies - we have to think about people that live in circumstances that for various reasons means that they don't yet have access to domestic charging units.

"I have been contacted by a number of people that live in apartments that have not yet had a communal charger installed in their building and still rely on the ESB and other private suppliers to charge their vehicle. They



Steven Matthews TD

have made an environmentally conscious choice and should not be unfairly penalised.

"I have written to the ESB to

outline my concern regarding the ongoing high unit price on the charging infrastructure that they operate. I have also raised this directly with the Minister for Transport to ask that his department actively engage with the ESB to seek the reduction in costs of people using public chargers.

"This is about fairness to all customers, and I have asked that the ESB actively consider reducing the unit rates for public EV charging in line with previously announced cuts for domestic customers to further reflect the fall in the wholesale price of energy. Energy companies must work with us on the transition away from combustion engine cars and any hurdles that would discourage someone from switching need to be removed," concluded Deputy Matthews.

68 vehicles seized for having no valid NCT cert

Gardai seized over 2000 vehicles across three regions for failure to have valid NCT certificate in 2023.

In a response to a parliamentary question the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee has confirmed that 2115 vehicles were seized across Wicklow, Kildare and the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) in 2023 for not having a valid NCT.

In the breakdown provided by Minister McEntee, it shows that 68 seizures were in the Wicklow

region, 250 in Kildare with the remaining 1797 made in the DMR.

Commenting on the figures, Social Democrats Local Election candidate, Aaron McAllorum said: "First and foremost, this is a road safety and road worthiness issue. In 2023 there was a period in which it had been problematic for

people to secure a timely test for their vehicle, the service provider incurred fines as a result.

"It is vital that all vehicles using public roads that they are fit for purpose, it is for the protection of all road users that these tests are compulsory." People seeking urgent test appointments can contact the NCTS directly, by calling 01-4135992 or by using the priority waiting list function via the NCT website, www.ncts.ie.

‘Energy prices remain far too high for Wicklow customers’

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has said energy prices are still far too high and must be cut to affordable levels.

Commenting on news that Bord Gáis Energy will cut gas and electricity prices from February 29th, Deputy Brady said: "Energy companies have announced price cuts recently, but they do not go far enough, and prices remain much too high. Families need a break from these unaffordable costs and need to see urgent action to slash prices further.

"While the recent price decreases are welcome, the reality is that customers remain squeezed. Yes, prices are falling, but they are

falling from extortionate levels. We cannot ignore the fact that even after the reduction, Bord Gáis Energy's electricity prices will remain around 90 percent above where they were in 2020, and gas prices are around double previous levels.

"Ordinary workers and families in Wicklow continue to struggle under the weight of these sky-high costs. The level of arrears continues to grow, and energy poverty remains high. Heating homes across County Wicklow will remain exorbitantly expensive

this winter, particularly as the reduction will not come into effect until it is over.

"The stark reality is that the price of gas and electricity here remains sky high for local customers. In fact, Irish energy prices are some of the highest in the EU. The reasons for this cannot be attributed to external shocks alone. There are systemic problems in our energy system and successive governments have failed to address them. They have failed to manage our energy system properly. People in

Wicklow cannot be expected to pay the price for government failures to get to grips with the cost-of-living crisis.

"Sinn Féin has set out a suite of proposals to maximise State and community-owned renewables, reduce energy bills and to reform planning and energy regulation here. The government needs to act and to get to grips with this situation once and for all. A Sinn Féin government would ensure people in Wicklow get a much-needed break from out-of-control costs."



Caroline Lambert and Sioux at the recent Arklow Residents Right of Way (ARROW) protest at Arklow North Beach. The group is campaigning for more open access for the public to Arklow's walkways and to ensure rights of way are kept open for future generations.



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Benville Robinson LLP Solicitors open new office in Newtownmountkennedy

Benville Robinson LLP Solicitors are delighted to announce the opening of their branch office in the village of Newtownmountkennedy in County Wicklow. Benville Robinson LLP is a long established and well-respected firm of Solicitors owned and operated by Brian Robinson, Eilish Bradshaw, and Clare-Ann Temple, with their head office situate at 24A Florence Road, Bray.

Newtownmountkennedy is recognised as one of the fastest growing towns in Ireland, which is evident to any visitor to the busy village. This strategic expansion aims to provide both the residents and businesses of Newtownmountkennedy and the surrounding environs with a local office to meet all of their legal needs. The village office is conveniently located at Unit 1, Mountkennedy Town Centre on the Main Street, and will specialise in a wide range of legal services such as property transactions, probate and wills, personal injuries, all types of civil and commercial litigation and local business support. Solicitor Ciara O'Sullivan, who will be working from the village office and lives locally, expressed her enthusiasm to have the opportunity to work within her community. Ciara says that "we are thrilled to be opening in Newtownmountkennedy. Over the past number of years, the town has grown and it contin-

ues to go from strength to strength. We are committed to providing a high quality of service to our clients."

Benville Robinson Solicitors was originally founded in 1993 and has since grown from strength to strength to become one of the largest and most prominent legal firms in County Wicklow and South County Dublin. Brian Robinson is currently State Solicitor for County Wicklow, prosecuting on behalf of the DPP. He also specialises in planning law and defence



Ciara O'Sullivan

involved with the inshore fishing industry.

The past few years have seen a lot of expansion at Benville Robinson which continues with the opening of our sub-office in Newtown. Along with the three Partners, Brian, Eilish and Clare-Ann, the office has three additional dedicated and professional Solicitors, who understand the importance of community engagement and have a focus on building lasting relationships with clients and fostering good relationships with the local community. Ciara O'Sullivan specialises in residential and commercial property transactions and Wills and probate, Peter McQuillan specialises in residential and commercial property transactions and Hannah Stockwell-Quinn specialises in probate litigation, personal injuries actions and regularly appears before the local District and Circuit Court. The six Solicitors are supported in the office by five Legal Executives, four legal administrators and their office



Peter McQuillan.

litigation matters. Eilish Bradshaw is currently the Managing Partner of the office and head of the Probate and Property department. Clare-Ann Temple is head of the office's Litigation department and looks after all aspects of civil and commercial litigation, but with a particular emphasis on personal injuries and medical negligence, commercial environmental and planning litigation, and is heavily



Hannah Stockwell-Quinn.



Clare-Ann Temple, Partner.



Brian Robinson, Partner.



Eilish Bradshaw, Partner.



Pictured are Peter McQuillan, Hannah Stockwell-Quinn, Ciara O'Sullivan, Brian Robinson, Clare-Ann Temple and Eilish Bradshaw at the opening of the new office of Benville Robinson Solicitors in Newtownmountkennedy.

Manager, Alison Heffernan.

The firm had its official opening last Thursday where residents and business operators were invited to meet the team, tour the new offices and learn more about the services offered. Managing Partner of the firm, Eilish Bradshaw said that "we

are delighted with the support from the local community and the opportunity to meet both residents and business operators at our recent launch event. We are very much looking forward to serving Newtownmountkennedy and its surrounding environs and growing with the village.

If you would like more information on the services that Benville Robinson provide or to schedule a consultation in either their Bray or Newtownmountkennedy office, please telephone the office on 01 276 1330 or email info@benvilleroobinson.ie



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PRACTISING SOLICITORS

*In contentious business, a solicitor may not calculate fees or other charges as a percentage or proportion of any award or settlement

Councillors put forward proposal for purchase of Old Court Demesne site in Bray



Councillors Rory O'Connor and Aoife Flynn-Kennedy at Old Court Demesne

Fine Gael councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy and Independent councillor Rory O'Connor have put forward a proposal for the acquisition of Old Court Demesne, a historic 16.4-acre site in the heart of Bray, prioritizing housing opportunities while respecting the area's environmental and heritage value.

The centerpiece of the proposal is the development of sustainable, community-oriented housing which includes affordable, social, and cost rental. This initiative aims to help meet the growing demand for homes, while integrating the housing within the natural beauty of the area.

Alongside housing, the proposal places a strong emphasis on protecting and enhancing the environmental richness of Old Court Demesne. The area's historical structures, including a Georgian farmhouse and a 15th-century tower house, are considered integral to the project. The Georgian farmhouse is planned to be preserved and used as a social enterprise such as a cafe alongside its use as a place for societies to meet.

Cllr Flynn Kennedy said "This is a unique chance to create something truly special in the heart of our community. By focusing on affordable housing, we are not only addressing a critical need but also protecting our environment and celebrating our rich heritage. This opportunity to make a lasting, positive impact on Bray is one we cannot afford to miss."

Cllr O'Connor's stated; "With this ambitious proposal, we are setting a new standard in urban development. By combining high quality housing with our commitment to environmental stewardship and heritage conservation, we are crafting an area of high-quality living.

This development isn't just about building homes; it's about creating a vibrant, sustainable community that will serve as a model for future projects, benefiting both current residents and generations to come."

'Govt policies are ruining Bray businesses'

Bray Aontu candidate Ciaran Hogan has spoken out against the establishment of a Bray Town Team, which will focus on generating ideas on how to rejuvenate Bray town, on the basis that this is what councillors are elected to do.

"My immediate reaction is: While I'm completely against an unelected group coming in to do the job of councillors, why aren't the councillors doing that job already then?", said Ciaran.

"The number of local businesses in Bray which have gone to the wall in the past couple of years is thoroughly depressing. As a small-business owner myself, I am well aware of the pressures and sudden outflows of cash that have many others teetering on a cliff edge. Very unfortunately when a business closes in Bray there isn't a new tenant business ready to take that shopfront and so we have many derelict properties for years all around Bray even on Main Street and Quinnsborough, the two main thoroughfares of the town.

"Are our councillors who are members of the governing parties aware of what these policies are doing to our local businesses? Have they been passing on to their colleagues in government the disastrous effect their policies have been having in towns like Bray, where vacant retail units provide the evidence for anyone to see of how many businesses have been forced over the edge into insolvency?

"The fact is that much of the financial strain on small businesses, particularly those in the service and retail sector, is arising directly through government policies, which have caused major cost increases that are becoming increasingly difficult to bear: the pension auto-enrolment scheme, the new statutory sick pay rules, the hike in the minimum wage to name just three. Add the stricter Revenue reporting requirements to the package and it is a recipe for disaster. These are all failed policies, there aren't examples to point to where they have worked to bolster equality, livability, employment, or reduce fraud. The issue they all do create is businesses passing on higher prices to customers, exacerbating an already rampant cost of living crisis.

