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Tuesday 23rd April 2024 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

WEST WICKLOW WATER

- PILOT SCHEME TO IMPROVE WEST WICKLOW WATER
- HIGH COURT APPLICATION BROUGHT TO JAIL COUNTY MANAGER
- COUNCIL ACCUSED OF 'PR STUNT'

West Wicklow's Water was very much in the news last week. On Wednesday last, Tirlán launched the Farming for Water: River Slaney Project, 'a collaborative initiative designed to enhance water quality, reduce climate change emissions and improve biodiversity across the Slaney River catchment area in counties Wexford, Carlow, and Wicklow.'

The River Slaney Project is closely aligned with the Government's national €60 million European Innovation Partnership (EIP) 'Farming for Water' project aimed at improving water quality at local, catchment, and national levels. The three Local Authorities of Wicklow, Wexford and Carlow County Councils have come together in a pilot initiative of this multi-year programme which will include a series of combined projects, actions and activities with the aim of improving water quality in the River Slaney, in collaboration with three core



Pictured presenting their cheque to Simon Carroll of Roundwood Cancer Support are the guitar students of Music Teacher Linda Ferguson who braved Storm Kathleen on Saturday 7th April to busk on Roundwood Main Street, to raise these funds. The final total came to €1,020. Pictured (Front left to right): Lila Doyle, Linda Ferguson, Kallie Lester, Eva O'Neill, Ella O'Neill, Annamai Kelly, Rachel Summers, Ailbhe Kelly, Tara Byrne, Simon Carroll; (Back Left to Right): Rosie Kelly, Lili Doyle, Naoise Doyle, Lochlann Byrne and Nathan Mitchell.

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partners, Teagasc, professional services firm IFAC, dairy and grain co-operative Tirlán and Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO). The Slaney Catchment covers significant parts of counties Wexford, Carlow and Wicklow, with a population of almost 400,000 people. The catchment has been highlighted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) water testing programme as a 'catchment of concern' with a requirement to improve water quality and reduce agricultural nutrient run-offs.

Following the official launch of the project Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, welcomed the initiative, saying "This project seeks to deliver the best practice through the co-ordinated efforts of the collaborating organisations and other stakeholders to support farmers as part of an overall partnership and community activation. This collaborative and partnership approach is the way to go - working together in a partnership approach offers the best chance of achieving good water quality and sustainability outcomes for farmers, for the community and for the local economy. The Council will aim to engage our community on the importance of action to protect our water supplies and host educational workshops in our communities."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council commended the project, saying "This project will seek to improve the water quality in the Slaney catchment. The protection of fresh water quality will contribute to numerous goals across the pillars of sustainable

healthy communities and climate action by ensuring efficient and sustainable use and development of water resources and services infrastructure and the conservation and

Continued on page 3

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WEST WICKLOW WATER

Continued from page 1

enhancement of natural water resources and their associated ecosystems, biodiversity, protected habitats and species."

Breege Kilkenny, Director of Services, Wicklow County Council, commended the positive engagement of the farming and wider community, noting that "having just completed extensive stakeholder engagement for the Climate Action Plan, I can attest to the commitment of the farming and the wider community. The measures proposed will focus on improving water quality but will also bring multiple benefits such as biodiversity and climate adaptation."

However, on Thursday and Friday of last week, Wicklow County Council was in the High Court defending an application brought to have Wicklow County Council's Chief Executive, deemed to be in contempt of court and to be committed to prison for failure to remediate a massive illegal dump which is leaching into the River Slaney.

In 2017 the High Court found Wicklow County Council to be the 'last man standing' of those who had illegally dumped there and gave them six and a half years to remove up to a million tons of contaminated matter. The owners of the land, Brownfield Restorations, brought the case back to the High Court claiming Wicklow County Council hadn't started any remediation. The judge will give a written judgement

in the next two weeks.

Reacting, Fine Gael Local Election Candidate for Baltinglass, Peter Stapleton, said Wicklow County Council should not have used the Minister for Agriculture and Food and Tirlan in a 'PR stunt' to distract from its failures on dumping in Wicklow. "It is no coincidence that Wicklow County Council timed a launch with Tirlán and the Minister for Agriculture of the River Slaney Water Project days before it was due in the High Court to account for why it has not cleared up toxic dumps in West Wicklow," Stapleton said. "The Council would be better advised not to cynically engage in PR stunts and focus on remediating the mess at hand."

"We need accountability from Wicklow County Council not PR puff. To ensure that, the Minister for Agriculture should ask his colleague the Minister for Housing and Local Government to appoint an inspector to investigate Wicklow County Council's compliance on dump remediation."

"Wicklow has been the poster boy for bad behaviour on industrial-scale dumping for too long. In the early 2000s, Wicklow was the national capital of illegal dumping. Yet 25 years' on, the County is still dealing with the issue."

"And at massive cost to the County. The final bill for these State-inflicted environmental dumping disasters, which may be eye-wateringly

high, should not be laid at the door of rate payers in Wicklow. An inspector, independent of the Council and answerable to the Minister, needs to establish the final cost and why it remains a running sore.

"I am calling on the Minister for Local Government Darragh O'Brien to appoint an inspector as he did into Bord Pleanala when its crises arose last year. A decade on and Wicklow County Council is still dealing with dumping in Whitestown. It is ironic now that the Council has a water project for the Slaney river while it remains at risk and while it is still unclear where the toxic waste from Whitestown will go if ever remediated. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of toxic waste were dumped there and despite the High Court ordering its full remediation by this year, that has still not been completed. Wicklow County Council has questions to answer for its involvement in the first place in this matter but also for its failure to meet High Court deadlines. If the Council will not be answerable to the High Court, the Minister has to make the Council answerable to him via an Inspector."

"Millions of Euro on, Wicklow is still not resolved of dumping. Between the County's own Council's actions and Minister Ryan's granting of 12 Lithium prospecting licences, Wicklow's reputation as Ireland's greenest garden is being tarnished by the day."



Pictured is Doug Cooney, a teacher in Bray Institute of Further Education (BIFE) who won a Gold medal in Taekwon-Do at the European Championships in Slovenia earlier this month.

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Taoiseach addresses British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) in Wicklow

An Taoiseach Simon Harris last Monday addressed BIPA's Plenary in Druids Glen. The theme of the Plenary meeting was Tourism, a key area of focus for the newly appointed Taoiseach

The two-day convention which brought together politicians from legislatures across the UK and Ireland, and the Crown Dependencies, took place on 15th-16th April.

Also addressing the plenary were Minister of State Thomas Byrne TD; Martin Fraser, Irish Ambassador to Great Britain; Paul Johnston, British Ambassador to Ireland; Alice Mansergh, Chief Executive, Tourism Ireland; Joanne Stuart, Chief Executive Officer, Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance; and Eoghan O'Mara Walsh, Chief Executive Officer, Irish

Tourism Industry Federation also addressed the plenary.

Formed in 1990, BIPA creates a forum for British and Irish lawmakers to foster closer ties by developing mutual understanding. As relations have improved since the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, it has now expanded activities to make policy proposals on issues of mutual interest to both Governments through the organisations' four committees.

Speaking before the event, Irish Co-Chair Brendan Smith said: "This is a timely opportunity to engage with colleagues

from a number of legislatures on a range of topics of particular concern across Britain and Ireland at present. This Plenary meeting will have a particular focus on tourism and the benefits of having an open border on the island of Ireland.

"2024 also marks 25 years of North-South cooperation under the provisions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. With the Agreements' institutions up and running across three strands, BIPA's shared focus is on stability, prosperity and strengthening our bi-lateral ties."

British Co-Chair and head of the UK Parliament delegation, Dame Karen Bradley said, "Friendly bilateral relations between our two nations are an essential ingredient in the shared prosperity of these islands. They allow constructive shared approaches on issues of mutual benefit. One long-standing area of cooperation, the open border on the island of Ireland, presents great opportunities to attract visitors to these islands: policymakers need to continually develop innovative ideas for how all administrations can support communities to make

the most of the benefits which tourism brings.

"It will be a great honour for the Assembly to be addressed by the new Taoiseach, Simon Harris, so early into his tenure, as he outlines his thoughts on the development of the bilateral relationship under his leadership. It is a mark of the esteem in which the British-Irish

Parliamentary Assembly, and its work in strengthening understanding between parliamentarians, is held."

Speaking at the event, Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "Here in Wicklow, and across our islands, we are



An Taoiseach Simon Harris speaking in Druids Glen

fortunate to enjoy a strong tourism offering. Ireland is an island nation, we rely on tourism. Tourism boosts local economies and keeps our communities vibrant.

"I know how important tourism is in Wicklow for jobs and services and my goal is to make sure we

keep supporting tourism as best we can through various strands of funding.

"That means investing in small businesses, making sure they receive business grants to keep up with the pace of change, investing in walking trails and historical monuments, and so

much more."

Taoiseach Simon Harris concluded: "British and Irish relations are built on deep and ensuring political, cultural, economic and social ties. Today is an important opportunity to solidify links with our closest neighbours."

Ark Housing Association host Bray networking event

Ark Housing Association hosted a networking event on Friday, 12th April in the Palm, Bray Seafrost. The event was well attended by local people from a range of backgrounds. Ark Housing Association was set up in 2007 with a focus to deliver good quality accommodation and support structures to those experiencing homelessness in the Bray area.

Since then Ark Housing Association has expanded into other parts of County Wicklow, including Greystones and Newtownmountkennedy. Cllr Stephen

Stokes, Cathaoirleach of the Greystones Municipal District attended on the day. Cllr Stokes stated: "Ark Housing do important work in the community. We are

grateful to their team for all of the work they do to assist people in difficult circumstances."

The gathering aimed to show the array of services that Ark Housing

offers to the community, and introduce their team and members of the Ark voluntary Board of Directors to the wider community, and their roles within the organi-

sation. During the event a video was played, which outlined the diverse range of circumstances of some people who had been housed by Ark Housing Association.

Cllr Stokes added: "Hearing the stories of people who had been housed was quite moving. I would like to wish the Ark Housing Association continued success over the coming years."



