



RIVER PROJECT
Page 6



MAKE WAY DAY
Page 8



FIREFIGHTERS
Page 9

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Tuesday 1st October 2024 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

WICKLOW'S MONIED TRAILS

Grants for 21 walking trails in County Wicklow were announced last week. The grants will be provided to nine Wicklow-based community groups.

Speaking on Friday, An Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "I am delighted to be announcing funding for walking trails across County Wicklow which will upgrade and improve the incredible amenities we already enjoy in this beautiful County. Walking trails are of huge benefit to people living in the County from a physical and mental health perspective but also a huge benefit to tourists who come to Wicklow to hike."

"For the first time we are ring fencing funding to promote our walking trails which will be welcome by the many businesses in Wicklow who benefit from increased footfall. We know the days are getting shorter and darker as we head into the winter so it's hugely important we upgrade our walking trails to make them safe."

"As an avid walker I can see first-hand the importance of providing suitable, safe and attractive walking trails."

The grants will be given to: Arklow Heritage/Nature Walks Development Co. Ltd (6 walking trails, €10,000); Avoca Tidy Towns & Community Courthouse (1 walking trail, €1,500); Blessington and District Forum (Trails) Ltd (1 walking trail, €2,500); Donard Glen Walking Trails (1 walking trail, €2,500); Glenmalur PURE Mile Group & Glens of Lead Group (1 walking trail, €4,000); Lacken Tidy Villages (1 walking trail, €1,500);



Maisie and Ali Butterworth with Sofia Barry at the Honey Festival in Ashford. Pic: Michael Kelly.



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- Lifestyle concerns, e.g.
 - Women's health services
 - Quitting smoking.

THINK PHARMACY



Rathdrum Tidy Towns (1 walking trail, €2,500); Tinahely Community Projects Ltd (4 walking trails, €4,000); Wicklow Uplands Council (5 walking trails, €10,000).

FG General Election candidate Councillor Edward Timmins said the local walking trails play an enormous role in our towns and villages.

"Walkways and trails are a blessing for communities in Wicklow providing an outlet to get fresh air, exercise, connect with neighbours and friends and boost our mental wellbeing. We all became so familiar with these walking trails during COVID lockdowns, and there is no doubting their valuable contribution to Wicklow's towns and villages. In Wicklow, we are fortunate to have such committed community organisations, and I am delighted that this funding will support

them to maintain and upgrade the walking trails".

Thanking all of the projects, Councillor Timmins stated: "I would like to pay tribute to all of these projects and thank them for their work."

"This will allow for crucial investment to be made in the walking trails, including the purchase of important equipment, or carrying out small scale maintenance works. The funding will also support the promotion of the trails as tourist attractions, which will provide a welcome economic boost for the wider communities across Wicklow. Indeed I look forward to walking these trails in the coming weeks and months and seeing their continued success," Cllr Timmins concluded.

However, Independent councillor Joe Behan, while welcoming the grants said he was dis-

appointed that possibly the best trail and tourist attraction in the county, the Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk was still

closed and had been for three years.

"Surely it is not outside the skill sets of a Minister and Taoiseach

who live in the county to get the necessary public bodies together to rapidly resolve this issue," he said.



Cllr Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien

Mental Health

"I believe very much that alongside vital services, Mental Health and Wellbeing is about people helping other people. It's about communities coming together to create hope, belonging and a sense of purpose. We can create environments that nurture resilience and support healing."

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Drew and Arlow Kavanagh with Jess Doolin at the Honey Festival in Ashford.

Race Night fundraiser for Greystones Family Resource Centre

The Greystones Family Resource Centre has announced its upcoming Race Night fundraiser on Thursday, October 10th at Greystones Rugby Club. The event promises to be an evening of fun, excitement, and community spirit, all for a great cause. Sponsors are still being sought, with a horse available for €20. Anyone in a position to offer sponsorship is urged to email ask@greystonesfrc.ie to find out more.

The Race Night will start at 7.30pm, with free entry on the night. Attendees will have the opportunity to bet on their favourite horses in a series of races. All proceeds are going toward the Greystones Family Resource Centre premises building fund. The Centre offers a wide range of programs, including parenting workshops, mental health services, youth activities, and outreach initiatives that strengthen the fabric of the local community.

Nicola Lawless, Chairperson of the FRC commented: "We're really looking forward to welcoming everyone to what promises to be a fun-filled and rewarding night. The support is greatly needed because of our population growth in the area, and the increased need for our services. As such we are seeking a purpose built facility."

Guests can also look forward to a fully stocked bar and snacks available for purchase throughout the evening. Greystones Rugby Club's atmosphere will add to the excitement, providing the perfect setting for this fun community event.



Nicola Lawless, Cllr Stephen Stokes and the Family Resource Centre team.

Shankill Classical Music Club

The next meeting is on Wednesday 9th October (this season the meetings are on the SECOND Wednesday of the month). Usual time - 7:45 to 10:00 pm, including a teabreak; and venue - Shankill Day Centre, Lower Rd, Shankill (100 yds from the main street, car parking available).

The music will be as always: a varied programme of classical music on CDs, covering many genres - orchestral, instrumental, vocal, opera etc. - in a friendly setting. You don't need to be an expert! Visitors and

new members are always welcome. There's no charge on the night. For further info phone or text John at 087 2109175.

Rathdrum Rugby Club

Girls rugby is on the up in Rathdrum Rugby Club and their u10 girls team are on the look out for some new players. Do you have a daughter born between 2015-2017? Would she like to try a new sport in a nurturing, encouraging setting? Get in touch if you think this sounds like your future rugby star and come down and give it a try. Contact the club via social media (@rathdrumrugbyclub) or call

John Cashman on 087 9497964.

Brockagh Country Market

The next event is on Sunday, Oct 13th. Come shop indoor and outdoor with beautiful handmade crafts and plenty of bargains and from gifts, clothes, plants, books, toys, skincare products, candles, art, tools, household items etc. You might be a keen bargain hunter or enjoy browsing for affordable gifts. Open to the public from 10am to 3pm. Tea, coffee and food snacks are available. Serving tasty Chips, Hot Dog and Burgers with a choice

of dressing at the best of prices. The barrier will be locked from 6pm Saturday evening until 8am Sunday morning. You can contact by phone 0404 45600 (Mon-Fri 9am to 4pm) or email brockaghooffice@gmail.com. All stallholders must pre book their space or no entry on the day. www.brockaghresourcecentre.ie. The Glendalough Market(carboot) is once a month on the 2nd Sun(except Jan/Feb).

Reaching out leaflet

The 'A Community Reaches Out' leaflet was launched in 2017 by Desi O'Toole. This leaflet he felt was now out dated being 8 years old and now he is relaunching his new edition It is a leaflet that lists all the services available locally and nationally in one place for all services but a focus on depression, and mental health.

Tinahely Library

Baby & Toddler Storytime - Every Wednesday at 10am all through the summer holidays. Stories, rhymes, songs, play and colouring

Adult Book Club - Tuesday October 1st, 7pm; Thursday October 3rd, 11am. Discover new books - chosen by the members. Relax and enjoy the discussion. All welcome

Open Day highlights importance of Wicklow Libraries

The crucial role of Wicklow public libraries in local community life was highlighted on National Public Libraries Open Day on Saturday, 28th September. Non-members and members alike were encouraged to 'Take a Closer Look' and visit their local public library on National Public Libraries Open Day to explore the myriad of free services on offer.

According to Dr Stuart Hamilton, Head of Libraries Development for the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), part of the remit of public libraries is to provide assistance to society where it is required.

"Irish public libraries have a proud and long-standing history of being integral within our villages, towns and cities in supporting people on an individual and a collective, community basis," he said. "They continue to fulfil an integral role in Irish life and, as their importance has continued to grow, the services provided have expanded to meet the needs of individual members and broader society."

"We aim to create a habit of visiting the public library among people who might not otherwise. Irish public libraries are important places of inclusivity within our communities. They provide a diverse range of resources and services to appeal to people of all abilities across society."

"Public libraries are connectors in the community. The local librari-

an will know the groups working to support learning, develop skills, support jobs seekers and those with special needs,

and will be able tell you who to talk to.

"Public libraries are community settings offering a broad range of free

services which allow people connect, access information, receive support and browse and escape."



Dr Stuart Hamilton, Head of Libraries Development for the Local Government Management Agency

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'133 bus issues need to be addressed'

Need for increased capacity as passengers being left by the side of the road

The issue of public transport difficulties in the north Wicklow area and the unreliability of Bus Eireann's 133 service is again being raised by TDs. There is growing frustration amongst commuters at the difficulties people are encountering, particularly during peak morning hours, which is causing considerable stress and anxiety to passengers, and disruption to workers, students, those attending hospital appointments and others.