"Price Waterhouse have predicted an increase in the business failure rate in 2024 to nearly 1,000. That's three



Bray Aontu candidate Ciaran Hogan



'Bray needs to get sun smart'

The National Cancer Control Programme and Healthy Ireland are set to rollout the SunSmart initiative in 2024 as part of the implementation of the National Skin Cancer Prevention Plan 2023-2026.

It has been confirmed by Dr Caitríona McCarthy, Consultant in Public Health Medicine National Cancer Control Programme that Bray Municipal will be contacted in relation to the installation of SunSmart sunscreen dispensers in the Town and on the seafront.

Reacting to the news, Social Democrats Local Election candidate, Aaron McAllorum said: "I am delighted that the Bray Municipal will have the opportunity to be part of this simple and effective measure to mitigate the risk of developing cancer.

"This initiative is something I have paid close attention to since it launched and was eager to see it rolled out in Bray. I kept in touch with the programme developers for updates, hoping the town could be part of it if approved. The positivity rate of 84% in feedback on the pilot programme is great to see and is proof the pilot was a success."

per day. That's not just a number; each one is someone's passion, livelihood, and hopes for future dashed. It's time to rejuvenate the Council. Let's get some people who know good business elected in June, 2024. With effective policy we can nurture the natural entrepreneurial spirit to give Bray the goods services and local jobs that make living and shopping local the best option."



PJ Busher, Julie Martin, Ann Byrne, Sheila Busher, Ann Carey and Owen Byrne at the Arklow Community Action Resource Centre community dinner held in Arus Lorcan, Arklow.

'Govt side with vultures who snapped up 52 Wicklow homes'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has criticised the Government for continuing to roll out the red carpet for vulture funds who snapped up 52 homes in Wicklow under the noses of workers and families since January 2021.

Deputy Brady was commenting after the Government last week voted to reject Sinn Féin's Dail motion, which sought to end the practice of vulture funds bulk-purchasing homes.

He further criticised government TDs in Wicklow for doing so in the wake of new figures confirming that 1,205 homes across the state have been purchased by vulture funds since January 2021, including 52 in Wicklow.

Deputy Brady, speaking on Friday said, "Last night the Dáil voted on Sinn Féin's motion to tackle the unacceptable practice of investment funds bulk-purchasing homes.

"There was a clear choice to make - to side with vulture funds or to side with aspiring homeowners, and the Government opted to side with the vultures.

"New figures released to Pearse Doherty this week show that these are not isolated incidents.

"Since January 2021, 1,205 homes have been snapped up by vulture funds, including 52 here in Wicklow.

"These are 52 Wicklow homes that should have been available to workers and families to buy.

Instead they have had that opportunity snatched from them, with vultures instead putting these homes on the rental market with exorbitant rents.

"For some time, Sinn Féin argued for new laws and a higher rate of stamp duty to be charged to stop this unfair and unacceptable practice, and that was the focus of our motion voted on tonight.

"Yet instead of joining with us in siding with aspiring home-owners, the Government rolled out the red carpet for vulture funds. The people of Wicklow will remember that.

"Only a Sinn Féin Government would end this practice, and undo the damage of decades of bad Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael housing policy."



John Brady TD



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

RESIDENTIAL ZONED LAND TAX (RZLT) PUBLICATION OF RESIDENTIAL ZONED LAND TAX ANNUAL DRAFT MAP

A new tax to activate land for residential purposes was introduced by the Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage as Section 80 of the Finance Act 2021. The tax measure is aimed at incentivising residential development rather than generating revenue for the State.

In order to implement this new tax measure, local authorities are required to undertake mapping to identify the lands in scope for the tax in their respective functional areas, with provisions allowing those landowners identified as being within the scope to challenge this decision by making submissions to the local authority or, where the challenge to the local authority is unsuccessful, An Bord Pleanála. Thereafter, the administration of the tax measure will be undertaken by the Revenue Commissioners.

An annual draft map, prepared in accordance with Section 653C, as modified by Section 653M of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, has been published on the website maintained by Wicklow County Council and is available for inspection at its offices.

The annual draft map has been prepared for the purposes of identifying land that satisfies the relevant criteria and is to be subject to the residential zoned land tax.

Residential properties, notwithstanding that they may be included on the annual draft map, shall not be chargeable to the residential zoned land tax.

Land which satisfies the relevant criteria is a reference to land that –

- (a) is included in a development plan, in accordance with section 10(2) (a) of the Act of 2000, or local area plan, in accordance with section 19(2)(a) of the Act of 2000, zoned –
 - (i) solely or primarily for residential use, or
 - (ii) for a mixture of uses, including residential use,
 - (b) it is reasonable to consider may have access, or be connected, to public infrastructure and facilities, including roads and footpaths, public lighting, foul sewer drainage, surface water drainage and water supply, necessary for dwellings to be developed and with sufficient service capacity available for such development, and
 - (c) it is reasonable to consider is not affected, in terms of its physical condition, by matters to a sufficient extent to preclude the provision of dwellings, including contamination or the presence of known archaeological or historic remains, but which is not land –
 - (i) that is referred to in paragraph (a)(i) and, having regard only to development (within the meaning of the Act of 2000) which is not unauthorised development (within the meaning of the Act of 2000), is in use as premises, in which a trade or profession is being carried on, that is liable to commercial rates, that it is reasonable to consider is being used to provides services to residents of adjacent residential areas,
 - (ii) that is referred to in paragraph (a)(ii), unless it is reasonable to consider that the land is vacant or idle,
 - (iia) the development of which would not conform with –
 - (I) in a case in which the land is zoned in a development plan, the phased basis in accordance with which development of land is to take place under the plan, as detailed in the core strategy included in that plan in accordance with section 10(2A)(d) of the Act of 2000, or
 - (II) in a case in which the land is zoned in a local area plan, the objective, consistent with the objectives and core strategy of the development plan for the area in respect of which the local area plan is prepared, of development of land on a phased basis, included in the local area plan in accordance with section 19(2) of the Act of 2000,
- on the date on which satisfaction of the criteria in this section is being assessed,

- (iii) that it is reasonable to consider is required for, or is integral to, occupation by –
 - (I) social, community or governmental infrastructure and facilities, including infrastructure and facilities used for the purposes of public administration or the provision of education or healthcare,
 - (II) transport facilities and infrastructure,
 - (III) energy infrastructure and facilities,
 - (IV) telecommunications infrastructure and facilities,
 - (V) water and wastewater infrastructure and facilities,
 - (VI) waste management and disposal infrastructure, or
 - (VII) recreational infrastructure, including sports facilities and playgrounds,
- (iv) that is subject to a statutory designation that may preclude development, or
- (v) on which the derelict sites levy is payable in accordance with the Derelict Sites Act 1990.

Submissions on the annual draft map may be made in writing to Wicklow County Council not later than **01 April 2024**, regarding –

- (I) either the inclusion in or exclusion from the final map of specific sites, or
- (II) the date on which a site first satisfied the relevant criteria.

Submissions should include a name and address, reasons for inclusion or exclusion of lands, along with a map of scale 1:1,000 (urban area) or 1:2,500 (rural area) where the submission is made by a landowner, clearly identifying the area of land subject of the submission.

Any such written submissions received by 01 April 2024 other than such elements of a submission which may constitute personal data, shall be published on the website maintained by Wicklow County Council not later than 11 April 2024.

The proposed inclusions and proposed exclusions on the annual draft map are subject to submissions received. Any landowners who supports the exclusion of their land should make a submission in support of such exclusion.

Where land is identified on the annual draft map as being subject to the residential zoned land tax and where the land identified on the draft map is included in a development plan or local area plan in accordance with section 10(2)(a) or 19(2)(a) of the Act of 2000 zoned –

- (i) solely or primarily for residential use, or
- (ii) for a mixture of uses, including residential use,

a person may on or before **31 May 2024**, in respect of aforementioned land that such a person owns, make a submission to Wicklow County Council requesting a variation of the zoning of that land. Any such submission should include evidence of ownership, detailed reasons for any rezoning request, along with a map to a scale of 1:1,000 (urban) or 1:2,500 (rural) clearly identifying the relevant plot of land.

Any such written rezoning requests received by 31 May 2024 other than such elements of a submission which may constitute personal data, shall be published on the website maintained by Wicklow County Council concerned not later than 10 June 2024.

All rezoning requests made will be considered by Wicklow County Council having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Submissions may be made in one of the following ways:

1. Write to Administrative Officer, Planning Department, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Whitegates, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96, marked 'RZLT'.
2. Email RZLT@wicklowcoco.ie

More information can be found on the Council website at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Planning/Residential-Zoned-Land-Tax>

House prices expected to fall 5pc in 2024



The price of the average second-hand three-bed semi in County Wicklow is predicted to decrease by 5pc in 2024, according to a national survey by Real Estate Alliance. Three-bed semi-detached homes in the county now cost an average of €362,000, up 1pc on the December 2022 average of €360,000, the Q4 REA Average House Price Index shows.

County agents reported that first time buyers made up 78pc of the market in Q4, with 5pc of sales coming from outside the county and 15pc of sales attributed to landlords selling properties.

"We are seeing evidence that purchasers are fewer in quantity and less willing to commit to a property without considering other areas," said Simon Murphy of REA Murphy Baltinglass and Blessington.

"West and South-West Wicklow are less accessible than neighbouring areas, and an increasing availability of designated 'affordable' houses in new housing schemes will have an impact on prices of second-hand older homes in third- and fourth-tier locations.

"More of the same is expected for 2024, with low stock levels of all property types

being available to buy.

"As we have seen already in 2023, there will be a premium for properties that are in good condition, well located and achieve a good energy rating.

"The second hand three-bed semi-detached market is softening, and 2024 may bring a price adjustment of 7.5% average."

The REA Average House Price Index concentrates on the actual sale price of Ireland's typical stock home, the three-bed semi, giving an accurate picture of the second-hand property market in towns and cities countrywide.

