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Tuesday 27th February 2024 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

LAST CHANCE FOR JUSTICE

The Joint Committee on Public Petitions and the Ombudsman met last Thursday to discuss the petition for Arklow fisherman C.J. Gaffney. The petition relates to Mr Gaffney's long campaign for compensation following his purchase in 2007 of a Dutch-built, German-registered trawler, which was then registered in Ireland and later found to be unstable and unsafe.

The Committee heard from the petitioner, Mr Gaffney; Ms Mary Bertelsen, Campaigner and Concerned Citizen on Peoples Rights; Mr Jakob Pinkster, Stability and Ship Building Expert; and Mr Justin Delaney, Stability Expert. Sinn Féin TD John Brady also spoke.

The Committee Cathaoirleach Deputy Martin Browne acknowledged

that Mr Gaffney's case "has clearly had a considerable impact on him, his family and his business".

Deputy Brady, speaking at the Dail Petitions Committee following evidence given by Mr Gaffney, called on Taoiseach Leo Varadkar to intervene directly in the issue of the MV Mary Kate in order to cut through the

wall of obfuscation.

Following years of frustration and false leads and unnecessary roadblocks, CJ Gaffney's fight for justice continues.

Deputy Brady said: "In 2007, CJ Gaffney purchased a Dutch fishing trawler, the Mary Kate WD30, in Holland and through several surveys was deemed fit for purpose



Chloe and Zoe O'Leary at the Arklow First Responders' 13th anniversary celebrations. Pic: Michael Kelly

by the Marine Service Office. Subsequently in 2009, the fishing trawler was found to have serious stability issues, tests showed 20 tonnes of unaccounted steel were in the vessel, an issue that was found to be a fault with this particular type of vessel across Europe, and indeed many EU states have taken action to protect their own fisheries.

"The Gaffney family have been put through 15 years of torture. CJ Gaffney has been left with his life in ruins as a result of the callous indifference of the coalition government to take on board the advice of the European Commission and provide compensation for the costs incurred due to the stability flaws in a fishing vessel, the MV Mary Kate, which had been certified by the EU. I cannot

understand the continuing refusal of two senior ministers - Eamon Ryan and Charlie McConalogue - to come to an agreement as to whose department is willing to take responsibility for making a decision in relation to this issue, despite being offered a clear solution by the European Commission.

"Magda Kopczynska has written on behalf of the European Commission, and laid out in explicit terms that the EU advised the Irish Government that compensation for CJ Gaffney could be drawn down under the advice of the European Commission and provide compensation for the costs incurred due to the stability flaws in a fishing vessel, the MV Mary Kate, which had been certified by the EU. I cannot

understand the continuing refusal of two senior ministers - Eamon Ryan and Charlie McConalogue - to come to an agreement as to whose department is willing to take responsibility for making a decision in relation to this issue, despite being offered a clear solution by the European Commission.

haunted the Gaffney family for years.

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Donal and Liam Keenan at the Wicklow GAA Garden County Awards Night

Wicklow Historical Society

Brian White, Chairman of the Bray Cualann Historical Society, will present 'St. Patrick: the man, the myth, the legend' at 8 p.m. on Tuesday February 27th in the De La Salle Pastoral Centre, beside St. Patrick's Church, Wicklow Town. All are welcome - voluntary donation to defray the cost of the meeting appreciated.

The Old Dublin Society

Cormac F. Lowth will present his lecture recalling 'The Sailing Trawlers of Ringsend' at 6 p.m. on Wednesday February 28th in the Conference Room of Dublin City Library and Archive, 139 - 144 Pearse Street, Dublin 2. All are welcome - admission is free - no booking is required.

Greystones Flower Club

Greystones Flower Club will meet next on Tuesday 27th February at 8pm, in Evangelical Church Hall, Hillside Road, Greystones. The speaker will be Trevor Stephenson. Members and Non-members welcome.

Delgany Thursday Club

The next outing for Delgany Thursday Club is on 7th March to The social history museum at 14, Henrietta Street, Dublin. Leaving Christ Church, Delgany, at 1.00 pm sharp. Please note the earlier start time. €30.00 per person to include coach transport and guided museum tour. Refreshments at own expense. Due to the increased cost of coach transport, the group needs a minimum of 20 participants for outings to proceed. If the number

of 20 is not reached, those who have pre-booked will be notified. To book, contact Peter (086 830 7644), Violet (087 756 0153) or John (086 356 6527).

Free entry to some visitors at OPW sites

The OPW offer free entry for those with disabilities and their accompanying carers at all of their heritage sites where an admission charge applies. Full Details from <https://heritageireland.pulse.ly/bbqk1bi5i3>. OPW sites are also JAM card friendly. JAM cards allow people with a hidden disability or communication barrier to tell others that they need extra time and understanding in a private and easy way. More information on <https://jamcard.pulse.ly/o82vmpoqab>.

Soup & Sandwiches

The next Holy Rosary Soup 7 Sandwiches lunch is on Wednesday, 28th February in Kilian House Family Centre, Greystones, 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.

Children's art competition

Wicklow teachers in primary and second level schools, whose pupils take part in the annual Texaco Children's Art Competition, are reminded that the closing date for receipt of entries this year is Wednesday, 28th February next. Now in its 70th year, the Texaco Children's Art Competition is widely acknowledged as the longest running arts sponsorship in Ireland. Details are available at www.texacochildrensart.com

Non-violent resistance programme for parents and carers

Bray Area Partnership is offering a free six-week Non-violent Resistance (NVR) programme for parents and carers who are struggling to cope with their child's aggressive behaviour. Over the six weeks, participants will learn in a supportive environment how to identify what the problem is, create a calmer home environment and de-escalate conflict between them and their child.

The programme will run for six weeks in the SPECS Family Centre in Bray, on Tuesday mornings from 10am-12pm, starting on 5th March. You have to live in the Bray and north Wicklow area to attend and certain other qualifying criteria apply. See www.brayareapartnership.ie to find out more about this. To find out more and book your place call Jennifer Jones on 083 393 6923 or Sarah-Louise Cole on 086-0297445.

Dublin International Film Festival comes to Wicklow

Ireland's premier film event, the Dublin International Film Festival returns this Spring with a stunning and varied programme of some of the best new cinema from Ireland and around the world and a host of special events planned across the ten-day event. The tour will travel around Ireland (22nd February - 2nd March), including Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray. The Festival would like to acknowledge the continuing support of the Arts Council and Screen Ireland.

The Festival is excited to announce that this year's international film showcase with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs will spotlight African Cinema featuring seven diverse movies including Oscar favourite Four Daughters, as well as Sundance award winner Mami Wata. The latter film along with French film Toni and a season of international short films will tour to venues outside Dublin during the Festival, in association with access>Cinema, and with the support of the Arts Council.

Eye on Africa features a magnificent line-up of films from emerging film talent from a number of countries including Sudan, Morocco, Nigeria and Tunisia, among the highly anticipated titles making their Irish premieres are the hotly tipped for Oscar glory Four Daughters, the box office success Goodbye Julia and the Sundance winning Mami Wata.

Other highlights include rapper Baloji's directorial debut Omen; Cannes Un Certain Regard Jury Prize winner Hounds; Ramata-Toulaye Sy's beautiful and rich

fable Banel & Adama.

From the African season, Mami Wata will feature as one of the three films programmes of Festival titles in the annual DIFF Film Tour, alongside French comedy drama Toni starring Camille Cottin (Call My Agent), and a season of DIFF 2024 curated international short films. The tour will visit the film societies and arts venues nationwide with as ever many of the screenings being accompanied by their filmmakers.

The full festival programme and booking www.diff.ie

Funding appeal launched for Enniskerry hillwalkers

A funding appeal has been launched for committed walking enthusiasts Niall Lenoach and Noel Barry from Enniskerry, to cover their legal bills in their failed fight for a public right of way.

Enniskerry Walking Association (EWA) are appealing for donations (IBAN: IE49AIBK93340 608771042) to help Niall and Noel, after their lost battle in the Court of Appeal to prove that a public right of way existed over a section of land in the Glencree Valley.

In 2003, a route on the Old Coach Road near Enniskerry was blocked off by a landowner. In 2004, the EWA was set up to promote walking in the local area and to lobby officials to keep traditional routes open. The association also held a public gathering to walk to Old Coach Road to raise awareness about the route's closure.

In 2008, the landowner filed a High Court case against Niall and Noel, alleging trespass and slander of title. Despite Niall and Noel's best efforts and all the evidence they compiled, the judgment didn't go in their favour. The judge found that it was not a public right of way for them.

They subsequently asked the Supreme Court to consider new evidence, including maps going back to the 18th century. The case was referred to the Court of Appeal, which ruled that Niall and Noel had failed to prove

there was a public right of way, but that this did not mean a right of way did not exist.

Last July, Niall and Noel were hit with a massive bill of €90,000. It has since been reduced to €38,452.96, but even this burden is practically unbearable for these two men.

Niall, a school teacher, historian and father of three, is chairman of Enniskerry Walking Association (EWA).

Noel, a great-grandfather who has given years to local causes, is its secretary. Both are stalwarts of the community who have fought for years to keep traditional walking routes open to all.

EWA stated "Such a financial penalty has frightened many walkers and locals who want to campaign to protect traditional routes, but now feel like they are unable to speak up. It is also

deeply distressing for Niall and Noel, who now face the worry of how to meet the cost.

"They stepped up to take a stand in this matter of great public importance. Now we, the people who love walking and who value our freedom to do so, must rally to help them alleviate the burden.

"Any donation at all that you can afford to give would be hugely appreciated."

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is published by Wicklow Times,
First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01-2869111

'School transport must run smoothly in September 2024'

Three services still not running in Wicklow

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore raised in *The Dail* last week the failings of the School Transport Scheme in Co. Wicklow, in advance of applications for the 2024/25 school year opening shortly. There are still three services which are not running in Wicklow - one service with 53 children and two special needs services.

"Last year there was absolute chaos in Wicklow when it came to the school transport system. Hundreds of students were left behind when it came to school buses," said Deputy Whitmore.

Minister for Education Norma Foley is working on an expansion of the scheme. Deputy Whitmore said any planned expansion must be rolled out in tandem with a major overhaul of the system to prevent the chaos of September 2023, when some parents only learned on the Friday before school was due to start that their child's bus would not be running.

"A long-delayed review is set to recommend that thousands of students who live closer to their schools will be eligible for a bus place instead of having to apply for concessionary tickets," said Deputy Whitmore.

"While this is very welcome news for many families, it must be remembered that there are still children waiting on a promised school bus service for the 2023/24 term that commenced last August.

"Unfortunately, there is every reason to fear that hundreds of families will face a repeat of last year's school transport debacle when the new term begins this autumn. In some rural areas, including my own Wicklow constituency and neighbouring Kildare, problems that marked the start of the last academic term - including driver shortages, last minute cancellations and promised bus routes that never materialised - still persist.

"With applications to the School Transport Scheme set to open at the end of this month, the Minister has so far failed to outline what - or if - additional measures have been put in place to prevent a repeat of these issues.

"I have repeatedly called for the establishment of a new national school bus service that is removed from the control of the Department of Education and is instead placed under the remit of the Department of Transport. There should also be a major recruitment drive to attract part-time drivers in rural areas.

"This issue has caused no end of

disruption and stress for parents, some of whom have had to take time out of their annual leave - or even quit their jobs - so they can drive their children to school. This is also putting more cars out onto our roads when we are trying to meet our climate action targets.

"While I am in favour of expanding the School Transport Scheme to more families, this must happen in tandem with systemic reform of how it currently operates."

Deputy Whitmore also asked if parents could be reimbursed. A grant is being provided for parents who have had to drive their children to school, however it will not be paid to them until after the end of the school year. Parents are not yet receiving reimbursement for that money as it has to be done retrospectively.

"That is really unfair," she said. "To expect parents to cover the costs of driving their children to school for an entire year when they have already paid for a bus ticket is very unfair."

The Minister for Education was



Sophie Penston, Emma Healy, Aine Moran and Amber Lehane at the Annacurra GAA Dinner Dance.

not present for the discussion. Deputy's Whitmore's questions were fielded by Deputy Thomas Byrne, who did not answer the question of reimbursement of fees.

The School Transport Scheme is managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department of Education. Under the current scheme, children are eligible for transport at primary level where they reside not less than 3.2 km from the school and are attending their nearest national school, and at post-primary level where they reside not less than 4.8 km from that school and are attending their nearest post-primary school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having

regard to ethos and language.