Cllr Stephen Stokes with Ark Housing staff and volunteers



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Wicklow property prices stay steady in Q1

Property prices in Wicklow have stayed flat during the quarter, according to the latest MyHome.ie Property Price Report. The report for Q1 2024, shows that the median asking price for a property in the county is still €395,000. This means prices have risen by €10,000 compared with this time last year.

Asking prices for a 3-bed semi-detached house in the county also stayed flat over the quarter at €395,000. This means prices in the segment are up by €10,000 compared to this time last year.

Meanwhile, the asking price for a 4-bed semi-detached house in Wicklow rose by €5,000 over the quarter to €495,000. This price is up by the same amount compared to this time last year.

There were 554 properties for sale in Wicklow at the end of Q1 2024 - a decrease of 2% on the quarter. The average time for a property to go sale agreed in the county after being placed up for sale now stands at just over three and a half months.

The author of the report, Conall MacCoille, Chief Economist at Bank of Ireland, said: "The message from this quarter's MyHome.ie report is that the housing market is heating up again. MyHome asking prices rose by a solid 2% in the first quarter, with the annual inflation rate accelerating to 6.5%, its fastest pace in 18

months. Notably, Dublin - where valuations had become most stretched during the pandemic - is joining in the rebound, with annual asking price inflation of 7.2%.

"We can see that demand is particularly intense from transactional activity. The number of homebuyers (first-time-buyers and movers) rose to 44,100 in 2023, up 1.4% on 2022 and accounting for 71% of total transactions. This is the highest proportion of transactions accounted for by homebuyers since 2013. In contrast, household buy-to-let purchases fell by 9% in 2023, no doubt hurt by higher interest rates.

"It is also significant that the number of non-household transactions fell by 6.6%, to 12,300. Of late, the role of the state in purchasing homes has received much attention. However, the fact that total non-household purchases fell so sharply in 2023 must also reflect reduced demand from institutional investors in the private rented sector.

"Earlier this year we saw houses

nationally being sold for 4.6% over the original asking price, at the median. This is a major change to one year ago, when the median premium was just 1%. Supply continues to be a concern; the number of properties listed for sale on MyHome has hit a fresh record low of 10,935 properties. This is below even the Covid-19 trough of 11,200, and down 19.5% on the year."

"It is worth noting, however, that the 63,000 residential transactions recorded in 2023 is the highest number recorded since the Property Price Register started collecting data in 2010. In absolute terms housing supply is slowly improving, but the gap with robust housing demand is growing.

"In summary, there has been no let-up in demand, and with the supply situation still difficult, it is not too surprising that house price inflation has regained momentum. We expect to see a mid-single digit rise in Irish house prices in 2024, close to 4%."

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Milestone progress for Greystones Community College

Greystones Community College Principal Ruairi Farrell has warmly welcomed the news on behalf of the whole school community that letters of intent to successful contractors have been issued for the 1000 pupil permanent school building project for Greystones Community College.

Mr Farrell said "The school would like to acknowledge the excellent support of the Parent Leadership Team, Board of Management, Student Leadership Team, KWETB, local public rep-

resentatives and the dedicated hard working school staff in getting to this point. This is a significant and long awaited milestone for our school community. However, we acknowledge there is still a journey to

travel and the school community are fully committed to leaving no stone unturned in ensuring our amazing students have access to the permanent school building and facilities they deserve without

further delay."

The Chairperson of Greystones Community College Board of Management Cllr. Lourda Scott welcomed the news: "I'm delighted that this next step has been taken in

getting our permanent building. It's a great relief for parents, staff and members of the Board of Management alike, all of whom have worked really hard in keeping this issue to the fore in the Department of Education. I'm confident that this momentum will keep going now and get this school built and occupied quickly," she concluded.

Speaking last Tuesday, An Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "Huge progress for Greystones Community College tonight. I can confirm that after months of work and campaigning, a letter of intent will issue to Greystones Community College tomorrow morning. This will allow the contract to be awarded within the next two weeks.

"This is significant progress for the community. This means we are on the road to a new build for Greystones Community College. As Taoiseach and as a Wicklow TD I know what this news will mean to parents across the community.

"I will continue, as Taoiseach to monitor every step to ensure that Greystones and areas in of huge demand receive the funding and drive they need to make sure we have enough school places for now and for the future. I will not give up until this new school building is open. I want to thank everybody in Greystones Community College, the



An Taoiseach Simon Harris TD meeting with Greystones Community College students in 2022.

principal, the ETB, the students and parents for their patience.

"I intend to continue to work tirelessly on this project but today is a major milestone, as Taoiseach I am so determined to deliver this project for people in Greystones."

Wicklow TD Jennifer Whitmore has welcomed the news, which came late last night, of progress for Greystones Community College's permanent build. Jennifer Whitmore TD welcomed the news but has however highlighted that two schools in the Greystones area are still awaiting progress on their building applications and that 20 students in the area have no secondary school place secured for September 2024.

Deputy Whitmore said: "The news that a letter of intent for Greystones Community College construction phase is very welcome. We have worked hard as an entire community for many years to see the permanent home for GCC delivered. None more so than their Principal, Ruairi Farrell.

"This now means that a contract for its construction can be awarded within the next two weeks. While this

is a significant milestone, there will be more work to do in the months ahead, and I will continue to support the school in its work, as I have done for years. Today's news also serves as a reminder of the progress we need to see on the other two secondary schools in the Greystones and Kilcoole catchment area.

"Colaiste Chraobh Abham is waiting to move on its extension. I want to see it made a top priority. Alongside this, Temple Carrig has been approved for an extension project under the additional school accommodation scheme to provide much-needed classrooms for subjects like Music, Art and Science.

"These schools need to be delivered if we hope to avoid a rerun of what happened this year where we had over 70 students with no secondary school places just a few months ago. While it is welcome that extra spaces have been found for some, we still have 20 students finishing primary school this June who still need to find out where they will be going to secondary school in September. This has been stressful for students and parents alike, who have

contacted my office weekly about the need for more school places.

"I have been raising this issue for months, most recently in the D-il yesterday with the Taoiseach. We have been repeatedly told that a solution will be found for these students, but it has yet to be found. While these students sit in limbo, preparation for the next school year is happening around them. Entrance exams are being held, book lists are being issued, and others are applying for the school transport scheme. This is an exciting time for most, but these twenty students and their families are being left behind.

"The current uncertainty around class places is a direct consequence of capacity issues in our schools, which can only be resolved if the Department of Education accelerates their applications and provides schools with the necessary support for construction. I am steadfast in my commitment to hold the government accountable for this situation and to collaborate with our local school communities to ensure the timely delivery of much-needed classrooms," said Deputy Whitmore.

2024 Greystones Municipal District People of the Year Awards



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

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Repairs in Kindlestown Park

Wicklow County Council has carried out a number of recent repairs in the Kindlestown Park area of Greystones. Cllr Stephen Stokes, Cathaoirleach of the Greystones Municipal District has particularly thanked the Greystones Municipal District staff for fixing a busy corner in the estate. This particular street corner had become damaged over time.

Cllr Stokes stated: "I pressed for this work to be done. More generally I also request that the Greystones District office carry out a lot of work across the district, so I appreciate their continued efforts. This was a particularly important job for local residents. I am delighted with the outcome. The Council staff have done a nice repair job."

Cllr Stokes has also expressed his appreciation for the repair of the Black Walk street lights that had been out for a long time. One key issue was a damaged cable, which required repair work from the ESB. Cllr Stokes added: "I raised the issue of the lights with Wicklow County Council. I also brought up the matter at Greystones Municipal District meetings. I am pleased that work has now been completed, and the lights have been restored. Street lighting is important from a safety and security standpoint. I will continue to press for improvements across Charlesland, Delgany, Greystones, Kilcoole, Killadreenan and Newcastle."



Cllr Stokes in Kindlestown Park

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Sod turned on new Bray transport hub

Minister of Transport Eamon Ryan TD, was in Bray last Thursday to mark the commencement of works for a transformative new Transport Hub in Bray which will bring together better facilities for buses and taxis, as well as walking and cycling infrastructure, all connected to the (Daly) train station.

A significant €3.5million of funding has been allocated in 2024 by the National Transport Authority to the Wicklow County Council project, which demonstrates the importance of the scheme within the county this year. Construction on the project is estimated to be completed in 12 months, subject to favourable conditions. The key features of the project consist of

the following:

- Construction of realigned bus interchange facilities to provide a more comfortable and safer experience for customers, with better bus parking and taxi spaces.
- Upgrading of pedestrian and cyclist facilities in the area, through the provision of new widened footpaths and pedestrian crossings.
- Landscaping features to enhance the public space,

installation of new seating areas, tree planting and introduction of cycle parking. The project will provide a high-quality transport interchange that complements the heritage of the Bray station buildings, which first opened for passengers back in 1854. The project, which has been facilitated and supported throughout by Iarnród Éireann, is designed by AtkinsRéalis Consultancy,

with Contractors David Walsh Civil Engineering carrying out the construction works.

Commenting on the event, Taoiseach Simon Harris said, "As Taoiseach and as a TD for Wicklow I am delighted to see this project move forward with today's sod turn. This scheme is set to have a significant impact on people across the county providing high quality public spaces to go alongside the historic station buildings we are already lucky to have. With this project going ahead we will see renewed energy and activity in the local area which small businesses will no doubt welcome. I want to thank Wicklow County Council and the National Transport Authority who have worked tirelessly to get this over the line. I look forward to seeing the result."

Speaking at the sod-turning, Minister Eamon Ryan said, "This new transport hub is going to transform the area around Bray Train Station and encourage more people to choose public transport. We are seeing throughout the country that when we improve transport infrastructure and facilities, people respond so positively. Bray is a wonderful, thriving town and it is about to get even better with this new plan from Wicklow County Council, for locals and commuters first, but also to the many people who visit. The Government is committed to transforming the way we travel in Ireland, and this is evidenced in the significant investment we have allocated in recent years to the Active Travel and Public Transport projects around the country. This is a great example of how this investment is being spent for people and for communities."

