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

MORE COST-OF-LIVING MISERY

The recent hikes in petrol and diesel prices have piled more misery and anxiety on many Wicklow residents and businesses. The price of petrol and diesel rose sharply this month, with fears that prices could reach €2 per litre. This severely impacts County Wicklow, where over half the population commutes outside the county for work or study, with the majority of these driving.

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has called on the Minister for Finance to implement Sinn Féin's call to cancel his Government's plans for further tax hikes on petrol and diesel this year.

Deputy Brady said: "Households across Wicklow continue to struggle under the cost-of-living crisis. The AA has announced

that petrol and diesel prices rose sharply this month, with fears the cost of fuel could soon rise to €2 per litre.

"At the beginning of April, the Government hiked the price of fuel for households and plans to do the same again in August and October. Instead of focusing all its efforts on reducing living costs, this government

seems determined to increase them.

"If the government presses ahead with these tax hikes, households in Wicklow and across the state will face among the highest fuel prices in Europe. Petrol prices will have risen by at least 10 cent per litre, with diesel prices set to rise by at least 8 cents per litre.



Kevin Macken as The Prince, Aaron Tierney as The Pilot, and Robert Donnelly as Grimsby in the Avonmore Musical Society's production of The Little Mermaid in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow. Pic: Michael Kelly

"Fuel prices have risen by more than 30 percent in the past three years - making the cost of travel even more expensive at this is the wrong call. But this government is clearly out of touch with the financial pressures so many people are facing. It is time for the government to heed Sinn Féin's call and scrap their planned tax hikes on petrol and diesel this year."

Speaking last week, Independent councillor Joe Behan said "The Government increased the excise tax on petrol and diesel on April 1st and is now taking a whopping 63c excise tax on every litre of petrol and 53c on every litre of diesel. This is added to the carbon tax which is

another Government Levy. The total price is then increased by a further 23% VAT, resulting in prices approaching €2 per litre. So, when the excise, carbon and crude oil prices are increased, the Government's VAT income also increases, so the Government now makes more on every transaction at the pump since April 1st.

"The prices being paid at the pumps by Irish consumers are now among the highest in the world. Recent reports state that the worldwide average fuel price is calculated at \$1.26 per litre whereas the average price in Ireland is calculated at \$1.85 per litre.

Continued on Page 3

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Wicklow gearing up for Darkness Into Light

Darkness Into Light, Pieta's annual fundraising event to raise money for lifesaving suicide and self-harm support and sponsored by Electric Ireland, is back at 4.15am on Saturday, 11th May, 2024.

With 100,000 participants expected at more than 230 official walks across four continents and many more taking part to fundraise in their own way, Darkness Into Light 2024 will bring communities together for the most important sunrise of the year, beginning in darkness and continuing through to dawn, symbolising the journey from despair to hope. Launched today

by Alan Quinlan and Aaron J Harte, the ambassadors are calling on the public to sign up today and support Pieta's flagship fundraiser.

In 2009, in the Phoenix Park in Dublin, 400 people set off on the inaugural Darkness Into Light 5km walk to raise funds for Pieta. From small beginnings, the movement has continued to grow, and now the walk attracts more than

200,000 participants.

Each year the walk provides an opportunity for people to connect with their local community and to bring hope to people who have been impacted by suicide.

Since Darkness Into Light began, the annual walks have helped Pieta raise more than €35 million. These funds have enabled the charity to keep its doors open and to operate a 24/7

Wicklow walk from Leitrim Place; and the Greystones walk from South Beach car park.

The Bray walk is organised by Bray Lions Club which has supported the event over many years, resulting in local walkers raising some €5500,000 for the charity. The 2023 walk raised in excess of €52,000. Bray Lions Club said they look forward to welcoming thousands of walkers over the route on the morning of 11th May.

Darkness Into Light Greystones organizers have announced David and Steven Flynn of The Happy Pear Brothers as Ambassadors for the 2024 Event, and Sugarloaf lions as partners.

The collaboration with Sugarloaf Lions Club will ensure a smooth and successful execution of the day's activities and will greatly contribute to the fundraising efforts before and after the event. Sharon Felton, Chair of the Greystones Darkness into Light committee, said "The Sugarloaf lions and a fantastic organisation in our community that are always available to support local activities, we are thrilled to have them onboard and their expertise will make this a hugely successful event."

Niall Quigley, President of the Sugarloaf lions club said "We are delighted to be involved in this important event and helping this cause. The objective of Lionism is to serve, so we are thrilled to be able to assist in this way."

Pieta depends on the funds generated by Darkness Into Light, with over 85% of the charity's annual income coming from public fundraising. Pieta's 300 qualified Therapists, Suicide Bereavement Liaison Officers and support staff across the country rely on this essential income to continue their lifesaving work.

By participating in the event, supporters can make a real and tangible difference, as the €26 sign-up fee for Darkness Into Light can enable Pieta to answer two calls to their 24/7 helpline, providing immediate support and guidance to those in crisis.



The Greystones Darkness Into Light organising committee



Cllr Mark Barry with members of Sugarloaf Lions Club



Leo the Lion getting in some practice for the 2024 Darkness into Light charity walk/run for Pieta.



Maureen Dunne Rose Maxwell and Ashley McKeon from Wicklow Parish Bingo presenting a huge cheque to Sean Olohan and Geraldine Mooney from Wicklow Lions for the Darkness into Light fundraising walk. All proceeds go directly to Pieta.

Darkness Into Light Greystones invites individuals and communities to join them in their mission to bring hope and support to those affected by mental health issues. Participants can sign up or register for the event.

Speaking at the launch, Darkness Into Light 2024 ambassador, Alan Quinlan, said: "I am a huge supporter of Darkness Into Light and I am beyond proud to work with Pieta and Electric Ireland to support the campaign this year. Mental health is a hugely important topic for me and every year myself and my family participate in what truly is the most important sunrise of the year and I look forward to taking part again this year."

Walkers can register on-line at www.darknessintolight.ie.


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In Co. Wicklow, DIL walks will be taking place in Bray, Arklow, Baltinglass, Blessington, Carnew, Tinahely, Wicklow Town, and for the first time Greystones. All walks will commence at 4:15am.

The Arklow walk will begin from the Arklow Sea Scouts Centre, the Bray walk from Moyad, Convent Avenue; the Baltinglass walk from Scoil Chonglais; the Blessington walk from Blessington Demesne; the Carnew walk from the fire station; the Tinahely walk from the community hall; the



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‘It’s plainly ludicrous’

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has described the decision to press ahead with plans to house 80 International Protection Applicants (IPAs) in Dunlavin in West Wicklow as “ludicrous”.

Deputy Brady said: "Dunlavin is a small rural community which is not equipped to deal with an influx of people for which there has been zero level preparation made in terms of community engagement and provision of badly needed services. Minister Roderic O’Gorman wants to push ahead against local community objection with plans to house 80 International Protection Applicants (IPAs) at two locations in the Dunlavin area from 1st May, in the full knowledge that the area is absolutely unsuitable. At a minimum I believe that the government has a responsibility to

determine through an audit that a minimum threshold of services exists before a decision is taken to locate additional numbers within the local community.

"I have previously challenged the then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar in the Dail over the failure of the government to conduct audits of services in areas where the decision has been taken to place IPAs.

"The failure to carry out audits on both the availability and future requirement for services is failing both refugees and local communities. Dunlavin already has to deal with the challenges of a lack of resources. Particularly in respect

of school places, GPs, etc. This is an area of rural West Wicklow where public transport is non-existent. It is a self-evident fact that these rural isolated villages are quite simply not suitable for relatively large numbers of people to be dropped in without any pre-planning or preparation that would allow for accessibility to already scarce or unavailable services. We need to know if there is an actual plan that looks at services and amenities in areas before a decision is taken. The current approach by the government is unfair, it is unsustainable, and is failing both communities and refugees."



Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Aoife Flynn-Kennedy with Cllr Erika Doyle at the Greystones People of the Year Awards in Greystones Golf Club last Thursday. See more, pages 10-11.

‘Introduction of body-worn cameras for Gardaí will play vital role in tackling crime’

A pilot project to introduce body-worn cameras for Gardai in key urban centres this year is expected to lead to greater advances for Gardaí in Wicklow, Fine Gael's South Wicklow Candidate Laurie Kearon has said.



Laurie Kearon with Minister for Justice Helen McEntee

"Body-worn cameras are being introduced in Dublin City Centre, Waterford and Limerick in 2024 and this will help inform the nationwide rollout of these vital pieces of equipment to all Garda members," said Mrs Kearon.

"Our Gardaí must be supported with better equipment and I believe that the use of body worn cameras, with appropriate safeguards; can help improve front-line capability with the accurate recording of incidents and enhancing situational awareness, while pro-

tecting people from harm. Furthermore, this technology is widely used across the EU as an effective tool for evidence gathering in the investigation of crime and I look forward to our Gardaí in Wicklow being kitted out in due course," Laurie continued.

"Body-cams are just part of a range of other measures that are being introduced by Minister for Justice Helen McEntee to tackle anti-social behaviour and wider crime. They include:

- Introducing Facial Recognition Technology in a number of limited and defined circumstances as a tool to

search evidence in the most serious of cases, with legislation published before the summer recess.

- Providing the funding necessary to strengthen the equipment available

to An Garda Síochána for public order policing, including the deployment of tasers and stronger incapacitant spray.

- Stronger Garda Powers resulting in the nation-

wide seizure of 44 quad bikes and 133 scramblers by An Garda Síochána from 1 January 2023 to 5 February 2024.

"In addition, I welcome increased funding for the expansion of

youth diversion projects, alongside the rollout of the new community safety partnerships and the development of community safety plans.

"These investments in community safety initiatives, in tandem with tougher sentences and enhanced equipment for our Gardaí will help protect our young people in Wicklow from falling into criminality, creating stronger streets and safer communities."

MORE COST-OF-LIVING MISERY

Continued from page 1

That is almost 50% of a difference and is completely unacceptable at a time of crippling cost of living increases, especially for homeowners with mortgages, small businesses with delivery costs and of course haulage companies, farmers and every sector in the country. The ongoing war in the Middle East looks likely to

increase wholesale oil prices further and it is very probable that County Wicklow motorists and businesses and farmers will face more pain in the next few months.