In addition, temporary alleviation measures have been continued for this school year, which means that transport is provided where there is capacity to do so for post-primary concessionary pupils who are eligible for transport to their nearest school, are attending their second nearest school, applied for school transport by 28 April of last year and paid for a ticket by 9 June 2023.

A review of the scheme has been conducted with a view to examining the current scheme, its effectiveness and its sustainability and to ensuring it serves students and their families adequately. The school

transport scheme has been in operation for over 55 years since its establishment in 1967 by Donogh O'Malley as part of the expansion of second level education.

Bus Éireann has confirmed that there are 4,450 children on school transport services in Wicklow, comprising 3,907 on mainstream services, 404 children going to special education needs schools and 141 children on services for children who have arrived in Ireland from Ukraine. Bus Éireann has also confirmed that there are driver shortages. Bus Éireann is continuing to prioritise sourcing vehicles and drivers but a small number of routes remain without a service.

New opportunity to solve public transport crisis in West Wicklow

Proposed route for Luas extension and need for more buses outlined by councillor

Cathaoirleach of the Baltinglass Municipal District, Councillor Edward Timmins believes it's time to be ambitious about public transport in West Wicklow as the car currently remains the only realistic travel option for most commuters.

Speaking from Blessington on Friday 24th February, Councillor

Timmins stated: "Blessington, West Wicklow and east Kildare are growing

areas of population and will require a better service from public transport with

significant investment in infrastructure needed. The Luas extension would benefit people not just here in Blessington, but the entire wider area. There is no train and the N81 upgrade is on hold. No decision has been made yet to include the Luas proposal in the town plan so I will be making a submission on

this, and all members of the public can make submissions too. I succeeded in getting the Luas back into the County Development Plan on three occasions.

"There is already a 300-metre-wide strip frozen for the proposed N81. The Luas could track this route and would be a much narrower strip than 300 metres."

Regarding the daily struggles of commuters Councillor Edward Timmins said: "I recently met students who face a daily commuting nightmare with limited full buses and hours of travel.

Many of those I spoke to also raised concerns about the environment noting how they are completely powerless to assist in this cause as public transport isn't an option for them. Accordingly, Social Justice Ireland have highlighted how limited and infrequent public transport in rural areas means a car is the only choice to commute to, and from, work and school as transport continues to contribute to our carbon footprint."

Regarding the limited bus service in West Wicklow Councillor Timmins said: "Research

carried out as part of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan showed how 70% of respondents want more frequent services on existing public transport routes. The programme for Government contains a fundamental contradiction. It states that two thirds of all transport spending be on public transport and one third on roads. But that misses a fundamental point. Roads are used by the most important mode of public transport ie buses. So the restriction on roads spending is limiting the effectiveness and use of buses. On top of that year



Cllr Edward Timmins

on year the roads budget for national roads has reduced at a time of large Government surpluses."

Funding for Wicklow greenways

Just under €2m in Greenway funding has been announced for Co. Wicklow. The funding forms part of a €517m package for roads and greenways nationally.

Blessington Lake Loop is to receive €1.5 million funding while Arklow to Shillelagh will receive €250k and Greystones to Wicklow will receive €200k.

Green Party TD Steven Matthews said "This is great news particularly for the Blessington Lake Loop which will be an asset for the local community as well as encouraging tourism into the area.

"The Blessington Lake Loop is a shared use path used by both pedestrians and cyclists and largely segregated from traffic, having a total length of approximately 33km. The proposed Greenway from Shillelagh would meander through Tinahely and Aughrim and into Arklow. The Greystones to Wicklow Town Greenway is a coastal route of approximately 20km terminating at the Murrough carpark.

"Greenways benefit not only tourists but primarily the local community, providing safe routes through and around our towns and villages. Some of these routes will enable people to walk or cycle safely to school or work as well as for leisure or exercise. The community gain must be considered alongside environmental impacts to ensure overall benefit for the communities concerned."



Steven Matthews TD

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‘Reform of Local Government needed’

A motion seeking reform of local government in Ireland passed with unanimous support at the February meeting of Wicklow County Council. The motion was brought by Cllr Stephen Stokes, Cathaoirleach of the Greystones Municipal District, and seconded by Cllr Rory O'Connor, Leas Cathaoirleach of the Bray Municipal District. The motion is seeking more power to be transferred from central government, so that decisions can be made at the closest level to citizens.

In October 2023, the Council for Europe published a report that found Ireland is compliant in only 8 out of 20 principles of the European Charter of Local Self Government. Since then the Association of Irish Local Government has highlighted the challenges found in the report, with a Ready for Reform campaign.

Cllr Stokes stated: "The Council of Europe expressed concerns in three key areas. Firstly the investigation revealed that Irish local authorities had limited democratic decision making powers. This creates a power imbalance, leading to a democratic deficit. Second there are insufficient financial resources and autonomy for local authorities. The Council of Europe found that this limits their ability to provide essential services and adequately respond to local needs. Thirdly, Ireland has the most centralised system of local government in Europe. The report concluded that Ireland is far from decisions being taken at the closest point to the citizen."

Since the Council of Europe report was published, Cllr Stephen Stokes & Cllr Rory O'Connor have heard further contributions from public representatives across

Wicklow who have expressed concerns about the role of Councillors in decision making. Cllr Stokes added: "At times, we do have impassioned debates in the Council Chamber, but that is healthy for democracy. I retain full confidence that if given the opportunity, local government will come to balanced decisions on behalf of local residents if decision making is further delegated."

Cllr Stephen Stokes and Cllr Rory O'Connor are determined to work towards positive change. Wicklow County Council will now resolve to write to Darragh O'Brien, the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage about the matter. Cllr Stokes concluded: "In our own Council of Wicklow County Council, it should be noted that there are many dedicated officials who are making an impact across Wicklow. We appreciate their service. The key point of this motion is to seek to address democratic shortfalls. Myself and Cllr O'Connor would like to thank our Council colleagues for their unanimous support. We believe it is timely for us to continue to pursue reform of local government in Ireland."



Cllr Stephen Stokes



Cllr Rory O'Connor

‘Worst sign an election is coming - the big spenders’ warns Aontu rep

“As General Election time looms over us sometime in the next 6 to 12 months, Government ministers and TD's engage in the worst type of governance- Spending your money quickly,” warns Aontú Wicklow representative Ciaran Hogan, who's running in the local elections in Bray.

Mr Hogan said: “We are already starting to get promotion material for the various suitors to the TD seats in Dail Eireann, in campaigns that will ramp up massively soon. I admit I am among them, trying to earn your vote. But what I warn all voters to be wary of is the large statements of spending promised from those incumbents. Of course spending may have been secured for this project or that campaign, and all worthy causes. But voters have to ask the question: ‘Why only now is this work being done?’”

“A quick read through local papers going forwards will see promises of funding to the tune of millions of euros for various projects. For a nation of 5 million people that amounts to thousands of euro from every man, woman, and child. Not something to be taken lightly. It's unfortunately so easy to allocate funding; the pool of taxpayer money is very large from the various taxes, tariffs, duties, licenses and levies we pay daily. The ‘throw money at it until it works’ strategy couldn't survive in the private sector.

“Within one Fianna Fail leaflet recently distributed in Wicklow



Ciaran Hogan

there were 15 claims of funding allocations totaling 22.645 BILLION euros. That is a huge amount of money to be spending considering in 2022, the national debt of Ireland was around €227.64 Billion and growing 5 Billion per year since 2018. Just digging that hole even deeper isn't a problem for the few with guaranteed government pensions.

“Try this yourself as an exer-

cise; have a read of any local newspaper and try find statements for large funding allocations without any promises for results and targets.

“Another catch to watch out for is the Key Performance Indicators of that spending. Is that money spent the best value for money to the Irish taxpayer? Will it pay itself off? Is the project protected from cost overruns? When will it be finished? Is that allocation protected from fraud and wastefulness?”

“Most career politicians have never worked in the private sector let alone as self employed entrepreneurs and business people. They don't value the money they spend because they haven't earned it.

“I have worked since 2012 I know what it's like to put your life savings on the line, work 80 hour weeks constantly and deliver something that generates value. Yes I am putting myself forward for your vote, but I'm not helping myself to your pocket to do so. Any election promises I make will be based on hard results, that will come in on time and under budget.”



Cora Hanmore at Martin Henneberg's 'People' exhibition in Wicklow Library



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LAST CHANCE FOR JUSTICE

Continued from Page 1

"I previously wrote to both ministers who responded by attempting to pass responsibility to the other. I further wrote to both ministers requesting a meeting to clarify which one of them could deal with the issue. Neither replied to this request. I have also attempted to persuade the other four Wicklow TDs to work together on behalf of Gaffney. Unfortunately, only one of those TDs bothered to write back. Which leaves CJ Gaffney, who told the Committee members that they were his last chance for justice. I am calling on Taoiseach to directly intervene to force Ministers McConalogue and

Ryan to end their roadblock and push through recommendations from the EU Commission. I am also calling for an inquiry to determine how this situation occurred in the first instance, and how it was allowed to go on so long."

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore also met with Mr Gaffney in Leinster House last week. Speaking afterwards, she said: "Anyone who knows CJ's story knows that he and his family have been abandoned between a rock and a hard place for years. Through absolutely no fault of their own, they have been robbed of their livelihood."

"I have spoken to CJ many times

since I became a TD, and I admire that he has never let this issue rest and has taken every avenue available to him to seek restitution. I attended the committee today and spoke in support of CJ. I, and others on the committee, called for the government to take responsibility for this. CJ has done enough.

"He has done everything right, but this shouldn't be his fight solely. the Taoiseach must take his case on and work alongside CJ in his case at a European level. I hope that CJ's attendance at the committee today will lead to positive outcomes being forthcoming on this for CJ and his family."



CJ Gaffney with his father and stability and ship building expert Jakob Pinkster and Wicklow Sinn Féin TD John Brady at the meeting of the Dail Petitions Committee



C.J. Gaffney meeting with Jennifer Whitmore TD

'Hypocrisy by Greens on exploration as Wicklow being targeted for lithium'

Fine Gael Local Election candidate Peter Stapleton has said the ban on exploration on oil and gas should be widened to include lithium or otherwise the Greens' ban is hypocrisy.

"Wicklow - one of Ireland's most beautiful places - is being targeted for a massive lithium mine. It makes a farce on the exploration ban. The same Department of Energy, led by Minister Eamon Ryan, the leader of the Greens, has long made a song and dance about banning oil and gas exploration but then on the other hand is granting lithium licences," Mr Stapleton said.

"Lithium is a valuable commodity but so too is natural beauty and tourism in Wicklow. Minister Ryan is wrong to allow speculators to run their drilling machines through our county's bowels in a hunt to find a massive lithium mine as reported in the Wicklow Times. The proposed lithium speculation is creating genuine concerns as to its impact on the environment and for water safety and the licence should be cancelled. Minister Ryan has no problem laying blame and pointing fingers for our deteriorating environment on hard-working farmers and commuters with little alternatives but is seemingly unconcerned with large-scale mining exploration - hypocrisy at its finest."

Minister Simon
HARRIS TD

*Welcomes New Fine Gael
Local Election Candidates*



"I am looking forward to working with Louise and Aileen to serve our community and ask you to lend their your support. They are both incredible community advocates with strong track records who would make excellent Councillors"

Simon



Louise FENELON GASKIN



Aileen LENNON



Greystones, Delgany, Kilcoole, Newcastle and Killadreenan

(01) 2813727
simon.harris@oireachtas.ie

DeputySimonHarris
@SimonHarrisTD

Business support events for Local Enterprise Week



Martin Cullen (Wicklow Local Enterprise Office), Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy (Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council) and Emer O'Gorman (Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council) launching Local Enterprise Week in Wicklow at County Buildings, Wicklow Town.

Small businesses and budding entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to sample a range of events aimed at helping them to start or grow their business as part of this year's Local Enterprise Week in Wicklow.

The initiative of Local Enterprise Offices nationwide, supported by Enterprise Ireland and the local authorities, takes place from the 4th to 8th March. A range of events open to all across County Wicklow will focus on Green for Business, Sustainability, Digital for Business, Exporting and Start up Business Advice clinics.

A flavour of those taking part in Local Enterprise Week includes Maurice Bergin who will deliver a webinar on how to green in the hospitality and tourism business, Liz Bonnin, world-renowned Natural History and Environmental Broadcaster; Blaise Brosnan of MRI Wexford alongside case studies of successful businesses such as The Chocolate Garden, Ri Ra Brewery, ALS Safety and many more.