The 133 route serves Wicklow Town, Rathnew, Ashford, Newtownmountkennedy, Kilpedder and Kilmacanogue. Passengers on this route have experienced delays, no shows and full buses passing them by for over a year, particularly at peak times.

Sinn Féin TD John Brady said: "While efforts have been made to attempt to improve the service, we remain in a situation where I am being regularly contacted by members of the public in north Wicklow who are being let down by this service on a constant basis. The situation is not acceptable. Passengers are being regularly left by the side of the road as the bus is full. The key issue here is one of capacity.

"If buses have to drive past waiting passengers because they are full, there is no other solution other than to put more buses on during the peak morning hours.

"I am calling on the transport provider to ensure that there is an increased capacity on the 133 route from Newtownmountkennedy,

Kilpedder, and Kilmacanogue onwards.

Delivery on this route must become fit for purpose. Extra buses need to be put on the route between 7am and 9am during weekdays to support the large numbers of users attempting to get to work and school.

Also commenting on the 133 issues, Green Party TD Steven Matthews said "I am very frustrated by the unreliability of the 133 service. I am contacted several times per week by passengers on this route who have been let down by this service and have been unable to travel or have been made late for work, college, and medical appointments. Buses on the route have been consistently late, unreliable and are lacking in capacity with many people unable to board the bus as it is often full once it leaves Wicklow Town. Transport information provided on the TFI Live app is also often inaccurate, leading to confusion for passengers.

"I have been in frequent contact

with the Area Manager for Bus Eireann to raise these concerns for over a year but any claims that improvements have been made have not adequately addressed the existing service delivery issues that impact frequent users of this service.

"This is not a new issue. It is not acceptable that this has been allowed to continue despite repeated commitments to listen and address commuters' concerns. If you take last week as an example, I have been told that the bus didn't stop due to it being full by the fourth of fifth stop on four days in a row at the same time. It's just not good enough.

"Improving access to public transport is one of my key priorities as Green Party TD for Wicklow. In order to be a viable option for commuters, public transport must be frequent, reliable and affordable. To see a route that services so many different locations in Wicklow failing on two of those criteria is extremely frustrating," concluded Deputy Matthews.

Resolution of Valleymount to Blessington school bus issue welcomed

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has welcomed confirmation by Bus Eireann that school transport for 52 pupils on the Valleymount to Blessington school bus route has been resolved and that a school bus has been put in place.

Deputy Brady said "Having been in contact with both Bus Eireann and the Department of Education over the last few weeks about the disgraceful annual saga of pupils being informed that there would be no school bus in place in many parts of Wicklow for the commencement of the school term, I welcome confirmation that a solution has now been found for the 52 pupils on the Valleymount to Blessington route.

"A bus has now been put in place for the 52 pupils on this school route. Whilst this is wel-

come, the failure to have the bus in place for the start of the school term has caused chaos for the parents and children over the last few weeks which left families with no choice but to drive their kids to school or try to make alternative arrangements.

"I am working with Bus Eireann to try to find a solution on several other routes, including the B9200 route from Roundwood to Wicklow Town which has left 49 pupils without a school bus. Several options are now being worked on and it's critically important that the Roundwood

school bus is back operating as soon as possible.

"This complete failure has now become an annual event for many parents and children. It is totally unacceptable, these children had been allocated a ticket for school transport, and which they had paid for, only then to receive an email just before the schools were due to start back saying the bus wouldn't be running.

"I will keep working with Bus Eireann on finding resolutions on all the Wicklow school bus routes that are facing problems, however

the onus and ultimate responsibility is with the Government. The Government has overseen a school transport system that is chaotic and not fit for purpose. Students and their families here in Wicklow have been left to pay the price for these shambles. "Each year, families face school transport chaos and confusion. Families are frustrated and feel badly let down by government failure to plan and to listen. We need the Minister and Government to address the annual crisis with school transport once and for all."



Mary Leonard watches the finishing touches of her portrait by artist Conor Walton during Culture Night in Arklow Library.

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Zach and Yvonne Johnson at the Honey Festival in Ashford.

Council launches public consultation phase for Biodiversity Action Plan

Wicklow County Council has announced the launch of the pre-draft public consultation phase for the County Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030, running from now until Monday 4th November. This plan aims to address biodiversity loss across the county and foster a more sustainable and resilient natural environment.

As the first local authority in Ireland to declare a biodiversity and climate-change emergency, Wicklow County Council is committed to protecting the rich biodiversity of the county. The Biodiversity Action Plan will provide a five-year framework that builds on national efforts to halt the decline of species and habitats.

The plan is underpinned by the objectives of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan, which places emphasis on local action to address global biodiversity challenges, including the restoration of ecosystems, safeguarding key species, and promoting nature-based solutions to mitigate climate impacts.

The public are invited to assist in the preparation of the Biodiversity Action Plan and to provide feedback on the consultation process. These views will be used to inform vision, aims and actions of the plan. The deadline for submission of comments or observations is 4pm on Monday 4th November.

Details of the pre-draft paper can be found on www.wicklow.ie, through the

Online Consultation Hub.

Additionally, Wicklow County Council's Biodiversity Officer will hold pre-draft public consultation drop in clinics to provide guidance at the following locations:

- **Ballywaltrim Library:** Wednesday, 9th October, 5pm - 7pm
- **Arklow Library:** Tuesday, 15th October, 5pm - 7pm
- **Wicklow Library:** Thursday, 17th October, 5pm - 7pm
- **Blessington Library:** Tuesday, 22nd October, 5pm - 7pm
- **Greystones Library:** Thursday, 24th October, 5pm - 7pm

Submissions at this pre-draft stage can be made via the Online Consultation Hub, via email to climatepolicy@wicklowcoco.ie or via post to the Senior Executive Officer at Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Paul O'Brien, said, "Our natural environment in Wicklow - from the

uplands to the coastline - provides essential services, including clean water, flood prevention, and carbon sequestration. Protecting biodiversity is about ensuring that these ecosystems remain healthy and resilient. This public consultation is a chance for everyone to have their say in creating a meaningful plan to protect our natural heritage."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, added, "The County Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan will align with national objectives and tailor them to the specific needs and challenges we face here in Wicklow. We want this to be a community-driven plan, and we encourage residents and stakeholders to engage fully in the consultation process to ensure the plan is comprehensive and forward-looking."

Submissions or observations should include your name and address and, where relevant, details of any organisation, community group or company etc. which you represent. Children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children, are particularly encouraged to make submissions or observations regarding the foregoing.

Play your part in protecting our shores

Do you like walking along our beautiful coastline, sandy beaches and rocky, pebbly shores? The All Ireland Coast Watch Survey, which is part of a wider European coastal initiative, started earlier in September and runs until Tuesday 15th October. Now operating for over thirty years, this month long survey is vital for raising awareness and for monitoring litter, water quality, and rare flora that occurs along our coastline.

Coast Watch Ireland has groups in other locations throughout the country but they need help this Autumn in Wicklow, particularly Wicklow Town. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage have provided essential funding to this long running initiative. Coast Watch Ireland is part of the wider Coast Watch Europe organisation, which is an international network of environmental groups, universities and other educational institutes.

To take part in this survey, go to Surveys (Coastwatch Europe and adopt a 500 metre stretch of coastline. Working in small groups or with a friend at low tide, explore your coastal stretch and record various litter items, for example plastic tops, wet wipes or fishing tackle and drinks cans. Survey forms, a training video, a guide to tides and other resources can be found on the Coast Watch Ireland website.



Coast Watch All Ireland Survey. Photo by Laurie Whelehan, SICAP Development Officer.

Adding to this, Wicklow County Council's Director Of Service, Theresa O'Brien praised the ongoing efforts of volunteers throughout the county on a range of citizen science initiatives such as this saying, "The data received is essential in feeding into government policy on environmental protection, following the recent introduction of the Return scheme and the new modified plastic bottle tops on Tetrapak and similar. We look forward to seeing findings of this year's survey."

Supporting this month long survey, Laurie Whelehan, a Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme

(SICAP) Development Worker with County Wicklow Partnership said, "It's great to see our community members, such as those in Wicklow Men's Shed, taking part in the Coast Watch survey. It enables the local community to take ownership in protecting their local natural environment and biodiversity."

In December, data collected by volunteers throughout Ireland will be presented at an event in Dublin's Trinity College. For further information and support, you can contact Wicklow County Council's Environmental Awareness Officer at eao@wicklowcoco.ie or visit the Coast Watch Ireland website.

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Berto's Pizzeria & Cafe Has Arrived – Kilmacanoge's Newest Dining Obsession!

If you're seeking a dining experience that combines authentic Italian flavours with a warm, inviting atmosphere, look no further than Berto's Pizzeria & Cafe. Located inside the historic Pluck's of Kilmac, at Junction 8 just off the N11, Berto's is perfectly positioned for commuters to and from Dublin, as well as visitors exploring Powerscourt, Glendalough, and Roundwood. With ample parking and easy access, it's the ideal destination for a meal that feels special from the moment you arrive.