Green TD Steven Matthews and Bray Councillor Erika Doyle were delighted to see Minister Eamon Ryan turn the sod on the Bray Station interchange.

Commenting on the interchange works, Deputy Matthews said, "The interchange work commenced in February with the installation of a large surface water drainage system. I worked with Irish Rail & Wicklow County Council so that under track drainage was carried out in 2023 during routine rail maintenance works. I'm delighted that our Green Party colleague Minister Eamon Ryan attended to turn the sod on the new public plaza which will give station road a much needed facelift.



Pictured at the sod turning to mark the commencement of works for a transformative new Transport Hub in Bray on Thursday 18th April were (l-r) Joe Murphy (Project Manager, David Walsh Civil Engineering), Frank Masterson (Manager CIÉ Group Property), Finola O'Driscoll (Senior Programme Manager, NTA), Ursula O'Higgins (Technical Director, AtkinsRealis), Joe Lane, (Director of Services Infrastructure and Capital Projects Wicklow County Council), Michael Nicholson (Deputy Chief Executive Wicklow County Council), Minister of Transport Eamon Ryan TD, Cllr. Melanie Corrigan (Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District), Lorraine Gallagher (District Manager of Bray Municipal District) and Jamie Cassells (Contracts Manager, David Walsh Civil Engineering). Photo: Mick Kelly



Pictured at the sod turning to mark the commencement of works for a transformative new Transport Hub in Bray on Thursday 18th April were (l-r) Michael Nicholson (Deputy Chief Executive Wicklow County Council), Minister of Transport Eamon Ryan TD, Cllr. Melanie Corrigan (Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District) and Lorraine Gallagher (District Manager of Bray Municipal District). Photo Mick Kelly

"The safety features included in the design will make it easier and safer to walk, cycle, catch a bus or train. The junctions at Adelaide Road and Quinsborough Road are being made accessible, safer and easier to cross for everyone going to the station or seaford."

"This upgrade will improve the experience for the thousands of journeys that start and end at Bray Railway Station every week and provide a public transport gateway to Bray that we can be proud of. I was so involved in this project from the start in 2018 during early design, planning process and supporting budgets for the NTA to fund the project and it's wonderful to see the work begin."

Cllr Doyle added, "The work is expected to take around nine months and while it will be disruptive during the construction, the benefits to all those using the station or living beside it will last much longer."

Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District Cllr. Melanie Corrigan said, "We were delighted that Minister Eamon Ryan was able to join us here at Bray (Daly) Train station to officially mark the commencement of works on the Bray Transport Interchange scheme. We welcome the commitment of funding from the Department and the National Transport Authority for this project, which upon completion will see much needed safety improvements for all those who access this busy area."

Deputy Chief Executive Michael Nicholson commented, "On behalf of Wicklow County Council, we are delighted with the investment from the Government in this vital

Active Travel project, one of many being rolled out across the county. Ultimately the project will benefit the key transport modes of walking, cycling, taxi, bus and rail at the station, and will encourage a modal shift from private vehicles to more sustainable modes of transport."

Jim Meade, Chief Executive of Iarnród Éireann said: "We are delighted that the Bray Transport Interchange project is now underway. It will greatly enhance the customer experience for our existing customers and with the increased multi-modal interchange will make DART travel even more attractive to potential future customers."

Anne Graham, Chief Executive of the National

Transport Authority said: "This scheme is a great example of the work we are doing in collaboration with Local Authorities like Wicklow County Council to make sustainable travel a more attractive option for commuters across Ireland. Enhancing facilities to support the various transport modes of walking, cycling and public transport, along with an improved public realm, will encourage more of us to consider choosing an alternative to the private car."

Also in attendance at the event were Bray District Manager Lorraine Gallagher, Wicklow Elected Deputies and Bray Elected Members along with representatives from the National Transport

Authority, Iarnród Éireann, Atkins Realis Consultancy, David Walsh Civil Engineering, Dublin Bus, Go Ahead Ireland, Finnegan's Bray and staff and members of Wicklow County Council.

Works will be carried out on a phased basis, with access to businesses, residences, public transport and amenities maintained throughout. Alternative access routes required during construction will be highlighted in advance with all stakeholders.

Wicklow County Council said it would like to thank the public, businesses and transport providers within the area for their patience and co-operation throughout the duration of works.

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Minister of Transport Eamon Ryan TD with Bray's Green Party councillor Erika Doyle

‘West Wicklow needs a transport system that is fit for purpose’

Wicklow Sinn Féin TD John Brady has expressed his disappointment following confirmation from the National Transport Authority (NTA) that there are no current plans to either increase the frequency of the 65 route which currently services Blessington, or to extend the badly needed service to Baltinglass.

Deputy Brady said: “Following a meeting this week with the NTA, I can confirm that as a result of questions that I put directly to senior figures, they stated that they will not be extending the 65 bus service to Baltinglass, or increasing the frequency of buses on the route. This is deeply disappointing, particularly as they further stated that any changes to the service would only be considered as part of a network review, which will look at all routes, scheduled to take place at the end of 2025, over a year and a half away. “Even if we are successful and get the changes to the 65 bus route agreed, it would take until 2026 at the earliest before any changes would be introduced. As someone who has been campaigning for a long time for improvements to public transport in West Wicklow, I am acutely aware of the impact that the service deficit has on communities. The population of Blessington is exploding, and the current level of service is wholly inadequate to meet the needs of this growing

community. Not to mention the complete disregard for the needs of commuters in West Wicklow who are being left to fend for themselves. “The current levels of service are simply not acceptable. A bus service every two hours simply isn’t sufficient. The people of Baltinglass and Blessington need a service that is both regular and reliable. This government in conjunction with the Green Party, and its ideologically driven leader Eamon Ryan, who is also the Minister for Transport

continue to refuse to invest in the N81 upgrade scheme, yet they are content to preside over a totally inadequate public transport service. What we need is a fit for purpose public transport service, designed to meet the needs of our local communities.”

Local Sinn Féin representative Connor Byrne, who is contesting the local elections for the party on June 7th, in the Baltinglass electoral area said: “The information that my party colleague John Brady TD was able to garner from the NTA is very disappointing. West

Wicklow has been traditionally grossly underserved by public transport, and that it may take over two years before we have any hope whatsoever of seeing any improvement is simply good enough. Particularly as even at that we have no guarantees that a decision will be made to improve local services. This Government’s disregard for the needs of our community in West Wicklow has gone on long enough. We need to see a public transport system in Wicklow that is fit for purpose.”



West Wicklow Sinn Féin representative Connor Byrne

‘Wicklow’s coastal communities need a local link bus’

Last week, Wicklow TD Jennifer Whitmore again called for a Coastal Local Link Bus in the county. Deputy Whitmore has put a Parliamentary Question to the Minister for Transport asking for an update on the long-awaited delivery of a coastal local link bus to serve towns and villages from Arklow to Greystones, which would include Brittas Bay, Magheramore, Wicklow Town, Newcastle and Kilcoole.



Jennifer Whitmore TD

Deputy Whitmore has been raising the need for this service for many years. Despite positive overtures from the NTA and the Minister for Transport in the past, there has been no delivery. Speaking last week, Deputy Whitmore said: "I raise this matter almost annually. Every year, we see evidence of a glaring need for a local link bus along the east coast of Co. Wicklow, yet the government fails to provide one. The Minister for Transport must progress this before the beginning of the busy summer season in Wicklow. "Our beaches in Wicklow are fantastic amenities visited by

locals and tourists in their droves all year round. The transport infrastructure is inadequate to cater to the many people flocking to our coasts on the weekends. Every year, this leads to massive traffic congestion, a diversion of Garda traffic management resources, roads turning into car parks, and a block in access to emergency services. This is unsustainable and could be prevented if the Minister and the National Transport Authority were proactive about regional bus services.

"If nothing is done to address the lack of transport infrastructure on Wicklow's coastline, the yearly pattern of traffic congestion will continue.

homes, and emergency services will not be able to reach people to provide urgent care in the area." Deputy Whitmore went on to say: "I am repeating my call for a coastal Local Link bus route like the one in Wexford to Curracloe in the first instance, to be set up from Arklow to Greystones, taking in stops along the route to include the popular

beaches like Brittas Bay and Magheramore. Bus drivers usually assigned to school routes could be redeployed for the summer months on the local link. A local link for the area will address our over-dependency on cars, which makes sense. "People would be better able to access public transport, therefore getting them out of their cars, locals would have

the peace of using the roads to and from their homes, and emergency services would have unimpeded access to provide care. If Wexford can get funding for such a service, then questions need to be asked about why Wicklow cannot get a similar service, especially as Brittas Bay is a much more popular beach than Curracloe," concluded Deputy Whitmore.

Deputy Whitmore went on to say: "I am repeating my call for a coastal Local Link bus route like the one in Wexford to Curracloe in the first instance, to be set up from Arklow to Greystones, taking in stops along the route to include the popular

homes, and emergency services will not be able to reach people to provide urgent care in the area." Deputy Whitmore went on to say: "I am repeating my call for a coastal Local Link bus route like the one in Wexford to Curracloe in the first instance, to be set up from Arklow to Greystones, taking in stops along the route to include the popular

‘Planned rail works will leave Bray isolated’


Irish Rail should postpone planned rail works over the May Bank Holiday Weekend according to Social Democrats Local Election candidate Aaron McAllorum.



Social Democrats' local Bray candidate Aaron McAllorum.

Irish Rail are set to cease rail links for Bray, Greystones and South Dublin over the holiday weekend despite the late addition of a Champions Cup rugby semi-final in Croke Park between Leinster and Northampton.