Cathaoirleach Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy commented: "Partaking in Wicklow's Local Enterprise Week offers a chance for small businesses to focus on key areas, the areas where they can make a real difference for their future ambitions. This may be in relation to digitalization or becoming more sustainable, or those who have ambition to grow internationally and begin the journey identifying new markets. Engaging and networking with your peers along with training and upskilling is recommended if you are a business who wants to grow, internationalise, or innovate, then there is something for you at Local Enterprise Week."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council, added "Local Enterprise Week in

2024 offers great opportunities for anybody who wants to start or indeed grow their business to get inspired and motivated. Attending events, networking and training will give you insights and add to your knowledge on important topics that can make a real difference to your business.

"The week highlights the range of supports, advice and information available to businesses through their Local Enterprise Office. We would urge everyone to make the most of the week and engage with the team at the Local Enterprise Office throughout the year."

Vibeke Delahunt, Head of Enterprise, LEO Wicklow, stated: "Local Enterprise Week is a fantastic marker in the road for any business. It's an opportunity to take stock of where you are, see where you can grow, where you can innovate or maybe become more sustainable and see what resources are available on your doorstep. There is something for everyone and those who maybe always had that ambition to start on their own, or a great idea, this is the week to see how to get started and make it happen."

"There are hundreds of events taking place all over the country covering everything from exporting and digital to going green or growing that idea. We also have two National Spotlight events taking place online and open to everyone that include experts from a range of industries. So online or on your doorstep, I would encourage everyone to check out the schedule of events and get involved."

The two National Spotlight events are open to everyone and

can be accessed online. The first, 'Understanding and leveraging future trends for your business' on Wednesday, 6th March, looks at what are the trends that will be emerging in the short and long term and how they will affect business. The session will also delve into how you can adapt and leverage these trends for business success.

The second spotlight event focuses on the area of sustainability. The 'Sustainability imperative for business success' session on Thursday, 7th March, will look at how sustainability is becoming a bigger and bigger factor in business survival and success. Headlined by renowned broadcaster and science and environment expert, Liz Bonnin, it will show how the small changes in your business can make a big impact and most importantly how you can start.

Each of the 31 Local Enterprise Offices will be running a full programme of events in their area that will tackle a variety of areas relevant to small businesses and starting up. The events are open to all from budding entrepreneurs to established businesses and gives them the opportunity to get expert advice on key areas of business from financial skills, raising funds, exporting and boosting your business online to future trends such as sustainability and digitalization.

Details for all the events taking place across County Wicklow during Local Enterprise Week, from March 4th to 8th, are available <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Wicklow/Enterprise-Development/Local-Enterprise-Week-Wicklow/>

2024 Greystones Municipal District People of the Year Awards



The Awards will be presented in the **Greystones Golf Club, Greystones** on **Thursday 25th April, 2024 at 8pm**

Application forms and tickets are available from Greystones Municipal District, Tel: 01 2876694 or Email: Kcoughla@wicklowcoco.ie / greystonesmd@wicklowcoco.ie
Ticket Price €35
www.wicklow.ie

Closing date for receipt of nominations is Thursday 28th March 2024

- **Sportsperson of the Year**
- **Civic Award**
- **Special Person of the Year**
- **Cultural Person of the Year**
- **Commercial Award**
- **Young Entrepreneur of the Year**



GREYSTONES
MUNICIPAL
DISTRICT
in association with

WICKLOW
Times
WE DELIVER!



Sharing the gift of Guaranteed Irish (GI) on St Valentine's Day, the GI team presented to members of the Oireachtas about its forthcoming 50th anniversary celebrations and the chance for local businesses in their constituencies to win a €50,000 marketing fund. 9 in 10 members say they have benefited financially by having the Guaranteed Irish symbol - the national symbol for trust and provenance. Senator Pat Casey is pictured at the event.



Your future: SORTED!

BIFE OPEN EVENING

Wednesday 6th March 4-5pm

NO FEES

All Tuition, Exam & Course Material Fees are abolished (flat registration fee will apply)

BUS PICK-UPS
Throughout the college year from Gorey, Arklow, Wicklow and Rathnew

BRAY INSTITUTE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

Dedicated • Professional • Passionate

ART

- KF** Art, Craft & Design level 4)
- KA** Art Portfolio Preparation
- KB** Art, Craft & Design (Level 5)
- KC** Fine Art Practice
- KE** Creative Craft

DESIGN

- DA** Graphic Design
- DD** Architecture Design & Technology
- DN** Jewellery Making & Woodcraft
- DI** Furniture Design & Carpentry/Joinery
- DC** Fashion & Textiles
- DK** Garden Design
- DJ** Furniture Design & Cabinet Making (Advanced)

MUSIC

- MI** DJ Techniques & Music Production
- MJ** Music Production
- MK** Music Performance
- MF** Sound Engineering
- MN** Traditional Irish and Folk Music Performance

COMPUTING & ENGINEERING

- NA** Computer Software Development
- NB** Computer Science
- NC** Computer Networks and Cyber Security
- ND** Computer A+ Operating Systems
- NE** Digital Arts & Creative Media
- NF** 21st Century Skills for Work
- NV** Engineering Pre-University

SPORT

- EA** Sport, Exercise & Fitness Instruction
- EC** Personal Trainer, Strength & Conditioning
- ED** Soccer Coaching & Sports Management
- EF** Sports Injury & Massage Therapy / Pre-University Physiotherapy

ANIMAL CARE

- HA** Animal Care
- HI** Animal Care & Management Pre-University
- HJ** Animal Science Industry
- HT** Dog Obedience & Training - Start Your Own Business
- HX** Equine Studies

SOCIAL STUDIES & CHILDCARE

- OA** Special Needs Assistant (Primary & Post-Primary)
- OB** SNA & Disability Studies (Level 6)
- HD** Early Learning & Care / Childcare
- HF** Supervision in Early Learning & Care / Childcare
- HE** Social Studies & Community Care

HAIR, BEAUTY & WELLNESS

- HG** Holistic & Wellbeing Studies
- FJ** Professional Make Up & Hairstyling
- FF** Hairdressing - Junior Stylist
- FG** Hairdressing - Senior Stylist
- FH** Barbering
- FD** Nail Technician & Salon Administration
- FC** Fashion Theatre and Media Make-Up

SCIENCE

- HS** Forensic Science - Pre-University
- HK** Science - Pre-University
- HZ** Food Science with Dietetics - Pre-University
- JF** Pharmacy Assistant
- JJ** Pharmacy Technician
- HU** Applied Ecology and Biodiversity Studies
- LJ** Brewing and Distilling Technology

BUSINESS

- JA** Business Management & Administration
- JB** E Business
- JC** Business Management - Advanced Certificate
- JD** Accounting Technician
- LD** Business Tourism Advanced Certificate
- SD** Legal Administration Pre-University Law
- SF** Medical Administration (Mornings Only)
- SE** IT & Office Administration (Mornings Only)
- JT** Digital Marketing and Entrepreneurship
- EE** Security & Pre-Garda

HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

- LA** Tourism, Reception & Event Management
- LB** Tourism with Airline Studies
- LH** Restaurant & Bar Management
- LC** Culinary Arts
- LE** Culinary Arts Advanced
- LG** Pastry, Baking & Barista
- LI** Hospitality & Business Management (Level 6)

ADULT LEAVING CERT

- RB** Adult Leaving Certificate

HEALTH

- HB** Nursing and Midwifery Studies - Pre-University
- HH** Healthcare Assistant & Activity Coordinator
- HP** Occupational Therapy Assistant
- JK** Emergency Care Studies (Pre-paramedic, Fire & Ambulance)
- HL** Applied Psychology
- HW** Applied Psychology (Advanced)

FILM & COMPUTER GAMING

- MA** TV & Film Production
- MB** TV & Film Production - Advanced
- MC** Immersive Media Production Degree (Hons)
- ME** 3D Game Design
- MG** Games Development

ACTING & DANCE

- PA** Acting for Theatre & Film
- PB** Acting for Stage & Screen Advanced
- PD** Dance Technique, Performance and Choreography
- PE** Dance Technique, Performance and Choreography - Advanced

ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- AA** English Language and Computers for International Students
- AB** English Language and Business for International Students
- AC** English Language and Healthcare Studies for International Students
- AD** English Language and Sport for International Students
- AE** English Language for Employment (level 4)

APPRENTICESHIPS

- JG** Accounting Technician Apprenticeship

PART-TIME COURSES

- ZE** Holistic & Wellbeing Studies
- ZA** Woodcrafts (Level 4)
- ZB** ICDL (level 4)
- ZC** Computers for beginners (Level 3)
- ZD** IPO medical Computer Assistant (Level 5)



www.bife.ie

01 2829668
bifeenquiries@wicklowvec.ie



BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA
CHILL DARA AND CHILL MHANTÁIN
KILDARE AND WICKLOW
EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

Wicklow wins Council of the Year award

Wicklow County Council has been crowned 'Council of the Year' in Ireland in prestigious national awards.

Council of the Year recognises a local council which has gone above and beyond for the people of the community. It must have developed and be continuing to develop a range of innovative projects and initiatives which improve and enhance the social, environmental, cultural and economic aspects of community lives.

The fantastic accolade for the County came as Wicklow County Council was also short-listed in 10 categories on the night.

Wicklow was judged to be Council of the Year in the awards which were presented in a special ceremony in the Royal Dublin Convention Centre in Dublin on Saturday night.

Commenting on the achievement, the Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, said: "Wicklow's win is a direct result of the outstanding work and commitment of staff and

communities across the County. It was an honour to attend on the night and watch our County shine."

Chief Executive Emer O'Gorman added: "I'm incredibly proud of the team in Wicklow, grateful for the support of our Elected Members and the work of our communities, volunteers and stakeholders in continuing to work to make Wicklow a great place to live, work, play and do business in."

Now in its 18th year, the award scheme hosted by LAMA (Local Authority Members Association) and IPB Insurance, recognises and celebrates communities and the country's 31 local authorities working together.

Cllr Micheal Anglim, Chairperson of LAMA, commented: "The 31 local authorities throughout the country have been always very supportive of the Awards and of LAMA and that is very much appreciated. People came for the awards from all the

counties throughout the country. These awards are a thank you to those who have worked so hard at the many different projects across the country. The commitment of what people do locally and the volunteers create the life blood and backbone of our great country."

Chairman of IPB Insurance, the awards long term headline sponsor and partner, John Hogan, said: "IPB Insurance takes great pride in serving as the primary sponsor of the Community and Council Awards in collaboration with the Local Authority Members Association (LAMA). As the mutual insurer to Ireland's local authorities, we are thrilled to support these Awards which celebrate the unique and symbiotic relationship enjoyed by local authorities and their communities. These accolades showcase the potential of local level community volunteerism when it is fostered and championed."

These awards recog-



Left to right: Cllr Tommy Annesley, Cllr Peir Leonard, Donal O'Keeffe, Leonora Earls, Cathaoirleach, Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy; Michael Nicholson, Chief Executive Officer IPB, John Kearns; Karen Boyle, Wicklow County Council Chief Executive, Emer O'Gorman; Chairperson of LAMA, Cllr Michael Anglim; Vibeke Delahunt, Caroline Fox, Jackie Carroll, General Secretary of LAMA, Cllr John Sheehan.

nise and illustrate the collaborative work between Wicklow County Council, the community and volunteers creating a better place to live and work in Wicklow.

'Every community should have a space to grow'

Social Democrats Local Area Rep for West Wicklow, Deirdre McCormack, has called for all communities to have the opportunity to create a community growing space like the one that has been developed over the last 19 years at Tearmann Community Garden in Baltinglass.

On a recent visit to the garden Ms McCormack praised the hard work and dedication of the Tearmann Community Garden Committee, who have worked tirelessly over the years to create an inclusive community garden which can be enjoyed by all members of the Baltinglass community.

"Tearmann Community Garden is a truly special and wonderful place to visit. I was delighted to meet with Patricia and Reenie from the committee to hear about the diverse range of projects that the garden is involved in: from Dawn Chorus open air coffee mornings, to TY student vegetable growing projects, art classes and workshops. Especially designed to

be dementia friendly and accessible, this garden is not only a sanctuary for the local community, it is also a haven for local biodiversity," commented Deirdre.

Wicklow TD, Jennifer Whitmore joined Ms McCormack in her praise for all that has been achieved at Tearmann, commenting, "with community allotments, chickens, an orchard, native hedgerows, ponds and more, there is a huge amount going on in this 2-acre site. And yet, it is a beautifully serene place, where everyone in the community feels welcome. I would love to see spaces like these in every town in the country."

Community Gardens Ireland have recently launched their 'Plant

for the Future' campaign calling on Local Election candidates to support the provision of more allotments and community gardens throughout Ireland.