"Government Ministers claim to have consumers' interests at heart and that they are conscious of the cost of living crisis affecting so many people in our country today. However, they have

decided that now is the time to punish Irish consumers by making the cost of abasic necessity even more costly. It is very clear to me that the words of the Government are hollow and the actions they take speak louder than their words. This Government is out of time and out of ideas and the day is soon coming when they will be out of office."



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SSE Renewables partners with Wicklow Sustainable Energy Community and Wicklow County Council for Energy Awareness Day



World Earth Day saw representatives from Wicklow Sustainable Energy Community to join with SSE Renewables and Wicklow County Council to announce SSE Renewables' sponsorship of the upcoming Wicklow Energy Awareness Day. Pictured are Simon Whelan (SEC Mentor), Deaglas O'Meachair (Wicklow SEC Chairman), Leonora Earls (Wicklow Tidy Towns), Sylvester Burke (SEC Committee member), and Jim Callery (Wicklow County Council Climate Action Officer), pictured with Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager with SSE Renewables.

Launched on World Earth Day 22nd April, SSE Renewables joined with representatives from Wicklow's Sustainable Energy Community, Wicklow Tidy Towns and Wicklow County Council's Climate Action team to announce SSE Renewables' title sponsorship of the upcoming Wicklow Energy Awareness Day 2024.

Wicklow Energy Awareness Day is set to take place on Saturday, 15th June in the Pastoral Centre, St Patrick's Road, Wicklow Town, and promises to attract significant crowds from all over the county. Admission is free.

Sylvester Burke from Wicklow Sustainable Energy Community said: "We're delighted that SSE Renewables has come on board as the lead sponsor for this year's Energy Awareness Day. The event aims to support community members in improving the energy efficiency of their homes and businesses. There will be a variety of exhibition stands providing helpful information on home energy efficiency grants, PV solar panel and heat pump installation, and tips for insulating homes. We have an EV car show planned with over 30 of the newest fully electric cars on display. There's also the chance to try out a range of electric bikes at the event. Children can enjoy ECO fun games organised by the Sustainable Energy

Authority of Ireland (SEAI) School Science Team. Gavin Harte from the SEAI Science Team will provide rolling half-hour stepping stone to energy efficiency workshops for home and business owners'.

Jim Callery, Climate Action Officer, Wicklow County Council said: 'The Energy Awareness Day is a great opportunity to connect with local businesses offering a range of energy efficiency, renewable, and EV products and services to homeowners and local businesses. Wicklow County Council is pleased to support the work of Wicklow SEC in raising awareness on how we can all make our homes and businesses more sustainable and climate resilient'.

Deirdre Keogh, SSE Renewables, said: 'World Earth Day 2024 reminds us of the importance of caring for our climate and supporting awareness around sustainability of our county, country and globally. Through our Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund we have

supported a variety of community sustainability initiatives close to our development site. The benefits that renewable energy can bring to reducing carbon emissions and helping to safeguard the planet for future generations cannot be understated. Raising awareness at events like the Co. Wicklow Energy Awareness Day in June, helps to inform everyone about ways we can individually and collectively as communities, help to reduce our carbon footprint and support positive initiatives that promote sustainability in our county. We appreciate the opportunity to come on board as title sponsor for the upcoming June event and look forward to a successful day'.

For further information about Wicklow Energy Awareness Day, 15th June 2024, email wicklowsec2020@gmail.com or follow Wicklow Sustainable Energy on Facebook. Energy Awareness Day 2024 is supported by Wicklow Tidy Towns, Wicklow Town Team, and Wicklow Co. Council.

'West Wicklow communities are leading by example on climate actions'

Social Democrats Local Election candidate for West Wicklow Deirdre McCormack has said that communities across West Wicklow are leading by example when it comes to community climate actions.

"This Earth Day it is fantastic to see so many community-led initiatives

across West Wicklow encouraging sustainability and promoting biodiversity," she said.

"The recent Plant Swap events in both Dunlavin

and Blessington libraries were a great success, and more are planned for the

future. These community climate actions are happening every day, with community groups across West Wicklow demonstrating their ongoing commitment to tackling climate change and biodiversity loss through achievable actions, changes and events.

"A small change, like moving away from single-use coffee cups can make a big difference, especially when a whole community does it together. Blessington Tidy Towns recently teamed up with local businesses to reintroduce the 2GoCup re-useable cups in the town and we are seeing more coffee shops across West Wicklow moving away from single-use cups," said Ms McCormack.

"Events such as the Blessington Christmas Jumper Swap shop or the recent Clothes Swap organised by students from Blessington Community College are a fun and cost-effective way to encourage sustainability in our communities and can be easily replicated in other locations.

"The West Wicklow Environmental Network host a wide range of events including rewilding projects and information evenings about energy improvements that we can make in our own homes and sharing energy saving tips and advice about SEAI grants that are available at events throughout the year



Deirdre McCormack, Jennifer Page and Jennifer Whitmore TD at the Grangecon Store Cupboard in Grangecon

"Earlier this week Jennifer Whitmore TD and I visited Grangecon and met with local small business owner Jennifer Page and Go Greener with Grangecon were doing in their local community: "It was fantastic to meet with Jennifer and hear about the collaborations that Go Greener with Grangecon have established with other local groups and businesses such as collecting unused toiletries from a local hotel to donate to a charity working with homeless people, collecting old reading glasses for the Carlow Lions Club and recycling cracker and biscuit wrappers to raise money for the local primary school. These are innovative, community-led initiatives which not only encourage sustainability but are of real benefit to our environment and to our communities. These types of community climate actions should be strongly supported and encouraged across the

country," commented Deputy Whitmore. Deirdre McCormack highlighted that biodiversity is also being championed by community groups throughout West Wicklow. "We are seeing exciting projects being rolled out including the Tinahely Tidy Towns bat boxes, collaborations between local schools in Baltinglass and Tearmann Community Garden and the award-winning Edible Blessington project by the Blessington Allotments Campaign. "I would like to congratulate and commend all the community groups, businesses, schools and individuals who are leading the way with these community climate and biodiversity actions. We need to ensure that community-led projects like these are fully supported and encouraged throughout the county," concluded Deirdre McCormack.



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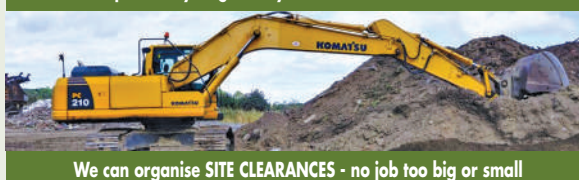
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New Respiratory Pulmonary Function Testing Lab in Bray sets a new standard for patient-centred care

Advanced diagnostics and streamlined healthcare pathways rolled out for respiratory patients in Wicklow

Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly T.D. visited a new Respiratory Pulmonary Function Testing (PFT) Lab in the Integrated Care Hub, Bray on Friday 19th April to tour the facility and meet with staff and patients. Martina Queally, the recently appointed Regional Executive Officer for HSE Dublin and South East was also in attendance.

The Integrated Care Hub, Bray was the first of its kind to be opened by Minister Donnelly T.D. in 2022. The Hub delivers a range of Chronic Disease and Older Persons specialist services in the community under the HSE's Enhanced Community Care (ECC Programme) - a SI-intecare initiative which helps reduce dependence on a hospital-central model of care.

The new Pulmonary Function Testing (PFT) Lab in the Bray Hub aims to further integrate hospital and community respiratory care in order to provide patients in Wicklow with advanced diagnostics and streamlined

healthcare pathways. Under this new service, GP's in the area can refer patients directly for pulmonary testing in the community, reducing waiting lists for respiratory consultants in hospitals and allowing patients to be tested faster and closer to home.

During his visit, Minister Donnelly T.D. discussed how the service sets a new standard for patient-centred care: "Diagnostic services in community settings offer increased efficiencies in service delivery as well as a better experience for patients who can complete their diagnostic tests and meet the clinical team in the same visit, close to their home. This innovative

service sets a new standard for patient-centred care. It also serves as a model for effective collaboration and integration within the healthcare service."

The local Respiratory team collaborated with colleagues in St. Vincent's University Hospital (SVUH) to establish a network link between SVUH, St Michael's Hospital Dun Laoghaire and the Hub's IT systems.

This means that results from the PFT Lab in Bray can be accessed remotely by hospital consultants who review the test findings and provide a comprehensive report to the GP. Onward referrals to members of the Respiratory Integrated Care (RIC) team can then also be arranged, if required.

The service first commenced in June 2023 in SVUH and St Michael's Hospital and it has been in operation in Bray since January. To date, 333 patients have been assessed. 32% of patients who were referred for testing haven't required further input by the clinical team, while 37% of patients were referred onto a Respiratory Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) in the community. Combined this means that 69% did not require referral to a respiratory consultant, assuring consultant capacity and hospital waiting lists are optimised.

Martina Queally, Regional Executive Officer, HSE Dublin and

South East, comments: "This service is a prime example of SI-intecare in action. Integration between acute and community services is a complex process involving clinical and administrative coordination between multiple staff across various sites. It is very clear from my visit today that staff across the board are highly dedicated to working together in order to improve the care and support that is delivered to our patients.

They are also witnessing the benefits of integration first-hand. The success achieved in this initiative serves as a testament to the potential of this model for other services. I look forward to supporting more of this work in the future across HSE Dublin and South East."

Aisling Heffernan, Chief Officer, HSE Community Healthcare East, adds: "I am delighted to welcome back Minister Stephen Donnelly T.D. and

Martina Queally to the Integrated Care Hub, Bray. It is fantastic to be able to show examples of how advances in healthcare, like the new

Pulmonary Function Lab, are contributing to more accessible and timely services for patients. It is also clear that the Respiratory Physiologist team is committed to providing comprehensive and holistic care by linking patients in with supplementary health and wellbe-

ing services available in the community such as the HSE's smoking cessation service."

To date, the respiratory team in the hub have referred 33 patients to the HSE's smoking cessation service. QUIT smoking services are available in multiple locations, including the Bray Hub, and offer in-person support and access to free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). The service also accepts self-referrals.



Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly T.D. visiting staff and patients in the Integrated Care Hub, Bray

Funding to progress redevelopment at Baltinglass Community Nursing Unit

The Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly last Friday confirmed that plans for additional beds and a new day care centre at the Baltinglass Community Nursing Unit, are to progress to detailed design and the lodgement of a planning application.