Calling on Irish Rail to postpone works Mr McAllorum said: "I have called the timing Irish Rail's rail improvement works into question repeatedly. Bray Jazz Festival takes place over the May weekend and I feel inbound visitors and town businesses will be at a loss without the rail connection on what should be a very busy time. "The addition of a huge rugby match in Dublin to the social diary is compounding the decision by Irish Rail to close the line. The train from Bray/Greystones and South Dublin to Croker is the most obvious direct mode to get to the match, leave the car at home we are always told - Irish Rail are pushing people to use private cars to get to Bray for music and to get to/from Dublin for the match. "Irish Rail need to look at the passenger data and identify the least busy periods and do the works around that. Irish Rail really need to engage meaningfully with stakeholders and rail users."



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Ferris launches re-election campaign

Bray Labour Councillor Anne Ferris held the launch of her re-election campaign on Wednesday, 17th April in the Promenade on Bray Seafront. A large group of family and friends as well as Labour Party members attended the launch, along with guest of honour TD and former Labour Leader, Alan Kelly.



Cllr. Paul O'Brien travelled that evening from his base in Wicklow Town to Bray to support his Bray colleague and expressed his hopes that they would both be members of the new Council in Wicklow after June 7th.

Deputy Alan Kelly told the gathering that he had a deep affection for Anne and was delighted to visit her hometown of Bray to lend his support. He recounted memories of their time working together in Dáil Éireann and commented that both he and Anne were always there for each other during the difficult days. He also commended Anne for all the work she had done, and continues to do, for equality and the inclusion of women, and especially her commitment and support for women who had been incarcerated in Magdalen Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes.

Cllr. Ferris told her supporters that if re-elected she would continue to be the voice for the inclusion of women and for all families and people who were struggling to survive. Cllr Ferris said her priorities are housing for all, more Community Gardai on our streets to combat anti-social behaviour, and a thorough review of traffic management in Bray. She thanked all those who attended her election launch for their love and support and said she hoped to make them all proud.



Cllr Ferris with Cllr Paul O'Brien and Deputy Alan Kelly

Meet the local election candidates from your area

Co Wicklow PPN and the Wicklow Older People's Council is inviting communities to Meet the Candidate events which will be held online during the month of May. There are over 55 candidates running in the Local Elections in Co Wicklow this June. These candidates are seeking positions that could make a real difference in our communities.

Therefore, Co Wicklow PPN and Wicklow Older People's Council is inviting the candidates to meetings to give our community groups the opportunity to meet the people that

could have an influence on the policies and proposals that will have a direct impact on their lives.

Wicklow PPN is a network of over 450 community groups cov-

ering the five Municipal Districts of Co Wicklow. One of the functions of the PPN is to promote and encourage citizen engagement in local plans, policies and decision-making

and ensure that community voices are heard. Wicklow Older People's Council provides a strong and guiding influence on age-friendly local development.

Meet the Candidate events will run online on Tuesday and Thursday evenings beg-

inning Tuesday 7th May with a meeting with the Arklow Municipal District candidates followed by meetings for the Baltinglass, Bray East, Bray West, and Greystones Municipal Districts. The series will end with a meeting for Wicklow Municipal District candidates on Thursday 23rd May.

Any candidates running in this year's local elections that would like to participate in these meetings, and who have not been contacted so far, can get in touch with Wicklow PPN by emailing: info@countywicklowppn.ie



Wicklow PPN's 2019 Meet the Candidates event



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John McDonald with Fianna Fail Senator Pat Casey at the recent opening of Rathdrum Cancer Support's new premises at Gilbert's Row, Rathdrum.

Wicklow tops Ireland for electric vehicle uptake

County Wicklow has emerged as the frontrunner in the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in Ireland, with recent data from Cartell, the vehicle history and data specialists, highlighting its leading position.

In a significant milestone, Wicklow was the only county in Ireland to see EV sales surpass those of all other fuel types in 2023. A total of 904 new electric cars were registered in the county, capturing a 30.28% market share, and outperforming petrol, petrol-electric hybrids, non-plug-in hybrids, and diesel vehicles.

The preference for fully electric vehicles over plug-in petrol hybrids is evident, with only 180 sales of the lat-

ter in Wicklow in 2023. This indicates a readiness among the county's residents to fully embrace electric power, moving beyond the transitional option of plug-in hybrids prevalent in other areas.

Notably, electric vehicles dominated the sales charts in Wicklow last year, with the Tesla Model Y, Volkswagen ID.4, Hyundai Ioniq 5, and MG4 being among the top-selling models.

Wesley Littleford, Cartell's

Commercial Operations Manager, notes that while the Leinster region, particularly the counties surrounding Dublin, is showing a rapid adoption of EVs and hybrids, Wicklow distinguishes itself by its more substantial embrace of alternative powertrains. "It's heartening to observe the shift from early adopters to mainstream consumers in Wicklow, demonstrating a genuine enthusiasm for electric vehicles," he stated.

Cartell leverages its comprehensive vehicle intelligence data to track car buying trends across Ireland, offering insights into new car registration figures nationwide.



Kia's all-electric SUV, the EV9

Clean Coasts Roadshow event takes place in Arklow



The community came together in Co. Wicklow recently for the Clean Coasts Roadshow event at Arklow Library with Arklow Coastcare and Seal Rescue. Participants enjoyed an educational talk and Q&A session by the educational manager at Seal Rescue Ireland.

On Tuesday 26th of March, Clean Coasts hosted a community event in Arklow Library, County Wicklow as part of the annual Clean Coasts Roadshow series, warmly welcomed by the local community.

This year's Arklow Roadshow was organised in collaboration with Seal Rescue Ireland. Lauren, the educational manager at Seal Rescue, joined Clean Coasts in Arklow to host an educational talk and presentation about all things Seals. The event was a great success, highlighting the different types of Seals we find in Ireland, specifically on the East Coast. The presentation showcased the diverse seal species inhabiting Ireland's shores, emphasising their crucial role in marine ecosystems and the pressing threats they face, notably plastic pollution. Lauren's compelling display, featuring images and videos of rehabilitated seals, underscored Seal Rescue's impactful contributions to seal rehabilitation, who have helped these animals regain full health and strength before returning

them to the coast.

The event was well attended with representation from Arklow Coastcare, Arklow Tidy Towns and the Arklow Sea Scouts, all of whom have done marvellous work in the past and present to create a healthy marine environment for Seals to thrive along the Wicklow coast.

The Clean Coasts Roadshow is a series of informative talks and workshops tailored for coastal communities across Ireland, taking place between January and May each year. This initiative brings together individuals interested in protecting their local beaches, seas, and marine environments.

The Roadshow events cover a range of topics, including biodiversity, dune systems, marine litter, wildlife, sustainable developments, and the work of local

groups and organizations. These events also serve as a platform for community groups to discuss practical matters, such as building volunteer capacity, attracting new members, and sharing responsibilities. Additionally, Clean Coasts Development officers explain various funding opportunities at a national and regional level, including the Clean Coasts grant scheme for 2024.

In 2023, Clean Coasts celebrated its 20th anniversary, marking two decades of collaboration with communities to protect Ireland's waterways, coastline, seas, ocean, and marine life. The Clean Coasts Roadshow in 2024 is an special opportunity to connect with and appreciate the communities and volunteers who have contributed to Clean Coasts' growth and success.

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SSE Renewables' community projects highlighted as new round of Sponsorship Fund opens

SSE Renewables is continuing its support for a wide variety of projects under the Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund. Over 70 groups have already benefitted since the introduction of the voluntary fund. A new funding round opened in April with evaluations to be undertaken on a quarterly basis during the new 2024/25 financial year.

The fund provides opportunities for local communities close to the Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 development site to benefit from SSE Renewables' commitment and social value proposition to support local communities close to its Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 development site.

Arklow RNLI's Lifeboat Operations Manager John Bermingham, commented on the support received through the Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund saying: "Arklow RNLI has benefitted under the SSE Renewables Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Fund over past years, and we value the positive relationship built up with SSE Renewables as a prospective near neighbour to our lifeboat station. Our recent application under the Sponsorship Fund has enabled three members of the Arklow crew to participate in dedicated professional development training so we can continue to ensure that our volunteer crew are ably and appropriately upskilled to continue to provide the vital lifesaving service offered by Arklow Lifeboat Station".

Both Arklow and Wicklow Tennis Clubs benefited under the Sponsorship Fund. An

Automated External Defibrillator (AED) was installed at Arklow Tennis Club, Coolgreaney Road. The club selected an AED which could be used without formal advance training. Club President Kay Hickey said: "As an expanding community club with a current membership of just over 200, we're very grateful to SSE Renewables for its support in enabling the club to purchase an AED. There is great comfort for both club members and those from further afield to know that the club has a defibrillator on hand should it ever be needed".

Wicklow Tennis Club successfully applied under the Fund to drive its energy efficiency and sustainability plan. Tom McConnell, Wicklow Tennis Club, said: "Our ambition is to grow as a flagship club for sustainability. The funding received from SSE Renewables gave us a head start in a phased transition towards deploying renewable energy power sources to drive energy efficiency and reduce our club's carbon footprint".

The Sponsorship Fund also supported initiatives in North Wexford including co-funding with Wexford County Council to support the installation

of a replica winch and commemorative plaque at Ballymoney South Beach, and planting upgrades at the Ballymoney Crossroads.

Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager, SSE Renewables said: "At SSE Renewables we are proud to walk the talk. We've demonstrated our commitment to supporting communities close to our Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 development site with over €500,000 already provided through our Sponsorship and Fisheries Funds.

Our Sponsorship Fund has supported a wide variety of initiatives and projects under key themes such as marine/water-based activities, environmental and social sustainability initiatives, and energy efficiency projects. We've supported local education and training initiatives and provided community, voluntary and sporting groups with assistance to drive forward meaningful initiatives on the front line of local communities.

As summer approaches, there are several community initiatives under consideration, in addition to the upcoming prestigious SSE Renewables Round Ireland Yacht Race 2024 hosted in partnership with



SSE Renewables Community Engagement Manager Deirdre Keogh with members of the Arklow Lifeboat crew and volunteer team.

Wicklow Sailing Club. Through our Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund, we endeavour to support local groups as best we can, recognising the immense contribution made by groups and individuals actively working in local communities".