Deirdre McCormack commented, "I fully support Community Gardens Ireland's 'Plant for the Future' campaign and agree that more must be done to provide community gardens and allotments throughout the country. I was delighted to see the inclusion of a commitment from Wicklow County Council to support community groups in their efforts to develop communal gardens and allotments, in the recently adopted Wicklow Climate Action Plan."



Reenie and Patricia from Tearmann Community Garden with Jennifer Whitmore TD and Deirdre McCormack



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



PREPARATION OF THE ARKLOW AND ENVIRONS LOCAL AREA PLAN CONSULTATIONS UNDER SECTION 20 OF THE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED)

Wicklow County Council intends to review the existing plan and prepare a new Local Area Plan for the settlement of 'Arklow and Environs'. An online consultation portal has been created, which details the significant planning topics that the Local Area Plan will address. The portal can be accessed through www.wicklow.ie and is accepting submissions from 1st of March 2024 to 2nd April 2024.

The Arklow and Environs 2018-2024 Local Area Plan is the current land use plan for the settlement and is available to view on Wicklow County Council's website at www.wicklow.ie

INFORMATION DAY

A drop-in public information day with the plan team will be held in Arklow Municipal District Offices, Castle Park, Co. Wicklow Y14 FX63, on Friday the 15th of March 2024, from 10.00 - 13.00 and from 16.00 - 19.00.

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions or observations regarding the review of the existing plan and the preparation of the new Local Area Plan are hereby invited from the public and interested bodies, between the period 1st of March to 2nd April 2024. Children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children, are entitled to make submissions or observations.

Submissions may be made in either of the following ways:

1. Write to: 'Arklow and Environs LAP', Administrative Officer, Planning Department, Wicklow County Council, Station Road, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow A67 FW96
2. Through the online consultation portal at www.wicklow.ie which can be accessed by scanning the below QR code.

NOTE

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



Council adds to road maintenance fleet with new patching machine

Wicklow County Council has taken delivery of a new Roadmaster Velocity Patching machine which will assist with road maintenance around the county.



Liam McNamee, Owner/Technical Development Manager, Archway Products Ltd, hands over the keys of the new Roadmaster Velocity Patcher to Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council Emer O'Gorman.

The latest addition to Wicklow County Council's Road Maintenance fleet, which will be deployed across county Wicklow's road network, introduces a comprehensive and modern approach to road maintenance.

The new machine complements an existing fleet of two older velocity patchers.

The velocity patcher is a one-person operated machine that delivers a computer calibrated mixture of aggregate and binder directly into a pothole or road defect under high velocity, ensuring a cost effective, reliable solution to problematic road maintenance issues.

As part of the hand-



Mike Freaney, Ireland Business Manager, Archway Products Ltd; Stephen Dowling, Linda Healy, Adrian Nichols, Pat Clarke, Michael Flynn, Kevin Scanlon, Leonaora Earls, Liam McNamee, owner/technical development manager, Archway Products Ltd, and Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council Emer O'Gorman, pictured with the new Roadmaster Velocity Patcher.

over and training process Wicklow County Council will trial a new performance-based carbon calculator with the new machine. The data collected will be used as a case study to demonstrate best practice in carbon management.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, stated that, "The addition of the Velocity Patcher to our growing Road Maintenance Fleet along with the use of the carbon calculator trail illustrates Wicklow County Council's commitment towards sustainable development."

Receiving the keys to the new velocity patcher, Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, said: "Our continuous improvement towards updating our works programme delivery is greatly helped by the purchase of this vehicle. It gives me great pleasure in launching this new vehicle into the Council's existing fleet."

Leonora Earls, Director of Services, added: "I wish to acknowledge our suppliers, Archway Products Ltd, on the timely delivery of this Velocity patcher which provides a much safer work environment for our drivers and operatives."

The cost of the velocity patcher, manufactured by Archway Products Ltd, was partially funded by a grant from the Department of Transport.


Applications now open for Local Enhancement Programme

Applications for funding under the Local Enhancement Scheme can now be made to Wicklow County Council. The amount reserved for Wicklow is just over €176,000 out of a total budget of €6 million and was initially announced in late 2023.

Welcoming the opening of the application process, Social Democrats Local Election candidate, Aaron McAllorum said: "I am delighted the programme has now opened, I would encourage all eligible groups to access this fund, the deadline for applications is 8th March, it's a short window in which to act on in terms of getting an application in."

"This funding is vital in assisting with the continuation of volunteer lead enhancements around the County."

"The range of purposes for which the fund can be accessed for is impressive, from increasing biodiverse areas, public realm enhancements, accessibility improvements to general premises upkeep."



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

NOTICE OF ADOPTION UNDER ARTICLE 16 OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF CERTAIN PLANS AND PROGRAMMES) REGULATIONS 2004 (S.I. 435/2004), AS AMENDED

LOCAL AUTHORITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2024 – 2029 FOR THE WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL FUNCTIONAL AREA

Wicklow County Council has prepared a Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) for the Wicklow County Council functional area for the years 2024 – 2029 under Section 16 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

The Plan provides a roadmap for taking decisive action through 135 actions to transition to a lower carbon and more climate resilient future for the citizens of County Wicklow. Our overarching goal is to transition to a climate resilient, biodiverse, sustainable, and carbon-neutral County by 2050. The plan builds on our commitment to the Local Authority Climate Charter, pledging to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions and a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.

The LACAP was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under SEA Directive 2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law under the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 435/2004), as amended; and Appropriate Assessment (AA) the EU's Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, as transposed into Irish law under Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011), as amended.

A copy of the LACAP and associated environmental reports are available for public inspection at the County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96, Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) between the hours of 9:00am to 5:00pm during the period from the 06th February 2024 until the 18th March 2024.

And available online at the following location:
<https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Environment/Climate-Action-and-Biodiversity/Climate-Action-Plan-and-Environmental-Reports>

A SEA Statement is also available for inspection which summarises:

- how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme
- how
 - the environmental report prepared pursuant to article 12,
 - submissions and observations made to the competent authority in response to a notice under article 13, and
 - any consultations under article 14,have been taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme,
- the reasons for choosing the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with, and
- the measures decided upon to monitor, in accordance with article 17, the significant environmental effects of implementation of the plan or programme, or modification to a plan or programme.



Pictured is Ann Morrissey who will lead the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Wicklow Town as the Grand Marshal

International WOMEN'S DAY 2024



International Women's Day (March 8th) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality.

More than just an annual event, IWD embodies a powerful call to action for propelling forward the journey towards women's equality. Tracing its roots back to the early 20th century, the first IWD gathering in 1911 was a landmark event that galvanized over a million people. This his-

toric event laid the groundwork for what has evolved into a worldwide phenomenon. Today, IWD transcends national borders, societal groups, and organizational affiliations, uniting people under the banner of global activism and celebration dedicated to championing women's equality.

The theme for this year's International Women's Day, 'Inspire Inclusion,' weaves a narrative of diversity and empowerment. This theme is a call to celebrate the multifaceted tapestry of society by acknowledging and valuing the diverse experiences and contributions of

women from every corner of the world, including those from marginalised communities.

'Inspire Inclusion' underscores the imperative of fostering an inclusive environment as the cornerstone of achieving gender equality. It challenges us to dismantle barriers, confront stereotypes, and cultivate spaces where every woman's value and dignity are upheld.

Network Ireland Wicklow

Network Ireland Wicklow is a branch of Network Ireland, a national organisation for Women in Business, the Professions and the Arts. With 17 branches across the country, Network Ireland provides a forum where women can exchange ideas and increase their business contacts.

Whether you are the owner of an established business, just starting out, or working for an employer, Network Ireland can help you develop your career and promote your business locally and nationally.

"Our membership is diverse and we welcome women from the public and private sector, entrepreneurs and employees, professionals and artists in all sectors. Why not come along to one of our monthly events, network with like minded women and listen to speakers on a wide variety of topics. For more information contact wicklow@networkireland.ie or check out our upcoming events on <https://www.eventbrite.ie/o/network-ireland-wicklow-branch-12017758533>. We'd love to hear from you."

Politics is Women's Work

I am the only woman elected as one of the five TDs for Wicklow in 2020, and I'm a member of the only party with more female TDs than male. The deficits of women's lived experience is visible all over our legislation.

By Jennifer Whitmore TD

Women do the lion's share of care work in Ireland. Yet we don't provide nearly enough support for carers. Women are more likely to retire into poverty. Women's

health issues seem to always been an afterthought.

Women are still the primary childcare providers in Ireland, with more women taking part-

time work to supplement far too expensive childcare costs.

Our lives and how our time is spent are different from those of our male counterparts. And that's

why it is so vital that our voices are heard in every room where sections are made.

When women experience gender-based discrimination in politics, it is not overt. It's often soft. For me came in the form of dealing with issues that most men don't face in work like how to get to council meetings when you have no childcare available. Not being able to get maternity leave when I was a councillor and pregnant (which has since now been addressed with new legislation). I ended up having to bring my baby with me to

council meetings.

Despite some strides forward, the challenges faced by women in politics persist. Many of the issues that were there when I first began are still there. There is still no maternity leave provided for TDs and Senators. The Oireachtas have been working to implement a family-friendly policy at work so that we can have better-managed hours. I love my job, and it is a privilege to get to represent the people of Wicklow in the Dail, but I think that if we want to see more women in politics or even more people with families, then we need to get the balance right. There has also been a growth in recent years of

targeted online abuse of women. When we are in the public eye, many women get messages and posts across different platforms that are specific to our gender. We need to address this better because it is a massive disincentive for many people to put their names forward for election. Politics is women's work. Our role is in the Dail and on the council as much as anywhere else.



Jennifer Whitmore TD

Jennifer WHITMORE^{TD} Working for Wicklow

Wishing Everyone a
Happy International Women's Day

If there is any support my office can give you please do get in touch.

☎ 085 173 8804

@ Jennifer.Whitmore@Oireachtas.ie

📍 3 Hillside Road, Greystones, Wicklow.



Social Democrats

Rachael Dandy - Eden Gift Company

"My name is Rachael Dandy, I am the owner of Eden Gift Company which is a bespoke gift company in Kilcoole with a presence both physically by way of my store and online. My business is very supportive of the local creators and artists which are aplenty in this county we call home.

"My store has become a showcase for these amazing entrepreneurs, I am taking 'shop local' to a deeper level and 90% are female owned businesses. This initiative which is called The Garden of Eden is growing by the day and I take a huge amount of pride in stocking these incredible products. Come and see the beautiful range in store or online now. www.edengiftcompany.ie"

Cllr. MELANIE CORRIGAN FINE GAEL

WORKING FOR YOU IN BRAY WEST

(To include Kilmacanogue & Enniskerry)

Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District

Celebrating International Women's Day 2024



1 The Granite Byre, Ballybrew, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow. A98 YD56

☎ 083-3642439

📧 MelanieBrayWest@gmail.com

📱 MelanieBrayWest

🐦 MelanieBrayWest

📺 MeallieCorriganFG

LAURIE KEARON LOCAL ELECTION CANDIDATE FINE GAEL

I will be representing Fine Gael as a new candidate in the South Wicklow Electoral area including Rathdrum, Arklow, Aughrim, Avoca and surrounding areas.

"There's something so special about a woman who dominates in a man's world. It takes a certain grace, strength, intelligence, fearlessness and the nerve to never take no for an answer." - **Rihanna**

☎ 085 182 1111 📧 laurie@GetsItDone.ie

📱 @LaurieWicklow 📺 @LaurieWicklow 📺 LaurieWicklow

SENSORY & MESSY PLAY WORKSHOPS

for ages 2-5 yrs. In Wicklow Town

Monday 25th March 11.30.

And Kilcoole 28th March 10.30

Outdoor teen wellness workshops

Ashford Saturday 30th March

Upcoming child anxiety and wellness workshops
Kilcoole and Wicklow.

Lydia George
Play Therapist, MSc Psychology & Mental Health Nurse Ashford/Wicklow.
Contact: 083 135 8164
Email: connectingdotsplaytherapy@gmail.com
Follow [connecting_dots_playtherapy](#) on Instagram and Facebook

Aisling Shortt
Play Therapist, Early Ed. Teacher Kilcoole/Greystones.
To contact: +353 87 940 5922
Email: heartofplaytherapy@gmail.com
Follow me on Instagram [Inthe_heart_ofplay](#)

COME CELEBRATE

Women

STRENGTHENED BY FAITH
FRIDAY 8TH MARCH. 10.00AM.