A Passion for Food That Feels Personal

Roberto Macari, the man behind Berto's, understands that food is about more than just eating—it's about creating a connection, a feeling, a memory. Raised on the simple, heart-warming dishes his Nona Giulia prepared in Italy's Val di Comino, Roberto brings those beloved family recipes to Kilmacanoge, sharing them with the community.

The care and authenticity that go into every

dish at Berto's isn't just about quality—it's about making you feel like you're part of something special. "When people eat at Berto's, they're sharing in the stories and flavours of my childhood," says Roberto. "It's more than just a meal; it's a little piece of Italy."

Authentic Italian Flavours Without the Hefty Price Tag

Berto's offers a menu full of authentic pizzas, traditional pastas, and a

variety of Italian-inspired dishes, all crafted with ingredients imported directly from Italy. But here's the best part: Roberto believes that great food shouldn't come with a high price tag. "We want everyone to enjoy authentic, high-quality Italian cuisine without breaking the bank," he explains.

Whether you're stopping in for a quick coffee, enjoying Italian-inspired sandwiches for lunch, or sitting down to an exquisite dinner, you'll find the food at



Berto's is just as affordable as it is delicious.

A Space for Connection and Relaxation

Beyond the food, Berto's offers a modern yet cosy space that's perfect for gathering

with friends or relaxing with family. Every visit feels like an occasion, whether you're catching up over a casual meal or enjoying a more leisurely dinner. And with Pluck's Bar right next door, Berto's continues Kilmacanoge's tradition of creating spaces where commu-

nity and good times come together.

Don't Miss Out

Berto's is quickly becoming a must-visit for anyone who loves authentic Italian cuisine. If you haven't experienced it

yet, now is the time to discover what everyone's talking about. With its genuine Italian flavours, welcoming atmosphere, and fair pricing, Berto's Pizzeria & Cafe is the perfect place to enjoy a taste of Italy—without the hefty bill.



Roberto Macari outside Berto's in Kilmacanogue.

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Groundbreaking Wicklow river project completed

Since 2020, the East Wicklow Rivers Trust (EWRT), Wicklow County Council (WCC), Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), & Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) have been working together in partnership to improve habitat and biodiversity for migratory fish in rivers and streams in Co. Wicklow - 'Wicklow Fish Barrier Mitigation Programme'. The project has also been supported by local riparian landowners and National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In 2012 Inland Fisheries Ireland completed a survey of barriers to fish migration on rivers in County Wicklow. The scale of the problem was highlighted in the Avoca Catchment which showed that approximately 50% of the entire catchment is potentially impaired (fish migration partially or fully blocked) by man-made structures. One of these is at Ballinglen Bridge on the Ballinglen River, which is located between Aughrim and Tinahely

Villages. The Ballinglen River is a tributary of the Derry Water River, which joins the Ow River to become the Aughrim River and the barrier at Ballinglen Bridge was identified as a priority for action. The Ballinglen Bridge is a beautiful three-arched stone bridge built circa 1790. It is constructed of local shale with lime mortar and cut stone granite voussoirs. The floor bed underneath each archway of the bridge is laid with

cut granite stones which are perfectly laid and grouted. Unfortunately however this man made structure creates a barrier to fish migration for fish species such as the Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*), Sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) and the Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*) (all of these are given strict protection under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive), as well as the

European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), which is also a species in trouble. All of these species (with the exception of Brook lamprey) are diadromous - i.e. they travel between the sea and freshwater habitats where they spawn and a new generation begins life all over again. When migrating over large distances in rivers they inevitably encounter barriers to free movement which, as in the case of the Ballinglen Bridge prevents them from reaching their spawning grounds in the pristine habitat upstream.

Recognising the built heritage of the bridge, WCC carried out all necessary heritage and archaeology studies /reports and the East Wicklow Rivers Trust received funding from the IFI Salmon & Sea Trout Rehabilitation, Conservation & Protection Fund 2021 for the project and engaged RIVUS Ecological Engineering to complete an Ecological Impact Assessment Report, an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and to design the fish pass and lamprey/eel pass.

In 2024 the project was given the green light to proceed and was funded under the IFI Salmon & Sea Trout Rehabilitation, Conservation & Protection Fund 2023. IFI staff completed a pre-construction fish survey and water quality monitoring has been ongoing by WCC staff. Following a competitive tender process RIVUS Ecological Engineering were appointed to construct the rock ramp and these works are now substantially complete and we look forward to welcoming our special river inhabitants back to the Ballinglen Valley.

This project is but one small step in the restoration of river habitat for a suite of protected species and assists Ireland in meeting our commitments under the EU Water Framework and Habitats Directives.

It is also a great example of collaboration between NGOs, private enterprise and state agencies in delivering the type of projects envisaged for rivers under the EU Nature Restoration Law.

Jennifer Whitmore TD has welcomed the completion of the groundbreaking



Ballinglen River.

Wicklow River project.

She has commended all the participants and hailed Wicklow as a leader in improving fish migration in Ireland's rivers.

Deputy Whitmore, who is the party's spokesperson on biodiversity, said: "The work done by East Wicklow Rivers Trusts on this project has been immense. It is wonderful to say that Wicklow is leading the charge to improve the quality of fish migration patterns in Irish rivers."

"What is happening across Ireland's network of rivers and streams is very worrying, but the work done in Tinahealy is an example of us getting it right. The initiative has seen the completion of a barrier modification pro-

gramme for the Derry Water River at Belling Bridge near Tinahely. Using local stones to create a rock ramp under the bridge will open breeding grounds for upstream migratory fish."

Whitmore went on to explain: "Man-made barriers such as weirs, dams, culverts, sluices, ramps and bridges are making it impossible for migratory fish to travel upstream to breed. This includes salmon, a highly endangered species, trout, lamprey and eels. I have been involved in a groundbreaking project in Wicklow, led by the East Wicklow Rivers Trust, in partnership to set this right in Wicklow. This work could not have been done without the collaboration of

local stakeholders such as Wicklow County Council, Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Local Authority Water Programme (LAWPRO), the National Parks & Wildlife Service and a local farmer.

"Also, the tremendous work of Alan Sullivan, from RIVUS Ecology, who the East Wicklow Rivers Trust hired, must be acknowledged."

Deputy Whitmore concluded: "This is just one local example of what needs to be done nationally. I hope that as other counties move to improve the migration of fish species in rivers around the country, they will use the approach adopted here in Wicklow as a template, as it has been a wonderful success."



Ballinglen Bridge (pre works).



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

PROVISION OF LAND FOR PARKING

Invitation to submit Expressions of Interest to lease/sell a suitable site to Wicklow County Council for the provision of parking in Laragh or Glendalough Co. Wicklow

Wicklow County Council is seeking Expressions of Interest from landowners in the Laragh/Glendalough area who would be willing to sell a site in order to address the need for additional parking in the area.

The Glendalough and Wicklow Mountains National Park Visitor Experience and Management Masterplan (VEMMP) was launched in December 2023 and work has commenced on implementation of the actions contained within. The provision of additional parking to enhance the visitor experience is one such action. The VEMMP can be found at <https://www.failteireland.ie/Regional-experience-brands/Ireland-s-Ancient-East/Ireland-s-Ancient-East-experience-development/glendaloughmasterplan.aspx>

Landowners are invited to submit an Expression of Interest for land in Glendalough / Laragh that is fit for purpose and located in close proximity to Glendalough.

Full details (including the information to be included in the submission and selection criteria) is available on www.wicklow.ie or can be requested by emailing economicdevelopment@wicklowcoco.ie

All submissions must be made in writing and include all information requested. Submissions must be received by email to economicdevelopment@wicklowcoco.ie by 12:00pm on 23rd October 2024.



Deputy Whitmore with members of the East Wicklow River's Trust.

Questions asked and answered

Last week Sinn Féin TD John Brady asserted that the Wicklow County Council Planning Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) had serious questions to answer, following revelations that "the Planning SPC failed to perform its core statutory function of ensuring that local area plans are up to date. Its failure to do so has led to planning for hundreds of homes across Wicklow being turned down by An Bord Pleanála (ABP)."



Cllr Edward Timmins.

Replying, Councillor Edward Timmins, Chair of the SPC said "Clearly Deputy Brady does not understand the planning process. If the Blessington local area plan had been put in place it would reduce or stop house building in Blessington. This is because it would have to be based on the old National Planning Framework. The new National Planning Framework, which the Blessington plan would have to adhere to, is currently being finalised and is based on the 2022 census. The Blessington plan has commenced and will be finalised in tandem with the new National Planning Framework which will facilitate housing construction in line with demand. Housing delivery in Wicklow, is moving at pace. Since 2016 there have been about 200 new units built in Blessington.