The project includes a new day care facility with a dayroom, dining room and kitchen in a purpose-built single storey building on a green-field site beside the current building.

Six additional en-suite bedrooms for older person services will be developed by refurbishing and extending the existing day care centre.

Baltinglass Community Hospital is a 60 bed Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) registered residential care centre for older persons. It provides person centred care to residents through a range of services for older persons' including Day Care, Respite Care, Continuing Care and Dementia Specific Care.

Stephen Donnelly said: "I'm delighted to confirm that we are now progressing to Stage Two of the process for delivering this important project in Baltinglass. I'm allocating €300,000 this year which will fund the full scheme design, submission of a planning application and preparation of tender documents."

On a visit to the Baltinglass Community Nursing Unit today, Minister Donnelly added:

"This project will see us invest over €6 million in Baltinglass Community Nursing Unit and Day Care service. It will also see a 10% increase in the number of beds and the further development and expansion of the day care services."

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Corrigan kick starts her election campaign

"To really live well we need more than bricks and mortar, we need to Live Here and Give Here". This message formed part of Melanie Corrigan's speech at her campaign launch in 2019. Five years on, facing a new electoral term, Cllr. Melanie Corrigan says she is still as committed as ever and holds fast to the 'Live Here, Give Here' ethos.

On Saturday 20th April in Enniskerry, she launched her canvass campaign for the 2024 local elections. There was

a great turn out to support Melanie from local businesses, community groups, constituents and family and friends.

When commenting on her decision to run again to represent the people of Bray West, Cllr. Corrigan stated. "I've really en-

joyed the last 5 years advocating on constituents' behalf, meeting people and listening to their concerns. I love this community, I have lived here all my life and choose to bring my family up here, I believe in the people, the beauty of the area, and in everything it has to offer. My campaign vision on 2019 was to make Bray, Enniskerry and Kilmacanogue a better place to work in, live in, and visit. A vision, I am still committed to".

If elected Melanie says she is keen to continue to work in her role as Councillor and Chair of the Local Community Development committee and Board Member of the various committees she is a member of to prioritise issues under her three campaign priorities to:

- Address the needs of the local area
- Boost business innovation and supports
- Cultivate a clean and caring community

Her final message as she kicked off her canvass campaign was to let everyone know that she will be canvassing with her team in the weeks leading up to the election, asking everyone to "please put Live Here Give Here into action and vote Melanie No 1. at the local election on 7th June."



Linda Laird with Bella, Cllr. Melanie Corrigan and Catherine Challaombe



Cllr. Melanie Corrigan pictured with family members



Cllr. Melaine Corrigan pictured with representatives from Enniskerry Community Games

Kearon launches campaign

Fine Gael's Candidate for South Wicklow, Laurie Kearon, officially launched her campaign to a packed audience at Bates Nua Restaurant in Rathdrum on Monday, April 22nd. The event saw an overwhelming turnout with standing-room only, as friends, family, supporters, and local councillors came together to show their support.

The highlight of the evening was the address by the Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Aoife Flynn Kennedy, who praised Laurie's trustworthiness, capability, integrity, and proactive approach to solving issues. Former Minister Andrew Doyle and former TD Billy Timmins also spoke, underscoring Laurie's unwavering commitment to the community.

Laurie took the opportunity to share her vision for South Wicklow, focusing on the welfare of its older residents, enhancing safety and security for all, and the urgent need for comprehensive recreational facilities. "We are all blessed to live in a part of Ireland that is so beautiful, has so many wonders and it is such a lovely environment that people have chosen this area in which to live. However, there are many things that need improvement and residents here deserve the



Cllr Vincent Blake, Cllr Irene Winters, candidate Laurie Kearon, candidate Peter Stapleton, Cllr Sylvester Bourke, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Cllr Shay Cullen and Cllr Melanie Corrigan

strong representation I will bring to South Wicklow," Laurie stated.

First-time candidate Laurie is happily married to Stephen and is a moth-

er to five children. She has served as a civil servant on Wicklow County Council, where she's worked in the housing section. Before this, she

had a successful 20-year tenure as an Examiner of Maps in the Property Registration Authority of Ireland where she demonstrated a commitment to

continuous learning, having successfully completed a Land Law and Succession course with Institute of Technology, Carlow.

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'Gov failure in policing is resulting in thefts in Wicklow'

Spate of attempted break-ins into cars in Rathnew area raises concerns

Wicklow East Sinn Féin Local Election candidate Abbie O'Loughlin has expressed concern at reports of increased crime in the Tinakilly Park area of Rathnew following a spate of attempted break-ins of cars in the area.

She described the development as particularly disturbing given the ongoing and worrying trend in the fall in Garda numbers across county Wicklow over the last five years, despite a corresponding population growth, which has resulted in huge housing developments such as Tinakilly Park.

O'Loughlin said: "There is a real concern in the Tinakilly Park and wider Rathnew area around a spate of attempted break-ins into cars there. It has been alleged that the break-ins are being carried out by gangs of

teenagers travelling down from Dublin. Which a visible Garda presence would help deter.

"The reality is that Garda numbers in Wicklow have fallen significantly over the last number of years. I am particularly concerned at the fact that Garda numbers in Wicklow had fallen 14% between 2019 and 2023. Even in the period from 2022 to March 2024 there are now 19 less Gardai in the county. The reality is that Wicklow is that the population of Wicklow has increased significantly in recent years. The last census indicated a population

growth of 9%, which has arguably increased in the interim period.

"This population growth has led to huge housing developments in Rathnew and other areas, and local resources such as Garda numbers have not kept pace with this development. The increased incidents of crime in the area are a direct result of government failure, a failure that local people are experiencing as an increase in theft, and cars being broken into.

"We now have a new Wicklow Taoiseach, who as Minister for Justice did nothing to reverse the fall in Garda numbers in Wicklow. He now needs to stand up and deliver for areas like Tinakilly Park and the wider area around Rathnew."

Wicklow Sinn Féin TD John Brady said: "I have challenged Simon Harris on his failure to address the issue of Garda numbers in Wicklow, but my protests have fallen on deaf ears. I want to join my colleagues Abbie O'Loughlin, and Anthony Hill in calling on Taoiseach Simon Harris to stand up for Wicklow and deliver on the issue of community safety for Tinakilly Park and Rathnew."

Anthony Hill, who is also a Sinn Féin candidate in Wicklow East for the local elections said: "Taoiseach Simon Harris made much of the record of Fine Gael, when he was trumpeting the issue of law and order at the Fine Gael Ard Fheis - well the clock is ticking for the Taoiseach in terms of his delivery on the issue of community safety and Garda numbers here in own home county."



Sinn Féin candidate Abbie O'Loughlin with John Brady TD in Tinakilly Park

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€3m for Bray's Ballywaltrim Library

Wicklow County Council has welcomed the announcement from Minister Heather Humphries that a maximum grant of €3 million euro has been allocated for a new library at Ballywaltrim. This substantial investment will mean the existing Ballywaltrim Library will almost quadruple in size and provide a modern public library space for the community. The transformative funding has been ringfenced to deliver a state of the art, two-storey expanded and improved library which will include a dedicated space for teenagers, work hubs, computer study areas and related services provided by our dedicated librarians in County Wicklow.

Speaking last week, An Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "Investing in libraries is investing in people and their potential. I believe Government should always invest in making sure people get to reach their full potential and libraries help to do just that."

"Today is a good day for Wicklow, with major funding coming on stream to revamp Wicklow County Council's Ballywaltrim Library. Government plays a huge role in ensuring our libraries are kept to a 21st century standard."

"It is great to hear that across the country we are delivering first class library services to communities by investing millions into new facilities. I have always placed significance importance to libraries around County Wicklow and I want to see Government continually invest in more upgraded facilities to meet the needs of library users."

"The magic of libraries is that they can be used by people of all ages and all backgrounds, they play a significant role in developing the community and are often at the heart of local activities."

"My colleague and deputy Leader of Fine Gael Heather Humphreys has continually emphasised the role of libraries in communities and the funding announced today reflects her commitment to them. As a representative for the people of Wicklow I will always make sure Government funds local services like libraries."

Also commenting on the funding announcement, Green TD and Bray resident Steven Matthews said: "I am delighted to support this big investment in Ballywaltrim library in Bray. Our libraries are so much more than books, they offer such a range of services, information, access to education and are a wonderful community resource."

"The need to upgrade the existing library is something that has been raised with me by local residents previously, so it is hugely rewarding to see this funding for this project. Libraries around Wicklow play an invaluable role in the lives of people, particularly families, encouraging engagement with reading and creativity in a convenient and accessible manner. It is particularly welcome to see young people being put at the core of this announcement and I expect this library will be an ideal place for students of all ages to study."

"None of this would be possible without the work that librarians and support staff of libraries across Wicklow do for our community and I hope they know how valued a role they play."

"If you haven't visited your library in recent years, I'd really encourage you to pop in and take a look at the range of services and facilities available. You'll pop in for 10 minutes and still be there an hour later," concluded Deputy Matthews.

In response to the announcement, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Aoife Flynn Kennedy was enthusiastic at the prospect of this opportunity for Bray and its environs: "This extended accessibility will be a game changer, and ensure that every member of our community can enjoy and use the library's facilities at times that suit their busy schedules. We are proud to provide a space that not only meets modern standards, but also adapts to the evolving needs of our residents, fostering a culture of learning and engagement across all ages."

The anticipated cost of the entire project could run to €8m, speaking following the announcement yesterday, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council Emer O'Gorman said "I am delighted with



Steven Matthews TD at Ballywaltrim Library

this announcement; the expected investment altogether of €8 million will result in a state of the art public library for Bray. This isn't just a building; it's an amenity that will serve as a centre for community life, ensuring we have a place where residents of all ages can gather, interact and inspire one another."

Proposals for the major €3 million revamp of Ballywaltrim Library were given the green light back in February 2022 and are included among the capital projects contained within Wicklow County Library Service Development Plan 2021 to 2025."

Speaking on the fund-

ing news, Director of Services, Breege Kilkenny said "This new library will feature a cutting-edge design that maximises natural light, creating a welcoming and energising space for our users. It will also be a near-zero energy building and the site has sufficient space to allow for the inclusion of a sensory garden."