Keynote speaker : Breda O'Brien, Irish Times columnist and social commentator

Panelists:

- Sinead McDonald-Smyth
- Joyce Lee • Ana Phalan
- Mila Hancock



Pastoral Area of Greystones & Kilquade

Killian House Family Centre, Greystones
Everyone Welcome

International WOMEN'S DAY 2024

Play Therapists

Aisling Shortt and Lydia George are Play Therapists with a combined range of expertise working with children, teens and their families.

Aisling is based in Kilcoole/Greystones. Her background is in early education, and she has experience in early childhood development, supporting children with additional needs, using sensory play for regulation, and support-

ing parents and carers. Lydia is based in Ashford/Wicklow. Her background in mental health nursing and psychology and has experience working with eating disorders, depression, psychosis, and anxiety.

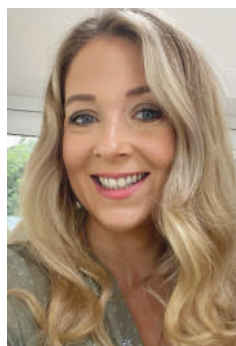
As therapists both Aisling and Lydia are passionate about working with children therapeutically to support mental wellbeing, navigate difficult life experiences and support overall resilience.

They work with children and teens on an individual basis and also run groups for all ages from therapeutic sensory and messy play groups for young older children to anxiety and wellness workshops for older children and teens.

You can get in touch:

Aisling on 0879405922 or contact inthe_heart_ on Instagram

Lydia on 0831358164 or contact connecting_dots_playtherapy on Instagram



Aisling Shortt (left) and Lydia George (right)



Ferris calls on Government to act NOW on Labour's Reproductive Leave Bill

Labour Councillor for the Bray Municipal District, Anne Ferris, is calling on the Government to act immediately in implementing the measures contained in its Reproductive Leave Bill.

Cllr. Ferris said that the Labour Party's Bill would embed compassion into workplaces by providing access for up to 20 days paid time off work in the case of a pregnancy loss, and up to 10 days paid leave for accessing fertility treatments like IVF.

"There are approximately 14,000 women in Ireland who experience pregnancy loss each year, and one in every six couples struggle with fertility," said Cllr Ferris. "These figures include many women living in Bray and other areas in Co. Wicklow who con-

tacted me personally to give me their stories about experiencing a miscarriage or to attend fertility treatments. Many of the women I spoke to had to take sick leave or use up their annual leave. This is just not right or fair.

"Our hopes and dreams for our families do not exist outside the hours of 9 to 5. They are always with us. This needs to be acknowledged in how we approach helping women in the workforce when they need it most. Early pregnancy loss, miscarriage or fertility issues

remain very painful topics for people and a large amount of people find it challenging or upsetting to discuss with friends, family and their work colleagues.

"However, the introduction of workplace measures for people undergoing such experiences would represent a meaningful step towards opening conversations around reproductive health in workplaces right around the country. It would also help to encourage public awareness around reproductive health issues.

"In November 2023,

the Labour Party's Bill was passed in the Senate with Government support. By giving its support to Labour's Reproductive Bill in the Senate, the Government gave the impression that they would also support the Bill during its passage through the Dail. Sadly, that did not prove to be the case. The Reproductive Health Bill was debated in the Dail in January but the Government tabled an amendment saying that the Bill would be debated again in twelve months. This is clearly disingenuous as it is highly unlikely that the Government will still be sitting at that point.

And more importantly,



Cllr Anne Ferris

it is a blow to the further 14,000 thousand women who may suffer pregnancy loss during the next twelve months.

"The Government is failing to recognise the clear and urgent need for this reproductive health legislation and it reflects the belief that the government parties don't care enough for women in the workforce."

Cllr. Erika DOYLE

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Laurie Kearon

Laurie Kearon has lived in Ballinaclesh for 24 years with a proven track record of impactful action.

"As a committed champion for Women's equality, I have tirelessly worked to represent and uplift various community segments including the rural and farming community, the elderly, the vulnerable and our youth.

"My focus extends to preserving our local Heritage while fostering the economic and social growth of our community.

Step into a new era with a candidate who brings innovative ideas and a fresh perspective.



Laurie Kearon

"There's something so special about a woman who dominates in a man's world. It takes a certain grace, strength, intelligence, fearlessness and the nerve to never take no for an answer." - Rihanna

Laurie@GetsItDone.ie

Looking to the future of parenting!

As part of a wider development of programmes and courses in the Parish of Greystones and Kilquade, a number of parenting programmes have been organised in Killian House Family centre.

Each Tuesday evening from 20th February to 19th March, parents who are interested in meeting other parents and discussing general parenting issues and what it's like to have teenage children are welcome to attend.

This follows on from a successful parenting programme for parents with children under 10 years.

For further information contact the Pastoral Area Office on 01 2874025.

Cllr. Anne

FERRIS

Peace Commissioner

Happy
International
Women's Day!



Contact me at

086-2364780 or Email:

AFerris@wicklowcoco.ie



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Tommy Murphy and Molly Healy at the Wicklow GAA Garden County Awards which were held in Arklow.

Council and Gardaí asked to pursue issues of concern for Bray Residents Associations

A new Residents' Association alliance, making up for 15 residents associations and groups in Bray, has come together to highlight some of the shared concerns and challenges across the town.

Minister Simon Harris has engaged with the new alliance to take on their concerns and has since written to both the County Council and the Superintendent in Bray Garda Station to pursue issues on their behalf.

Speaking last Wednesday Minister Harris said: "I'm delighted that Bray Residents' Associations have come together to form an alliance and have raised the shared issues faced by residents in Bray."

"The top two priorities raised with me by the alliance are traffic and policing. These are two areas of concern I have consistently raised as a

local TD for Wicklow and will continue to work on with the Alliance.

"After engaging with the alliance I immediately wrote with the County Council and the Superintendent in Bray Garda Station to follow up on both their priorities and the issues faced by the people of Bray."

"The benefits of having an alliance of Bray Residents' association are enormous and can foster positive change and action for the community in Bray."

"As the Alliance has already rightly pointed out to me, we cannot solve traffic management and congestion in



Minister Simon Harris

Wicklow by addressing individual traffic problems. The County Council must put in place a more overarching, comprehensive and encompassing plan to solve traffic the town."

Minister Harris added: "As a public representative for the people of Bray I will actively work with the alliance and the County Council so that a robust and solid traffic plan that works for all is put in place."

"Having increased Gardaí on the beat is also a top priority in Bray. We have got to see more Gardaí in our town to make for safer streets and stronger communities."

"We can start making residents of Bray feel in anyway safer is by having a larger presence of visible Gardaí on our streets and I'm glad that this week the Department of Justice announced an

expansion of the Garda Reserve and plans are underway to recruit more Gardaí across the country.

"I have written to the Superintendent in Bray Garda Station again to highlight the need for an increased presence of Gardaí and I will continue to work hand in hand with the alliance to raise the critical need for better safety in Bray."

Minister Harris concluded: "I look forward to working closer with the Alliance of Bray Residents and amplifying their voice with representations on their behalf to key stakeholders and organisations in the area."

€482,366 collected in parking fines

Figures released to Social Democrats Local Election candidate; Aaron McAllorum indicate that Bray Municipal issued 3,059 fixed charge offence fines in 2023.

In total, €482,366 county-wide was collected from parking fines in 2023. Fines can be issued ranging from

parking on double yellow lines to parking in bus bays and taxi ranks.

Commenting on the figures, Mr McAllorum

said: "The figures provide an interesting insight into the range of parking violations committed around the Municipal District of Bray."

"Generally speaking, there appears to be a good level of compliance

with parking rules, it certainly helps that the town has an active and visible warden presence. Unfortunately, one of the higher offence items is parking on footpaths or in a way that causes obstruction. I really can't countenance that prac-

tice, it's an intrusion into a very clearly defined and reserved realm."

A breakdown of revenue collected by each of the County Municipal Districts was not available as fines collected were on whole of County basis.

885 bus service will continue to operate

Social Democrats TD for Wicklow, Jennifer Whitmore has welcomed confirmation that the 4pm 885 bus service between Sallins and Ballymore Eustace will continue to operate.

The 4pm service had previously been cancelled following the extension of the 885 bus route to Balingglass in mid-November. The change in timetable and removal of the 4pm bus resulted in several school children being left with no way home from school in Naas.

Deputy Whitmore and Social Democrats Local Area Rep for West Wicklow, Deirdre McCormack, raised this issue with the National Transport Authority and were successful in having the 4pm service reinstated on a temporary basis, which was operated by Kildare-South Dublin Local Link.

"I am delighted to have received confirmation that the 885 4pm bus service from Sallins to Ballymore Eustace will be continued on a permanent basis. The removal of this service, which at least 14 school children were relying on to get home from school, caused a huge amount of stress and upheaval for the families involved. I would like to thank the NTA and Local Link for their help in finding a solution to this matter," commented Deputy Whitmore.

Local Area Rep for West Wicklow, Deirdre McCormack commented, "this is great news for the families involved and for people in



Jennifer Whitmore TD and Deirdre McCormack

West Wicklow who want to choose public transport over getting in their car. We need more public transport options and routes here in West Wicklow but we also need transport services that work for the needs of our community. I'd like to thank the NTA and Local Link for engaging

with our community on this issue and working together with us to resolve it."

The 4pm 885 bus service will be operated by Carlow Kilkenny Wicklow Local Link and will run from Sallins to Ballymore Eustace via Naas and Blessington.

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Voice for KARE service users facing accessibility issues in Baltinglass

Social Democrats TD for Wicklow, Jennifer Whitmore, recently met with David Leigh from the Voice for KARE advocacy group in Baltinglass. Mr Leigh had previously written to Deputy Whitmore on behalf of the group, highlighting the ongoing accessibility issues that their group members have been experiencing in Baltinglass town centre.

Voice for KARE is an advocacy group of service users for an organisation called KARE which operates services and supports for people with learning difficulties in the Kildare, Wicklow and Offaly areas.

"I was delighted to meet with David to listen to the concerns and issues faced by KARE service users in the Baltinglass community and to discuss ways that myself and our Local Area Rep, Deirdre McCormack, can work with and support Voice for KARE in having these issues addressed," commented Deputy Whitmore.

During their meeting Mr Leigh explained that one of the problems

continuously highlighted to the group by service users in KARE is the poor condition of the street environments of the local towns and communities where their services are located and where they and their fellow service users live. Using his hometown of Baltinglass as an example Mr Leigh explained how the uneven footpaths, high curbs, confusing road layouts and chaotic parking are stopping some of his fellow service users from going into the town as they fear injuring themselves, especially those who are visually impaired or have mobility issues.

While both Deputy Whitmore and Mr Leigh welcomed the town

upgrade works which Wicklow County Council will be carrying out on Baltinglass Main Street for the next few months, they were disappointed that these works would not extend as far as the entrance to the Lalor Centre where KARE are based.

"I understand that the initial plans for the Main Street and Town Square upgrade work did include the footpaths leading up to the Lalor Centre but due to project delays and price increases the plans had to be pared back. But it does not make sense to do all of this work to improve accessibility in the centre of the town and then leave out the path connecting the KARE centre

and its service users," commented Deputy Whitmore.

"I will be writing to Wicklow County Council to ask for them to meet with David and Voice for KARE and suggesting that members of the Council accompany David and his fellow service users around the town to demonstrate the accessibility obstacles that they must navigate and to try to find a suitable solution to these ongoing issues," continued Deputy Whitmore.

Social Democrats Local Area Rep for West Wicklow, Deirdre McCormack, was also at the meeting with Voice for KARE and commented, "One of the main aims of KARE is to support individuals to play an active role in



Jennifer Whitmore David Leigh Voice for KARE and Deirdre McCormack

their own area and community. The work being carried out at the Lalor Centre by the KARE staff and service users is fantastic and hugely beneficial to the wider Baltinglass community. However, the fact that some service users feel unable to go down to the town centre to visit the shop or get a cup of coffee because they don't feel that the paths and

roads are accessible or safe for them is unfair and undermines their hard work. We will continue to work with David and Voice for KARE to try to improve accessibility in the town."

Another issue raised by Mr Leigh in the meeting was the lack of progress on the long awaited Baltinglass pedestrian bridge and

the safety concerns for KARE service users and other pedestrians due to the narrow footpath on the current bridge. He went on to explain that for some members of the community the far side of the town is essentially cut off from them as they don't feel safe using the current bridge.

"The community in Baltinglass have been waiting for their pedes-

trian bridge for far too long. There are serious pedestrian safety and accessibility concerns with the current bridge set up and a new bridge is urgently needed.

"I will be contacting Wicklow County Council for an update and timeline for the development of this important piece of town infrastructure," concluded Deputy Whitmore.