For details on the SSE Renewables Arklow Bank 2 Sponsorship Fund contact Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager by phone 087 1822587 or email deirdre.keogh@sse.com



Members of the Ballymoney Kildermot Community Group at the unveiling of a plaque at the Ballymoney winch.



SSE Renewables Community Engagement Manager Deirdre Keogh with Tom McConnell and Ella Tindale at Wicklow Tennis Club



SSE Renewables Community Engagement Manager Deirdre Keogh with Arklow Lawn Tennis Club's Kay Dickson and Jason O'Hara, at the club following an installation of an AED defibrillator

Taoiseach announces increase in SENOs for Wicklow

An Taoiseach Simon Harris has been campaigning for additional supports for Special Education provisions in Wicklow. The Taoiseach can now confirm that an extra Special Educate Needs Organisers (SENO) is set start working in the Wicklow area to support parents, students and schools.

Speaking last Wednesday, An Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "I am delighted to confirm that after months of campaigning some progress is finally coming Wicklow's way regard-

ing Special Education provision. I am delighted to confirm that an additional Special Education Needs Organiser is now set to work in County Wicklow.

"I have been in contact with a number of parents and schools regarding the supports available for students with additional needs in the West Wicklow area especially. I made contact with John Kearney, the Chief Executive Officer for Special Education, requesting urgent action to address the lack of supports. SENOs offer vital supports to students and families. This extra SENO will help

even more families manage their child's education and ensure that they get the best start in life.

"I want to ensure that these supports are made available all across County Wicklow and I will continue to tirelessly campaign for this. As always I will be sure to keep you all updated and as Taoiseach I will continue to push for extra investment in educational supports.



An Taoiseach Simon Harris

New Learning Day Service launched in Wicklow

It's celebration time for a group of young adult students with a severe to profound intellectual disability who are the first to enrol at an innovative new learning Day Service called Cali - Care and Learn Ireland.



Alex Kinme-Coyle, Annette Kinne, Stephanie Soriano, Carol Bellamy, and Emir Kavanagh

This learning Day Service has just officially opened its doors here in County Wicklow, but has been years in the planning by a group of parents, encouraged by teachers at St Catherine's Special School who had taught these students and knew their potential to continue to learn.

"Until now these learners would have been placed in a traditional care focused Day Service, but without access to formal learning programmes structured to their specific level many stagnated, regressed and lost skills learned over the years in school," explained Cali manager and interim tutor, Kristin Keogh.

"Cali provides 3 critical pillars of support for these students - Learning, Care and Therapy. These young adults some of whom also have physical disabilities and medical issues need care and therapy such as physiotherapy, speech and language, occupational therapy and behavioural supports in order to create an environment where they can maximise their learning."

Students also benefit hugely from one-to-one facilitator support which is the ideal standard. This maximises the young person's ability to actively engage in activities rather than being spectators on the sidelines.

"This learning Day Service for young adults with severe to profound disabilities is to our knowledge the first of its kind in Ireland and it is Cali's intention to roll this service out nationwide," Ms Keogh said.

"It has been much needed and it is fantastic that it is now a reality here in County Wicklow. The students are immersed in a wide variety of subjects including communication skills, numeracy, literacy and science. In addition, they also enjoy activities in the community where layered 'soft learning' reinforces content they have covered in class. They love the stimulating and fun way Cali approaches learning."



Abbey Ramsey, Olive Moroney, Richard Wareham, Mags Connors, Annette Kinne, Alex Kinme-Coyle, Stephanie Soriano, Carol Bellamy, James Kavanagh, Emir Kavanagh

Wicklow student wins 3rd place at the 2024 National Accounting Competition

CPA Ireland and gamification application Quitch have announced the winners of the 2024 National Accounting Competition. For the second year running first-place went to Technological University of the Shannon student Chenlu Lin. Wicklow student Lia Wallace from Rathnew, a student from South East Technological University Carlow, won 3rd place at the competition.

Now in its third year the competition was entered by over 400 students from first- to final-year in accounting and business as well as master's, and post-graduate students and Accounting Technician Ireland students from 22 colleges across Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Each week, a range of theory-based accounting questions were released to participants on the Quitch app. Participants scored points for correctly answering questions and for how quickly they answered the questions. Participants could monitor their progress under their avatar name and see their score in real time leaderboard along with the other participants.

Tracy Byrne, Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Accounting Programme Director said "I am absolutely delighted to see Lia Wallace, South East Technological University (SETU) Carlow student, win third place in the 2024 CPA National Accounting Competition. Lia is a final year student in the BBS (Hons) in Accounting and Finance programme. She is a very talented young person, and she will no doubt enjoy an exciting and successful career in the accounting and finance field."



Lia Wallace

17 more Wicklow schools included in Hot Meals Programme

The rollout of Hot School Meals to additional 900 Primary Schools, including 17 Wicklow Primary Schools, was announced last week. An Taoiseach Simon Harris TD has the ambition to have all children receiving Hot School Meals by 2025.

Speaking last week, Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "Making sure every child receives Hot School Meals is a top priority of mine. I am so proud of this programme. It is one of the things that is mentioned to me most as I visit communities across the country. I am delighted that an extra 17 Primary Schools in my own County are set to receive Hot School Meals.

"We launched Hot School Meals as a pilot 5-years ago and it has seen huge demand ever since. Today's expansion to an additional 150,000 children means that over 316,000 children can now receive a nutritious, hot meal during their school day.

"To the schools who have not yet signed up to this successful programme, I want them to know Minister for Social Protection Heather Humphreys is opening a new round of Expressions of Interest to allow for a further expansion of the programme."

Taoiseach Simon Harris concluded:

"As Taoiseach I will focus on helping families in County Wicklow and across the country. Today's announcement is just one of the ways I am planning to do this."

Expanding the Hot School Meals Programme has been an issue that Green Party TD Steven Matthews has worked extensively on with the Department of Social Protection since being elected in 2020. In addition, any remaining primary schools who have not yet joined the scheme can now express an interest to participate in the scheme from September.

Speaking after last week's announcement, Deputy Matthews said: "When visiting schools, this issue is one that is constantly raised with me by parents, principals, and teachers. This is hugely positive news for families in these schools. The provision of hot meals to children is a hugely worthwhile investment in their wellbeing and development.

"This is particularly welcome at a time when food prices are at such a high level. The provision of school meals is a key intervention to tackle educational disadvantage and assist those children to achieve their full potential. The simple reality is, if children are hungry in classrooms, they can't concentrate, and the negative knock-on impact has been shown in countless studies.

"One thing I have consistently raised with the Ministers for Social Protection and Education is the need to avoid excess waste as part of the national rollout. I believe that any vendors tendering for these contracts to provide hot school meals should include how they propose to reduce the use of single use plastic and ensure that food waste is minimised.

"I have worked with a series of schools previously that had been included in this programme in earlier rounds to ensure that funding was allocated as quickly as possible and



Taoiseach Simon Harris and Minister for Social Protection Heather Humphreys at the launch of the expansion of the Hot School Meals Programme at St. Thomas Junior National School in Lucan.

that any other teething issues were resolved. In response to this week's announcement, I have written to every school that has been included in this round of funding to offer my assistance to ensure that the provision of this service runs as smoothly as possible."

The list of Schools in Wicklow are: Lacken Mxd N S, Moin An Bhealagh N S, Delgany NS, Glebe Ns, Caoimhin Naofa NS, Donard NS, Hollywood NS, Coolfancy NS, Padraig Naofa N S, S N Naomh Brid, Stratford Lodge Ns, St Francis NS, Gaelscoil An Inbhir Mhoir, S N Mhuire Senior School, Wicklow

Educate Together NS, Gaelscoil Na Lochanna, and Woodstock Educate Together National School.

The Hot School Meals Programme was introduced in 2019 as a small pilot of 30 schools. Over 2,000 Primary Schools are now eligible to receive a Hot Meal.

Last year, Government signalled its intention to roll out the Hot School Meals Programme to all Primary Schools.

As part of this significant expansion plan, all remaining Primary Schools were contacted and requested to submit an expression of interest form if their school is interested

in commencing the provision of Hot Meals. Applications for the Hot School Meals Programme were received from some 900 Primary Schools in respect of 150,000 children and these schools will be as of today participating in the Hot School Meals Programme.

The Department of Social Protection provides the funding to schools for the School Meals Programme, and it is the responsibility of each school to choose their supplier in an open, fair and transparent manner in accordance with national legislation and EU directives on procurement.

Petition calls for safe access to Wicklow ETNS

A petition has been started by concerned parents of children attending Wicklow Educate Together National School in Wicklow Town calling for a safe route across the Hawkstown Road. The petition, started by parent Stephanie Gavin and being supported by local election Social Democrats candidate Danny Alvey, has already collected over 100 signatures.

The road in front of the national school is in a 60km/h zone and is one of the main commuter routes for those exiting and entering the town. In August 2023, Wicklow County Council introduced

periodic 30km/h speed limits outside every one of the 102 schools in the county - the first local authority in the country to introduce such a measure. There is now electrified signage in front of

Wicklow Educate Together National School that switches on during school drop-off and pick-up times to make motorists aware of these changes.

However, a number of parents who walk with

their children from estates in the Marlton end of the Hawkstown Road have reported motorists not paying attention to these new speed limits and not slowing down for parents and children trying to

cross the road here.

"As a parent with a child attending the Educate Together National School, I have personally experienced several near misses while trying to cross the Hawkstown Road," said petition organiser Stephanie Gavin. "I am not alone in this experience, many other families

have shared similar stories of danger and fear. This road has become an accident waiting to happen. The Hawkstown Road is heavily trafficked, making it particularly dangerous for young students and their families who need to cross it daily. The absence of an adequate light controlled pedestrian crossing near our school poses significant risks to our children's safety. In addition a crossing guard employed at school drop off and

collection times would further improve road safety."

"Safe access so parents and children can walk to their local school in the morning is essential," added local election candidate for the Social Democrats Danny Alvey. "It reduces the number of cars on the road and is much better for children's physical and mental health. However I've spoken to a number of parents who walk from the Marlton estates, including

Stephanie, and its clear the lack of a pedestrian crossing or other safe route across this section of the road in the morning has led to a number of near misses! I have contacted the Council to try look for resolutions to this issue before an accident happens."