"There is an existing planning permission for an additional c. 350 units in Blessington awaiting commencement, as well as 750 units either under construction or awaiting commencement in Wicklow-Rathnew. Between 2016 and mid 2024, 8,000 new housing units have been completed across the County.

"With respect to social and affordable housing, over 1,600 new units have been delivered since 2020. Politicians need to work together and cooperate for the good of County. Knee jerk and ill-informed comments are not the way to go. I'll continue to work with all colleagues to improve the quality of life for the people of County Wicklow."

'Glen of the Downs expansion is an absolute must'

On 25th September, Jennifer Whitmore TD hosted a packed meeting regarding the campaign to see the Glen of the Downs expanded. The proposal would see the State purchase 200 acres of land in Wicklow to allow for the expansion of the ancient woodland in the Glen of the Downs.

The meeting was attended by Wicklow locals, Fintan Kelly from the Irish Environmental Network, and Cllr Danny Alvey from Rewild Wicklow. It resulted in a renewed commitment by local activists to see the Government invest in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to expand the Glen.

Speaking after the meet-

ing, Deputy Whitmore said: "The meeting was so well attended that it is impossible to deny that this is what Wicklow people want to see done. It was not surprising that so many people joined us last night, given that the petition I set up on this issue surpassed 2000 signatures in less than 24 hours just a few weeks ago.

"This is an area that I and many Wicklow resi-

dents feel passionately about. I have previously spoken in the Dail about the need for the Glen of the Downs to be expanded. The 200 acres that have come up for sale present a rare chance to expand an ancient woodland, one the Government must not allow it to pass us by."

Deputy Whitmore went on to say, "The

Glen of the Downs woodland is a national treasure and holds a very special place in the hearts of people here in Wicklow. Unfortunately, we have seen the vibrancy and health of the forest decline in recent years because of several factors. The purchase of this land is an absolute must in order to allow it to regenerate and join up with Kindlestown Forest naturally," said Whitmore

"The Meeting was addressed by Fintan Kelly, an Agricultural Policy officer with the Irish Environmental Network. He explained the importance of the Glen and woodlands. He also rightly pointed out that Ireland has a legal obligation to expand woodland areas across the country. We also heard from Danny Alvey from Rewild Wicklow, who highlighted the work our community can continue to do from the grassroots to make this expansion a reality.

"Out of last night's meeting, a community group was set up to continue this campaign. I will continue this fight in the Dail and on the ground here in Wicklow," concluded Deputy Whitmore.



Fintan Kelly, Jennifer Whitmore and Cllr Danny Alvey.



Wicklow RNLI have announced the appointment of Joe Healy as new Lifeboat Operations Manager, following the retirement of Mary Aldridge. As operations manager, Joe will be responsible for authorising the launch of the station's two lifeboats and providing leadership of the operations team. He will also ensure that operational activities are conducted to keep the lifeboats and that all associated equipment is in a constant state of readiness for launching on service. Joe has been volunteering at Wicklow RNLI since 2020 and joined as a volunteer Launching authority during the Covid -19 pandemic. Speaking about his new role, Joe said: "I want to thank Mary for all she has contributed to our station, I hope to continue and build on that during my time as Operations manager."



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Information Meeting for Stakeholders

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Wednesday, 16 October, 7pm

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Disability activists raise awareness for Make Way Day

Highlighting the dangers posed by everyday obstacles for disabled people in Wicklow

People with disabilities from across East Wicklow have joined forces to highlight the difficulties they face when trying to navigate the county's footpaths. The action was part of the national Make Way Day, organised annually by the Disability Federation of Ireland and coordinated locally by Wicklow County Council's Disability and Inclusion Steering Committee (DISC).

The Irish Wheelchair Association in Arklow, Tidy towns, a group of activists in Greystones and a group of visually impaired activists in Newtownmountkennedy led by Councillor Orla Finn and a group of visually impaired activists in Wicklow town, took to

the streets to photograph local problem areas and identify obstacles blocking the way.

The powerful images created encourage everyone to give thought and consideration for people with disabilities when going about their own daily lives.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Paul O'Brien said, "Make Way Day gives every single one of us an opportunity to be more mindful of the 21% of people in Wicklow who have a disability. Bringing in your bin early in the day, or clipping your hedge might not seem that important, but it's a small action with a big impact for a neighbour, who otherwise might not be able to get down the street."

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman commented, "As a council, we're committed to making our streets as accessible as possible, but this campaign highlights the need for everyone to play their part. Motorists might not give

illegally parking their car on the footpath too much thought, but it has the potential to force a disabled person into a busy road, making it dangerous for everyone."

Sadie Doyle, an activist involved in the campaign in Arklow said, "There have been days when I just had to turn around and go home because my wheelchair could not go around a parked car on the footpath. If you come across enough obstacles like these, you eventually don't want to go out at all, and you become isolated."

Campaigners believe thoughtlessness and genuine lack of awareness is behind most of the instances they encounter. According to activists, Make Way Day is not about pointing the finger, but rather about making the public aware of an issue that is fully within their power to change.

For more information on how you can give further thought and consideration for people with disabilities, see www.makewayday.com



Anne Martin in Newtownmountkennedy showing how parked cars can severely impede access. Photo by Robert Mullan.



Ciara Martin and her son Aaron highlighting the obstacles they face on a daily basis, navigating a wheelchair around cars parking on public footpaths. Photo by Robert Mullan



Sadie Doyle from Arklow demonstrating the issues posed by wheelie bins, blocking vital wheelchair access. Photo by Robert Mullan.

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Cllr. Orla Finn, Cllr. Louise Fenelon Gaskin, Carina Holmes (Chairperson of the Older People's Council), Martin Flanagan and Anne Kennedy were joined by members of the local community and disability activists in Greystones to highlight Make Way Day. Photo supplied by Cllr. Orla Finn.

Commemoration held to mark 17th anniversary of Bray firefighters' deaths

Sinn Féin TD John Brady addressed a commemoration last Thursday in Bray, to mark the 17th anniversary of the deaths of firefighters Brian Murray, and Mark O'Shaughnessy. Both men died in the line of duty as they responded to a call out at a former factory site in Bray.

Deputy Brady said: "Brian Murray and Mark O'Shaughnessy embodied the very best of what the fire service is about. Their courage, commitment, and unwavering sense of duty remains an inspiration to fire fighters across Ireland and further afield to this day. They put their lives on the lines to protect their community.

"Their sacrifice continues to remind all of us of the immense challenges and dangers faced by front line emergency workers. I am proud and humbled at being asked by the families to speak at the commemoration today. I am proud to be able to continue my efforts in support of the retained fire service. Of the women and men, who like Mark and Brian are prepared to put their lives on the line to protect their communities.

"Major outstanding issues remain unresolved for the retained fire service. There is a retention and recruitment crisis in the service. Major problems with senior management also remain unresolved. The morale of fire fighters is on the floor, as time after time, as they have attempted to address these issues, have attempted to force the government to bring the service into the twenty-first century they are continuously rebuffed or ignored by Minister Darragh O'Brien.

"Despite these problems, the retained fire service continues to serve their community, they continue to put themselves in the tradition of Brian and Mark. But the government cannot continue to ignore the needs of the retained fire service if it is to survive.

"I am once calling on Taoiseach Simon Harris to step up to the plate and deliver on a full-time fire service for North Wicklow. The members of the retained fire service nor I will not cease in our efforts until the much needed reforms and the establishment of a full time fire service for north Wicklow come about."



Deputy John Brady and Cllr Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien, Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District, with members of the Fire Service at the commemoration to mark the 17th anniversary of the deaths of Bray firefighters Brian Murray and Mark O'Shaughnessy. Photo by Shayne Phelan.

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€6m for Wicklow sports clubs but 15 applications refused

A total of 55 Sporting groups and clubs in Wicklow will receive funding of €5,847,360 which will be hugely beneficial to members and athletes, it was confirmed last week. The funding will be used for improvements to infrastructure such as improving playing and training facilities, astro-turfs, handball alleys, walking tracks, hurling walls, and floodlights. The €5,847,870 comes out of a total fund of €230 million. This represents less than 3% of the funds offered to groups across the State. Fifteen sporting groups from across the county of Wicklow, such as Blessington AFC, and the Newtownmountkennedy Sports Area Development had their applications refused by the government.

There was a record number of applications from Wicklow under this scheme and this has been matched by record funding allocations to clubs from a wide range of sporting disciplines.

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has slammed the Department of Sport for rejecting Newtown Area Sports Development's application under the Sports Capital Grant Scheme. Deputy Whitmore wrote to Minister Byrne and called for a reversal of the decision.

Deputy Whitmore said: "Today will bring much good news for many clubs across the county, but it has been very upsetting for the Newtown Area Sports Development. The government rejected their recent application under the Sports Capital Grant Scheme.

"I would strongly question this decision, which has caused immense frustration. I

have written directly to the Minister of State for Sport and asked him to explain why this decision was made and review it urgently.