Three-bed semi prices nationally will rise by 3pc in 2024, estate agents across the country are predicting.

A record shortage of supply has driven a 1.5pc rise in the last three months in the capital,

but only in houses under a certain price, the index found.

House prices in Dublin and the other cities outpaced Ireland's large towns and commuter counties as mortgage approved buyers chase properties within their price ceiling.

The actual selling price of a three-bed, semi-detached house across the country rose by 1pc in the final quarter of 2023 to €304,259 - representing an annual increase of 4.3pc.

Time taken to reach sale agreed nationally is steady at five weeks as low supply continues to drive sales in an increasing interest rate environment.

Prices in Dublin city rose by 1.5pc in the last three months, meaning that the average three-bed semi in the capital is now selling at €511,667 - an increase of 3pc in the last year.

Mortgage-approved first-time buyers are still the main market drivers, with 59pc of sales nationally - a figure that rises dramatically to over 80pc in commuter counties as they hunt suitably priced properties.

Cities outside Dublin experienced a 1.73pc rise in the past three months to an average selling price of €323,000 with the annual rate of increase of 4.5pc.

Homes in the commuter belt showed the most stability in 2023, rising by just 2.2pc to €319,722, with counties within travelling distance of the capital recording growth of just 0.2pc in the past three months.

The biggest annual rise came in large towns nationwide, which rose by 6.6pc annually and 1.2pc in the quarter to €223,638.

'ESRI report highlights need to implement Sinn Fein housing proposals'

Sinn Fein TD John Brady has said the ESRI review of the government's National Development Plan published this month should be a wakeup call for the government.

The ESRI review confirms that the government's housing targets are far too low and that not enough homes are being built to meet demand. The review also backs Sinn Fein's calls for directing construction focus on housing need; to end the housing crisis.

Deputy Brady said: "The report by the ESRI confirms what Sinn

Fein have been saying for a long time. The government's housing targets are far too low. Plans to deliver housing fall far short of what is needed to end the housing crisis.

"The report also backs Sinn Fein's long-standing proposal that moving construction focus from offices and hotels towards delivering

homes for workers and families could be funded using targeted tax measures and make a real difference in getting to grips with the housing crisis. The report should make for sober reading for a government who spend more time backslapping than delivering. After 13 years in Government, it lays bare the

coalitions lack of ambition and failure to realise the scale of investment needed to address decades of neglect.

"The National Development Plan has not been adjusted to take into account huge inflation in construction costs. We are allocating the same amount of money as if inflation never happened. This is essentially a substantial cut in ambition in real terms. It is ordinary people who will pay the price for Government's failure to plan and invest. Budget 2024 was an opportunity to address the shortfall in capital investment. The government failed to do this. In our Alternative Budget, Sinn Fein set out how this could be delivered.

"The IFAC has warned that there will be a €19 billion black hole in our capital budget by 2030 and that €2.7 billion extra is

needed each year from 2024 to 2030. This is just what is needed for the same projects outlined in the NDP in 2021 to be delivered. We are in desperate need of homes, health projects, water infrastructure, road, rail, and grid infrastructure.

"It is clear that every day this government remain in office, the housing crisis is getting worse and worse. Workers and families in Wicklow and further afield are being forced to pay the price for this government's failed housing policy, trapped paying sky-high rents while watching their dream of owning their own home slipping further and further from reach. It's time for change. Sinn Fein have a detailed, fully costed, and workable plan to deliver genuinely affordable homes. Housing would be the number one priority of a Sinn Fein government."



John Brady TD


COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

VALUE YOUR VOTE

**IT IS NOW YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE
THAT YOU'RE REGISTERED TO VOTE.**

New Registration

The referendums on the proposals contained in the Thirty-ninth Amendment of the Constitution (The Family) Bill 2023 and the Fortieth Amendment of the Constitution (Care) Bill 2023 will be held on 8 March 2024. If you are eligible to vote and not on the register of electors you must apply before **Tuesday 20 February 2024**.

To be eligible to vote in a Referendum:

- (a) You must be 18 years of age on or before Friday, 08 March 2024.
- (b) You must be living at the address at which you wish to be registered.
- (c) You must have Irish citizenship.

How to apply:

- On-line on www.checktheregister.ie
- Hard copy forms (ERF1) are available at Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow, Municipal District Offices and Libraries. Forms also available to download from www.checktheregister.ie

For any enquires please email franchise@wicklowcoco.ie or phone 0404 20161.

All hard copy completed forms to be returned to Franchise Section, Freepost, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow, A67 FW96.









Diarmuid Ryan and Aaron McDermott at the Bray Institute of Further Education (BIFE) Open Day

New faces on the Council

There are certain to be many new faces on the Council after the upcoming local elections.

Many are predicting several gains for Sinn Féin if the polls are to be believed. There is also a host of new young candidates standing for the established parties and as Independents.

A number of long serving councillors have decided to retire:- Vincent Blake (FG); Irene Winters (FG); Shay Cullen (FG) and Derek Mitchell (FG), while Gerry Walsh (FF)

has also decided to depart. Rumours are also that long serving Councillor Pat Fitzgerald (FF) may not run. Poll topper Shay Cullen is expected to resign from Fine Gael and run as an Independent candidate in the general election.



Stepping down: Fine Gael councillors (from left): Irene Winters, Derek Mitchell, Vincent Blake and Shay Cullen



Paul Prendergast, Independent local election candidate Ciara Martin Perks and Paul Murray at the opening of Benville Robinson Solicitors' new office in Newtownmountkennedy last Thursday evening.

Fianna Fail spring surprise with new Wicklow candidate

Fianna Fail have a new surprise candidate in the Wicklow local electoral area, with Senator Pat Casey's wife announcing her intention to stand.

Speaking to Wicklow Times Sonia said "I have put my name forward to Fianna Fail as a candidate in the upcoming local election for the Wicklow Local Electoral Area. As a local resi-

dent, in the townland of Boleynass, located between Ashford and Roundwood, I am familiar with the issues that impact our community and would welcome the opportunity to represent

you and your family as a member of Wicklow County Council.

"I have been blessed with the opportunity to grow up in this wonderful part Wicklow, going to national school in

Newtownmountkennedy and secondary school at the Abbey Community College, Wicklow. After attending the University of Limerick, I returned home and following a 5 year challenge to get planning permission, was fortunate enough to build my house close to my family and married Pat

from Glendalough 8 years ago.

"I have always been interested in national politics and local government, and have worked in our public health service for the past 27 years. If elected my priorities would be to ensure the continued development and vibrancy of our local communities through ensuring transparency and consistency in our planning processes, the expansion of local infrastructure and rural transport networks, and supporting our voluntary community organisations particularly those which support our young people to flourish and grow and our older people to age well."



Sonia Casey (Shortt)

Fine Gael holds Wicklow selection convention

Fine Gael has begun to select the candidates that will represent the party in the next Local Elections in the constituency. The Wicklow convention was held on the 22nd of January in the Ashford Heritage Centre.

Local Area Representative Graham Richmond, a Wicklow Town based teacher was

selected on the night by Fine Gael as the election candidate. Graham has worked as a history,

resource and games teacher in East Glendalough Secondary School for over a decade and has been heavily involved in the community through his school life and links with Wicklow Rugby Club.

Graham was endorsed by his colleagues, Councillor Irene Winters and former TD, Andrew Doyle on the night. They both expressed their support for Graham and wished him the best of luck in his campaign. This was followed by a speech of endorsement from Minister Simon Harris. Graham was joined by his wife and three daughters, and his brother Minister Neale Richmond in support.

Senator Barry Ward chaired the selection convention. He said: "We are lucky to have a very tight team representing the party at local level. Graham Richmond has already shown how

invested he is in his community. He has demonstrated great commitment to improving his local area and that commitment is set to grow."

Minister Simon Harris said: "Fine Gael has started to select the candidates for the local elections, the candidates selected will bring a strong mix of experience, energy, youth and diversity to the party. We had a successful local election in 2019, with 255 councillors returned. We were the first Government party in two decades to buck the trend and increase our number of council seats at a mid-term election."

Speaking following his selection, Graham said: "It was a great honour to be selected as a candidate for Fine Gael in East Wicklow ahead of the local elections in June. I have spent the last number of months out on the ground, meeting residents and families and finding

out first hand the issues the people of East Wicklow care about. I know that there are a myriad of concerns out there at the moment that we need to work together to overcome whether it's tackling congestion on the N11, improving infrastructure such as roads and footpaths, addressing shortages in housing, upgrading sporting and recreation facilities, enhancing public transport and local healthcare and so on.

"But I know too that our communities in Wicklow have become wonderful places in which to live, work, visit and raise a family. If elected, I will ensure that the investment that Fine Gael has put into this constituency will continue. Over the next few months, I intend to meet as many residents as possible and to prioritise the issues that affect the people of East Wicklow."



Fine Gael candidate Graham Richmond with Minister Simon Harris at the selection convention



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

SECTION 75 – ROADS ACT, 1993 PROVISION FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF PUBLIC ROAD

Wicklow County Council hereby gives notice that it proposes the temporary closure of the following public road.

Road to be closed
Quinsborough Road, Bray.
Section between Station Road and Strand Road.

Period of closure
From Sunday 6th March to Wednesday 27th March 2024.
24 hour closure.

Alternative Routes
Diversion route via R766 – Strand Road to Putland Road to Meath Road and Adelaide Road.

For vehicles not exceeding 3.2m in height diversion will be via Sidmonton Avenue.

Reason for Closure
This closure is necessary to facilitate the installation of storm water drainage either side of the railway tracks for the Bray Transport Interchange Project.
Any person wishing to object to the proposed road closure must lodge their objection in writing to Transportation and Roads, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Co. Wicklow or via email at roadtrans@wicklowcoco.ie not later than 12.00 noon on Tuesday 6th February, 2024.

SSE Renewables supports Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club's Youth Coaching Programme for a fourth year

Leading renewable energy owner, operator and developer SSE Renewables, through its Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund, has supported the annual Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club (WBSAC) Youth Angling Coaching programme for the fourth consecutive year.