The petition can be viewed and signed at www.change.org/p/install-a-pedestrian-crossing-on-hawkstown-road-for-educate-together-national-school



Teresa Doyle Tinahealy, Wicklow with Laura O'Hara, Tallaght, Dublin who received a BSc in Nursing during the Spring Graduation Ceremony in the DCU Campus. Pic: Kyran O'Brien



Social Democrats candidate Danny Alvey with Stephanie Gavin

Funding to protect archaeological monuments

Minister of State for Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan TD, has announced that over €7.4 million will be awarded to 140 projects around the country through the 2024 Community Monuments Fund to help owners and custodians of archaeological monuments to safeguard them into the future.

The total amount allocated to Wicklow is €202,247.02. This is for: Wicklow Kilmacanogue Church and Graveyard - €30,000; St Kevin's Church, Hollywood - €29,932.05; Wicklow Kilranelagh Graveyard - €9,588.47; Wicklow Mullinacuff Church - €90,678.50; Drumgoff Barracks - €12,159.

The aim is to encourage

access to monuments and improve their presentation and also to build their resilience to help them withstand the effects of climate change.

An Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "I am delighted that six projects across the county will be supported under this year's Community Monuments Fund. Since its inception in 2020, this fund has

become a lifeline for the protection of Ireland's irreplaceable archaeological heritage by revitalising historic monuments.

"Through this, it is enabling valuable investment in the wider heritage sector, creating thousands of hours of employment for specialist craftspeople and traditional skills practitioners, as well as supporting the achievement of

national commitments under Heritage Ireland 2030 and the Climate Adaptation Plan for Built and Archaeological Heritage. I'd like to congratulate the successful applicants and wish them the very best of luck in with their projects this year."

Discussing the funding, Green Party TD Steven Matthews said: "The Community Monuments Fund invests essential capital in our valuable archaeological heritage and helps to safeguard them into the future. This funding is vital not only for those involved in the various societies and groups across Wicklow who work to preserve our historical heritage but for locals and visitors alike who enjoy visiting and walking around these areas of huge historic importance. There is a good geographical spread in this funding too which I know has been raised as a concern in years gone by.

"I am particularly delighted to see funding go to St. Kevin's Church in Hollywood. I have met with a local tidy town's group previously at this beautiful cultural heritage



Deputy Steven Matthews at St Kevin's Church

'When our plane hit the mountain'

Roundwood & District Historical, Folklore & Archaeological Society, present a local history talk in the Parish Hall this week on Tuesday 23rd April at 8pm.

In his talk, Bill Nelson will describe events surrounding the 12th August 1946 accident when a plane on its way from Paris Le Bourget to Dublin airport crashed with five crew and 21 passengers on board.

The passengers were French Girl guides invited by their Irish counterparts to relieve their wartime tribulations. Due to a miracle and several lucky episodes, all the occupants survived. This is a great story of resilience, perseverance, and the will to survive.

A young woman named Chantal de Vitry decided to leave the aircraft, as she wasn't injured, to raise the alarm and a huge rescue operation was launched. However, nobody knew the exact location of the crash site. So commenced a huge effort by the police, mountain rescue, the army and local residents who knew the mountains well.



Junkers 52 crashed in the Dublin / Wicklow mountains



Africa Day in Wicklow

Call for participants, entertainers, collaborators and volunteers

Africa Day Wicklow is returning this May on the 18th from 12-5pm and is set to be bigger and better than ever! The flagship event will be held in Greystones at Burnaby Park (opposite the train station).

African Irish Society of Wicklow is working with local authorities and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to bring you this free, family friendly

event that is filled with entertainment, crafts, games, cultural displays, and more. Organisers are extending an invitation to participants, performers, partners, and volunteers to join us in

the festivities on this day. Do not hesitate to reach out to Susan Ngereso Mc Darby or Anne Waithira Burke at 0892695123, or via email at aiswgroup@gmail.com.

site regarding the need to invest in the preservation and upkeep of the church and the surrounding grounds. I know that the €30,000 announced as part of this fund will go towards this work and I look forward to engaging

further with the community in Hollywood on this project.

"All the projects that have been awarded funding are extremely worthwhile investments in our shared heritage, but I know that not all of Wicklow County

Council's project applications were fully funded. I look forward to engaging with the area managers in the council and the local heritage groups involved in the coming months with the hope that they can be considered under future

funding allocations. "We should be extremely proud of our heritage sites, not only the ones that have received funding this week but all sites of historic significance across Wicklow," concluded Deputy Matthews.

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Council announces new short film award scheme

Screen Wicklow and Wicklow Arts Office have announced a new Wicklow Short Film Award for 2024, which was launched at the Clermont Screen Hub at Wicklow County Campus by Actor, Broadcaster and Author Laura Whitmore earlier this month.



Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Laura Whitmore (Actor, Broadcaster and Author), Jade Travers (National Talent Academy Film & TV Crew East Manager), Leonora Earls (Director of Services: Planning, Economic & Rural Development, Wicklow County Council), Jenny Sherwin (Arts Officer & Creative Ireland Coordinator, Wicklow County Council), Jackie Carroll (Senior Executive Officer: Climate, Environment, Recreation and Amenity, Wicklow County Council), John Powderly (Senior Enterprise Development Officer, Film Commissioner, Wicklow County Council), Lisa McMahon (Assistant Staff Officer, Screen Wicklow, Wicklow County Council) and Marlena Murphy (Creative Communities Engagement Officer / Creative Ireland) at the launch of a new Film Award

The purpose of the award is to support Wicklow filmmakers to make high-quality, original films in the county. Narrative films, documentary, digital film and animation are all eligible to apply. The Wicklow Short Film Award is funded by Wicklow County Council and Creative Ireland, and supported also by Clermont Screen Hub.

For 2024, there will be a maximum of 2 grants of up to €15,000 each for the production of a short film or documentary. Films should be approximately 10-15 minutes in duration, although animation projects may be shorter. The total fund therefore available for award in 2024 is €30,000.

An online Information session will be held on Thursday 18th April between 12.30pm and 2pm, where applicants can ask questions about the award, and seek clarifications about the application process.

Questions and enquiries about the Wicklow Short Film Award may be directed to filmaward@wicklowcoco.ie and an FAQ document will be published online. The closing date for applications is Friday 24th May at 4pm.

This is a film production award, and scripts must be full developed prior to applying, it cannot be used to develop scripts



Lisa McMahon (Assistant Staff Officer, Screen Wicklow, Wicklow County Council), Laura Whitmore (Actor, Broadcaster and Author) and John Powderly (Senior Enterprise Development Officer, Film Commissioner, Wicklow County Council) at the launch of a new Film Award

or ideas, and films must be ready to go into production within two months of funding being awarded. Films must be shot in County Wicklow.

We are seeking applicants who have a track record of filmmaking, and who have already built a portfolio of high-quality, creative and original film. Applicants may apply individually but priority will be given to applicants who have already assembled a core creative team (including writer, director and producer).

Wicklow County Council has a strong history of supporting the development of the film industry in the county, and is proud to be host to a burgeoning professional commercial film sector. It is our intention that making these two awards will have a significant impact on two film makers and their progression in the film industry.

Cathaoirleach Aoife Flynn Kennedy said that 'I was pleased to attend the

launch of the Award Scheme with Laura Whitmore at Clermont Wicklow County Campus and home to the Screen Hub. This award will undoubtedly lead to the creative production of strong new film work in the county which otherwise may not have an opportunity or investment to be produced.'

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council stated that 'after much research on the landscape of both local and national film awards in Ireland by the Council staff, I am pleased that we have been able to craft this particular award to suit the needs of the film sector in the county and to add to the canon of supports offered by Wicklow County Council in this area of work.'

Please note that successful applicants must have a registered production company in order to draw down the funding, and appropriate insurance must

be in place prior to the commencement of filming. In collaboration with Clermont Screen Hub, successful applicants will also receive additional supports including access to co-working space.

Screen Wicklow will also assist grant recipients with locations, permits and where possible, Wicklow Arts Office and Screen Wicklow will seek to facilitate screening opportunities for the two successfully funded films.

The primary applicant must be native to County Wicklow or residing in County Wicklow for the past three consecutive years. For all further eligibility criteria and funding guidelines please see <https://www.wicklow.ie/Business/Film>

Shortlisted applicants must be available to attend an interview/pitching session on 13th and 14th June 2024. Specific dates and times will be communicated when applicants have been shortlisted.

Wicklow photographers urged to 'Reach for the Stars'

'Reach for the Stars', the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies' (DIAS) astrophotography competition has returned for its fourth year running and is calling on Wicklow's budding astrophotographers to submit their images.

This year the competition has added a new category, the 'Night Sky in Your Hand', a mobile phone category to encourage more people to get involved.

The competition, which opened for entries this week, is seeking the best astro-photographs taken in Ireland over the period 28th April 2023 to 10th May 2024. It is calling for submissions under five distinct categories:

1. Night Sky in Your Hand: Images taken with only a smartphone, and without telescopes, of an astronomical scene.
2. Out of this World - Planetary: Images of the planets, sun and moon.
3. Out of this World - Deep Sky: Images of celestial objects that exist outside our solar system such as nebulae, star clusters, and galaxies.
4. Back on Earth - Landscape: Images that depict a feature of astronomical interest as a prominent feature and elements such as nature, land or water.
5. Back on Earth - Landmark: Images that depict a feature of astronomical interest as a prominent feature and elements such as cityscapes, buildings, houses, historical structures or monuments.

Entrants may submit up to two images per category to the competition. The deadline for entries is 5pm on Friday, 10th May 2024.

All entries to the competition will be screened by a shortlisting panel to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria. The shortlisted images in each category will then go forward for consideration by the judging panel and for an online public vote.