"I am in touch with the applicants and will do all I can to rectify this. I will also pursue the matter with the Minister."

Whitmore went on to say, "These grounds are used by several teams, including Newtown United FC and Newtown Juniors FC, which are immensely popular



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

teams in the area. The Newtown area has seen significant growth in houses and population over recent years, but community services have not kept pace. Today's decision again exemplifies the lack of government investment in the area.

"The application was for less than €15,000, which is a small amount compared to the scale of some of the grants awarded today by the Department. It is also an essential piece of work on security gates. Hardly the most outlandish request! I know that Local Councillor Danny Alvey did great work with Newtown Sports Area Development to complete this application in time with all that was asked of them."

Deputy Whitmore went on to say "I am aware there are fifteen Wicklow applications listed as invalid in this round of applications. This will be hugely dis-



John Brady TD.

appointing to all those volunteer groups and clubs.

"If any of the other groups affected want to reach out to my office, I am happy to help them identify the problems and assist them in the appeals process. Hopefully, further engagement with the Department will see additional clubs getting the financial support they deserve," concluded

Deputy Whitmore.

Sinn Féin TD John Brady said "Obviously I want to congratulate those groups that have benefited from the funding announcement. I have worked closely with some of these groups and am very aware of the huge effort that it takes to get these applications in. But I am both disappointed and frustrated to learn that fifteen sporting groups from across the county of Wicklow, such as Blessington AFC, and the Newtown Sports Area Development had their applications refused by the government.

"Blessington AFC is not just a football team, it is a local community club with over 800 members, with a long-term lease in place for grounds. The refusal of the government to approve funding to the club means that it now cannot access funds to allow the club to grow to meet the demands for its services from the local community. The club will have to turn new members away due to the refusal to grant funding needed to address the lack of facilities. The club membership ranges across an area that covers Blessington, Kilbride, Lackan, Valleymount, Hollywood, Rathmore, Eadestown, and Kill.

"This is not just about refusing funds to a local sports organisation. It is about refusing access to badly needed local facilities for a community that have suffered at the blunt end of government lack of investment for far too long. The whole of County Wicklow received less than 3% of the total fund of €230million which was distributed to groups across the state.

"The 2.54% which was allocated to Wicklow must be measured against the backdrop of decades of underinvestment in community facilities across our county. This lack of investment was a major contributory factor to the protests which were witnessed in Newtownmountkennedy earlier this year.

"That the government continues to ignore the need to invest in facilities and amenities for local communities in

Wicklow is a disgrace. The government needs to heed appeals to reverse these decisions. We have three sitting government TDs in Wicklow - they need to act.

"The Taoiseach Simon Harris needs to acknowledge the community needs of his own county, a paltry 2.54% return for the Taoiseach's home county suggests some body dropped the ball here. As the Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly should be more aware than any body of the role that sports participation plays in the physical and mental health of both children and adults. I encourage all of the groups that have had their applications refused to appeal the decision. I will also be actively appealing these decisions, and doing everything that I can to have the decisions to refuse reversed. I am calling on all government TDs in Wicklow to add their voice in support of my call for a reversal of the decision to deny funding to the 15 groups representing their communities across Wicklow."

An Taoiseach Simon Harris TD welcomed the allocations made to local clubs: "It's fantastic to see so many clubs in Co. Wicklow succeed in their Sports Capital Grant applications, and this will come as a major boost to members. Our local clubs are at the heart of our communities and I understand just how impactful help this great source of support is to our local clubs and teams.

"This funding will benefit over fifty clubs in Wicklow. Encouraging active engagement in sports not only helps keep people healthy, but it also builds confidence and independence.

"It is crucial that we invest in sport for the overall health and well-being of our communities, and that is why this programme is so important. I will always advocate strongly for sports clubs and organisations because of the positive impact they have on our community. I thank each and every one of them for the invaluable contributions they make to



Deputy Stephen Matthews at Kilbride GAA Club.

our community and look forward to seeing the improvements they make with this funding. Fine Gael is committed to supporting communities and this funding will go a long way in helping clubs not only in Co. Wicklow, but across Ireland," concluded the Taoiseach.

Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly said: "This is an amazing day for 48 sports clubs and community organisations who are getting more than €5.2 million in local allocations for a variety of capital projects such as pitch drainage, electrical upgrades, dressing room refurbishment, club lighting and other upgrades of facilities.

"Among these are €186,974 for Carnew Emmets GAA Club for refurbishment of club facilities; €50,830 for Kiltegan GAA Club for equipment; €153,648 for Ballywaltrim Recreational Sports Facilities and €145,343 for Lakers Social and Recreation Club Sport Hall.

A further €497,784 is being provided on a regional basis which will benefit the Wicklow County Board of the GAA for upgrades at Aughrim and the Ski Club of Ireland. And five clubs in Wicklow will also share €103,492 for equipment only funding. A further €461,533 was previously announced for equipment. This brings the total for Wicklow to €6,308,893.

Stephen Donnelly added: "I'd like to congratulate all those who work in and volunteer with and out sporting clubs across County Wicklow for their dedication to their sports and their communities. I'm sure the funding from government will ensure that they can continue to foster sport in Wicklow."

Senator Pat Casey said: "There is a tremendous sense of community that comes from engagement with sports and their associated organisations. Ensuring that we have the right equipment in place and that adequate facilities are provided is key to supporting people of all abilities to get, and to

stay, involved. This is an unprecedented level of sports funding and will prove transformative for sports clubs in our communities. As a party in government we are committed to providing everyone with the opportunity to participate in sport."

Also speaking after last week's announcement, Green TD Steven Matthews said: "This is the largest ever package of capital funding announced for sports clubs in Wicklow. This funding will support a wide range of clubs to undertake much-needed capital works to upgrade their infrastructure, improve facilities and carry out major repairs. The allocations include clubs in each district of Arklow, Bray, Wicklow, Greystones and west Wicklow.

"Sports clubs are at the heart of every community across Wicklow. I am delighted to see that so many clubs and organisations across our county have been awarded funding. I have met with a huge number of these groups and the voluntary work that so many people do on a weekly basis is incredibly inspiring and adds so much to our local communities. It is only right that this community spirit is supported through Government funding.

"I worked closely with my Green Party colleague - Minister Catherine Martin to ensure that Wicklow received an unprecedented funding allocation. I worked closely with many clubs on their applications, and I was particularly delighted to see the announcement of €141k for pitch drainage and all weather facility at Kilbride GAA as well €195k for Baltinglass GAA to develop two pitches. I look forward to following-up with these clubs on the progress of these capital projects over the next year.

"If any club needs assistance with drawing down their grant allocation or were unsuccessful and wish to appeal, I am always happy to arrange a meeting, learn about their work and assist with an application," concluded Deputy Matthews.

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Mental Health Awareness

October is World Mental Health Month and October 10th is World Mental Health Day. The goal is to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilise efforts in support of mental health.

Tiglin's commitment to supporting mental health

At Tiglin, they believe that addressing mental health is not simply a matter of crisis intervention but a lifelong journey of recovery, growth, and renewal. For many of the individuals they work with, mental health challenges are deeply woven into the fabric of their experiences, whether they have faced addiction, homelessness, or personal trauma. The stigma that still surrounds mental health issues often makes it harder for people to seek help, reinforcing cycles of isolation and despair. But it's a stigma that Tiglin are determined to break.

Tiglin stated "At Tiglin, we take a holistic approach to recovery, recognising that healing the mind is inseparable from healing the body and spirit. Our programs are built around this understanding, offering not just treatment but an opportunity for individuals to regain their sense of self-worth and connection to others."

"For us, mental health support isn't a single service; it's a community effort. The journey to mental wellness doesn't happen in isolation, but through the support of caring individuals and a network that understands the challenges each person faces. This is why the foundation of Tiglin's work is built on compassion, dignity, and

human connection. Whether through residential programs, outreach initiatives, or community reintegration, we strive to create environments where individuals can feel safe, respected, and heard.

"In recent years, we have expanded this mission through Rise at the Cove, a social enterprise located in Greystones.

Rise at the Cove is more than just a café - it represents an opportunity for individuals in recovery to rediscover their strengths, engage with their community, and build toward a future filled with possibility. For those who work at Rise, the experience of gaining employment in a supportive setting is transformative. It fosters a renewed sense of self-confidence and independence, both of which are crucial elements in the broader scope of mental health recovery.

"What sets Rise at the Cove apart is its connection to the community. Customers who visit are not just enjoying a coffee or a meal - they are participating in a larger story of recovery and empowerment. Every interaction, no matter how small, reminds us that mental health isn't something that exists in a vacuum; it thrives when supported by a community that cares. The enterprise invites the wider public to join in this mission, making mental health a shared responsibility that transcends individual struggles.