The company which is developing the 800MW offshore wind project off the coast of Wicklow and North Wexford, was represented by Community Engagement Manager Deirdre Keogh at the annual WBSAC awards night in Wicklow Town on Saturday, 13th January. Kit Dunne, Club Secretary, acknowledged the Club's appreciation to SSE Renewables for its support over the past four years, commenting that "Angling is a sport that is accessible to all ages and abilities. It's a sport that allows young people to benefit and take time out and enjoy fun activities whilst learning an important skill. We're very grateful to SSE Renewables for its continuing support for our youth angling programme." Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager on the SSE Renewables Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Project, presented the youth coaching awards. She commented: "Our Sponsorship Fund is an important part of our social value proposition. The Club's youth angling programme aligns well with our Fund criteria in seeking to support marine-based initiatives and youth training programmes in communities close to our development site."



Kit Dunne of Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club, Ray McKeown, and Deirdre Keogh of SSE Renewables present Kyro Roberts with his award.



Kit Dunne of Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club and Deirdre Keogh of SSE Renewables present Jayden Hubbard with his award.



Kit Dunne of Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club, Ray McKeown, and Deirdre Keogh of SSE Renewables present Sam Czwalina with his award.

'New protected marine area is good news for Wicklow's birds'

A new designation of 305,000 hectares of marine waters off the coast of Wexford as a 'Special Protection Area' is good news for birds says Wicklow Green TD Steven Matthews. It joins several other east coast Special Protected areas in Wicklow including The Murrough and Wicklow Head.



Deputy Steven Matthews

Deputy Matthews commented, "This will bring the total percentage of marine protected areas up to 10%, moving towards the target of 30% designated Marine Protected Areas by 2030. This protection is vital in order to have a clean and healthy marine environment. A programme of measures accompanies the designation, including nature based solutions to address biodiversity loss and climate change, and crucially for the Wicklow/Wexford coastline, environmental guidance for offshore renewable energy. "The designation of the Special Protection Area by Minister Malcolm Noonan, Ireland's 'Minister for Nature', is the largest designation of this nature in the history of the State. They are designated under the EU Birds Directive and cover a vast area of over 305,000 hectares of water important to a range of over 20 bird species, among them the Little Tern, well known for nesting on Kilcoole beach. This new SPA joins eight others along the coast. Other bird types that the area has a special conservation link to are the Common Scoter, Red throated Diver, Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, gannet, Shag, Cormorant, Kittiwake, Black headed Gull, Herring Gull, Roseate Tern, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Sandwich Tern, Mediterranean Gull, Puffin, Razorbill and Guillemot."

Newtown man and ReWild Wicklow among '50 to Watch' in 2024

Newtownmountkennedy resident and chairperson of ReWild Wicklow, Danny Alvey, was recently selected in the prestigious Irish Times '50 People to Watch' for 2024.

ReWild Wicklow was co-founded in 2021 by Alvey siblings Danny, Ian, Simon and Enya, along with other local environmental enthusiasts and experts. Since then it has grown to over 1,300 volunteers who have worked with the NPWS, NGOs and private landowners on over 25 nature restoration sites. This innovative people-power movement gained full charity status in 2023 and there are big plans to grow their impact on fighting the biodiversity crisis in Wicklow, including a new community native tree nursery in Newtownmountkennedy. In the piece in the Irish Times, environmental journalist Catherine Cleary said: "Over Christmas three years ago, Danny Alvey and his siblings Enya, Simon and Ian started a WhatsApp group to get more nature into the plan for the Wicklow Mountains National Park. The existing plan was heavy on 'new roads and new trails', Alvey explains, and light on the ecological restoration. They started a petition and, 10,000 signatures later, found

themselves meeting Minister of State for Heritage Malcolm Noonan. That energy and support has grown into ReWild Wicklow and they now have a volunteer army of 1,300 people ready to take on the work of restoring sensitive ecological areas. The group visits fellow Wicklow nature-based enterprise Wildacres once a season, and has been on 25 different sites carrying out work. Plans for the coming year include a native tree nursery and helping people in other counties set up their own 'ReWild' organisations. Going from having 'no land, no wealth, no experience, just a passion', they have grown a charity that gets people out restoring nature, where 'everybody goes home with a smile on their face.'" Danny is surely set for a busy year as he is also a candidate for the Social Democrats in the upcoming Local Elections to represent the Wicklow Municipal District of Wicklow Town, Newtownmountkennedy, Rathnew, Ashford, Kilpedder, Roundwood, Glenealy and Laragh.



Danny Alvey



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Li Duggan Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine expanding into Delgany

Li Duggan Acupuncture is delighted to call Skin and Body in Delgany its new home. This serene and welcoming space has been carefully chosen to provide clients with a tranquil environment, perfectly suited for their needs and building upon the success of the established practice in Foxrock Co. Dublin.

"Since I opened in Foxrock in 2019 the clinic has thankfully gone from strength to strength," says Li. "I live in Greystones with my husband, two daughters and the latest edition our dog Sammy for the past 16 years. Over the last couple of years I have seen a growing number of clients coming to me from the Wicklow region so it made sense to try to establish another clinic closer to their home and my own!"

Background

"I worked as a nurse for 10 years in a Triple A rated hospital (the highest standard of medical care in China). I came to Ireland in 2007 on a career break with the goal of perfecting my English and experiencing a different culture. However, after a few months I met my future husband and decided to settle in Ireland. I started working as

a theatre nurse in the Rotunda hospital in 2009. Over the course of my ten year career in the Rotunda, I became increasingly convinced of the benefits of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine for helping to treat a range of acute conditions.

"During this time as a nurse, I had my two children and also completed the Accounting Technician exams and subsequently qualified as an ACCA chartered accountant. I worked briefly for an accountancy practice, but soon realised that my passion remained in the field of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine. I therefore went back to my studies in this area and began to prepare for opening my own clinic.

"I opened my clinic in Foxrock, Co. Dublin in 2019, just before Covid. Despite the lockdowns and restrictions, my clinic has gone from strength to

strength ever since. I am consistently perfecting my techniques to achieve the best outcomes for my clients and as you can see from my website I have over 138 five star google reviews. Earlier this year, I took on another acupuncturist in Dr. Zhang. Her CV and knowledge in areas such as infertility, womens health and pain management is exceptional."

Philosophy

"The vision for my clinics in Ireland is to pair Chinese traditional medicine principles with my strong clinical background. If a client for example comes to me with a persistent knee injury they are reassured that I understand the physiology of their injury. However, my approach to their treatment is similar to my approach to a person who may come to me with an entirely different

issue. The reason for this is that while we can use acupuncture treatments to relieve pain, we are equally focused on the root causes of their problem. We take a much more holistic approach which involves not only solving the immediate source of the pain, but also working on the root causes. This is intended to ensure that healing and preventative measures lead to an overall improvement in long term health. Alongside treating my clients I also try to demonstrate to them how they can take measures or do exercises which will lead to an overall improvement in their general health and thus reduce the chances of issues resurfacing."

The Principles of Acupuncture

"I think its fair to say that Acupuncture is regarded in China as a medical treatment rather than an alternative medical treatment. It is ubiquitous and in the treatment of pain, stress and increasingly

fertility it could be said that it is simply part of the medical system.

"In my own clinics as the years have gone by I have seen the results of our approach time and time again with our clients. I suppose I would say I have two types of client: 1) The believers; 2) The converted. Ironically, it is the second category of people that are often my biggest advocates. Sometimes these clients have tried everything to get the root cause of their issues and when we treat them successfully they often say 'I wish I had known about you years ago'. Some of the most effusive testimonials actually come from people who were sceptical when they first came in and then see the effects of our approach and are converts to it for life, I hope! In fact many of my new clients come from referrals and word of mouth from my existing clients. Also in recent years we are seeing more clients coming to us with fertility issues and just in December of 2023 we have had 5 celebrating a successful pregnancy."



Li Duggan

Growth in employment openings forecast to reach 5% in 2024

Upward pressure on salaries in Wicklow and around the country to remain for next 12 months

Employment opportunities are expected to grow by 5% in Wicklow during the course of 2024, according to recruitment company FRS Recruitment. This follows the 7% growth also recorded in Wicklow for 2023.

The positive outlook for the coming year is in line with FRS Recruitment's national projections, with 8% growth also forecast for the country as a whole over the next 12 months. They are anticipating particularly strong demand for accounting, insurance, engineering, science, construction, cybersecurity and social care personnel on a national basis for the coming year.

It is also expected that upward pressure on salaries in Wicklow and the rest of the country will continue over the next 12 months, with the economy at full employment and cost of living challenges still being felt by local employees.

The analysis is included in FRS Recruitment's 2023 Review & 2024 Trend Forecast report. In total, over the course of 2023, FRS Recruitment advertised a total of 88,964 opportunities nationally. There was also a strong level of response from potential candidates to the openings that came on market, with FRS recording a 32% rise in the average number of applications received per opportunity.

On a county by county basis, 20 of the 26 counties experienced a decline in job opportunities in 2023. Dublin and all the other main urban areas experienced a drop in the number of roles with Limerick (down 20%), Cork (down 19%) and Galway (down 18%). Proportionately the largest decline was experienced in Monaghan (down 51%).

Wicklow was one of six counties to buck the national trend and record a rise in the number of opportunities last year. There was significant growth in activity in the north-west part of the country in particular, with the largest county by county increases occurring in Donegal (up 43%), Leitrim (up 40%), Mayo (up 36%) and Sligo (up 13%).

Speaking about the report and the outlook for the year ahead, Lynne McCormack, General Manager with FRS Recruitment said, "If 2023 was a year of turbulence in the recruitment market nationally, Wicklow was one of the few counties where a rise in the number of employment opportunities was recorded. Looking ahead to 2024, we fully expect the market in Wicklow to continue to grow and our expectations are that there should also be steady growth across the national market after a challenging 12 months for the recruitment sector.

"It is fair to say that in 2023, on a national level, the market got jittery, certainly in the first half of the year. The large job losses announced by the major tech companies seemed to resonate across the market and across most of the country. This had implications for opportunities coming on stream for multiple industries beyond the IT sector. Rising costs relating to energy, supply chain expenses and salaries also impacted on the recruitment outlook as many employers opted to utilise their available workforce rather than going to the market with new openings."