Entries to the 'Reach for the Stars' competition will be judged by Brenda Fitzsimons, Picture Editor, The Irish Times; Michael McCreary, President, Irish Astronomical Society; Peter Gallagher, Senior Professor and Head of Astronomy and Astrophysics at DIAS and Niamh Breathnach, Senior Director, Alice Public Relations.

Further information, including the competition guidelines and entry form, is available at www.reachforthestars.ie.



Packed programme for West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival

Over 25 musicians, some returning and others making their Irish debuts, will arrive in West Wicklow this May for the return of the West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival. From May 15th to 19th, the festival will host a scintillating series of chamber music concerts, school workshops, masterclasses and family events.

With nine concerts and various education events, the 2024 May Festival provides a wide array of opportunities for audiences to experience chamber music and enjoy a diverse range of performances by renowned chamber ensembles and soloists.

Opening this year's festival on Wednesday 15th May, acclaimed for her 'technical brilliance', is Korean violinist Hyeoon Park, the youngest ever winner of the prestigious ARD International Music Competition in Munich, who will be joined by French horn player Ben Goldscheider and the Festival's Artistic Director, pianist Fiachra Garvey. These three phenomenal artists will combine to bring a programme infused with rich and luxurious romantic duos by Clara and Robert Schumann, a lesser-known gem by Edith Borroff and horn trios by Huw Watkins and Brahms. Passing on their expertise to the next generation, Hyeoon Park and Ben Goldscheider will travel to Dublin to give two masterclasses at the National Concert Hall (NCH) and the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) on Thursday morning. Park will work with students from the RIAM String Faculty, and French Horn students from music institutions

around the country will have the opportunity to work with Goldscheider in his open class at the NCH.

Making their Irish debut on Thursday 16th May are award-winning Korean violinist Inmo Yang, first prize-winner of the eminent Sibelius Violin Competition, and

from Carnegie Hall to the Berliner Philharmonie.

Regarded as one of the most exceptional piano trios of today, the festival welcomes The Sitkovetsky Trio on Friday 17th May. The trio will present a powerful, yet beautiful programme that includes arguably the greatest piano trio ever

gramme featuring two of J.S. Bach's most loved cello Suites, No.2 in D minor and No.3 in C major, at 10pm on Friday 17th May, under the moonlit Russborough skies!

Known for their highly energetic performances, Quatuor Arod (String Quartet), is widely regard-

Stars for May 2024 will be Maria O'Dea (bassoon) and Luke Lally Maguire (piano). Both students at the prestigious Guildhall School of Music in London, the duo are a fine example of the wealth of emerging talent Ireland has to offer. Audiences will be treated to favourites for this combination from Grovlez and Hindemith, a transcription of Schumann's Fantasiestucke Op.73, and ending with the jazzy inflections of Andre Previn's bassoon sonata. This concert will also feature the winning work from the festival's Composition Competition in association with the Contemporary Music Centre. This includes the 'Composer's Voice Interview' with the chosen composer giving the audience a unique opportunity to hear the inner workings of someone at the early stages of their compositional career.

Described by the Guardian Newspaper as being 'blessed with a powerful, pitch-perfect voice', American-born icon Judi Jackson, together with her jazz ensemble, will perform songs inspired by some of the jazz greats, such as Nina Simone, Billy Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald, as well as her own original compositions, in a soulful and exhilarating performance on Saturday



Quatuor Arod (String Quartet), is widely regarded as one of the world's premier chamber music ensembles

French pianist Yannick Rafalimanana. They will join forces for an exquisite programme of baroque and classical sonatas by C.P.E. Bach and Mozart, the sumptuous Nocturne et Cortège by Lili Boulanger, the rarely heard Fantasy Op.131 by Schumann, culminating in the mighty Violin Sonata in A major by Franck. The duo regularly performs in some of the world's leading venues

composed, the symphonic Piano Trio in A minor by Tchaikovsky, as well as formidable trios by Cecile Chaminade and Irish composer Sam Perkin's 'Freakshow' (inspired by the Fron-Goch interment camp).

A 'Late Evening Concert' will be performed by Irish cellist, Ailbhe McDonagh. Ailbhe, who has just released her album Bach: It's a Cello Thing, will perform a pro-

gramme featuring two of J.S. Bach's most loved cello Suites, No.2 in D minor and No.3 in C major, at 10pm on Friday 17th May, under the moonlit Russborough skies!

The festival's Rising



French pianist Yannick Rafalimanana

18th May at 8pm at the Tramway Theatre, Blessington.

The final day of the festival will bring our ever-popular Family Concert to the Tramway Theatre, Blessington. Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf will be narrated by award-winning Irish actor Jos Vantylar, who is renowned for his work in classical theatre. Jos will be joined by members of the Irish Chamber Orchestra to bring this timeless family-friendly tale to life!

Bringing the May festival to a close, two of Ireland's finest singers, superstar soprano Claudia Boyle and honorary Irish baritone Gyula Nagy will

join our Artistic Director, pianist Fiachra Garvey, for a captivating concert packed with opera arias and duets by Mozart (Marriage of Figaro & Don Giovanni), Verdi (Rigoletto) and Bizet (Les Pecheurs de Perles), to name a few, as well as music inspired by folk songs from Ireland and Hungary. The festival finale will take place at St Mary's Church, Blessington on May 19th at 3:30pm.

Commenting on this year's festival, Artistic Director, Fiachra Garvey said, "As the cultural landscape of West Wicklow continues to flourish, music enthusiasts and aficionados alike will be

thrilled to hear about the launch of the 2024 May edition of the West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival. This festival promises to be a celebration of chamber music at its finest, featuring world-class performances in intimate and enchanting settings."

He added, "With a carefully curated programme, showcasing a diverse range of musicians and genres, from classical to contemporary, the festival will offer something for every musical palate."

Tickets for the West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival are now on sale from www.westwicklowfestival.com.

Greystones Vocal Academy Student Showcase

Whale Theatre, Sunday 28th April, 2pm (doors 1.30pm). Tickets €16/€12 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

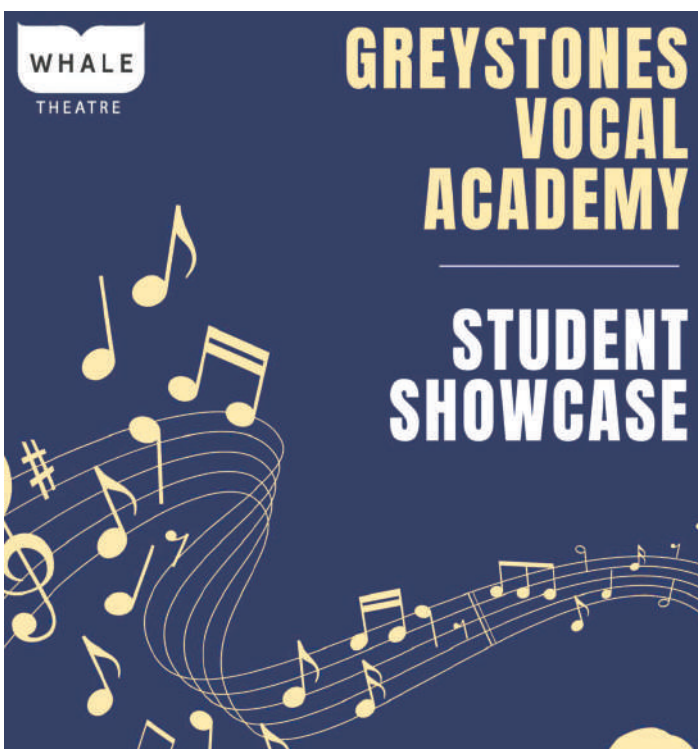
Join students from Greystones Vocal Academy for a showcase end-of-year student concert. Talented young local singers will perform a variety of songs from pop and rock to musicals, jazz and the classics.

A wonderful treat on a Sunday afternoon and a chance to hear upcoming stars of the future! Plus some very special guests will be putting in an appearance too...

Accompanied by Justin McCann on piano.

Offering excellent vocal tuition for everyone, Greystones Vocal Academy was founded by local singer and vocal coach, Dara MacMahon, and helps each student achieve their full singing potential.

Please note: Concession tickets are available for children under the age of 18 only



Mute the TV at Whale Theatre

Saturday 27th April 2024 @ 8pm (doors 7pm). Tickets €15 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

Mute The TV return to The Whale Theatre on Saturday, April 27th following their sold out raucous debut on October 6th, 2023.

The band, made up of brothers Elliot and Dylan Crampton from Greystones were blown away by the turnout and support at their first gig entitled Turn Up The Stereo, Mute The TV and the interest in when their next show would be. So, they're thrilled to be doing it all again on April 27th. Entwining laughter, storytelling, family feuds (they're brothers after all) and a passion for writing songs and music that can be enjoyed en masse, it's a night not to be missed!

In a risqué, sorry, risky move, older brother Elliot will open proceedings with a short, intimate set of his solo material. He'll tell little stories of where his songs come from which are mostly personal anecdotes about his childhood, his time spent travelling, friends and love. Elliot's most recent release "In my Head (again)" received national airplay with RTE, TodayFM, Radio Nova, EastCoastFM and more.

Dylan will then "really" start the show as he likes to say, after his "support act". It is interesting to hear and see the contrasting songwriting styles and personalities of the two brothers. Dylan has a unique and impressive picking style, in a similar vein to Lindsey Buckingham and Glen Campbell which he makes look effortless while singing sweet melodies over complicated picking patterns. His most recent release "Butterfly" also received radio play across the country.

To close the night, the brothers come together with their full-band set of upbeat, loud and fun Mute The



TV songs. Their friends Oscar Hackett and David Heffernan will be on bass and drum duties respectively who bring a whole host of experience and showmanship in their own right.

The format of the show means there's something for everyone to enjoy and is like a rollercoaster of ups and downs with laughing, screaming, some crying and lots of singing along. Mute The TV's latest release "You're So Cruel" was described by Hotpress as "...infectious as ever, absolutely dripping with both imagination and undeniable skill" and as an "anthem" on RTE 2FM.