"At Tiglin, we know that addressing mental health issues requires

more than just short-term solutions. It's about creating long-term, sustainable support systems that enable individuals to lead meaningful, fulfilling lives. Many of the people who come through our doors have been marginalised or cast aside by society. By providing a space where they are seen, valued, and supported, we help them reconnect with the world around them and build the confidence to move forward. Recovery, after all, isn't just about surviving - it's about thriving.

"As we mark Mental Health Awareness month, we are reminded of the incredible resilience of those who face these challenges every day. The road to mental wellness can be long and fraught with obstacles, but it is one that can be navigated with the right support. Whether it's through direct intervention, community involvement, or simply being there to listen, we all have a role to play in supporting mental health. At Tiglin, we invite you to join us in creating a society where mental health is not only acknowledged but prioritised - where everyone, no matter their past, has the chance to heal and grow.

"This month, we encourage everyone to take a moment to consider how they can contribute to this cause. Whether it's by learning more about mental health issues, volunteering your time, or supporting initiatives like Rise at the Cove, each of us has the power to make a difference. Together, we can help ensure that mental health support is accessible, compassionate, and effective for all.



Cllr Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien and Adam Burke supporting Jigsaw.

'Mental health is about community'

Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District, Cllr Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien was full of praise for Jigsaw Wicklow last week after their hugely successful 'Swim for Jigsaw' fundraising event on Sunday Sept 15th in collaboration with Catalyst.

"Jigsaw sees itself as part of the community rather than just a provider of service to the community. That's why I would give them so much credit for their approach to this event and how they operate in Bray," said Cllr O'Brien.

Jigsaw is the National Centre for Youth Mental Health whose vision is 'for an Ireland where every young person's mental health is valued and supported'. They give families, educators, and those who support young people's mental health ways to cope and the skills to be there for young people.

Cllr O'Brien acknowledged how Jigsaw placed a high value on the community dimension of Sunday's event.

"It was very clear that the team were so conscious of how the ingredients were brought together for an event that was inviting the community to get involved. We had Yoga, Mindfulness, Boxercise, sea swimming and then a gathering in Catalyst cafe afterwards. This type of package ensured that we had an inclusive and intergenerational gathering. The whole energy of the event was infused with a spirit of connection and huge credit goes to the organisers and in particular Adam Burke who is at the heart of community engagement in Jigsaw."

The Cost of Cancer & Clinical Trials with Prof. Michaela Higgins

As part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Purple House Cancer Support are holding a free talk with Prof. Michaela Higgins on The Cost of Cancer & Clinical Trials. Everyone is welcome to this talk, which will take place on Wednesday 16th October 2024 at 10am in Purple House, 2 Duncairn Tee, Quinsborough Road, Bray.

Attendance is free, but registration is essential, via the Purple House website (<https://www.purplehouse.ie/talk-the-cost-of-cancer-clinical-trials-with-prof-michaela-higgins/>). Prof. Michaela Higgins is a Consultant Medical Oncologist at St. Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin and a Clinical Professor at University College Dublin (UCD).

Prof. Higgins graduated from UCD and completed medical and oncology training in Ireland prior to completing a 3 year fellowship in medical oncology at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland. She served as Chief Fellow during her last year at Hopkins. After fellowship she was appointed as an Attending (Consultant) Physician at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston and was an Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Boston 2010-2014.

Breast Cancer Open Day

Visit Purple House for their Breast Cancer open day and see the wide range of services on offer for breast cancer patients, including our mastectomy wear specialists, cancer rehabilitation physiotherapist, cancer support specialists, MLD therapists, and our team of counsellors and complimentary therapists.




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Bray Wheelers fundraise for Bray Lakers

The annual Joe Loughman Memorial Randonnée took place recently, marking another successful event that tested both the endurance and camaraderie of the Bray Wheelers community. Despite challenging weather conditions, with strong winds sweeping across the course, nearly 100 dedicated cyclists turned out to honour the memory of Joe Loughman and to support a worthy cause, the Bray Lakers.



The event raised €2,000 for the Bray Lakers, an organization deeply rooted in the community. The cycling event is held in memory of Joe Loughman, a beloved figure in the local community and the found of Bray Wheelers, 75 years ago this year. The annual Randonnée serves not only as a challenging physical event but also as a way for cyclists to remember and honour Joe's contributions.

Lakers Social and Recreation Club was started in 1989 by 3 parents who found their children were missing out, to began as a basketball club with just 10 members and in the last 35 years has just grown and grown; with now over 400 members and more than 70 classes per week.

Lakers relies on fundraisers like Bray Wheelers and others to help fund their activities for all their members. Over 60 per cent of Lakers annual income comes from fundraising and without the support of the amazing communities, groups, clubs and schools their members



Phil O'Brien President Bray Wheelers and Joe Kelly General Manager Bray Lakers, with Lakers Members Ronan Lenihan, Mark Tighe, Michelle Lane, and Lucy Campbell from the Bray Wheelers committee.

would not have a Lakers and the space they can call their own.

It is thanks to these communities that Lakers

as a club survived the fire that took their home in 2018. Bray and the surrounding areas came together and raised vital

funds and helped them find a new home in Bray.

Over the last year they have been renovating that home after 20 plus

years of fundraising and can now say their members have a gorgeous space in Bray to hang out, learn and grow in.



Members of Bray Wheelers at the start of the annual Joe Loughman Memorial Randonnée.

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Bray Wheelers 75th Birthday Reunion

This year marks a significant milestone for Bray Wheelers, as the club celebrates its 75th anniversary, a remarkable achievement in the world of Irish cycling. To commemorate this occasion, a special reunion dinner for former and current members will be held on October 12th at the Glenview Hotel. The event promises to be a night of memories, stories, and celebration of the club's rich history.

Founded in 1949, Bray Wheelers has grown into one of Ireland's most respected cycling clubs, with a proud tradition of nurturing talent, fostering a love for the sport, and creating lasting friendships. The upcoming reunion dinner offers a unique opportunity for members, both past and present, to reconnect, share experiences, and reflect on the evolution of the club over the past 75 years.

Former members are especially invited to attend, as they have played an essential role in shaping the club's identity and success. Whether you've raced in the club's colours, supported the younger generations, or contributed in any way, this is a chance to celebrate the legacy you helped build.

The evening will include a formal dinner, followed by speeches from key figures in the club's history, as well as a look back at some of the most memorable

moments from the past 75 years. It will be a night of nostalgia and pride, with plenty of opportunities to reminisce about club rides, races, and the camaraderie that has always defined Bray Wheelers.

For more information and to secure your place at the reunion dinner, visit our website www.braywheelers.ie or contact us directly. We look forward to welcoming everyone to what promises to be a truly special night!

Event Details

Date: October 12th, 2024

Venue: Glenview Hotel, Co. Wicklow

Time: 7:00 PM onwards

Tickets: Available through the Bray Wheelers website or by contacting the club directly



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- HI** Animal Care & Management Pre-University
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SOCIAL STUDIES & CHILDCARE

- OA** Special Needs Assistant (Primary & Post-Primary)
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- HE** Social Studies & Community Care

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- FD** Nail Technician & Salon Administration

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- HZ** Food Science with Dietetics - Pre-University
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- JA** Business Management & Administration
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HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

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

FILM & COMPUTER GAMING

- MB** TV & Film Production - Advanced
- MC** Immersive Media Production Degree (Hons)

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

PART-TIME COURSES

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

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‘Strategic vision and resources needed to optimise community pharmacies’

IPU White Paper seeks to transform pharmacies into dynamic healthcare hubs

A new White Paper, published by The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU), has outlined a policy framework to transform pharmacy care in this country by turning pharmacies into key healthcare hubs, improving access to community care. The IPU says, that with the right strategy and resources pharmacies can play a greater role in improving access to community healthcare.

Speaking on World Pharmacist Day, Tom Murray, President of the IPU, said, "With 78 million visits per year pharmacies are the most accessed part of our healthcare system. However, the absence of a national pharmaceutical care policy limits their potential."

The IPU White Paper - 'Key Enablers for a Sustainable Pharmacy' focusses on the areas of expanding pharmacy services, refocussing on patients and most importantly keeping pharmacies open by addressing under resourcing.

Expanding Pharmacy Services

A central recommendation of the Expert Taskforce on the Future of Pharmacy Services, which we would hope to see implemented as soon as possible, is allowing pharmacists to prescribe medications for common conditions. With appropriate resourcing and an implementation plan this service will allow pharmacists to prescribe medication directly for patients and facilitate quicker access to care.

The IPU is also calling for:

- An expansion of the range of vaccines that can be administered in a pharmacy setting.
- The introduction of chronic disease management services to complement existing clinical care pathways.
- Oral Contraception to be available

through consultation with a pharmacist.

"These are not new schemes or ideas; they are tried and tested and functioning well in other countries," Mr Murray said.