Cathaoirleach meets with Palestinian Ambassador

On Tuesday 13th of February Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council and Bray East Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy travelled to Dublin to meet with the Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland, Dr Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid.

Along with fellow Cathaoirleach she signed a joint letter calling for an immediate ceasefire, the recognition of the two-state solution and the creation of a viable independent Palestine.

Cllr. Flynn Kennedy stated "the strength of character and love for her people demonstrated by Ambassador Wahba Abdalmajid during our visit was exceptional. She has an extremely difficult role, in what can only be described as horrific times."

Cllr. Flynn Kennedy said that in times of war and conflict women and children are the greatest victims. She and the Ambassador, both mothers, discussed this issue in detail during their meeting and the need for peace.

The Ambassador thanked Ireland and the people of Wicklow, where she has visited previously, for their strong support, their kind messages and their continued support of humanitarian aid to deal with the impact on the lives of those affected.



Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Aoife Flynn Kennedy meeting with the Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland, Dr Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid

Greystones officially designated as a Darkness into Light location

The Darkness into Light (DIL) Greystones committee has announced that Greystones has been selected as an official location for the annual Darkness into Light event.

This prestigious designation reflects the dedication and hard work of the local community and marks a significant milestone in the drive to support mental health and raise awareness about suicide prevention.

Darkness into Light Vice Chair and Treasurer Councillor Mark Barry said he believes Greystones being designated an official darkness into light venue reflects

the very strong local support for the annual fundraiser in the community in recent years.

"Suicide has touched the lives of so many, and the Pieta Darkness into Light event allows our community to come together, show support for one another, and foster hope for a brighter future," he said.

Sharon Felton, Chairperson of DIL Greystones, expressed

her excitement about this achievement, saying, "After many years of unofficial walks in Greystones, we are delighted to be made an official location. This recognition is a testament to the tireless efforts of so many individuals who have been committed to our cause."

Councillor Barry expressed his appreciation for the committee's efforts behind the scenes,

commending their work. He expressed delight in being part of the ongoing journey and looking forward to working together in 2024 and beyond. To

register and support Darkness into light Greystones see <https://www.darknessintolight.ie/register/wicklow/default>.



Cllr Mark Barry and the Greystones Darkness Into Light team

COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

Project Development Measure 2024

Wicklow County Council is seeking Expressions of Interest for the Project Development Measure of the Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2024 from towns and villages that may meet the criteria for inclusion in this scheme. There are two grants available per county to develop a project up to shovel ready stage. Closing date for Expression of Interest is Monday 11th March 2024.

Full details of the scheme and forms are available on www.wicklow.ie or by contacting townregeneration@wicklowcoco.ie



SSE Renewables Arklow Bank Wind Part 2 Sponsorship Fund supports the St. Mary's College Eco Club with the installation on campus of a water font supporting the school's ongoing commitment to plastic bottle waste reduction and fostering the health benefits for teenagers of regularly hydrating with fresh water.

Calls for entries for 2024 SciFest

SciFest, Ireland's largest and most inclusive STEM fair programme for second-level students has announced its return for the 19th consecutive year. The competition attracts 12,000 student participants annually and organisers have kicked off the 2024 competition with a call for entrants to the SciFest regional fairs around the country.

SciFest is free to enter and open to everyone across the island of Ireland, no matter their background or circumstances. The goal of SciFest is to help students develop research, problem solving, critical thinking, and presentation skills while fostering an interest in STEM fields. Project entries will be accepted across a range of scientific disciplines.

Winners from each regional SciFest STEM fair will go on to compete at the National Final in November 2024. The winner(s) of the SciFest National Final 2024 will be presented with a trophy and the opportunity to represent Ireland at the Regeneration International Science and Engineering Fair in Columbus, Ohio next year.

Speaking at the launch of SciFest 2024 at Oatlands College in Dublin, Sheila Porter, SciFest Founder and CEO said: "We welcome entries from a wide array of scientific disciplines, encouraging students to explore their interests and curiosity in the sciences. We are not just celebrating science; we are preparing our students to be global leaders in innovation. We look forward to seeing the creative and impactful projects our students will bring to the 2024 competition."

Dr Avril Gaynor, Oatlands College, said: "We are immensely proud to be launching SciFest 2024 at Oatlands College this morning. The competition continues to play a crucial role in STEM education by offering a unique platform for students to showcase their talents, creativity, and passion for the subjects. By participating in SciFest, our students are not only preparing themselves for future careers in STEM but are also contributing to Ireland's reputation as a hub of innovation and research excellence on the international stage."

Students wishing to participate should log on to the SciFest website (www.scifest.ie) and enter online. Completed entry forms for SciFest 2024 must be submitted by Friday 8 March 2024.

Extra half a million for Wicklow Education and Training facilities

Minister Simon Harris has announced that Kildare & Wicklow ETB (KWETB) is in line to receive €507,500 in funding to further improve and develop the training facilities in the County Wicklow.

Speaking on this breaking news Minister Harris said: "This extra half a million in funding for KWETB is hugely welcome and will have a really positive impact on the learners and staff in each education and training facility across County Wicklow."

"This means the total funding for 2024 to date for KWETB is €2,537,500. The continued investment in our Education and Training facilities in County Wicklow is a top priority of mine as Minister for Further and Higher Education. I want to see our young learners placed in state of the art, comfortable and environmentally friendly facilities to develop the skills of the future."

"It is so important we continue to invest in education to safeguard the future of this country and build on the progress made over the past decades," Minister Harris said.

"We have built together a thriving economy where whoever wants a job has a job and I will continue to deliver funding that invests in our communities to make sure we have a resilient society equipped to face any of the challenges that come our way in years to come."

Minister Harris added: "ETBs around the country are playing a huge role in making sure we have a skilled workforce. If we want to build more homes, we need to train more people and to do that we need to invest in our education and training facilities."

"If we want to meet our climate targets and make a greener economy we need to invest in our education facilities to be decarbonised and become more



Minister Simon Harris

energy efficient."

Minister Harris concluded "The funding announced today will deliver stronger communities across the country and most importantly I am guaranteeing today that this level of funding will be maintained for at least the next 2 years."

Schools invited to compete to represent Ireland at European Money Quiz

Banking & Payments Federation Ireland (BPFI), with the support of the Business Studies Teacher's Association of Ireland (BSTAI), have opened registration for the Irish finals of the 2024 European Money Quiz, Europe's largest financial education competition for 13 to 15-year-old students involving 28 countries.

Teachers and schools from Wicklow and across Ireland are now invited to register their students at www.bpfi.ie/european-money-quiz, to take part in the Irish leg of the quiz which will see classrooms up and down the country go head-to-head in the live online final on Thursday 21st March. Playing in teams of two, students will be tested on a series of financial questions and compete directly against each other in real

time using the Kahoot! learning platform. The winning team will be flown to Brussels in April to take on students from over 28 other European countries for a chance to be crowned European Champions and share in a prize fund of €5,000 for their school. This year Money Week is taking place from 18th to 24th March. Further details and registration are available on the BPFI website at www.bpfi.ie/European-money-quiz.

Bill to ban smartphones in primary schools

Aontu leader Peadar Toibin TD has tabled a Bill that will ban outright the use of smartphones in Primary Schools. The number of children in primary school with the use of a smartphone has been deemed 'of major concern' by Deputy Toibin.

The TD for Meath West stated, "I am tabling a Bill that will entirely ban the use of smartphones in primary schools. Following the recent numbers published in a study by Amarach, including 25% of children as young as six having a smartphone, now more than ever measures need to be taken."

"New technology can be a wonderful addition to the lives of individuals across the state, and we want our children to be able to learn how to use it properly. However, placing the power of a smartphone in the hands of very young children, giving them full access to the internet and social media, and sending them to school with their classmates is a big problem for any child of primary school age. By giving a smart phone to a child, you are effectively giving the full content, including extreme violence and graphic pornography to a child that is not equipped to deal with it. Not only that but that material also becomes available to other children in the class who have not been given a smart phone by their parents."

Toibin continued, "School is a place for education and it is indicative that the young children of the nation can give their full focus to learning. Countless studies have shown the distracting nature of smartphones, as well as their addictive nature. On line bullying is also a massive problem with all the mental health pressures that that entails. This is extremely hampering to the education and brain development of children."

"Parents and guardians will still have an important responsibility to monitor their children and their access to smartphones outside of the school environment. However, banning smartphones within primary schools sends a strong message to parents about the unsuitable nature of smart phones for primary school children. It is a significant step to protecting children from so much of the harmful content on the internet," Deputy Toibin concluded.



At lunchtime on Tuesday, 20th February, third level members of the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) held protests around the country over the non-adherence by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) to a collective agreement on the establishment of the Technological University (TU) sector. The TUI has said that there must be parity of esteem across the sector and any regional variations in pay or conditions are completely unacceptable.

'GP shortages driven by Govt failure to plan'

Sinn Fein TD John Brady has said chronic shortages in General Practice, as reported following a study by the Irish Independent, have been persistent and worsening over the last five years.

Deputy Brady said GPs have been warning of long waiting times and unplanned collapse of services, but that Government has failed to listen.

He said Government should put in place directly hired GPs to cover disadvantaged areas and provide cover for vacancies and absences in understaffed practices, as proposed in Sinn Fein's alternative budget.

Deputy Brady said: "General practice has been under severe pressure for several years. Government has failed to listen to GPs and front-line primary care workers who have been warning of unacceptable waiting times and unplanned collapse of services."

"Sinn Fein has set out our proposals for General Practice and Primary Care year after year in our Alternative Budgets. In the short-term, public GPs should be recruited to target the areas of

highest need and to cover vacancies and absences in understaffed practices. The Government must immediately develop a directly hired GP contract.

"Additional primary care staffing supports, such as public health and practice nurses, are needed to take pressure off GPs. Additional services, under a minor ailments scheme, should also be placed in pharmacies as a first port-of-call for minor illnesses. "In the longer term, Government must ratchet up training places and commence significant investment in GP and wider primary care services. We need a 21st century GP contract with modern staffing arrangements and supports.

"Additional supports are needed, such as directly provided public services, in underserved rural and disadvantaged communities where GP retention is a major issue.

"The declining access to GP services has been persistent and worsening. Government has allowed the situation to deteriorate through inaction. While welcome, the Strategic Review of General Practice was started far too late in the day. The Government should not wait for its conclusion before taking action.

"The inability of patients across Wicklow to access GP services is continuing to have a serious impact on the well-being of patients."

'A perfect storm over GP access'

Peadar Tóibín, Leader of Aontú, recently described the situation with regard to recruiting and retaining GPs as a "slow motion car crash". This was in the wake of the news that we have currently 2,000 GPs fewer than is considered a safe number.



The Arklow Community First Responders celebrating their 13th anniversary

Bray candidate for Aontú Ciaran Hogan said "Add the fact that last year 442 Irish doctors left to work abroad, out a total 725 that graduated here, that is 60% of Irish trained GP's leaving the Irish system! We have clearly a perfect storm over GP access.

"This will come as no surprise to those of us who live in Bray. People are really struggling to find a GP. I rang around the GPs listed by the HSE

on their 'Find a GP' web page as being available to patients in Bray. Of the ten GP practices listed, one had closed its doors, one wasn't actually a GP service, five said they weren't taking on new patients and two offered to put me on a waitlist. Only one said they might be able to take me on but couldn't 'officially' confirm that until they saw my application form.

"The situation in Bray seems even worse than

the shocking figure from the Irish College of General Practitioners that more than three quarters of GP practices nationally have closed their lists to new patients.

"I have been told that a new GP practice will be opening in Bray soon and I hope this brings some help to the many people currently without a GP, but one can't plug the systemic problem," he added.

"Although Ireland's

population has grown by around 50% over the last 30 years, there has not been a proportionate increase in the number of GPs that are trained or recruited in Ireland. In 2020 the government announced that six and seven-year-olds will receive free care from that year onwards, and that free GP care will be extended to all children under the age of 13 in the coming years. As a father I'm happy to hear that

children will be covered, but this only puts further strain on limited GPs availability.

"Urgent action is needed to train new GPs and retain them. Unfortunately the failure is upon two Wicklow TDs Simon Harris, as Minister for Higher Education and Stephen Donnelly, as Minister for Health, who should have been training and retaining many more GPs through their time in office."

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FREE PARKING



Sophie Brady and Evie Brady who took part in the Roundwood Variety Group's production of *Aladdin* in the Brockagh Centre, Laragh

Social Fabric Podcast: The Power of Human Connection

Whale Theatre, Thursday 29th February, 8pm (doors 7pm) Tickets €20/€18 and can be purchased at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550 for any returns.