'State supports for vulnerable but viable businesses must be made available'

Sinn Fein TD John Brady said time-limited state supports for vulnerable but viable businesses must be made available to help firms in the face of an escalating cost-of-business crisis.

Deputy Brady said: "There is no doubt that the current economic challenges are proving to be a testing time for both workers and businesses alike. With Wicklow suffering as much as any part of the state. Recent analysis from Deloitte Ireland revealed that corporate insolvencies reached the highest level in five years after 25% rise in 2023. Of the 663 insolvencies last year, hospitality and construction saw a 62% increase, showing that inflation is having a particularly potent impact on these sectors.

"We in Sinn Fein are particularly aware of the cost-of-business storm that has been brewing for SMEs, in addition, we are also cognisant that warehoused tax liabilities due to be repaid from 1st May will put further pressure on businesses. It is for these reasons that I and my colleagues in Sinn Fein have called for a bespoke strategy to tackle such pain points for SMEs here in Wicklow.

"Small businesses across our county are facing crippling running costs which are driving many of them out of business. For some

time now we have been calling for underspent Temporary Business Energy Support Scheme (TBESS) funding to be made available for struggling businesses, and for repayment of warehoused tax liabilities to be carried out in a manner that ensures all monies owed are repaid, but that does not push companies to the brink.

"TBESS funding was earmarked to support business in Budget 2023, but the scheme was a failure only expending 11.5% of its €1.3 billion budget. Sinn Fein, like many in the business community, had hoped the over €1 billion underspend would be reprofiled and redistributed to struggling SMEs. While the government's €250m Increased Cost of Business

Scheme (ICOB) announced in Budget 2024 is welcome, and its structure eagerly anticipated, this scheme is inevitably being funded from the TBESS underspend.

"The frustration for Sinn Fein and SMEs is that when TBESS and ICOB spend are subtracted from the overall TBESS underspend, nearly €900 million in funding that was earmarked to support struggling business has been returned to the exchequer.

"Sinn Fein agree with business groups that this is an unacceptable situation, and we have called on the Minister to explain to SMEs how government can make this decision at a time when insolvencies are at their highest level in five years.

Targeting German holidaymakers

Tourism Ireland in Germany kicked off its 2024 programme of promotions at CMT (holiday exhibition) in Stuttgart last week. Tourism Ireland was joined at CMT by nine tourism businesses from Ireland - including Powerscourt Estate.

CMT is one of the biggest travel fairs in Germany, attracting around 300,000 visitors - or potential holidaymakers for Ireland - all looking for ideas and suggestions for their next holiday. CMT also attracts leading tour operators and travel agents, as well as around 1,500 travel and lifestyle journalists, during the nine-day event.

Nadine Lehmann, Tourism Ireland's Manager Germany, said: "CMT in Stuttgart is the first travel fair of the year for Tourism Ireland, providing an excellent opportunity to spread the word about the many great things to see and do in Ireland and to inspire German travellers to put Ireland on their holiday 'wishlist' for 2024. Germany is the third-

largest source of visitors to the island of Ireland and one of the largest outbound travel markets in the world."

In 2024, Tourism Ireland's aim is to increase the value of overseas tourism to Ireland, sustainably supporting economies, communities and the environment - and will do so by inspiring overseas visitors and strengthening strategic partnerships. Tourism Ireland's message in Germany, and elsewhere around the world, is that Ireland has so much to offer across regions and seasons. The organisation will showcase iconic reasons to travel here, expanding people's bucket lists from best-known spots to our hidden gems.



Vivienne Nyhan, Powerscourt Estate; and Laoise Coakley, Tourism Ireland, at CMT in Stuttgart.

Kate sheds 4 stone on her slimming journey

Wicklow woman Kate Rock has shared her successful Slimming World journey, which has seen her shed over four stone since she began in May 2023. Kate has been attending Trevor O'Brien's Slimming World classes in Kilcoole.

It was Kate's New Year Resolution to lose weight, however it took her until May 23rd to get into the right head space and finally join Slimming World.

"I guess my health took a turn for the worse, plus my mental health," says Kate. "I told nobody I was joining Slimming World and I went to the class in Newtownmountkennedy at the time. I was so nervous - there was a male consultant Trevor and I knew there would be no turning back, I was looking forward not back and was instantly put at ease with Trevor, he made feel very welcome, he was friendly, encouraging motivating, so the nerves were gone."

Kate says she was "shocked,

mortified, disgusted" at the initial weigh-in as she discovered she was 2 stone heavier than she had thought she would be and in total would have 6 stone to lose.

However, Kate wasn't daunted by the task. She lost 5.5lbs in her first week and another 5.5lbs the following week, and has never looked back since.

Now, after losing 4 stone 3.5 pounds, Kate says "I feel incredibly proud of myself. The best Christmas Present I could have got was my 4 stone award. The feeling is amazing. I made a plan, I was disciplined, I motivated myself, I food optimised on nights out. I couldn't do much walking with the bad weather and my work schedule is difficult, so I watched and

tracked all the way, I listened to the Slimming World podcasts on the app which are excellent for the extra push you need. Most importantly I attended class every week. I enjoyed the banter and chat and inspiration, everyone is there for the same reason

"With all my heart Slimming world has been life changing, the support from Trevor has been outstanding. I never felt alone. I have about a stone and a half to go and it's never felt like a chore. Trevor and the girls are so warm, welcoming, inviting, and this makes it all much easier than you think. I'm healthier, happier, I can fit into everything in my wardrobe! I'm loving life and loving Slimming world."



Kate pictured before her Slimming World journey (left), and a recent pic after shedding 4 stone (right)

Harris outlines success of education programme for people living with addiction

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD has outlined the success of an education programme for people living with addiction issues.

In 2023, the Department and the Higher Education Authority awarded €833,000 for a partnership between Tiglin and the South East Technological University. To date, 92 students and 30 staff members have benefited from the educational programme.

Minister Harris said: "This is a truly transformational programme. This project is about making sure everyone gets a chance to reach their full

potential in life and it is clear it is working.

"A survey of the students showed 89% stated that completing a higher education had a positive impact on their confidence and belief in their abilities. A further 81% said that it had a positive impact on their sense of purpose, with over 70% stating that they would like to undertake more studies in the future.

"I believe this programme offers people a

second chance at life. We all know the impact of addiction. There is not one family that has not been impacted by homelessness, drug or alcohol addiction. Education can help break that cycle. I am so pleased to see this project embedded and now I want to see it grow."

The three-year project, which was awarded €833,333 by the HEA in 2022, under the System Performance Funding, is

delivered by SETU's Lifelong Learning in collaboration with Tiglin and focuses on the delivery of higher education courses to individuals impacted by homelessness, drug or alcohol addiction.

Dr Alan Wall, CEO of the HEA, said, "I am delighted to see how Performance Funding has contributed to the progress achieved by SETU and Tiglin. This initiative is testament to the continuing commitment of our institutions to widening the reach and accessibility of high-

er education. The collaboration between SETU and Tiglin is one of a number of important partnerships across social and economic life that demonstrates the impact of the higher education and research system in wider society."

Speaking about the impact of the project so far, Professor Veronica Campbell, President of SETU said, "I'm delight-

ed to be here today to celebrate the achievements of our project to date. SETU's partnership with Tiglin, and the support it received from the HEA, means that the university can continue in its strategic goals to maximise educational opportunities for learners by enhancing alternative pathways to third-level courses.

"Our partnership with Tiglin is offering real

opportunity for transformational learning and broadening access to higher education for all learners involved."

"Education is a gift nobody can take away," says Phil Thompson, CEO of Tiglin, "encapsulating the spirit of empowerment that lies at the heart of this collaboration. This groundbreaking project aligns seamlessly with the National Access Plan, embodying the 'whole person' approach championed by Tiglin. Over the past year, SETU has delivered an impressive array of courses to Tiglin

residents, including the Certificate in Learning to Learn at Third Level, Certificate in Introduction to Psychology, Certificate in Communications, and Certificate in Critical and Ethical Thinking in a Changing World."

This event serves as a testament to the transformative power of education, turning challenges into opportunities. The HEA-funded project will continue for a further 2 years and Tiglin and SETU remain committed to providing a pathway to a brighter and more promising future for all.



Chair of Tiglin Aubrey McCarthy, Minister Simon Harris, and Professor Veronica Campbell, President of SETU, pictured outside Whale Theatre

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Pictured at the Webwise Safer Internet Day Ambassador Training Day are, from left Grace Geraghty (East Glendalough School), Lily Kate Buttle and Sinead Whelan (Colaiste Bhríde Carnew)

Wicklow students take a leading role in promoting online safety

Three students from Wicklow are among more than 140 students from across Ireland who are taking part in the Webwise Safer Internet Day (SID) Ambassador Training Programme.

The peer-led programme equips students with the knowledge and skills to lead their own online safety awareness raising campaign in their schools and local communities.

Grace Geraghty (East Glendalough School), Lily Kate Buttle and Sinead Whelan (Colaiste Bhríde Carnew) attended the in-person training day in Dublin, where they received training and support from the Webwise Youth Advisory Panel. The theme for Safer Internet Day 2024, which takes place on

Tuesday, February 6th, is 'Tech in Our World' which explores young people's views on new and emerging technology, and the changes they would like to see online.

The Webwise Safer Internet Day Ambassador Training Programme gives students the opportunity to take a leading role in promoting a safer, better internet and tackle issues that are important to them including online bullying, misinformation, wellbeing, privacy and rights online.

Safer Internet Day (SID) is an EU wide initiative to promote a safer internet for all users, especially young people. It is promoted in Ireland by the Oide Technology in Education and Webwise, with almost 200,000 people taking part in last year's celebrations.

Everyone has a role to play in helping to create a safer, better internet. Find out what you can do, and get free resources, by visiting the Webwise Safer Internet Day Hub at webwise.ie/saferinternetday

New €4.5 million fund to support regional campuses

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science Simon Harris TD has today announced €4.5 million to support higher education institutions that have multiple campuses in remote regional locations.

The new Distributed Campus Support Fund has been established to support higher education institutions (HEIs) with multi-campus in our regions, primarily in the Technological University sector.