Other ideas considered at the time included extending Bray Carnegie Library on Eglinton Road, however due to its historical significance and location with the prospect of losing the garden, it was agreed that the site at Ballywaltrim presented a better opportunity for development.

Like all Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) funded libraries, the new Ballywaltrim Library will be a My Open Library whereby the public will have access from 8am to 10pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Construction of the new Ballywaltrim Library is expected to span approximately 18 months. During this period, the current library will relocate but continue to serve the community with minimal interruption. Further details on the construction will follow in due course.



An Taoiseach Simon Harris

New wall art for Arklow and Wicklow libraries

The decor of the libraries in Arklow and Wicklow Town were transformed last week with the installation of new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) wall art and cube seating, which was sponsored by SSE Renewables

This sponsorship was in recognition of the work that the Council, and in particular the

library services and Climate Action Team, have undertaken to promote the SDGs and strengthen their links with local communities.

The 17 Goals, adopted by all UN member states in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, serve as a blueprint for global peace and prosperity. They represent a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and enhance the lives of all individuals.

In response to the welcome installation, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Aoife Flynn Kennedy said "I'm delighted by this recognition of our council's dedication to promoting sustainability and community engagement through initiatives like the SDGs. The seating cubes and wall art add colour and encourage children and parents to take note of the 17 goals."

Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement

Manager with SSE Renewables said "SSE is delighted to support the library service in helping to promote the 17 SDGs. Our community funding programme will continue to

support such worthwhile programmes. SSE are committed to being operationally net zero by 2050 and have set 2030 business goals aligned with the SDGs, such as increasing renew-

able energy by fivefold, enable low-carbon generation, and champion a fair and just energy transition."

SSE Renewables are committed to supporting local communities where

they operate. They appreciated the opportunity to support the work carried out by Wicklow County Council and in particular the Library Service and the Climate Action Team.



Pictured at the installation of the new wall art and seating cubes were Mark Costello (Climate Action Co-Ordinator, Wicklow County Council), Aileen Klauer (Wicklow County Council), Deirdre Keogh (Community Engagement Manager SSE Renewables), Sarah Rubalcava (Environmental Awareness Officer, Wicklow County Council), Loretta Rose (Branch Librarian, Wicklow County Council), Margaret Birchall (Senior Executive Librarian, Wicklow County Council), Catherine Costello (Branch Librarian, Wicklow County Council), Julie Sammler (Environment, Wicklow County Council) and James Callery (Climate Action Officer, Wicklow County Council). Photo: Michael Kelly

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Extra €1m for rural roads

An Taoiseach Simon Harris has announced an extra €1,279,015 for repairs and improvement works on non-public rural roads and laneways under the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS). The announcement is part of a record €40 million delivered under LIS, the very successful scheme reintroduced by Fine Gael which has carried out works on more than 4,000 roads with €170 million in total funding since 2017.

With this new funding the Government is clearly showing how committed it is to Ireland's road infrastructure, the Taoiseach said.

An Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "Working with Government colleagues over the past few weeks it's been so important to me that we place a particular focus on roads and roads infrastructure. That's why in my first few days as Taoiseach I met with the Roads Safety Authority to discuss road safety around the country.

"Today I'm delighted to announce over €1 million in funding to improve access to homes and remote places in County Wicklow. With an additional and €40 million being announced today for all of Ireland, the total allocated under LIS is now up to €170 million, having helped to

improve over 4,000 roads across the country since 2017. LIS has clearly worked over the past few years and I intend on making sure we continue to better fund and improve our roads infrastructure."

Speaking today Taoiseach Simon Harris concluded: "People across Wicklow will know the impact of this funding on roads and we must continue to identify where the repairs are needed to work on them as soon as possible. I want to thank my colleague Minister for Rural and Community Development Heather Humphreys who is delivering the funding today. She has worked tirelessly in that Department to ensure our roads are repaired and improved and most importantly has worked day in and day out to ensure Ireland continues to offer a thriving

and inclusive rural landscape under Our Rural Future, a whole of government policy dedicated to Rural Ireland."

Cathaoirleach of the Baltinglass Municipal District, Councillor Edward Timmins has welcomed the news of two recent government funding announcements which will significantly benefit West Wicklow in particular the allocation to upgrade rural laneways.

Speaking last Thursday morning from Baltinglass regarding the €40 million LIS allocation to upgrade rural laneways Councillor Timmins said: "This will be a very beneficial scheme for rural dwellers here in West Wicklow. It's welcome that only one herd number is required for this laneways funding. This will open it up to more people as many rural dwellers who need

improvements to existing lanes do not have a herd number."

Regarding the recent monuments funding announcement, Councillor Timmins said: "Having long campaigned for the protection of our historic sites in West and South West Wicklow in areas like Kilranelagh, I welcome this funding announcement of €202,247 to conserve, protect, and promote monuments and these sites in our area in addition to encouraging access to them. They must be properly preserved for future generations."

"Three of the five Wicklow sites selected for the Wicklow funding are in West or South West Wicklow which is testament to our lobbying efforts here on the ground for the protection and conservation of the local area."

Progress advancing Baltinglass and Dunlavin fire stations to next stages *Consultants have now produced detailed drawings for both stations*

Cathaoirleach of the Baltinglass Municipal District, Councillor Edward Timmins has welcomed the news that all site investigation work for the new Baltinglass and Dunlavin Fire Stations has been completed in addition to the update that the Council have met with NDFEM (National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management) on the issue of increased costs.

The new stations were initially announced as part of a €61 million

Fire Service Capital Programme 2021-2025. Councillor Timmins raised the issue of delays with the County Manager at the February County Council meeting and since then has been working to ensure the projects are moved along as quickly as possible.

Speaking from Dunlavin, last Wednesday, 24th April, Councillor Timmins noted: "Back in February the issue of the fire stations was not on the Council agenda, but I brought up this item directly at the meeting as I believe the stations must be fast-tracked. I pointed out how funding had been previously allocated and

questioned if the projects had been forgotten. Since then, I have been following this issue closely, and I am delighted to report that consultants have now produced detailed drawings of the fire stations, and all site investigation work for both Baltinglass and Dunlavin stations has now been completed."

Councillor Timmins continued: "This is another step in the right direction for the provision of the stations and I will be continuing to ensure these projects keep moving. In a 'Practical Guide for Monitoring Rural Development Policies in Ireland: Opportunities and Challenges' published by the ESRI in January 2024, access to proper public services



Cllr Edward Timmins

like fire stations are named as 'key performance indicators' in monitoring the effectiveness of our rural policies."

Regarding the next steps, and the tendering process Councillor

Timmins added: "The Council have also met with NDFEM (National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management - funders) around the increased costs of the projects and a letter of approval will be issued over the coming days in this regard. As this issue further progresses, consultants will prepare contract documents so tenders can be issued immediately thereafter."

Councillor Timmins concluded: "I would like to thank the staff in Wicklow County Council for continuing to work to ensure this issue moves swiftly. I will work with all stakeholders to ensure the delivery of the new stations for Baltinglass and Dunlavin."



JJ O'Byrne and Lisa Flanagan present a donation to AnnMarie Murtagh of Féileacáin, the not for profit organisation that provides support to anyone affected by the death of a baby during or after pregnancy. The funds were raised after Lisa took part in six marathons in memory of her son Teidi.

Funding for Garryhoe Trail improvement

Green TD Steven Matthews has welcomed the €9,400 funding for the Garryhoe Trail in the Wicklow Way under the Our Rural Future Walks Scheme announced recently. The funding will go directly on resurfacing works and the installation of drainage on this section of the trail.

Discussing the funding, Deputy Matthews said: "The Wicklow Way is an incredible asset for our county, and I am delighted to see this investment come through. Regular walkers and tourists had previously flagged this section of the Wicklow Way as having drainage issue in bad weather and the days following so it is welcome to see the money being put towards resolving that."

"It is vital that we maintain consistent investment in the Wicklow Way, and I will continue to work with Wicklow County Council to ensure greater funding is allocated under future Departmental schemes," concluded Deputy Matthews.



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2024 Greystones Municipal District PEOPLE OF THE YEAR AWARDS



The annual Greystones People of the Year awards made a dazzling return last Thursday. Hosted by Greystones Golf Club, the 31st Greystones People of the Year Awards event was again proudly sponsored by Wicklow Times.

The ceremony was a heartwarming homage to the unsung heroes of the Greystones district, recognising individuals whose tireless dedication and selfless acts have woven the fabric of community spirit.

These local luminaries, celebrated for enriching the lives around them, gathered for an evening dedicated to applauding the altruistic endeavors that make Greystones a commendable place to call home.

Speaking after the event, Jennifer Whitmore TD said: "Tonight's awards were a great reminder of all the wonderful work done by local people here in Greystones. The range of work recognised last night was huge, from the Young Person's Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity to Sports and Civic activities. It was a real pleasure to be there and see such dedicated members of our community recognised."

CIVIC AWAD - KINDLESTOWN & KENMARE BINGO COMMITTEE

This year's Civic Award proudly recognises the dedicated efforts of Mai Smullen, Linda Byrne, and Mary Gilbert, the dynamic trio behind the Kindlestown and Kenmare Bingo Committee.

These individuals have become pillars of the community through their unwavering commitment to organizing the weekly Bingo Afternoon, a highlight for many old age pensioners in the area.

Held every Wednesday at the Dr. Ryan Resource Centre, this event has not only offered entertainment but has also fostered a sense of connection and community among its attendees. Mai, Linda, and Mary have been the driving force behind this beloved event for several years, dedicating their time and energy to ensure its success and continuity.

Their commitment shone particularly bright during the challenging times of the pandemic. When public health concerns necessitated physical distancing, they creatively adapted the event, transitioning it outdoors to safeguard the health of the attendees while continuing to combat the social isolation felt by many elderly residents. Their quick thinking and adaptability allowed the bingo sessions to continue, providing much-needed joy and a sense of normalcy amidst the uncertainty.

The impact of their work extends beyond just organizing a game of bingo; they have nurtured a community space where friendships flourish, spirits are lifted, and the social needs of the elderly are met with warmth and genuine care.