In the intricate tapestry of human connection, neuroscience plays a profound role in shaping our bonds and influencing addictive behaviours. The power of human connection is woven into the fabric of our brains, impacting our emotions, motivations, and well-being.

Through the lens of neuroscience, we can unravel the intricate dance between neurotransmitters and the craving for connection that underlies addictive tendencies.

Understanding the neurological mechanisms at play sheds light on the profound impact of social bonds on mental health and highlights the importance of fostering healthy connections to navigate the complexities of addiction and enhance overall well-being.

With a PhD in Psychology from Trinity College Dublin, Brian Pennie is a published author and trained neuroscientist. By combining lived experience with academic expertise, he develops programmes for blue-chip brands to help people gain full control over their mental, emotional, and external world.

Join Andrea and Brian as they tackle this very important topic live in the Whale Theatre.



Film at Mermaid: May December

Thursday 29th February, 8pm. €9/€7. English with open captions. Duration: 118 mins



20 years after they were at the centre of a shocking tabloid scandal, Gracie (Julianne Moore) and her much younger husband Joe (Charles Melton) are seemingly happily married and sending their children off to college. Their dark past resurfaces after a famous actress Elizabeth (Natalie Portman) is cast as Gracie in an upcoming film. When Elizabeth arrives to spend several days meeting and observing the family, the carefully crafted image of a happy marriage begins to unravel.

Todd Haynes' expertly-crafted psychodrama is witty, unpredictable and unsettling. Portman and Moore - both playing unusually unsympathetic characters - are exceptional, while Melton is a revelation as Joe.

Shopping Centre turns into Art Gallery for the Arklow Music Festival

The 53rd Arklow Music Festival will take place from the 2nd to the 10th of March 2024. This year will see entries from across the country compete in competitions including choirs, orchestras, public speaking, verse speaking and many more.

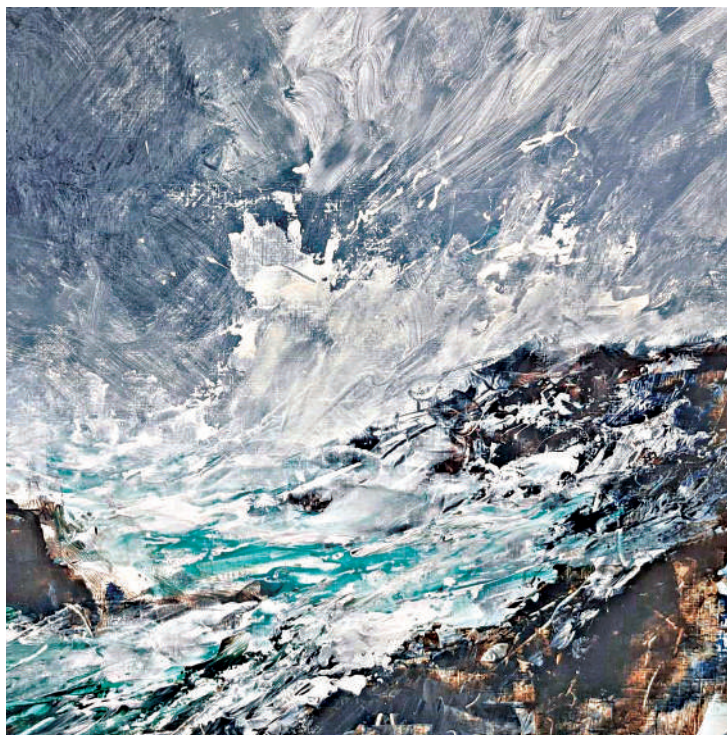
With nearly 1000 entries to the verse speaking categories alone this festival is set to be a great week for the Arts in Arklow and beyond. The new competition 'Paint a Poem' will see Bridgewater Shopping Centre become an art gallery for all entrants work to be displayed from the 26th of February to the 11th of March, further involving the community in the wonderful tradition of the music festival.

The Arklow Music Festival relies heavily on volunteers and on donations and if you are able to volunteer your time or make a small donation it would be much appreciated and go towards keeping this important event running. Please email arklowmusicfestival23@gmail.com if you are able to volunteer during the festival or to make a donation.

Borrowed Fragments: an exhibition by Bettina Norton

An art exhibition capturing the fragmentation of our coastline amidst a changing world

Boundless Fragments is a captivating art exhibition that delves into the profound impact of changing climates on our coastline, showcasing seascapes that reflect the increasing fragmentation of our landscape. It will run in the Signal Arts Centre in Bray from Monday 13th May to Sunday 26th May.



'Boundaries' by Bettina Norton

Through compelling artworks, Bettina Norton conveys the evolving nature of our shores under mounting environmental pressures. Climate pressures have brought a change in our weather patterns and an increase in violent storm activity, as well as rises in sea levels which are having a dramatic impact on our coastal habitats. "Boundless Fragments" offers a poignant exploration of the delicate balance between nature and human influence, inviting audiences to contemplate the evolving beauty and vulnerability of our coastlines. 'Boundless Fragments' is an immersive visual experience that sparks dialogue and reflection on the future of our landscape.

Bettina is a self-taught artist originally



'The Substance of Things' by Bettina Norton

from Kildare but now living and working in South Kilkenny. Since graduating from Trinity College, Dublin with a Master's Degree in art history she initially

worked in antique dealing abroad in London and The Middle East before returning to Ireland in the late 90's. Since 2012 she has been gradually growing her

art practice and is now represented by several galleries around the country. Working in both oil and other mixed media her method is intuitive and expressive.

Drawing inspiration from our coastal landscape with expressive paintings that bring an immediate and immersive experience of the power of the ocean.

Fugitive from Injustice - Book 2 of the County Wicklow Mysteries

Robert T. McMaster has just published his sixth novel, *Fugitive from Injustice*. Set in the fictional town of Glenkerry in County Wicklow, this is the second in the series of County Wicklow Mysteries and the sequel to *Rose of Glenkerry*.

Fugitive from Injustice tells the stories of four families from war-torn regions, Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan, who have fled their homelands and sought refuge in Ireland. Based on published accounts, these are gripping narratives of courage and determination, of sadness and hope.

But *Fugitive from Injustice* has a lighter side, the story of Glenkerry's newest sport team, the Hurleys. The team includes girls from different lands and cultures who have just one thing, one very important thing, in common: their passion for camogie.

Those two threads, of refugees and camogie wannabes, at first seem unrelated, but gradually they converge and finally collide in a harrowing encounter during one of the team's victory celebrations.

The main character of *Fugitive from Injustice* is 21-year-old Cary McGurk. Newly graduated from a Dublin university, Cary has revived the *Glenkerry Gazette*, a small weekly newspaper founded by his father nearly thirty years ago. But Patrick McGurk is gone; he died suddenly just days before Cary's graduation. Reeling from

the loss, Cary decides that reopening the newspaper would be a fitting tribute to his father as well as an exciting opportunity for an aspiring young journalist like himself.

But a month later the young publisher is struggling to attract readers and pay his bills. "If only there was one big story, one riveting piece of news that everyone in Glenkerry will want to read," he tells himself, even as a small voice within issues a warning: "Be careful what you wish for!"

Early on a calm September morning, Cary sets off on a run at Travelhawk Beach at the foot of the Black Castle in Wicklow town. There he makes a startling, unsettling discovery - the body of a man, wrapped in seaweed, awash on the beach at the foot of the ancient ruins.

But who is this man? What brought him to this normally peaceful place? And how did he die?

The gardaí investigate the death, but progress is slow. Cary and his friend Rosie O'Malley do some sleuthing of their own, uncovering a web of intrigue that stretches back a decade and half

and a world away. Most alarming of all, the story it seems is not over, threatening to shatter the peace and tranquility of Glenkerry.

Meanwhile garda Sabrina Selkirk has just been named coach of Colaiste Gaeilge's new camogie team, the Hurleys. What the players lack in skill and endurance they more than make up for with spirit and drive. But as Sabrina and Rosie O'Malley, her unofficial assistant coach, struggle to pull together that rag-tag bunch of would-be hurlers, they begin to suspect that something is amiss with one of the new players, Molly Boyle. In the search for the source of Molly's unease they stumble into the midst of a sinister plot right in the heart of idyllic Glenkerry.

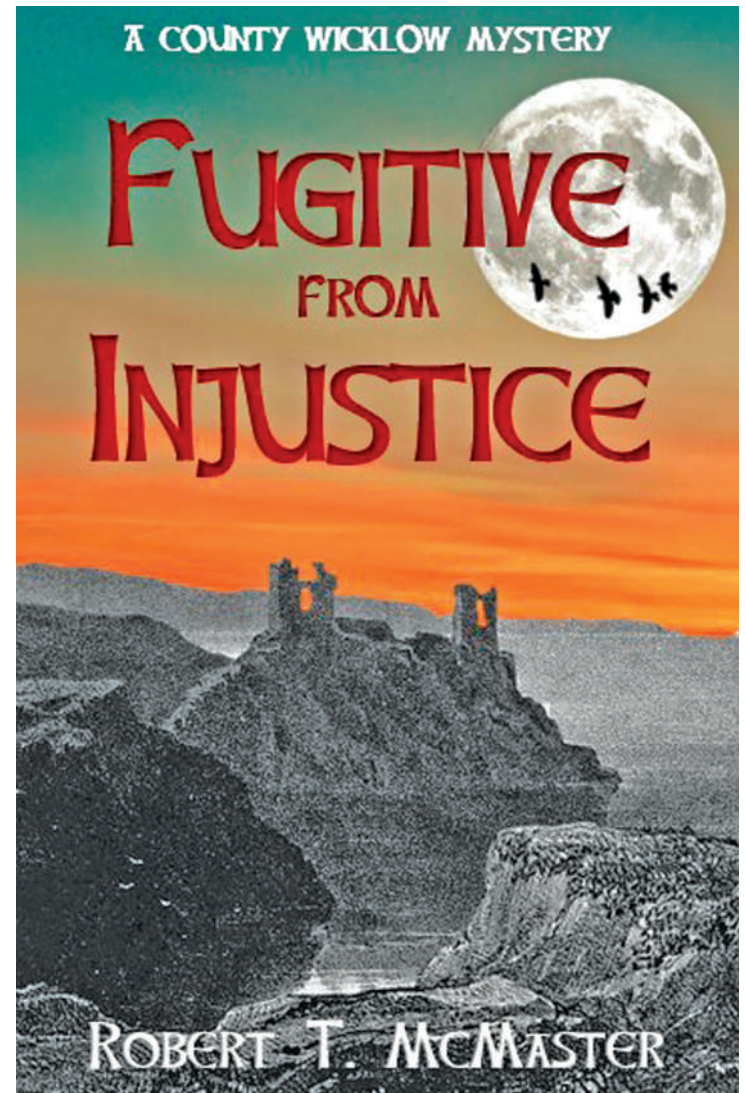
One reader writes, "...a great story and mystery [that] included so many relevant social justice issues...I didn't know much about camogie until I read [*Fugitive from Injustice*] but now I'm ready to go out and look for a team to join....I kept wanting to keep reading, but also didn't want it to end."

A compelling story line,

enchancing setting, and unforgettable characters combine to make *Fugitive from Injustice* a thoroughly satisfying read for young and old alike, for those fortunate enough to live in the Emerald Isle as well as those who can only dream of such a life.

Robert T. McMaster grew up in Southbridge, Massachusetts. He holds a B.A. from Clark University and graduate degrees from Boston College, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts. He is author of *All the Light here Comes from Above: The Life and Legacy of Edward Hitchcock* (2021) and the *Trolley Days* Series of novels set in Massachusetts in the World War I era. His most recent project, the County Wicklow Mysteries, includes *Rose of Glenkerry* and *Fugitive from Injustice*.

Fugitive from Injustice: A County Wicklow Mystery by Robert T. McMaster, published by Unquomk Press, 2023, 325 pages. Paperback and ebook editions. ISBN 979886903-1457. Ages 16 to adult. Visit www.WicklowMysteries.com for more information.



On the Road Again

An Evening With Tom Dunne, Fiachna Ó Braonáin & Alan Connor

Mermaid Arts Centre, Saturday 16th March, 8pm. €31 full price

"On The Road Again" promises to be a fun evening of songs and stories as Fiachna Ó Braonáin from *Hot House Flowers* and *Radio 1*, Tom Dunne from *Something Happens* and *Newstalk* & Alan Connor from the *Late Late Show* band hit the road together for the very first time!