Minister Harris said: "This new funding strengthens and supports campuses dispersed in our regions. This ensures that HEIs that have multiple campuses can boost and maximise the impact of their campuses in the regions."

"Dispersed campuses often have higher costs associated with delivering education. This funding ensures that regional higher education campuses like those in Thurles or Killybegs are supported in recognition of the fact they are regionally dispersed. With this extra investment we are guaranteeing that

the same level and quality of education and service is being provided in regional campuses as anywhere else.

"Crucially this new funding delivers more balanced regional development, a key Government objective, with high quality and state of the art campuses. It shouldn't be that all roads lead to the big city when it comes to education. The actions I am taking with my Department commit to the delivery of an excellent level of education across Ireland."

"Our higher education institutions are drivers of regional and economic development. This new fund will be key to supporting our institutions and sustaining their dispersed campuses, helping them to deliver on their mandates to develop knowledge and skills, promote innovation and collaboration, and to foster social inclusion across the regions."

The funding will be distributed to relevant HEIs. This provides HEIs with the flexibility to determine how best sustainability can be secured across their campuses, taking advantage of the strengths of individual campuses.

Dispersed campuses have unique circumstances and higher costs associated with the delivery of education. It is recognised that there are unavoidable additional fixed costs in operating such campuses.

These costs include: the cost of the delivery of core campus services across multiple sites; travel costs between campuses; and unique demographic profiles that can result in smaller classes and lower staff student ratios than is the case in larger population centres.

Financial challenges faced by institutions have been identified as an issue over many years. These campuses provide an important function for the delivery of education within their regions.

While multiple campuses were a feature of some Institutes of Technology, the multi-campus approach is now a defining characteristic of the new Technological Universities. It is seen as fundamental to the delivery of the regional mission of our Technological Universities.

The Minister also announced the creation of a new Strategic Support Fund of €1.2m. This is a continuation of an existing support fund which can be deployed to support vulnerable institutions.



Minister Simon Harris

Race is on for Wicklow schools

A reminder has been sent to Wicklow schools by three of Ireland's best-known athletes - World Para Rowing champion, Katie O'Brien and Olympians, sprinters Phil Healy and David Gillick - advising teachers and pupils alike that the search to find 'Ireland's fittest school 2024' has now gone live.

Running until the end of March, the top four schools in Ireland, north and south, will progress to a live 'grand final' at which the prize package will include €8,000 worth of sports equipment.

Working with Fyffes, their aim is to find a school whose focus on fitness will replicate the success of previous 'Ireland's Fittest School' winners - Scoil Na Croise Naofa, Dunfanaghy (2022) and Gilson National School, Oldcastle (2023). Schools can register at www.fyffesfitsquad.ie



Shauna Orange and Aaron Carroll at the Bray Institute for Further Education (BIFE) Open Day

Ready, set, go for Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10km

Wicklow Hospice is calling on runners, walkers and supporters to lace up and support the Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10KM Race, taking place on Saturday, 24th February.

The event was recently launched by Wicklow Hospice ambassador and Olympian, Fionnuala McCormack, as she attended her local ParkRun at Avondale Forest Park, for its first event of 2024.

Now in its tenth year, the Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10KM Race raises vital funds which go directly to Wicklow Hospice, allowing for the continuation and development of care in its state-of-the-art facility in Magheramore and across the community through Wicklow Hospice's specialist Community Palliative Care Team.

Speaking ahead of the event, Emily Barton, Senior Fundraising Manager at Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services said: "As one of the first events on the local racing calendar and given the special anniversary this year, we are call-

ing on runners and walkers to sign up and take part in the Half Marathon or 10KM event. The funds raised allow us to continue our important work in Wicklow Hospice and with people and their families across Wicklow.

"Participants will be supported on the day by our ambassador and Olympian, Fionnuala McCormack, as they take on the beautiful course through Avondale Forest Park. We are also calling on supporters to come along on the day to support friends, families and neighbours and to donate what they can to participants, to help them reach their fundraising targets," she added.

Wicklow Hospice ambassador and Olympian, Fionnuala McCormack said: "This is a great event for seasoned runners and walkers as well as those newer to the sport, all the while raising

funds for Wicklow Hospice. It's always a great event, taking in some great tracks and trails along the way. I am really looking forward to seeing familiar and new faces at the start line on Saturday, 24th February."

Both the Half Marathon and 10KM events take a looped course, starting and finishing in Avondale Forest Park, Rathdrum. The route provides both country roads and hardcore-surfaced forest trails. The Half Marathon commences at 8.45am and costs €35 to register, and the 10KM begins at 9am and registration costs €20. Walkers are welcome to register for the 10KM race. Both events are chip timed and participants will receive a medal. For more information and to register, go to: <https://register.enthouse.com/ps/event/%20WicklowHospiceHalfMarathonand10Km>



Wicklow Hospice is calling on runners, walkers and supporters to lace up and support the Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10KM Race, taking place on Saturday, 24th February.

Beirne 3 Peaks Challenge raises €29,242 for children's cancer services

The Beirne family recently visited Purple House to present the proceeds from the Beirne 3 Peaks Challenge to the cancer charity.

A spokesperson for the organisation said "We were honoured to welcome the Beirne family to Purple House, who through the Beirne 3 Peaks Challenge raised an incredible €29,242 for our cancer services."

The Beirne 3 Peaks Challenge is an annual event was set up in memory of their mum Ursula, dad Tony, and sister Debbie who sadly passed away.

In 2023 the event was opened up to the wider community to conquer the 3 peaks of Bray Head, The Big Sugarloaf and Little Sugarloaf in Wicklow in memory of our loved ones.

The 2024 Beirne 3 Peaks Challenge will take place on Saturday 6th July and further details will be available on purplehouse.ie.

The funds raised will provide cancer programmes including the CLIMB and CUBS Programme for children impacted by cancer.

The CLIMB Programme for children who have a parent with a Cancer diagnosis, will start on Monday 13th May 2024 and on Monday 4th November 2024 from 3.30pm-4.30pm in Purple House.

CLIMB stands for Children's

Lives Include Moments of Bravery. It is an enjoyable, sharing, interactive experience and a time for children to come together to deal with their feelings.

The programme will be delivered by trained CLIMB facilitators in Purple House in Bray.

Throughout the programme the children will develop an understanding of cancer and from this understanding the myths and fears that children can hold about cancer will be dispelled. The programme is creative, using drama, arts and play. They are also based on having fun together and meeting new friends.

CLIMB aims to help your child:

- To understand a cancer diagnosis by providing information on cancer.

- To learn how to express his or her feelings and emotions

- To learn how to cope with these feelings

- To feel part of a social group by making friendships with other children sharing a similar experience

- To cope with the dramatic changes they are witnessing and experiencing in the home

The CUBS (Children Unite in Bereavement Support) programme is a bereavement support programme for children who have lost a loved one to cancer. The 8 week programme starts on Tuesday 13th February from 3.30pm-4.30pm in Purple House.

New research reveals Irish people's experiences of grief support

New research conducted by Irish Hospice Foundation (IHF) reveals that only three in ten (30%) people in Ireland believe there are enough supports available for those who have experienced loss.

The research (1,000 people) also found that:

- Almost three out of four Irish people are clear that being together with extended family and friends is a key part of the grieving process.
- However, one in every two Irish people struggle to know what to say to a person who is grieving or how to support them.
- The study revealed a notable increase in funeral attendance, with six in ten (64%) respondents having attended a funeral in the past year, a big increase since IHF's last survey during Covid in 2021 when 48% had attended a funeral.

More generally, over half of the Irish population (51%) expressed that discussions around death and dying are insufficient, although comfort levels in discussing such topics have dropped by 18% since 2016, with just over 6 in 10 individuals (63%) claiming they feel at least relatively comfortable discussing dying and death.

Irish Hospice Foundation last week launched National Grief Awareness Week (January 22nd to January 28th), aiming to raise awareness about the importance of acknowledging and supporting individuals who have been bereaved.

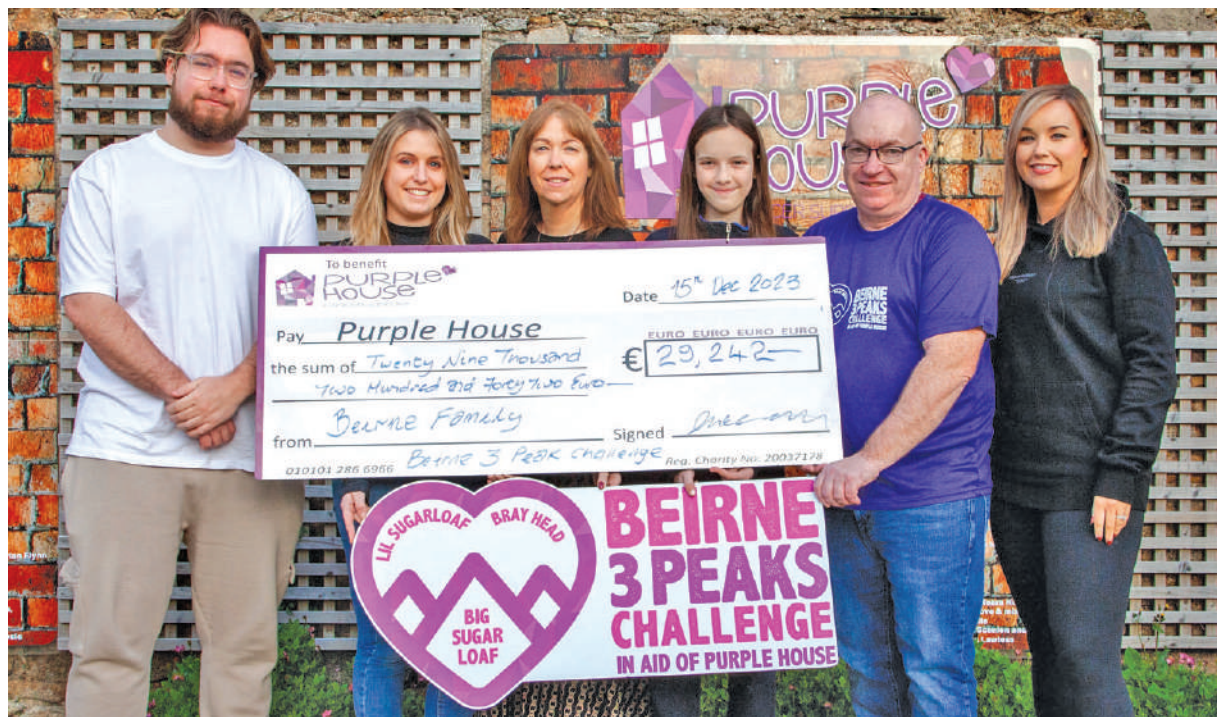
This year's national grief awareness campaign took place in January as it's often a time which can be difficult for many people, including those who are grieving.