Greystones Cathaoirleach Stephen Stokes presenting the Civic Award to Mai Smullen of the Kindlestown and Kenmare Bingo committee

SPORTS AWARD - TADHG O'DONNELL

Greystones continues to make its mark on the national and international boxing scene, as evidenced by the remarkable achievements of this year's Sports Award recipient, Tadhg O'Donnell.

Tadhg, a phenomenal athlete, has not only claimed the national title three times but has also risen to prominence on the European stage by becoming Greystones' first ever European Boxing Gold Medallist.

Recently, Tadhg's remarkable journey continued in Croatia at the European Youth Championships earlier this month, where he competed again against Europe's best young boxers and this time

earned a bronze medal.

Tadhg's achievements in the boxing ring are a source of immense pride and inspiration for his peers at Temple Carrig School and for young people in Greystones.

This year's award not only celebrates Tadhg's historic achievement, but also honors the remarkable skill he displayed along the way. Throughout the European competition, Tadhg outmanoeuvred and outclassed four

highly skilled opponents without losing a single round. On his way to winning his most recent national championship here at home, he overcame four of Ireland's former champions, showcasing his exceptional technique and resilience.

Last year's Sports Award winner, Kaci Rock, said of Tadhg: "His dedication to his sport and his humble attitude make him a role model for young people and a future star."



Tadhg O'Donnell being presented with the Sports Award by Cllr Gerry Walsh

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD - JOHN O'GORMAN



John O'Gorman with Trish O'Gorman, receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award from Greystones District Engineer Ruairi O'Hanlon

John O'Gorman, who dedicated an impressive 51 years of his life to serving Wicklow County Council, is the esteemed recipient of this year's Lifetime Achievement Award.

John began his journey in 1973 as a skilled carpenter at Wicklow Gaol, where he laid the foundation of his lengthy and distinguished career. After 15 years at the Gaol, John's leadership abilities led him to the position of Area Supervisor in 1988, and he was subsequently promoted to Area Foreman for North Wicklow.

In recognition of his half-century of service, John was honored last March with a special award from Wicklow County Council, celebrating his remarkable five-decade career.

This award was part of a larger ceremony where 137 employees were recognized for their collective contribution of over 4,000 years of service to the local authority and the county. Among these, John stood out and received the night's most prestigious accolade for his unparalleled commitment.

John has shared that what he will miss most about his job is the sense of camaraderie with his colleagues. He humbly acknowledges that his success was not just his own but also the result of the joint effort of a committed and hardworking team. He never saw himself simply as a boss but as part of a cohesive unit, emphasizing that the strength of a leader is truly reflected in the strength of his team.

SPECIAL AWARD - SHARON FELTON

This year's Special Award goes to a truly inspirational member of the Greystones community, Sharon Felton. A longtime resident and a devoted Special Needs Assistant at St. Brigid's School, Sharon has significantly enhanced the lives of many families through her compassionate career and dedicated fundraising efforts.

It's thanks in large part to Sharon that Greystones will have its first official Darkness Into Light walk this year on 11th May. Prior to this, she organized informal seafront walks where participants would light candles, creating a powerful symbol of hope and support for those affected by mental health issues.

Sharon's history of community involvement is rich and varied. She organized the poignant Remembrance Evening in Burnaby Park two years ago; Jade's Glitter Ball in 2019 to support Jade McCann; and ran the Mini Marathon to fundraise for the Lucy Leahy memorial bench to honor a young local girl who passed away from cancer.

For many years, Sharon has been a stalwart supporter of the Irish Cancer Society's Daffodil Day, dedicating her time to collecting donations and

spreading awareness. This commitment extends to her own battle with breast cancer, diagnosed last June. Throughout her treatment, Sharon has been remarkably open, sharing her journey on social media. Her courage and candidness have not only provided insight into her personal challenges but have also inspired and educated us on resilience, positivity, and the importance of community support.

This Saturday, Sharon's latest initiative, The Pink Ball for Cancer, will take place at the Parkview Hotel. This event is particularly close to her heart, organized to give back to Greystones Cancer Support, a group that has been a pillar of support for her. Sharon's life and actions teach us about the power of giving back and the profound impact of community solidarity.



Sharon Felton receiving the Special Award from Cllr Mark Barry.



2024 Greystones Municipal District PEOPLE OF THE YEAR AWARDS



SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD - DR. HELEN O'SULLIVAN-DWYER

This year's Special Recognition Award celebrated the remarkable contribution of Dr. Helen O'Sullivan-Dwyer, co-founder and chairperson of The Caroline Foundation. Named in memory of Caroline Dwyer-Hickey, who tragically lost her battle with cancer at 35, the foundation was established by Helen and her husband Dermot to turn profound grief into a beacon of hope through cancer research.

Under Helen's leadership and guidance, The Caroline Foundation has not only been a beacon of hope but also a powerhouse of community-driven fundraising, amassing over €2million for cancer research. This includes €1.3 million raised directly and an additional €800,000 for specific projects funded by Science Foundation Ireland and Puma Pharmaceuticals.

Helen's innovative approach to fundraising has mobilized entire communities, starting with the inaugural 'His & Her' lunch in 2013, which quickly became an annual highlight featuring notable speakers. The foundation's record-setting endeavors include creating the longest awareness ribbon chain along the Cliff Walk in 2014, which involved about 3,000 participants and set a new Guinness World Record. This was followed by assembling the longest line of teddy bears in 2015 and the most people wearing decorated hats in 2016, each event fostering community spirit and bringing together people of all ages.

Another significant initiative led by Helen was 'Give Us a Song,' launched in 2017 on World Cancer Day and Caroline's birthday, February 4th. This initiative saw choirs, music groups, and communities nationwide come together annually to perform music and songs, raising funds and awareness.

Even during the COVID pandemic, Helen's resolve didn't waver. She initiated 'March through March,' a challenge encouraging participants to walk 100km throughout the month, adapting to the constraints imposed by the pandemic.



Dr Helen O'Sullivan-Dwyer being presented with the Special Recognition Award by Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Aoife Flynn-Kennedy

CULTURAL AWARD - MILLA HANCOCK

Milla Hancock, originally hailing from Goa, has become a vital part of the Greystones community since her arrival. As a passionate advocate for the Indian Goan community in Ireland, Milla has played a pivotal role in both supporting her fellow Goans and enriching the local Irish community. Her efforts are prominently showcased through her leadership in organizing the Irish Goa Day celebrations, an event that she coordinates alongside Nora Hayden.

The festival, particularly last year's celebration held in Burnaby Park, drew thousands of attendees. The upcoming festival, scheduled for June 1st, promises to offer high-quality entertainment imported directly from Goa, reflecting the vibrant and dynamic culture that Milla's community has introduced to Greystones. With each passing year, the festival has seen increasing participation, indicating the growing influence and integration of the Goan community.

The Irish Goan community is committed to supporting not only Goans in Ireland but also the broader Irish community, especially during times of tragedy and hardship. Since the Goan community first began arriving in Ireland in 1996, they have been a shining example of successful integration. They have actively contributed to the local community by donating food and clothing, raising funds for medical expenses, offering services to nursing homes, and providing haircuts and vouchers to the homeless.

Furthermore, Milla and her community are working towards an ambitious goal of establishing an affordable nursing home for the Irish Goan community, reflecting their dedication to long-term community support. In addition to her community work, Milla has also made her mark as a successful businesswoman in Kilcoole. Her diverse contributions highlight her multifaceted role as both a community leader and an entrepreneur, making her a distinguished figure in both the Goan and Irish communities.



Cllr Tom Fortune presenting Milla Hancock with the Cultural Award

YOUTH RECOGNITION AWARD

For their remarkable initiative and commitment to environmental advocacy, local students and Tidy Towns members Olwyn Costello (15), Siofra Scanlon (14), and Lucas O'Connor-Azpiazzy (13) have been honored with a Youth Recognition Award.



Cllr Lourda Scott presenting the Youth Recognition Award to Siofra Scanlon, Lucas O'Connor-Azpiazzy and Olwyn Costello

These three environmental champions earned their spots at the Irish Government's Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss-the state's first youth citizen's assembly. There, they powerfully advocated for nature's rights and influenced government policy.

Siofra collaborated with teams from DCU and UCC to design the Assembly, creating a platform for youth engagement and idea sharing. Olwyn and Lucas, meanwhile, voiced young people's perspectives on biodiversity. Together, they joined peers from across Ireland for intensive weekends in Glencree and Killarney, devising strategies to combat biodiversity loss.

Their efforts culminated in a report with 58 action recommendations, which they presented to the Minister for Nature and Heritage. Their advocacy paid off with the integration of several proposals into the National Biodiversity Plan, including the establishment of a permanent Children and Young People's Forum on Biodiversity by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Beyond the assembly, Siofra and Olwyn engaged with Wicklow County Council, recommending local actions for inclusion in Wicklow's Climate Action Plan. They also shared their insights at the Mary Robinson Climate Conference, presented their assembly report to Mary Robinson herself, and discussed climate justice with the US and French Ambassadors to Ireland.

COMMERCIAL AWARD - ZOOM ADVENTURE PLAY

This year's Commercial Award went to Zoom Adventure Play in Charlesland for their remarkable initiative in launching the monthly 'Additional Needs and Autism Friendly Play' sessions. These sessions provide a specially tailored, inclusive environment for children with special needs and autism, demonstrating Zoom's commitment to inclusivity and community service.

Founded in 2007 by a local Greystones family, Zoom Adventure Play was envisioned as a community hub where children and their parents or caregivers could enjoy quality time together. The founders, drawing on their backgrounds in the airline industry, were inspired by their travels to design unique, engaging experiences for children. Features at Zoom include a hurricane tunnel and floating balls inspired by the Chicago Children's Museum.

Zoom's commitment extends beyond play; it includes providing a welcoming space for adults and a cafe serving homemade, healthy food. The venue's design facilitates ease of movement and safety, making it accessible for children of all abilities. Additionally, Zoom fosters a strong community spirit by employing local students and supporting their educational and career progressions.

Zoom's ethos is about creating a space that enriches the lives of both children and adults, making it not just a play center, but a vibrant part of the Greystones community. This award recognizes their dedication to inclusivity and community engagement, setting a benchmark for commercial enterprises in the area.



Ian Colgan from Wicklow Times Tina Hennelly, Josephine Lloyd and Sophie Burke from Zoom Adventure Play being presented with the Commercial Award by Ian Colgan of Wicklow Times

German students preserving history at Glencree

For the third time, students and teachers from the Eichendorffschule in Wolfsburg, Germany, visited the German War Cemetery in Glencree on Saturday 20th April, to honour and preserve the memories of those buried there.