Keeping Pharmacies Open

"To enable this vision of pharmacy care will require the appropriate level of resourcing," according to Mr Murray. "Many pharmacies, particularly those in rural areas, are facing financial difficulties due to outdated payment structures and rising costs."

“The average pharmacy receives almost two-thirds of its income from the State for providing care through the community drug schemes. The fees provided for this care have been frozen since 2009, and pharmacies like every other business and individual, have experienced soaring operational costs.

The White Paper also outlines proposed reforms to address the shortages of pharmacy staff highlighting that a comprehensive workforce planning strategy is required to address skill gaps, improve access to pharmacy education, and ensure adequate staffing levels are maintained.

Reducing Paperwork to Focus on Patients

Pharmacists spend up to 82% of their time on administrative task managing community drug schemes, leav-

ing less time for patient care.

Mr Murray explained the impact of this red tape. "There is an overwhelming administrative workload that leaves little time for patient care. Worryingly, 27% of pharmacists are considering leaving the profession due to the administrative burdens associated with the complexity of managing existing drug schemes.

"We are calling for the implementation of a modern ICT system and streamlined processes to automate routine tasks allowing pharmacists to dedicate more time to direct patient care."

Mr Murray called for the recruitment of a Chief Pharmaceutical Officer (CPO) to lead and represent the sector at a national level to be accelerated.

"The appointment of a CPO, as exists in many other countries and as recommended in the recent Expert Taskforce report, would provide strategic leadership, and ensure representation and involvement of the pharmacy profession at the highest level nationally.

In conclusion Mr Murray said, "There is so much exciting potential in pharmacy care. It is possible to revolutionise our pharmacy care services within a few short years, but it will require vision and, above all, the proper resourcing of our pharmacies to make this a reality."

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ART, CRAFT & DESIGN

Art, Painting and Drawing	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-9.30pm Fee €125
Oil Painting	10 Weeks - Time: 7.30-9.30pm Fee €140
Pottery/Ceramics Beginners	10 Weeks - Time: 5.00-7.00pm Fee €175
Pottery/Ceramics Improvers	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-9.00pm Fee €175
Woodwork for Beginners	10 Weeks - Time: 7.30-9.30pm Fee €175
Dressmaking	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-9.00pm Fee €125
Crochet	10 Weeks - Time: 7.30-9.30pm Fee €125
Graphic Design	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-9.00pm Fee €130
Digital Photography	10 Weeks - Time: 7.30-9.30pm Fee €130



LANGUAGES

Italian : Beginners	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-8.30pm Fee €100
Italian : Improvers	10 Weeks - Time: 8.30-10.00pm Fee €100
French Beginners	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-8.30pm Fee €100
French Improvers	10 Weeks - Time: 8.30-10.00pm Fee €100
Spanish Beginners	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-8.30pm Fee €100
Spanish Improvers	10 Weeks - Time: 8.30-10.00pm Fee €100
German for Beginners	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-8.30pm Fee €100
Leaving Certificate Irish	10 Weeks - Time: 7.30-9.30pm Fee €130
Conversational Irish 1 (Beginners-Intermediate)	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-8.30pm Fee €100
Conversational Irish 2 (Intermediate)	10 Weeks - Time: 8.30-10.00pm Fee €100
English for Speakers of Other Languages	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-8.30pm Fee €100

HOLISTIC HEALTH

Pilates: 7.00 Class	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-8.00pm Fee €100
Pilates: 8.00 Class	10 Weeks - Time: 8.00-9.00pm Fee €100
Tai Chi: 7.00 Class	10 Weeks - Time: 8.15-9.30pm Fee €100
Tai Chi: 8.15 Class	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-8.15pm Fee €100
Yoga: Beginners	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-8.15pm Fee €85
Yoga : Beginners and Beginners Plus	10 Weeks - Time: 8.15-9.30pm Fee €85

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Bridge Beginners	8 Weeks - Time: 7.00-9.00pm Fee €130
Beekeeping For Beginners	9 Weeks - Time: 7.30-9.30pm Fee €115
First Aid And Cardiac First Responder	10 Weeks - Time: 7.30-9.30pm Fee €125
Computers Introduction (Hardware and Software)	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-9.00pm Fee €140

MUSIC & DANCE

Guitar Lessons	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-9.00pm Fee €130
Ukelele Lessons	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-9.00pm Fee €130
Latin Dancing for Beginners	10 Weeks - Time: 7.00-9.00pm Fee €130

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Roundwood's Fionn Stephens sets new lap record at Mondello Masters

13-year-old Wicklow racer Fionn Stephens from Roundwood ended the Mondello Masters on a high, winning all three rounds and setting a new lap record

The Mondello Masters consists of an 18-round championship, with 3 races each month over 6 months. At the start of the season, Fionn was entered into the Moto 1 Class on his Tianda 300 bike. Fionn started off the season well with several wins in the first 3 months, his success didn't go unnoticed, and James Halligan offered him a ride on a Yamaha R3 Jnr Super sport bike, as Fionn was too young at 13 to ride in the super sport class, he received dispensation from the organising body (MCUI) to compete.

Fionn was only able to avail of 2 practice sessions on the Yamaha R3, before qualifying and 3 races, he didn't disappoint, qualifying in pole position and winning all 3 races, despite being the youngest rider in the class.

This success contributed to the bike being sold the next day. James Halligan offered a second Yamaha R3 for the following 3 rounds, Fionn took full



Fionn Stephens.

advantage of this securing 2 second places and a win, and only narrowly missing out on the lap record, this bike also sold within 24 hours, leaving Fionn with no bike for the last 3 rounds.

The weekend before last being the final weekend of the series, Brain Carey from Athboy Karting, offered Fionn a ride on his Kawasaki Ninja 400. On that Friday morning Fionn got to work setting impressive lap times with only 2 practice sessions available,

over the weekend Fionn had qualifying and 3 races, he set pole position, and claimed all 3 race wins, having beating the previous lap record, he now holds the current lap record, despite having only moved up to this class over half the season this result secured 3rd place in the championship for Fionn and secured the sale of the bike for Brain on Sunday afternoon.

"Now that Fionn has made the step up to the SuperSport class in Ireland

and has shown his ability, we are hoping that he will be able to compete in the last 2 rounds of the Spanish Nation ESBK championship this October in Spain," his team said.

"We would like to say a big thank you to Fionn's school CCA in Kilcoole for all the support and encouragement that they are giving Fionn, to the Irish Talent Team and all the sponsors and supporters over the season."

You can follow Fionn on social media @fsracing17

Pure & EcoTrail Wicklow ensure a litter free route and race day

More than 1400 participants came to Bray Seafront to take part in the 5th edition of EcoTrail Wicklow on 28th September. The popular trail running race committed to minimise its environmental impact with actions such as no single use plastic, sorting litter and promotion of public transport to participants.

EcoTrail Wicklow partnered with PURE. This is a major initiative that helps the event to look after the uplands and the various routes used on race day. The objective was to collaborate with PURE on litter picks and clean-ups along the trails used for the race from Bray Seafront to Bray Head, Belmont, Sugarloaf, The Wicklow Way and all the way to Roundwood. One such litter pick was organised recently at Ballyreamon Commons. The event was

organised with the support of Wicklow Wolf Breeding Company, a long-time sponsor of EcoTrail Wicklow.

Ian Davis, Pure Director, commented: "Pure are delighted to be working with the Ecotrail Team. It's extremely important that both participants and spectators see the county of Wicklow, pure, clean, and pristine, the way it should be, and this collaboration will ensure that there is no unsightly litter or dumping tarnishing the 'Garden of Ireland.'"

The EcoTrail Wicklow marshals also took on the role of litter pickers on the day of the race to ensure the route was clean and pristine for the runners. Any runner seen littering was disqualified as it goes against the ethos of Ecotrail.

Pure (Protecting Uplands & Rural Environments) is an environmental project established to combat illegal dumping/fly-tipping in the Wicklow/Dublin uplands. Pure is a partnership project and the first of its kind in Ireland

which incorporates statutory and non-statutory organisations, including Wicklow County Council, South Dublin County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Coillte, National Parks & Wildlife Service, and the Wicklow Uplands Council. Funded by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, Pure was established to combat illegal dumping/fly-tipping in the Wicklow/Dublin Uplands and was officially launched in September 2006.

With start and finish near the Band Stand at Bray Seafront, EcoTrail Wicklow offered five different race options starting through the day. The 80km race started at 7.30am and brought competitors all the way to Lough Tay and Roundwood and back. The 47km race started at 9am and reached the Wicklow Way above Powerscourt Waterfall and back. Starting at 10am and 11am, the 30km and 20km loop around the Big Sugarloaf and the Little Sugarloaf. This year, EcoTrail Wicklow introduced a 10km loop around Bray Head. The last race started at 5pm.



Litter Pick team at Ballyreamon Commons.