Ellie Wiloughby as Ariel and Gavin Maloney as King Triton in Avonmore Musical Society's production of *The Little Mermaid* in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow.

'Government and local authorities need to face some 'Home Truths' about accessible housing'

Government and local authorities need to face some 'home truths' about accessible housing, according to Michelle Kent Byrne, service coordinator with Wicklow Irish Wheelchair Association.

"Housing shortages in Ireland have been well documented and highlighted. But everyday here in Arklow, I meet people with disabilities who are facing a deeper, silent housing crisis that doesn't have the commitments or resources from government and local authorities to address them," she said.

"Working with Irish Wheelchair Association across Wicklow, my colleagues and I regularly meet people who are living in unsuitable housing that is dangerous and damaging to their health. We meet young people who cannot figure out a plan for where they will live when their parents get older. And we meet parents who are struggling to care for their adult children and are worried about the future.

"But what choice do they have? Finding housing that is 'wheelchair liveable' is impossible across

Ireland, let alone in Wicklow. Today if you go onto any property website looking for wheelchair liveable accommodation in Wicklow you will find next to nothing. Yes a property might be accessible meaning it is possible for a wheelchair to get in the front door, but it doesn't mean a wheelchair user could live there; use the bathroom, kitchen, bedroom. This is why social housing is so vital for people with disabilities, because there are no private rental options there for them.

"Irish Wheelchair Association's latest national 'Home Truths' campaign is hoping to keep accessible housing on the agenda for local authorities and local politicians. There are many committed individuals in our local authorities who work hard to make sure people with disabilities are included in local housing rollout. But overall, as government and local authorities remain committed to building more and more houses, people with disabilities remain excluded. Unfortunately a report published in January by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Disability Matters found that Ireland's provision of independent living and inclusion in the community has worsened in recent years. The committee was reporting on Ireland's performance under the UN treaty that Ireland signed in 2018, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At a time when Ireland is

building houses at historic levels it is shocking to see opportunities for independent living and accessibility being squandered and missed.

"Successive governments have failed to deliver on its own commitments to provide housing options that are accessible and adaptable, for people with disabilities, across our communities. For example, according to the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2002-2027, people with disabilities have the right to live independently with supports, but the strategy has not been implemented or funded adequately.

"For people reading this who have a disability

or support a person with a disability, there is always hope when it comes to housing. Irish Wheelchair Association's 'Home Truths' campaign is a time to refocus on accessible housing, figure out what you need and find the support you need to make a plan. The process may be slower and much harder than it should be, but there is support along the way.

"It is important to apply for social housing to be included on your local authority housing list. Your local authority will have those details. Irish Wheelchair Association supports many of our members around housing applications as do many other disability organisations. Ask as many people for advice and help as you can. No one can do it alone.

"It is also important that when our local politicians call to our doors in the coming weeks looking for our vote, that we raise issues of accessible housing with them. What are they doing? How can they help? Access to independent living, with independent living supports and wrap-around services, is a right for disabled people who need it. Or what is the alternative? Three years ago a report from the Ombudsman found over 1,300 people in their thirties, forties and fifties who are living in nursing homes for elderly people, because of their disability and the lack of any wheelchair liveable accommodation for them.

"Independent living is a critical pillar of our society and our government and local authorities need to make this happen."

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PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Planning Permission is sought by PEO Restaurants Ltd T/A Ripasso for development consisting of (A) a front, ground floor, single storey, flat roof, glazed restaurant seating area extension of 41m²; (B) new door in the front eastern ground floor facade, using existing blocked up opening; (C) amendments to existing ground floor north side door entrance; (D) new window in north ground floor facade and all associated site works, at existing restaurant premises at corner of Albert Avenue (No.1) & Brennans Terrace (No.1), Strand Rd, Bray, Co. Wicklow. This building, No.1 Brennans Terrace is a Protected Structure. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of the Planning Authority during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, The Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency, intend to apply for planning permission for change of use, from existing holiday apartment, to permanent residence as apartment. Including all associated site works. This building is a protected structure NIAH Ref No. 16322033. At Apartment No. 15, St Marys Court, St Marys Road, Arklow, Co. Wicklow, Y14 P409. The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission. Signed: Mark Kelly, www.mkelly.ie

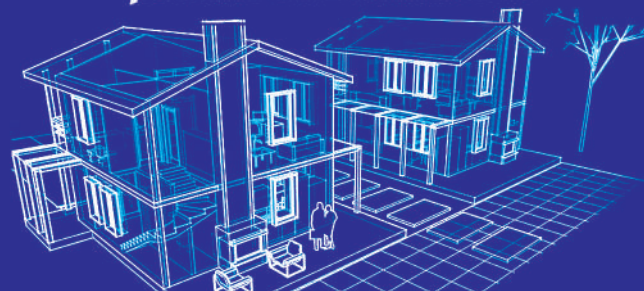
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, the Health Service Executive, intend to apply for permission for development consisting of a) a new standalone substation, client switch room and external store building; b) a new standalone plant room and external plant area; c) window, curtain wall, door, cladding and roof upgrade works; d) roof mounted solar photovoltaic panels, and all associated site development works at Baltinglass District Hospital, Newtownsaunders, Baltinglass. The post box (ref no. 27-31) and union work house (ref no. 27-32) at Baltinglass District Hospital are protected structures within the boundary of the development. 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.

ATTENTION Architects, Planners & Builders

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WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

E M Doyle & Associates seeks Planning Permission on behalf of our client Martha O'Neill for the construction of two number dormer dwelling houses with access road with footpath, improvement to entrance, services, drainage including connections to main sewer and water, landscaping and boundary treatment and ancillary works at rear of No.1 and No. 2 Knockfin, Glendalough, Co. Wicklow. Planning permission is also sought to decommission the existing septic tanks serving No. 1 and No. 2 Knockfin and connect both houses to the main sewer including ancillary works. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

Wicklow company wins at at Fáilte Ireland Employer Excellence Awards

Vagabond Tours, Wicklow, won the Best Employer - Adventure Award at Fáilte Ireland's Employer Excellence Awards which took place in the Lyrath Estate Hotel in Kilkenny, last week. The awards celebrated businesses who have demonstrated their commitment to making the tourism industry an appealing and rewarding place to work through their participation in Fáilte Ireland's Employer Excellence programme. This is the second year of the award ceremony.

Speaking from the event, Fáilte Ireland CEO Paul Kelly said: "Tourism has an unparalleled track record of providing a diverse range of employment opportunities in communities the length and breadth of the country. The Fáilte Ireland Employer Excellence Awards are a celebration of the businesses who have set the industry standard for employee engagement and workplace culture in the tourism sector. According to our latest labour market research, this positive impact can already be seen as 88% of employees in the sector now view tourism as a long-term career option, an increase of 17% on the previous year."



Rob Rankin of Vagabond Tours and Ruth Andrews, Fáilte Ireland Chairperson

The Employer Excellence Programme was developed by Fáilte Ireland to continuously build quality workplaces that offer appealing and rewarding careers where employees can develop and progress. In just two years, consider-

able progress has been made with 64% of employees saying they enjoy the unique benefits of their role and over 70% recognising improved employee communication and involvement.

Over 260 tourism businesses are currently participating in the Fáilte Ireland programme which launched in September 2022. As part of the programme, a survey was conducted with staff of participating businesses, which gave staff the chance to high-

light the strengths of their workplace, along with areas for further development. Fáilte Ireland is now supporting these businesses to implement actions identified in their survey to further enhance employee engagement. The winning businesses were chosen based on this employee feedback as well as completion of the dedicated management training programme.

Jenny De Saulles, Fáilte Ireland's Director of Sector Development added: "We know there are excellent employers and great workplaces in the industry and to attract and retain the best people to work in tourism, we need to continue to highlight the fantastic career and employment opportunities on offer in the sector. A key element of Fáilte Ireland's Employer

Excellence programme is putting the views of tourism employees front and centre and tonight's



Patricia O'Toole, Anne O'Loughlin, Bernice Nolan and Marie O'Neill at the official opening of Rathdrum Cancer Support's new premises at Gilbert's Row

winning businesses have all been chosen based on employee feedback. Over 27,000 tourism employees have already been engaged and positively impacted by this initiative. So, it's fantastic to gather together to showcase the best-in-class examples of employers along with those professionals who are thriving in the tourism industry."

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. A.C.

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PRAYER FOR A SPECIAL REQUEST

Oh! Dear Mother of God. Our Lady of Conception Aparecida! Oh! Saint Rita of Cassia and Saint Jude worker of miracles and helper of impossible causes pray for me. Saint Expedite, Saint of urgent causes. Saint Edwidge the Saint of the needy, you know how desperate I feel, please ask Jesus to help me (mention request) May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored and glorified for ever. Pray 1 Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be..... Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Pray for 3 days. Publish on the 3rd day. See what will happen on the 4th day. A.C.

Less taxi licences compared to pre-Covid levels

Taxi numbers in Wicklow have declined by almost 14%, according to new figures from the NTA, highlighting stark regional disparities in access to essential transport. The figures came in response to a recent parliamentary question by Independent TD Carol Nolan.

This dramatic drop in available taxis raises concerns for the country's vital hospitality industry and everyday passengers, particularly as tourist numbers are expected to surge in the coming months.

has been heavily impacted by taxi shortages in recent years, falling by over 11%, which has led to criticism of current SPSV policy by various stakeholders, particularly in hospitality and tourism. "The significant decrease in taxi availability

is a crippling blow to rural Ireland's hospitality sector," says Adrian Cummins, CEO of the Restaurants Association of Ireland. "These businesses often rely on taxis to get customers home safely, especially after dark. With little to no

public transport links in rural areas and without a vital taxi service, many people simply won't go out, further squeezing already strained rural businesses.

"The Government needs to take immediate action to address this issue before it cripples the entire industry entirely."

The decline in taxi numbers is attributed to a number of factors, includ-

ing the fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic, an onerous entry system, and costly barriers for new drivers - such as outlays of up to €59,000 for a vehicle alone.

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