One of the visiting German students places a new QR code on one of the graves at the German Graveyard in Glencree

This educational pilgrimage, held for the last few years, has become an annual tradition for the school, with 12 students this time conducting extensive research on the lives interred within this remote and serene resting place.

In 2022, their visit consisted of maintenance work on the gravestones where German soldiers are buried. Their aim is to maintain a project in conjunction with local schools, where regular visits are carried out for necessary work.

This year's focus included Hans Möller, a Jewish victim of World War II, whose tragic death came when the ship Arandora Star was torpedoed by a German submarine while en route to Canada. Möller's body, initially



Students from Eichendorffschule tending to the graves of German soldiers in Glencree.

washed ashore in Donegal, was later reburied in Glencree.

The students meticulously compiled Möller's story, along with those of other German soldiers and civilians, and made the information accessible to all via QR codes. These digital memorials were placed beside the graves during their recent visit, providing visitors with instant access to the histories that the graveyard conceals.

Unfortunately, the QR codes that the students installed during their previous visit last year were removed by an unknown party. The students, undeterred, expressed hope that visitors would not only engage with but also respect these digital tributes by leaving them undisturbed.

The visit also illuminated other tragic tales, such as that of a German aircrew whose plane crashed over Dursey

Head during the war. Local historian Frank Tracy showed the students a shared grave of a Jewish man who perished in World War I and a German soldier from World War II, symbolising the universal loss brought by warfare.

Amid these reflections, the students appreciated the tranquil atmosphere of the cemetery. Nadzeya and Tessa, participants in the project, noted, "Despite being a war cemetery, its atmosphere is truly peaceful." They were motivated to encourage future students to continue this work, hoping that the legacy of remembrance and reconciliation is carried on.

Adding to the rich educational experience, this visit also facilitated a cultural exchange with local students from St. Patrick's National School in Curtlestown, who participated in last year's Remembrance Day celebrations. The interaction included sharing languages and cultural insights, with German and Irish students teaching each other words from their native tongues. "We hope that we will stay in contact, and it was very nice to play, talk, and work with the Irish students," said Tessa Schubert, reflecting on the meaningful engagement.

Supported by the German War Grave Commission, these endeavors by the students of Eichendorffschule not only help in conserving the historical significance of the Glencree Cemetery but also bridge histories and cultures, fostering an understanding that transcends generations and national boundaries.

The war cemetery at Glencree, one of many German war cemeteries in Western Europe, serves as a stark reminder of the devastation of the First and Second World Wars.

134 German military servicemen and civilians are buried there, many of them Luftwaffe pilots who flew off course while flying over England, or crashed as a result of damage to their aircraft or fuel loss.

The Glencree website states, "Interred here also are a number of regular naval personnel (Kriegsmarine) whose bodies washed up, sometimes in remote coastal locations. Of the eighty-one air and naval servicemen buried in Glencree, the identities of twenty-eight remain unknown."

"Those who engaged in the 'secret side of war' are also buried here. Dr. Hermann Gortz, who took his own life to avoid arrest as a spy, has the only individual memorial - a finely carved stone relief - in the cemetery."

"Six soldiers of the First World War are also interred. These soldiers died while in a British prisoner of war camp based in Ireland from 1915-1918."

"The cemetery is also the final resting place of forty-six German civilians who were being transported from England to Canada in July 1940. Their ship 'The Arandora Star' was torpedoed by the German submarine off the coast of Donegal."

"Just inside the wrought iron gated entrance, a poem by Professor Stan O'Brien, a dedicated supporter of the Irish-German Society, set in polished stone, captures the poignancy of this quiet resting ground."

"A pathway leads to the 'Hall of Honour', a place of reflection and prayer. Just beyond the Hall the gravestones are laid out in eight gently curved arcs, while a mosaic Pieta, designed by Berlz, the Munich born painter, adorns the interior wall. Seton a height above the cemetery is a fine Celtic cross."



Teachers Benedikt Melzig, Susanne Wolf and Christian Luebke with students from Eichendorffschule

Disabled drivers launch campaign for Text Alert Scheme countrywide

Fear of physical and verbal abuse and their own safety were among the top reasons for not approaching somebody parked illegally in accessible parking bays, according to a survey carried out by the Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland (DDAI) in April 2024.

Over 2,600 people from across the country responded to the survey, which was carried out to highlight the DDAI's campaign to call on city and county councils nationwide to introduce a Text Alert Scheme to combat the misuse of accessible parking bays in public places. 94% of respondents said they would welcome a mobile phone Text Alert Scheme to notify the local warden when someone

was parked illegally. It is an offence to park a vehicle in an accessible parking bay in a public place without a valid parking permit. Offenders receive a parking fine of €150 which increases to €225 if not paid within 28 days. Despite this, parking bay abuse is still going on, according to Richard Ryder of the Disabled Drivers Association.

Richard Ryder, marketing manager with the Disabled Drivers Association said, "Our survey wasn't confined to our members, we received a huge response from across the community, with many people without disabilities commenting they are annoyed and frustrated with the misuse of accessible parking bays."

"It's very clear that people want an opportunity to be able to do something about parking bay abuse but in a safe way. It's why we are calling on city and county councils to begin using a Text Alert Scheme in their areas. It's safe, it's easy and it's a significant deterrent," Ryder continued.

The survey results were highlighted at the DDAI's AGM and Strategy Launch in the Connacht Hotel,

Galway on Sat 20th April 2024, at which the charity announced the details of its three-year strategic plan. The plan was launched by Sean Canney TD, a member of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters. The event was also attended by Mairead Farrell, TD and Noel Grealish TD with special guest Nikki Bradley, an adaptive adventurer and one of Ireland's leading female motivational speakers.

Chairman Seamus Reidy said, "Our mission is to present physical disability in the best possible light and strives to show that most physical disabilities can be overcome, and individuals can go on to achieve their full potential, with the benefit of support and training."

The Text Alert scheme is already in use in Lucan and Rathfarnham Villages in Dublin and Gorey in Wexford. Every publicly accessible parking bay has a sign displaying the bay number and a mobile phone number. If someone is parked in one of those bays without a permit or is



Max and Mia Nichols enjoying the sunshine at Wicklow RNLI



Richard Ryder, marketing and communications manager, Disabled Drivers Association and disability advocate Nikki Bradley launching Text Alert campaign

misusing the permit, people can text the bay number to alert the traffic warden.

Disability advocate Nikki Bradley is campaigning to have the Text Alert Scheme introduced into her native Donegal. Nikki said, "As someone living with a physical disability, I have experienced first-hand the negative knock-on effect that occurs when someone

unlawfully parks in a disabled bay. I have often found myself left with no option but to park in a 'normal' parking space which makes it extremely difficult to get out of my car."

"The Text Alert Scheme is an excellent solution to this ongoing issue, and I welcome it wholeheartedly. It will give those living with reduced mobility that feeling of power and con-

trol that they have not had prior to now. Parking in an accessible parking bay is not a luxury. It is a necessity."

The Disabled Drivers Association (DDAI) is Ireland's leading charity for disabled drivers and passengers on a national level. It promotes independence and equal opportunity through mobility, education and training.

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National Learning Network, Bray

Three new jobs in a month

How National Learning Network scored the perfect hat-trick

National Learning Network (NLN) is celebrating another great month with three of their students landing jobs! This success story highlights their job-seeking training program's (JobStart) support and success for people needing support in getting and keeping a job.

Suzanne (name changed) exemplifies the impact of NLN's support. A year ago, anxiety and shyness made job seeking and interviews daunting. However, an ad for NLN's "JobStart - Training in the Workplace" training course sparked hope. Suzanne found the encouragement and practical guidance she needed.

Her job-seeking instructor, Colette O'Loan, played a pivotal role. Together, they secured a valuable work placement, with Colette providing crucial support during employer conversations and training planning.

One of the key features of the job seeking course - JobStart - Training in the Workplace, is that NLN and the employer agree a training plan for the student so they get the most out of the placement.

Suzanne thrived. She seamlessly settles in with colleagues, gaining newfound confidence. Armed with an enhanced CV, a positive attitude, and valuable skills, she landed her dream job as a Catering Operative in a local school.

"Three students securing jobs in a month - that's great!" says

Alison Gapert, NLN's local manager. "It's a testament to the combined strength of our determined students and our expert instructors."

NLN, funded by the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB), empowers individuals facing physical/mental health challenges or learning difficulties. Alison has observed a rise in young people struggling with school due to anxiety. For them, NLN offers a critical re-engagement pathway.

"School isn't for everyone,"

Alison acknowledges. "Some want a job, but anxiety and lack of confidence hold them back. That's where we step in."

Suzanne echoes this sentiment: "NLN opened the door - the rest was up to me. They provided the support I needed, and I became more confident week by week."

National Learning Network offers a variety of courses for job seekers and those seeking to resume education/training, gain qualifications, and get and keep a job. See their ad on this page to learn more!

Matthews impressed by youth delegates at Wicklow ETSS Model United Nations

Green TD Steven Matthews has congratulated Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School on organising and hosting another successful Model United Nations conference.

Deputy Matthews commented, "I was delighted to attend and address the opening ceremony of the Model United Nations 2024, which hosted over twenty schools and 200 delegates from across the country. The event was expertly organised by students, led by Secretary General Aidan O'Connor and Deputy Secretary General Ayah Mohamed. The students debated and discussed global issues around health, security, environmental and social justice in committees before bringing matters to the delegate countries in the general assembly.

"These students are incredible, they are teaching and learning vitally important skills around debating, negotiating and consensus building. These skills are so important to protect peace and our democratic principles in the face of ever divisive politics and global tensions. In my address to the conference I suggested that some of the most important skills are the ability to listen carefully, to be inquisitive, respectful and honest and to always verify your information. The skills and professional approach that I witnessed from the delegates leaves me in no doubt that our future is in good hands but only if our older generation can take the steps necessary on climate, health and environment until they are ready to take the wheel.

"It was very fitting that the conference also paid tribute and remembrance to former principal Colm Kehoe who was a champion for the Model United Nations and who has left a proud and lasting legacy at ETSS Wicklow," concluded Deputy Matthews.