The show comprises songs from both *Hot House Flowers*, *Something Happens* and songs from some of guys and favourite performers

Despite having shared stages across the world over several decades, Tom Dunne of *Something Happens* and Fiachna Ó Braonáin of *Hothouse Flowers* and *Radio 1* had never actually performed together until they were invited to do so on RTE *Radio 1*'s Ray Darcy show where they performed a Christy Moore song, "John O Dreams" and a Willie Nelson

song, "On The Road Again". Ray D'Arcy loved it, Fiachna Ó Braonáin and Tom Dunne had a ball... and were joking they should do more of it! Or perhaps... only half-joking!

Since then several coffees were had and they decided to make it happen! Their respective bands were from different musical worlds but Tom Dunne and Fiachna Ó Braonáin were always united by a love of performance and songwriting and were very taken with what those different schools of thought could bring to their coffee

table. Since then they have been working on what songs they could perform together including some new songs neither have performed publicly before.

Multi Instrumentalist Alan Connor was then drafted in to add some Piano, Guitar and Percussion to the dynamic duo! Alan Connor has toured with Sharon Shannon for over ten years and regularly performs with *Something Happens* and *Frances Black*. He is also a member of RTE's "The Late Late Show" House Band since 2021



YARN Story Circle - Guest Teller Vincent Kiely

Mermaid Arts Centre, Wednesday 6th March, 6:30pm. Pay What You Can from €3.

"Join us for a relaxed storytelling circle with guest teller Vincent Kiely. Our special guest will launch our monthly storytelling story circle and then open to the floor. No pressure to tell - listeners welcome!"

Vincent Kiely is a writer and storyteller from Moyne, near Thurles in Country Tipperary. He is a lover of what he calls "creative oral storytelling."

He is a member of "The Gab" storytellers in Cork, and of "The Storytellers of Ireland." He is working on an oral epic called *Scéalta na Muimhneach*, The Stories of the Munster Men, set in the ancient Irish kingdom of Munster.

Ages: Adults (14+)

Venue: Mermaid Arts Centre - (Multi-Purpose Room Space)

The Yarn Story Circle will take place on the first Wednesday of the month from February to June and then in September and October before culminating in a Story Swap at the YARN Storytelling Festival.



Loreto Abbey Dalkey present Footloose

Mermaid Arts Centre, 13th-15th March, 7:30pm. €21

Loreto Abbey Dalkey Transition Year students present 'Footloose', the feel good stage adaptation of the original hit movie.

In this energetic show, original screenplay writer Dean Pitchford, along with Walter Bobbie and composer Tom Snow once again bring us the story of the town of Bomont, where the teenagers just want to be allowed to dance again!

The story follows Ren McCormack and his mother as they move

from Chicago to a small Midwestern town. Ren is used to Disco and tight clothes so the move to conservative Bomont is a real culture shock. The idea that rock music and dancing are illegal is something Ren can't quite get his head around. When Ren sets his sights on Reverend Shaw's daughter, Ariel, the rules in the town start to unravel. The Reverend's beliefs are really tested when Ren and Ariel try to abolish the ban on dancing before their senior prom.



A rise in rat callouts in January

Rentokil recorded a 29% increase in the reporting of rats nationally in January of this year compared to callouts in January 2023. The company has issued a caution to homeowners and businesses against the prevalent threat of rats.

Notably, Cork witnessed the most pronounced increase during this period, with a 50% increase in rat-related callouts in January 2024 compared to the same period in 2023. Similarly, the Northwest region and Dublin experienced increases of 33% and 32%, respectively, during the same period.

Rats pose a significant threat to both residential and commercial properties, being widely acknowledged as the country's primary pest concern. Rentokil emphasises the importance of implementing rodent-proofing solutions to prevent these creatures from infiltrating premises. Among the recommended solutions is Rentokil's Flexi Armour, a robust method utilising

durable materials like Kevlar and knitted steel mesh to create impenetrable barriers against rats.

Rats are the top pest threat that premises and businesses need to be aware of due to the significant damage they can cause to properties and assets. Rats spend extended periods every day grinding down their teeth on surrounding objects, and as a result, they can chew through utility lines, electrical wires, and other key infrastructure. Signs of rat activity to be aware of include droppings, scratching noises, and footprints.

The presence of rats in a business also poses a serious reputational risk, as well as a health risk due to the potential spread of diseases through their bodily

fluids and excrement.

Colm Moore, Area Technical Manager for Rentokil said: "Rentokil is encouraging home and business owners to be mindful of the presence of rats in their premises after a 29% increase in rat callouts nationwide was observed.

"Members of the public can find out more about the signs of a rat infestation as well as how to discourage their presence by visiting the Rentokil website. Both homeowners and businesses must remain vigilant against the threat posed by rats. Implementing effective rodent-proofing solutions like Rentokil's Flexi Armour is crucial in safeguarding properties against these persistent pests."



Padraig, Eileen and Maire Doran at the Wicklow GAA Garden County Aeads in Arklow.

Newcastle grower among Tirlan Quality Grain Award Winners

Champion food grade oats growers, John and Ann Deering and their son, Mark, have won the coveted overall Tirlán Quality Grain Award for 2023 and have been singled out for their exceptional attention to detail in growing top quality grains on the family farm.

The Deering family, from Morette near Emo in County Laois, also won the individual Food Grade Oats award for harvest 2023. The champion growers were among 14 top suppliers commended at the highly-competitive Tirlán Quality Grain Awards for 2023 ceremony that took place on Tuesday, February 20th 2024 in Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

New research from Teagasc on the Tirlán grain pool shows that Irish grain has one of the lowest carbon footprints in the world. The research unveiled at the

awards is the first of its kind using a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) methodology specifically developed for Irish grain on a wide range of commercially-grown Irish cereals. Accounting for straw incorporation, the study showed the net carbon footprint could be close to net zero.

The Dried Feed Wheat category was won by Michael Carey who farms at Stonefield, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow. Michael Carey farms with his son, Stephen, and his brother, Brian.

The Careys farm approx. 1000 acres of

owned, leased and contract farmed land along the east coast from Bray down to Wicklow town. It is an all tillage enterprise with winter wheat, winter rye, winter oats, oilseed rape and winter and spring barley being grown. Soil types are generally on the heavier side and particularly suit winter crops which are the backbone of his rotation. Michael uses minimum till as much as possible to establish crops but will plough when necessary.

With the aim of improving soil health Michael spreads a lot of organic manure, mainly in the form of chicken litter and has recently started growing cover crops on land destined for spring barley.

Oats and winter rye are sold green off the combine to Tirlán with the remaining crops being dried and stored on farm and sold throughout the winter months. Michael's Tirlán agronomist is Tom Hession.

Addressing the Awards, Martin Heydon T.D., Minister of State with responsibility for Research and Development, Farm Safety and New Market Development, commended the award-winning growers on their dedication to delivering the highest quality grain, while also farming sustainably.

"I congratulate today's 14 champion growers on their quality produce and commend Tirlán for its continued investment in research and development at its Innovation Centre in Ballyragget which I've visited previously and at its high-spec Oat Mill here in Portlaoise.

"In what was a difficult year for weather conditions, Tirlán's growers produced top quality grains on farms across this catchment, as showcased here today. They take immense pride in what they do, how they farm, how they nurture and respect the land. This dedication, passion and commitment to sustainability is what sets Irish grains apart, as evidenced by the research work unveiled here today. We continue to strive to find new markets and add value to this quality Irish produce."

John Murphy, Tirlán Chairperson and Wexford native, said it was one of the most challenging years in living memory for grains but commended Tirlán's 1,100 plus growers on the resilience they've shown. "The commitment to quality and passion shown by the award winning growers, coupled with the sustainability credentials of the crops, bodes well for the future of Irish grain.

"As the largest buyer and user of premium Irish grains, Tirlán is investing in the future of Irish grain. Tirlán paid our growers almost €3 million in additional bonuses last year, specifically for premium grains. And in spite of the exceptionally challenging weather, we doubled our gluten-free oats intake last year.

"We've built strong capabilities in our Oat Mill in Portlaoise and in R&D with a view to maximising returns for our farm families. We continue to expand our plant-based offerings and we're evolving our portfolio to meet growing global demand in key markets such as North



Michael Carey from Newcastle with Tirlan Vice-Chairperson Brendan Hayes, agronomist Tom Hession and Tirlan Chief ESG Officer Lisa Koep.

America, Europe and Asia where demand for sustainably produced, fully traceable product made from quality Irish grains continues to grow. Our new Avonmore Oat Drinks are

performing very well in Ireland and the Asian market, and we recently launched a new Truly Oat beverage range into the US market.

"As plans for harvest

2024 continue, we remain committed to facilitating sustainable growth in the grain sector, in line with Government ambitions. Our grains team are out working with our valued

growers, assessing and harnessing regenerative agriculture practices on farms and continuously improving the sustainability credentials of the premium portfolio."

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Mr. Simon Carey, Principal,
St David's Holy Faith Secondary School,
Marine Road, Greystones, Co. Wicklow.

Alternatively, please email your application to
simoncarey.principal@stdavids.ie

Deadline for applications is 4 p.m on Thursday, 7th March 2024.

PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Noel Prendergast seeks permission for Change of Use of Unit G1 granted planning in planning application 21/1271 from manufacturing unit to office building including an increased floor area from 508m² to 764m² provided by extending the first floor area and alterations to car parking on site to accommodate additional spaces at Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

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Codling Wind Park to sponsor Wicklow Half Marathon & 10K Run

Codling Wind Park has been revealed as the new title sponsor of this year's Wicklow Half Marathon & 10K run which will take place on March 24th. Race organisers say the sponsorship marks a significant milestone in the development of this very popular event and that they are looking forward to welcoming a record number of participants to Wicklow Town for it.

In 2019, around 1,700 runners, joggers and walkers took part in the event before it was suspended for two years due to Covid. This year organisers expect over twice that number, 3,500 people, to enter the Codling Wind Park Wicklow Half Marathon & 10K run.

The event, which will start on the quays of Wicklow Harbour, travels

along a scenic route with stunning coastal views before finishing up in the unique courtyard of Wicklow's historic gaol. Race Director Mick Foy says the county's fantastic scenery is a huge draw for people but so also is the warmth of the Wicklow welcome.

"The engagement and support from the people of Wicklow for this event has been nothing short of amazing, creating an atmosphere that participants and spectators really cherish. We are eagerly anticipating the return of people who have participated previously and look-

ing forward to meeting people who will be joining us for the first time. We are also thrilled to welcome our new sponsors Codling Wind Park on board for the next exciting chapter in the event's development. The company has shown a real interest in engaging with the local community and contributing to the success of local events, just like this one.

"The fact we are on course to double our numbers over the last couple of years is testament to its growing popularity. We are inviting athletes of all levels, from seasoned

marathoners to enthusiastic first timers, to partake in a day of challenge, camaraderie, and personal achievement, in the most scenic of settings. We would encourage anyone planning on taking part to register as soon as possible as we are anticipating the event will be a sell-out."

Codling Wind Park Project Director Scott Sutherland said the company was delighted to support an event that is quickly becoming a fixture in the local athletic and social calendar.

"We were hugely impressed with the sup-



Pamela McCann (Communications Project Manager at Codling Wind Park), Aidan Hopkins (Marketing Manager with the Bear Group), Scott Sutherland (Project Director for Codling Wind Park), Mick Foy (Race Director) and Pat Sammon (External Affairs Manager) at the launch of the half marathon.

port the event receives from the people of Wicklow, not just from the 70 or so volunteers from various clubs who will be helping out on the day but from right across the community. This partnership underlines our support and commitment to sustain-

ability, community, and the promotion of an active and healthy lifestyle.

"The event is not just a wonderful way to promote Wicklow Town and all it has to offer but it is also of course a great way for people to socialise, to exercise and to have fun. I

know ten of our own employees have been training hard for it and are looking forward to taking part. We wish them, all the participants and their supporters the very best for a great day out."

Many participants in the event, which starts

from 10am on Sunday March 24th, also raise funds for charity and there is a fundraising platform which can be set up during registration. For further information and to register for the event go to Wicklow Half Marathon and 10 KM

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. S.M.

Kilmacanogue History Society talk - The History of Glencree

Kilmacanogue History Society's next Talk will take place on Monday 4th March at 8pm in Kilmacanogue Parish Hall.

"Our Speaker Frank Tracy will lead us through the fascinating History of Glencree from the earliest times to the present day. Frank Tracy graduated from University College Galway with a B.A. in Celtic Archaeology. He has spent most of his working life in the Public Service.

"A keen hillwalker and lifelong member of the scout movement, he has a keen interest in local history. We expect Frank to keep our audience enthralled like he has done on previous occasions."

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