Through National Grief Awareness Week, IHF hopes to encourage people to be more grief aware, to have conversations about this typically uncomfortable subject and have created a suite of resources to help both professionals and individuals to raise awareness of National Grief Awareness Week 2024 on social media, at work and in the community.

Amanda Roberts, National Bereavement Development Manager at Irish Hospice Foundation said: "As the nation's leading charity dedicated to addressing dying, death, and bereavement, Irish Hospice Foundation strives to ensure that individuals facing end of life or bereavement receive the necessary care and support.

"Our research shows that there are gaps in the support available to the Irish public, as well as a drop in the level of comfort people feel discussing these issues. National Grief Awareness week is a great opportunity to open the conversation around death and bereavement in Ireland, and Irish Hospice Foundation, through its resources and services, is here to support people to do so."

For full details of National Grief Awareness Week events and campaign resources, see: <https://hospicefoundation.ie/our-support-services/bereavement-loss-hub/national-grief-awareness-week/>



Members of the Beirne family presenting a cheque for €29,242 to Purple House

Daniel Rorke/Rick Simpson Jazz Quartet in Greystones

Whale Theatre, 1st February, 8pm (doors 7pm) Tickets €20 available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550 for any returns

Daniel Rorke | Tenor Saxophone (AU), Rick Simpson | Piano (UK), Dave Redmond | Bass (IE), Shane O'Donovan | Drums (IE)

Daniel and Rick met while on tour with trumpeter Linley Hamilton's group that included American Jazz greats Adam Nassbaum and Mark Egan. Hilarity ensued. These musicians share a simpatico that makes for playful and exciting musical interaction on the stage.



Daniel Rorke

This quartet is born of a desire to further this interplay, joined by two of Ireland's foremost rhythm section players. Expect adventurous contemporary Jazz music that revels in the joy of improvisation in a way that invites the audience to be part of the journey.

Rick Simpson is based in London playing a wide variety of music, and leads his own group playing original jazz music. In 2008 Rick won a Yamaha Scholarship Prize for Outstanding Jazz Musicians. A recording of Rick's band was put on the front cover of *Jazzwise* Magazine.

Daniel Rorke's latest album, *Naked Allies*, recorded in Brooklyn NY, features renowned saxophonist Oscar Noriega,



Rick Simpson

Simon Jermyn and Matthew Jacobson. Boasting a varied performance career, Rorke has worked with cutting edge European and American Jazz musicians and has won many awards including Icelandic Jazz Album of The Year in 2005.

Irish Bassist **David Redmond** is best known

for his collaborations with renowned Irish and International groups, and musicians including the acclaimed American pianist Bill Carrothers as part of the Kevin Brady Trio, Larry Coryell, the UK jazz vocalist Ian Shaw. He became a member of The Louis Stewart Quartet, and has also performed

with Van Morrison.

Shane O'Donovan is a Dublin based drummer and producer who is involved in a number of projects alongside some of Ireland's leading jazz musicians. These projects include Michael Buckley's Ebb and Flow, OKO, Gamerz with Kit Downes, John Moriarty Quartet.

Beyond Utopia

Film at Whale Theatre. Thursday 8th February, 8pm (doors 7pm) Tickets €12 available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550 for any returns.

A suspenseful look at the lengths people will go to gain freedom, *Beyond Utopia* follows various individuals as they attempt to flee North Korea, one of the most oppressive places on Earth, a land they grew up believing was a paradise.

At the film's core are a mother desperate to reunite with the child she was forced to leave behind; a family of five - including small children and an elderly grandmother - embarking on a treacherous journey across the Yalu River and into the hostile mountains of China; and a man of God on a mission to help these desperate souls. Leaving their homeland is fraught with danger - severe punishment if caught and possibly even execution - as well as potential exploitation by unscrupulous brokers. Family members who remain behind also may face retribution. Yet these individuals are driven to take the risk. Gripping, visceral, and urgent, Madeleine Gavin's film embeds the viewer with these family members as they attempt their perilous escape, palpably conveying life-or-death stakes. The result is a singular, illuminating, and unforgettable experience.



04 - 24 Lasting Impressions: an exhibition by 04 Textile Group

Signal Arts Centre, Monday 15th April to Sunday 28th April

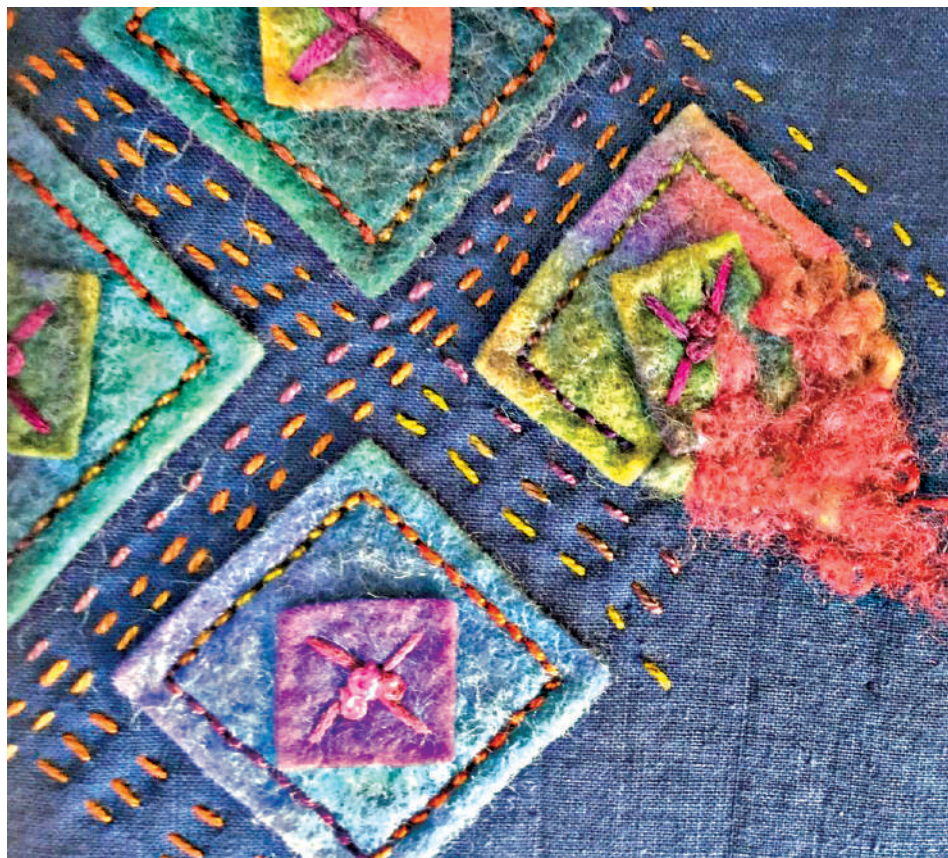
The 04 Textile Group is a collective of eight textile artists based in Dublin and Wicklow who have been exhibiting together since 2004. Members work in a variety of both contemporary and traditional textile forms, using a range of techniques and a wide mix of materials.

"We are passionate about the potential and wonder of working with textiles and are delighted to have the opportunity to share our work at Signal Arts Centre," they said.

Past exhibitions include: 'Plant, Fibre and Form' at the Botanic Gardens in 2007 and 'Purple in the Park' in the Visitors Centre, Phoenix Park in 2009; 'Running Threads' at the same venue in 2011; 'Ten x Ten' at Signal Arts Centre in 2014; 'Haberdashery' at the Knit and Stitch Show in 2015 and 'Unravelling' at the Knit and Stitch Show in 2016.

This current exhibition '04 - 24 Lasting Impressions' is a retrospective glance at some of the work previously exhibited over the last two decades and will also include work created specifically for this exhibition.

The 04 Textile Group consists of: Jane Enticknap, Tess Flynn, Anne Jeffares, Brid McCabe, Sidella O'Brien, Mary O'Reilly, Colleen Prendiville and Sheelagh Rooney.



textile artwork by Tess Flynn

Awards presented at ICA Wicklow Federation Drama Festival



Susanna Braswell presents Grainne Gallagher of the Delgany Dramatic Society with the Best Performance Award for 'Anastasia - the recognition scene'

After three great nights at the ICA Wicklow Federation drama festival in Glenealy the awards were presented.

The Premier award for Best Group and Best Director (Joanne Keane) went to Balally Players. Balally also won Best Moment of Theatre, and the Adjudicator's Award went to Mary Carroll.

Square One were Runner up Group, Byron Hayes won Best Actor, Aileen O'Reilly won Best Actress and Maeve Edwards who wrote the play "Surprise, Surprise" got a Merit Award.

Peter Robbie from Delgany Dramatic

Society was Runner Up Actor and Tracy Boxhall won the Adjudicator's Actress Award.

Maura Lavelle from Dalkey Players was Runner Up Actress and Lua Mc Ilraith who wrote their play "Truth is a Strange Country" received a Merit award.

The May Condon Cup for an ICA Group or Individual went to Claire Timmons Ashford ICA.

The Norah Ferns Trophy for Most Appropriate Costumes was won by Lusk Ladies Sheds.

Delgany Dramatic Society won Best Sketch/Short Play and cast member Gráinne Gallagher won Best Performance.

Best Sketch by an ICA group went to Delgany ICA and cast member Geraldine Gilroy won Runner Up Performance.

The Adjudicator's Award in the Sketch section went to Mo Hudson Fuinneoghe D.G and Roy Beatty the writer of the sketch "Dangling the Carrot" won a merit award.

Ann Quane who wrote "Pilgrimage to Knock" for Lusk Ladies Sheds, Angela O'Brien Lusk ICA and Fiona Doherty also won Merit Awards.