Steven Matthews TD, Secretary General Aidan O'Connor, Annie Waithira-Burke and Deputy Secretary General Ayah Mohamed.

Kildare & Wicklow ETB Core values take centre stage at national education symposium

Equality 'most challenging' value to implement in one third of all post-primary schools

Over 200 principals and teachers from across Ireland's sixteen Education and Training Boards, including Kildare & Wicklow ETB, who gathered at a national symposium "Let's Talk Ethos" in Athlone on 22nd April to reflect on their core values have heard that the previously "uncontested" core value of equality can be the most challenging to implement.

Education & Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) commissioned research on how schools are currently experiencing the ethos agreed for Ireland's almost 300 Community National Schools and Community Colleges under the patronage of Education and Training Board (ETBs). While the overall findings were very positive, with clear evidence of the core values of excellence in education, care, equality, community, and respect in action across the sector, the research highlighted that the most challenging core value to implement is 'equality'.

"We think this is for a number of reasons" says ETBI General Secretary Paddy Lavelle "including teacher identity, the need for training and more time for discussion on equality issues. However, the climate has also changed: previously uncontested values like equality are increasingly contested in the often-febrile public discourse we see across social media. This symposium gave our school leaders the space and time to explore key equality issues and shows me that, despite the challenges, ETB principals and teachers are very proud and committed to provide equality-based, inclusive and multi-denominational education for all students."

Dr Séamus Conboy, ETBI's Director of Schools agrees: "Having



Kildare & Wicklow ETB Ethos champions pictured at the Let's Talk Ethos: National Symposium held in Athlone: (l-r) Grainne O'Connor, Ethos Coordinator, Ken Scully, Director of Schools and Deirdre Keyes CE of Kildare & Wicklow ETB

strong multi-denominational primary and post-primary schools has never been more important: the 2022 Census shows that 69 per cent of people in Ireland now consider themselves to be Roman Catholic and 14% of the population identify as having no religion. There are also significant increases in those identifying as having other religious beliefs. Our own research, carried out by Opinions in 2023

shows that 61% of people nationally - of all religious backgrounds and none - want multi-denominational schools. ETBs provide this equality-based education at primary and post primary level. While one in 3 post-primary schools are multi-denominational, only one in 20 of Ireland's primary schools are multi-denominational. There is a clear evidence base for the need for change."

The "Let's Talk Ethos"

symposium included an address by Professor Anne Looney, Executive Dean in Dublin City University's Institute of Education, a dynamic panel discussion featuring ethos champions and equality themed workshops on:

- Beliefs and Religions
- LGBTQ+ Inclusion
- Support for marginalised communities including Travellers
- Creating a culture of welcome.

Taoiseach delivers on pledge to support Newcourt Special School

An Taoiseach Simon Harris TD last week confirmed an increased allocation of post primary teaching hours in two Bray based schools and the appointment of an administrative deputy principal in Marino School.

Speaking last week, An Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "I am really pleased to deliver on a pledge I made to schools in Wicklow to further support the need for improved special educational resources in Wicklow. Back in October I visited Newcourt Special School in Bray where I met with a number of students and staff. I listened carefully to their needs and those of other schools in Wicklow I have visited over the past year and have been determined to improve special education delivery across the county."

"Today I am delighted to say Newcourt Special School and Marino School in Bray have received an increased allocation of teaching hours, allowing for more personalised and effective educational classes for those with extra needs. On top of this Marino School in Bray is getting a new

Administrative Deputy Principal. This role will be vital in supporting principals to boost student learning experiences and increasing engagement with community and parents."

An Taoiseach Simon Harris concluded: "I want parents of with children with additional needs to know that as Taoiseach I will continue to stand on their behalf so that their voices are heard. What I want to see is schools delivering across the county comprehensive national curriculum subjects at both junior and senior cycles, which are specifically designed to build on individual strengths, fostering progression and smooth transitions for students. One of my core values is Equality of opportunity and the people of Wicklow can count on me to deliver on my promise for a more equal Ireland."



An Taoiseach Simon Harris with members of staff from Newcourt School in Bray

Wicklow students honoured at All Ireland Scholarships award ceremony

Four Wicklow students have received an All Ireland Scholarship. AIS has awarded 1,799 scholarships to date

Four Wicklow students have been awarded an All Ireland Scholarship which will cover the full duration of their undergraduate studies.

Hugh Mac Giolla Cearra from Colaiste Raithin, Hannah O'Connor from East Glendalough School, Jonas Stafford also from East Glendalough School, and Robert Shparuta from St. David's Holy Faith, were honoured at the All Ireland Scholarships Awards Ceremony on the 30th of March in University Concert Hall, University of Limerick.

In attendance at the ceremony was scholarship sponsor JP McManus, Guest of Honour and CEO of Northwell Health, Michael J. Dowling, Minister for Further and Higher Education Niall Collins T.D. and Director of Skills, Strategy & Policy, Department the Economy, Northern Ireland, Graeme Wilkinson as well as the family, friends and school representatives of the scholarship recipients.

Commenting at the awards ceremony, Scholarship Sponsor JP McManus said: "I am delighted to be here today to celebrate the outstanding academic achievements of these 125 students. To date, 1,799 students have received an All Ireland Scholarship and 1,348 of those students have since graduated from university. Today is a very special occasion for the students, their families and principals. They should all be very proud of themselves, and we are looking forward to seeing what they do in years to come."

The All Ireland Scholarships were estab-

lished in 2008 by JP McManus and this year marks its 16th anniversary. The third level educational scholarship is awarded to 125 of the highest - achieving students per year, with a minimum of two students

from each of the 32 counties. The recipients must meet a further set of criteria, including attending a non-fee-paying school and be in receipt of a third level education maintenance grant from Student Universal Support Ireland

(SUSI) or be in receipt of an Education Maintenance Allowance in Northern Ireland.

The scholarship offers full academic financial support for the duration of the students' third level studies.



Hannah O'Connor from East Glendalough School



Robert Shparuta from St. David's Holy Faith



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Mermaid wins IMRO Venue of the Year Award

Mermaid Arts Centre is thrilled to announce its recent accolade as the Venue of the Year at the IMRO Venue Awards 2024 in the rest of Leinster category.

In a statement regarding the awards, Eleanor McEvoy, IMRO Chairperson, expressed her delight, stating, "I'm delighted for these well-deserving winners this evening. They are the

lifeblood of the Irish music industry, providing the means, the ambiance, and the environment to hear music the way it is truly meant to be heard - live on stage in front of an appreciative audience."

The event, hosted by IMRO, took place on Tuesday, 5th of March at the Sugar Club, Dublin. The shortlist of nominees was curated by over 20,000 IMRO members through a public vote.

A small representative group from Mermaid Arts Centre attended the ceremony on the evening. To the delight of the team the Arts Centre was awarded Venue of the Year in the Rest of Leinster category.

The evening was further enriched with captivating performances by Qbanaa, EFÉ, Big Sleep, and DJ Maria Lawlor.

Mermaid Arts Centre is Wicklow's creative powerhouse. With a theatre, gallery, cinema, café and a lively programme of events to enjoy and participate in, we're a home for artists and artistic communities to create, connect and make memories.

Julie Kelleher, Artistic Director & CEO at Mermaid Arts Centre, commented: "There's an exceptional music culture in Wicklow, and Bray is a fantastic town for live music, supported by very loyal audiences who



Members of Mermaid Arts Centre Board Cllr. Melanie Corrigan, Ursula Quill and Cllr. Anne Ferris, and Julie Kelleher unveiling the IMRO award at Box Office.

attend live events at Mermaid all year round. We work really hard at putting together a varied and exciting programme of music events and creating a really excellent live experience for those

audiences, so it's lovely to see the whole culture of that recognised and celebrated. We're really grateful to the mystery industry colleague who nominated us, as well as all those who voted in the

awards and the team at IMRO."

Cllr. Anne Ferris, Chairperson of Mermaid Arts Centre's board of directors, said of the award: "I'd like to pay particular tribute to the

team here at Mermaid Arts Centre especially our technical and front of house teams whose hard work and warm welcome is the backbone of what makes this a great live music venue."



Julie Kelleher, Artistic Director and Darren Coogan, General Manager receiving the award for Best in Rest of Leinster - photo by Glen Bollard

Georgia Cécile Quintet

Whale Theatre, Friday 3rd May, 8pm (doors 7pm). Tickets €25 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.



The Glasgow born chanteuse exploded onto the UK jazz scene in 2021 with a startling debut - 'Only the Lover Sings' - for which she was named UK Jazz Act of the Year and Vocalist of the Year at the 2022 Jazz FM Awards.

Her debut album also ended that year topping the UK's official charts in the jazz/blues category.

The granddaughter of a renowned Scottish jazz pianist, Georgia Cécile's sound combines jazz, soul and R & B influences; the girl groups of the 60s and 70s being a particular touchstone. She perfectly mixes classic song-writing, contemporary production and modern jazz sensibility.

While her vocals are impeccable Georgia Cécile's music is also a credit to her long term collaborator, pianist Euan Stevenson, and to a formidable line-up that includes top Scottish players Ryan Quigley (trumpet, flugelhorn), Andrew Robb (double bass) and Matt Clark (drums).

Championed since she first emerged by singing star Jamie Cullum, in a dizzying break-out year Cécile supported Gregory Porter on tour, performed with the BBC Concert Orchestra, and showcased at SXSW in Austin, Texas. Her shows with Porter included four sell-out nights at The Royal Albert Hall, after which she played a debut at London's legendary Ronnie Scott's venue that sold out rapidly.

George Colligan Quartet

Whale Theatre, Saturday 4th May, 8pm (doors 7pm). Tickets €25 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

New York based pianist and bandleader George Colligan is one of the most original and compelling jazz artists of his generation.

He has released more than 25 of his own albums, has recorded on over 100 others. Colligan has performed with an array of jazz stars, Cassandra Wilson, Don Byron and Buster Williams included.

The pianist, who was winner of the 2015 DownBeat Magazine Critics Poll is a long-time member of the legendary Jack DeJohnette's ensemble. Colligan previously played an 'On the Road' show at Bray Jazz in 2018, recorded 'Live in Arklow' from recordings of that gig at a church in the south Wicklow town.

George Colligan is joined here by decorated Belgian alto saxophonist Stéphane Mercier, Belfast-born international drumming star Darren Beckett, and top Irish bassist Dave Redmond.



Eva Belle Bradshaw as Flounder with the Mersisters in the Avonmore Musical Society's recent production of *The Little Mermaid*, in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow.

'I'd do it all again!'

Popular showband Singer Tina shares some memories of Eurovision 74'

It's been 50 years since the Swedish pop group Abba won the Eurovision song contest on 6th April 1974. This week I caught up with Irish singer Tina as she celebrates 50 years since she represented Ireland on stage alongside the Swedish super group.

by Amanda Bell

Eurovision 1974 is classed by many as one of the best Eurovision shows ever!

It certainly was the launch pad for some extremely well-known names like Abba, Olivia Newton-John and Grey-stones local Philomena Quinn better known in the music business by her stage name Tina.

Tina was the lead singer of many well-known Irish showbands of the 60's and 70's like The Mexicans, The Real McCoy, and the Nevada showband. Later she went on to have a solo career in the 80's. She had plenty of hit songs too like "I Don't Know how to Love Him," "I'd Do It All Again and Viva L'Amour" to name but a few.

In 1974 She proudly represented Ireland singing the up-beat pop song "Cross Your Heart", written by Paul Lyttle of the 70's Irish pop group "Chips" of which singer Linda Martin was once a member.

Cross Your Heart hit number one in the Irish charts and increased Tina's fame to an even bigger audience world-wide.

However, those watching Eurovision that night may not have realised that Tina had just recovered from a very serious road accident which she had been in the previous year.

On the way back from a gig in county Kerry the van she was travelling in crashed near Portlaoise. All the heavy band equipment was flung from the back of the van to where Tina was sitting, almost crushing her to death!

She was rushed to hospital where it was touch and go if she was to live. Thankfully after a long spell in hospital she did recover and went on to perform at the famous song contest held at the Dome in Brighton, UK.

Exciting as it was, Abba had it in the bag with Waterloo.

Tina tells us "They had something special. No denying it, that was such a good song. At rehearsals even I was humming it and tapping my feet to the beat she laughs. Everyone was clapping after Abba's rehearsal. It wasn't surprising they won as they were great.



Tina

"There were no bad feelings about not winning the competition. Not at all. All of us were professionals and we all had well established singing careers before then, even though many of us were only in our twenty's we had accomplished a lot in the music industry before that event.

"But being part of Eurovision took your career to a larger audience and a higher level. So, I for one felt honoured to be there and so enormously proud to represent my country. I gave it my all on the night and loved every minute.

"I met all the contestants too including Olivia Newton-John she was such a beautiful, fun, upbeat girl. What a voice!

"I always loved Olivia's singing even before Eurovision. Many of her songs I sang at my

concerts too." At the Eurovision Song Contest, Olivia sang "Long Live Love", and her stage craft was great. She and I chatted regularly at rehearsals.

"I can remember at

Eurovision she had a smile for everyone and was happy to stop for autographs and photos. She was incredibly positive and professional. When she was ill later in life that wonderful positivity still shone through.

Unfortunately, as the years went by our careers took us in different directions, so we never got the chance to meet up again in person.

I was absolutely devastated when I heard my lovely Eurovision pal had died in 2022 after a long tough battle with cancer.

"We both loved Abba's sound. Agnetha and Frida were stunning girls but also, they were lovely to work with. I didn't realise Agnetha and I had a few things in common. We both worked as telephonists before we became singers and we both had a number one hit in our own countries with the song 'I Don't Know How to Love Him'. I sang it in English, and she sang it in Swedish.

"Abba did brilliantly winning Eurovision with

Waterloo and went on to achieve so much in the music industry. I'm looking forward to visiting the purpose built Abba Arena in London sometime and watching the fabulous Abba show.

Really, all the contestants were lovely people that year. There were no ego's back then it was all about the audience and their enjoyment. Yes, Euro 74 was such a wonderful time for all of us. We were young and having fun.

"As for myself I'm good. I'm here and happy with my lovely husband Eamon. I still sing a little, but my greatest joy is singing for the congregation at my local church on Sundays. As for myself I now live in County Offaly with my lovely husband Eamonn. I still sing a little and one of my greatest joys is singing in church on Sundays. I probably will watch this year's Eurovision and I wish Bambi Thug - the Irish entry the best of luck in Malmö. Enjoy it, it's a fantastic opportunity and



Tina pictured after she won the Irish finals with Paul Lyttle, the man who wrote her Eurovision song 'Cross Your Heart'.

experience. I had a fabulous career in the music business which I'm incredibly grateful for and

met lots of wonderful people. I've sang with the best of musicians and singers too. I'd do it all

again bar the accident. But Eurovision 1974 will always be one of my best memories..."



Tina with Olivia Newton-John at the Eurovision Song Contest 1974



Eurovision '74 promo photo



Tina pictured with the Nevada Showband

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Wicklow students win top prizes in art competition



Aidan Bolger from Aughrim

Five Wicklow students have won top prizes in this year's 70th Texaco Children's Art Competition.

They were: Martyna Gabriel (age 18), a pupil at Dominican College, Wicklow; Aidan Bolger (18), from Aughrim; Donncha Hunter (16), from St. Catherine's Special School, Newcastle; Freyja Ryan-Dockrill (14), from Greystones Community College and Michael Halpin (13), from New Court School in Bray.

All were winners of Special Merit Awards for artworks that Final Adjudicator, Gary Granville, Professor Emeritus of Education at the National College of Art and Design, said "demonstrated high levels of skill and imagination".

No strangers to the Competition, Martyna and Freyja both won Special Merit Awards last year.



Donncha Hunter from St. Catherine's Special School



Martyna Gabriel (age 18) from Dominican College



Michael Halpin (13), from New Court School in Bray.



Freyja Ryan-Dockrill (14), from Greystones Community College and her artwork



Commenting on Freyja's success, art teacher Ms. Joan Morton remarked on her natural talent. "From the beginning of 1st year, Freyja has been a talented and inspired art student and never afraid to try new things. We are really proud of these achievements on the National Stage".

Wicklow children win in Dream Car Art Contest

The future of art in Wicklow is bright as Toyota Ireland reveals the winners of this year's Toyota Dream Car Art Contest. Four year old Faie O'Sullivan, from Derrybawn placed first in the 7 and Under category, while 12 year old Eva Yu of Bray placed first in the 12 - 15 Years category. Now in its 17th year, the hugely popular contest saw over 730 entries across three age categories submitted by children around Ireland.

Toyota's Dream Car Art Contest asks children from all across the world to illustrate their vision of the car for the future. Children are encouraged to be as creative and innovative as possible with their entries and develop something that they would like to see on the roads - or even in the skies themselves one day. The Toyota Ireland Dream Car Art awards were judged by Helene Hugel, CEO & Artistic Director of Helium Arts

and Mark O'Kelly, Head of Painting at the National College of Art and Design.

Faie was awarded first prize for her brilliant piece of art, 'The Moon Car' which depicts a car using energy from the stars to travel through space, while Eva picked up first prize for her

entry, 'Floral Toyota Robot Transformer'.

Eva's striking sustainability-inspired artwork features a futuristic vehicle that collects rubbish on land and sea and grows plants. Faie and Eva's works of art, along with the winning entries from the seven other Irish finalists, will now be put forward to represent Ireland against finalists from other participating countries in the international stage of the contest.



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Local businesses urged to apply for Increased Cost of Business Grants

Fianna Fail candidate in the upcoming local election for the Wicklow Electoral Area, Sonia Casey-Shortt, has encouraged eligible businesses in Wicklow to apply for Increased Cost of Business (ICOB) Grants before the closing date.

As part of Budget 2024, signed off by Minister for Finance Michael McGrath, a package of €257 million for ICOB Grants was approved. Eligible businesses will receive a once-off grant payment with the amount of the grant to eligible businesses based on the value of the Commercial Rates bill the business received in 2023.

The opening date for the online sys-

tem to manage the online application for the grant was the 14th March 2024 and the closing date for businesses to confirm eligibility and upload verification details is the 1st May 2024.

Casey-Shortt said: "The Increased Cost of Business Grants (ICOB) was introduced by Fianna Fail as we recognise there are huge cost challenges facing businesses. Backing Wicklow businesses and ensuring they benefit

from targeted supports is a key priority of my campaign.

"Fianna Fail recognises the difficult environment small businesses, particularly hospitality businesses are operating in, and the ICOB Grants, while not a silver bullet, provide a welcome cash injection for businesses to cope with increased costs and the challenging wider economic context.

"Small businesses are the fabric of

our community in so many ways and I am calling for any eligible businesses that have yet to apply to do so before the deadline. Fianna Fail in Government will continue to listen and respond to the needs of businesses and prioritise their support."

Further detail on the ICOB Grant and how to apply can be viewed on Wicklow County Council's website here.



Sonia Casey-Shortt

Whitmore commends Wicklow's Cancer Support services

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has commended the many voluntary organisations across Wicklow that provide invaluable support to those impacted by cancer in the county. Her comments coincide with the annual East Coast FM Wicklow-Wide Coffee Morning fundraiser, which raises much-needed funds every year to help keep those services operating.

Deputy Whitmore said: "I was delighted to attend several coffee mornings across Wicklow today, which were raising funds for our cancer support organisations. Charities such as Purple House Greystones Cancer Support and many others do incredible work in the community, supporting cancer patients and their families through treatments and recovery, and this fundraiser organised by East Coast Radio is crucial to help them with this invaluable service.

"Every family in Ireland has been touched by cancer, and we all know its impact on everyone in a home. Most of those delivering these services are volunteers providing this crucial work in their free time. People all over Wicklow are generous with their time and skills, from driving people to their appointments, running counselling services, and volunteering in the service's charity shops. Their work is something for the whole county to be proud of, and today is an excellent opportunity to talk to those working on the ground in these services and to thank them for their efforts.

"I also want to congratulate East Coast FM for all their hard work organising coffee mornings around Wicklow today. They support this event every year, and I know for many of us, it is a staple of the diary."



Jennifer Whitmore TD with Purple House Volunteers at their Coffee Morning in Red Bird Cafe, Bray



Paudie Breen as Sebastian in Avonmore Musical Society's production of The Little Mermaid in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow.

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