Susanna Braswell presents Tracy Boxall of the Delgany Dramatic Society with the Adjudicator's Award for her part in 'Sharks in the Custard'



Hilda Roche and Susanna Braswell present Claire Timmons of the Ashford ICA Group with the May Condon Cup for her performance in 'The Book Club of Little Witterington'



Susanna Braswell presents Geraldine Gilroy of Delgany ICA with the Runner Up Award for her performance in 'Dressing the Chicken'

Wicklow winners announced in 'Someone Like Me' art competition



Dr. Aileen Hartney, National Disability Authority with students Ellie-Mai Heffernan with (name unknown) and teacher Lisa Heffernan, Scoil Mhuire Realt na Mara Brittas Bay



Dr. Aileen Hartney, National Disability Authority with students Emma McEvoy, Jilly Rhatigan, St Saviours NS and their teacher Antoinette Doyle



Susan Nunes of Kilcoole Athletics Club at the Leinster Cross Country race in Avondale Forest Park

Public urged to learn seizure first aid for Epilepsy Day 2024

In advance of International Epilepsy Day on the 12th of February, Epilepsy Ireland, the national patient organisation supporting people living with the condition, have appealed to local people across Wicklow to learn about Seizure First Aid.

The organisation is highlighting the importance of knowing the three key words of TIME, SAFE, STAY. Commenting on the campaign, Paddy McGeoghegan, Advocacy & Communications Manager at Epilepsy Ireland said, "Epilepsy is one of the most common neurological conditions in Ireland, affecting over 45,000 people across the country. It is much closer to home than you might think, and it is crucially important the public know how to respond to a seizure.

But what is meant by TIME, SAFE, STAY?

TIME - The first thing you should do is TIM the seizure. This is because if a seizure goes over 5 minutes, an ambulance should be called.

SAFE - Keep the person

SAFE during the seizure. If a person is having a convulsive seizure, cushion their head with something soft if possible and remove any harmful objects, e.g. furniture from their vicinity. NEVER put anything in a person's mouth or restrain them during a seizure.

Be aware that there are also types of seizures where the person does not experience convulsions. Instead, they may zone out or stare blankly, become confused or agitated, display behaviours like chewing, smacking their lips, fiddling with their clothes, or wandering aimlessly. In this type of seizure, the person's awareness of their surroundings is affected, and it is important to gently guide the person away from any danger. As with

convulsive seizures, NEVER restrict the person's movements.

STAY - During the seizure and after it passes, STAY with the person. Often after a seizure, a person with epilepsy will be confused and in many cases, exhausted. Make sure to stay with them until recovery is complete, explain what has happened and gently reassure them.

The person may have experienced an injury if they have fallen, and if this is the case, ensure normal first aid steps are taken.

TIME, SAFE, STAY!

Other than when the seizure goes over 5 minutes, there are other instances where an ambulance should be called:

- Call an ambulance if a person having a seizure briefly comes out of it and

If you see me fall down, will you stand up?



goes into another one.

- Call an ambulance if you know it's a person's first seizure or if you're not sure whether the person has epilepsy or not (often a person with epilepsy will have a bracelet or card in their wallet/purse indicating they have epilepsy.)

- Call an ambulance if the person is physically injured e.g. if they have

taken a heavy fall during their seizure.

- Call an ambulance if the person is pregnant.
- Call an ambulance if you're in any doubt if this is the most important point of all. No one is going to be annoyed at you for calling an ambulance out of real concern; not the person who's having the seizure and not the ambulance crew.

1 in 20 older people spent Christmas alone

Social isolation is a pressing issue worldwide, but particularly within Ireland. A study from the European Commission identified Ireland as the loneliest country in Europe, with our older population most severely affected by loneliness and isolation. A survey conducted by Bounce Insights on behalf of HaloCare in December 2023, has highlighted the loneliness suffered by older people within Ireland.

For many people over 65 years of age in Ireland, the Christmas period intensified their feelings of loneliness. 1 in 20 surveyed over the age of 65 admitted that they would be spending the Christmas alone, with a further 1 in 6 reporting that they felt lonely, unhappy, angry, or disconnected over the Christmas season.

One of the many contributing factors to this growing isolation for the older generation is the impact of geographical distance from loved ones. 49% of over 65's surveyed reported having family members who live far away or abroad whom they would like to have spent time with, but can't due to physical distance.

Consequently, a number of older individuals spent Christmas alone and availed of homecare services to help them over the holiday period. Compounding the challenges faced by many who rely on homecare services, according to the survey, the respondents often noticed a decrease in the level of service available over the busy Christmas season with 42% of those who avail of homecare

services noticing a disruption in their homecare over Christmas. Respondents from Dublin or Leinster reported more disruption in homecare consistency when compared to other regions in the Country.

Additionally, 39% of seniors expressed reluctance to leave their homes in winter weather conditions, adding another layer of complexity to the already prevalent issue of loneliness amongst the older population.

"There is no doubt that loneliness has detrimental effects on a person's health, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared loneliness a pressing global health threat with mortality effects equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day," said Martin Dunne, Managing Director, HaloCare.

"We would like to remind people to check in on their older neighbours as often as possible during the year, especially over the winter months. A quick 'hello' can make all the difference to someone who may not have family or HaloCare to say hello every day."

PLANNING

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 Annacrive 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.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Catherine Kelly, intend to apply for permission for development at this site: The Stream, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow, A98V263. The development seeking permission will consist of the repositioning and widening of the existing vehicular entrance to the property along with all site works. 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

Full Planning Permission Sought for:
1. Change of opening hours permitted under An Bord Pleanála Permission, ABP-315866-23, Condition No. 2 as follows,
'The hours of operation shall be between 08.00 to 20.00 hrs Thursday, Friday and Saturday and between 08.00 to 18.00 hrs Sunday to Wednesday, to 08.00 hrs to 22.00 hrs for Wednesday to Saturday's and between 08.00 to 19.00 hrs Sunday (Summer Hours April to September inclusive) and 08.00 to 18.00 hrs Monday to Tuesday, at No 7 & 8, Albert Tce, Meath Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow. A98 XW13 & A98W188.
Signed: Meabhdh Kilroy
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:

• EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

Salary €55,519.00 – €77,176.00 gross per annum (includes 2nd LSI)

REF: 04/2024

ROLLING RECRUITMENT

This competition will be on a rolling recruitment process, over several phases. Phase one will close at 12 noon on Thursday 29th February, this competition will remain live and all applications are welcome after this date for subsequent phases.

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

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

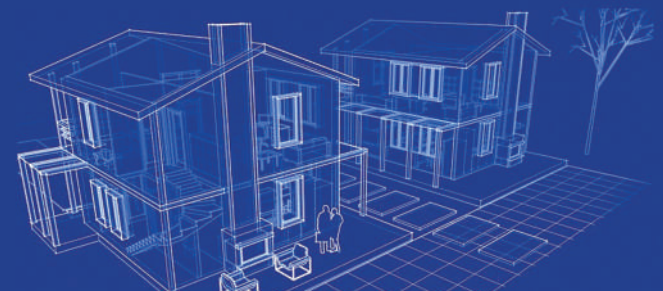
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'Retail business costs have become unsustainable'

CLASSIFIEDS

THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

Retail Excellence has expressed serious concerns about the urgent challenges faced by retailers due to the increasing costs of doing business within the sector.

Retail Excellence's latest survey, which includes the views of 128 retail companies representing approximately 3000 stores, from SMEs to some of Ireland's corporate giants, reveals a strategic response to these financial pressures. Nearly half of retailers surveyed are considering a reduction in operational hours, while another 35% are faced with the prospect of price increases as a means to balance the scales.

Retail Excellence said "There has been an avalanche of new policy measures that are putting pressure on business costs, the most notable

adjustment of the national minimum wage has introduced some major challenges for retailers, balancing the commendable goal of ensuring a fair standard of living for employees with the practical financial capabilities of businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which will struggle to shoulder these costs without adverse effects. The last 4 years has seen a 30% increase in the minimum wage."

70% of retailers surveyed were in favour of a national living wage provided the costs of doing so were offset elsewhere and businesses were not expected to shoulder these costs alone. There was also a 70% increase in sick pay utilisation amongst the retailers surveyed with reports indicating a trend of some employees treating the additional paid sick leave akin to extra holidays.



Breda Helay, Rory Fenlon and Michael Lane at the opening of Benville Robinson Solicitors' new office in Newtownmountkennedy last Thursday evening.

Celebrate creativity this St Brigid's Day

Powerscourt Estate will celebrate creativity this upcoming St Brigid's Day weekend with a craft showcase & inspiring event.

Powerscourt Estate is hosting a unique five-day showcase of the work of skilled practitioners and artisans from Wicklow's digital craft trail, in the beautiful surrounds of the entrance hall to Powerscourt House from the 1st to the 5th of February.

The showcase celebrates the launch of Wicklow's inaugural digital craft trail - 'Made in Wicklow: Head, Heart & Hands'. The Wicklow digital craft trail is a platform and a comprehensive showcase for forty-one (41) of Wicklow's skilled craft practitioners and artisans and presents a curated display of the county's unique, excellent, and diverse craftsmanship. The showcase is Free and open to the public and gives visitors a unique opportunity to have a sneak peek inside Powerscourt House. The show-

case opening times are from 2pm on St Brigid's Day, Thursday the 1st of February and from Friday 2nd to Monday 5th February (incl) from 9.30 am - 5pm.

The Powerscourt Distillery is also set to honor Ireland's patroness of brewing, healing, poetry, and fire with an immersive St Brigid's Day event on Sunday, 4th February, their third annual celebration of the feast. Taking place in the distillery visitor experience, it will encompass the spirit of Brigid herself; the day will be ablaze with cultural enrichment, from poetry readings to sessions with wellness experts and the spark of innovation from leading business and community figures.

The event is also free, but you need to register as places are limited - <https://powerscourt-distillery.com/stbrigid/>

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• In **Blessington** we are parked in the square, near the Lemon Tree (which is now closed)
Note that during funeral Masses in Kilcoole we will be closed during the hearse arriving and leaving as a mark of respect.

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