The first event on the Cumann na mBunscol calendar of this school year was the Girls Football Participation Day Blitz. It took place on the 19th September in Bray Emmets GAA Club and was for 5th and 6th class girls. It was a perfect day for football and the girls put on a fine show of skills, the emphasis of which was on point scoring, in the sunshine. Thanks to Bray Emmets for the use of their grounds, Dave Barry for his help on the day and the TY students and teachers who refereed. Pictured are some of the girls from St. Coen's who took part. The other participating schools were: St Pat's Wicklow (2 teams), St. Patrick's Bray (2 teams), Ashford (2 teams), Kilmac (2 teams), Holy Rosary (2 teams), Greystones Community National School, Nuns Cross, Wicklow ETNS, St. Peter's, Ravenswell, Greystones ETNS (2 teams), Newtown (3 teams), Gaelscoil Uí Chéadaigh (3 teams), St. Laurence's (3 teams), St. Fergal's (3 teams), Gaelscoil na gCloch Liath (2 teams) and St. Kevin's.

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Wicklow Stories Film Festival 2024

Whale Theatre, Saturday 12th October, 2pm (doors 1pm) & 8pm (doors 7pm) Tickets €20 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

The Whale Theatre welcomes the Wicklow Stories Film Festival for the third year in a row. The festival has now become a true staple in Greystones, returning with a red carpet and amazing short films. Like every year, the Wicklow Stories Film Festival aims to uplift and highlight the talents of local filmmakers, with stories that centre around the county.

Festival organisers said "We are delighted to announce the partnership between the Wicklow Stories Film Festival and Ardmore Studios - Ireland's oldest and most iconic film studio. This year we are introducing a very special Ardmore Studio Recognition Award which will be announced and presented by Elaine Geraghty, Managing Director of Ardmore Studios during the evening show on Saturday, 12th October in the Whale Theatre.

"There will be two screenings on October 12th (2pm and 8pm), each showing a selection of several short films that were made in Wicklow County, by independent filmmakers. Both showings will feature the same selection of films. Parental guidance is advised, as some topics might be unsuitable for younger children."

For more information about Wicklow Stories, please visit <https://www.wicklowstoriesfilmfestival.com/>

Huge congratulations to the selected short movies:

"NEXT", directed by Gerard Walsh

"Where It All Began", directed by Alan Dunne

"Alive Again", directed by Seán Treacy

"Mourning", directed by Jackie Walsh

"Take Care Now", directed by Richard Childs

"Sonoma", directed by Brian Brennan

"Ó Lá Go Lá", directed by Stu Teehan

"Shiv. The Seanchaí of Greystones", directed by Tim Taylor

"Wicklow - A Symphony of Light", directed by Rafal Rozalski



A Soprano in Hollywood

Whale Theatre, Sunday 13th October 4pm (doors 3pm) Tickets €22 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

A Soprano in Hollywood Songs from the golden age of Hollywood Musicals with Kelli-Ann Masterson, soprano & Niall Kinsella, piano.



Following their sold-out performance at the National Concert Hall, Irish soprano Kelli-Ann Masterson and pianist Niall Kinsella perform a concert of songs from the golden age of Hollywood Musicals, including Kiss Me, Kate, West Side Story, My Fair Lady, The Sound of Music, Mary Poppins...and many more!

Leading young Irish soprano Kelli-Ann Masterson has delighted audiences at home and abroad in opera and concert performances. She is an alumna of the ABL Irish National Opera Studio 2019-2021, and has performed leading roles for Irish National Opera, Opera Collective Ireland, Buxton International Festival and Blackwater Valley Opera Festival. She was the 2022 winner of the NCH Bernadette Greevy Bursary for singers and has performed regularly as soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra and RTÉ Concert Orchestra.

Described as "a meticulous collaborator" (BBC Music Magazine), Irish pianist and conductor Niall Kinsella has established himself as one of Ireland's most exciting, versatile and sought-after musicians. He has performed extensively across Europe accompanying leading singers. In September 2023, he conducted the RTÉ Concert Orchestra in a sold-out celebration of Rodgers & Hammerstein at NCH which was broadcast on RTÉ lyric fm. He conducts a celebration of MGM Musicals at the NCH on September 4th and makes his debut conducting the Ulster Orchestra in March 2025.

Room Service: A homage to Surrealism

Arklow Library, October 1st - 15th



An exhibition of recent foto assemblages will open at 7pm on October 1st in the Arklow Library Gallery. Surrealist artist, Irene Plazewska, has created an interior world of strange characters. 16 foto assemblages tell a story about them reflection & deception. The Bellhop leads the narrative, perhaps.

2024 is the Centenary year of the Surrealist movement which Andre Breton began in 1924 in France.

This exhibition pays homage to Surrealism, posing more visual questions. The exhibition runs until 15th October.

All welcome to the opening evening. There will be an Artist talk on the work on Saturday 5.10.24 at 3pm in the Library Cup Room.



One of the highlight events of Culture Night in Co. Wicklow on Friday 20th September took place in Coolnagreina in Greystones, where the Voices of Ukraine Ladies Choir performed. The event brought together Irish and Ukrainian culture, and featured Siena Murphy who performed as a talented musician and Irish dancer. The Eric Fisher Trio sang popular Ukrainian songs as did the talented young singer and guitarist Taras Ivanets from Wicklow. The choir who performed a selection of Irish songs received a huge reaction from the packed audience. Sean Olohan from Wicklow & District Lions Club thanked all those who took part and especially Fiona Mulvey and her team for all their work and for the food on the night. Sean also thanked the Wicklow Arts Office and Culture Ireland for their support.

Bray author recognised for outstanding contribution to children's books

Alan Nolan, who is based in Bray was recognised for his outstanding contribution to children's literature, receiving the Annual Children's Books Ireland Award at the Children's Books Ireland International Conference held in Dublin's Light House Cinema the weekend before last.

Nominated by fellow artists, Dublin-born Alan was presented with this prestigious award by Laureate na nOg Patricia Forde who described him as 'one of the most hard-working and generous writers working in Ireland'.

Confirming his tireless commitment to children's books, Nolan had also joined Forde at the launch of Children's Books Ireland's new 'Recommended Irish Reads 2024' guide at a Culture Night event in Dubray Books in Dublin on Friday,

reading from and signing copies of his book 'The Riddle of the Disappearing Dickens' which features in the guide.

Curated by Children's Books Ireland, the reading guide spotlights authors, illustrators and their publishers from or based in Ireland and features 200 titles, in Irish and English, for readers aged 0-18 years.

Published for children aged 10-12, 'The Riddle of the Disappearing Dickens' is a mystery novel that follows best friends Molly

Malone and Bram Stoker on an adventure from Dublin to London where they embark on a heroic quest to find the renowned author Charles Dickens who has been kidnapped.

Speaking at the launch of the reading guide, Laureate na nOg, Patricia Forde, said: "Our children need to see themselves in books, whether they trace their lineage back to Fionn Mac Cumhaill, or have only recently arrived on our shores. This reading guide is an essential resource for parents/carers,

educators, librarians and booksellers in Wicklow and of course, our young readers themselves! And it will definitely come in handy for anyone starting to think about gift-buying for young readers in the coming months!

"Why does it matter that the writers and illustrators featured call Ireland home? Because our children need to see stories that reflect their identities and surroundings, from artists who understand and can relate to their lived experiences. Children in

Wicklow need role models to pave pathways that will help them to realise their dreams. We see it in sport, we see it in theatre and film, and we need to see it in the realm of children's books.

The 'Recommended Irish Reads 2024' guide is available to download from the Children's Books Ireland website. With 25,000 copies distributed across the country, it will be widely available free of charge through local libraries and participating bookshops in Wicklow.



Alan Nolan accepting his award for his outstanding contribution to children's books at the Children's Books Ireland International Conference.

New Arklow mural 'Sun, Moon & Starfish'

A new mural has been completed in The Pines Estate in Arklow. This brush painted mural was designed and created by Arklow-based visual artist Irene Plazewska. It was painted by hand using recycled paints donated by the Rediscovery Centre in Dublin as part of their community initiatives.

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the Rediscovery Centre in Dublin as part of their community initiatives.

The painting, entitled "Sun, Moon & Starfish" covers a grey cement wall 10m x 3m. It cleverly links the wall to the trees behind it and to the sea just beyond the site, depicting both day and night.

Irene is a member of the Arklow 402 Art Collective & is a multimedia artist. She has a selection of her art work in the 402 Gallery in Bridgewater Shopping Centre & will open her one woman exhibition "Room Service" in Arklow Library on October 1st.



The new mural by Irene Plazewska.



Irene Plazewska working on the mural.

Niall Toner and Andrea Booth in Arklow

Arklow Roots Music presents Niall Toner and Andrea Booth in Concert in the Bridge Hotel, Arklow on Mon 7th Oct at 8.30 pm. They gave an enjoyable performance at Ballyraine Café last year.

Music includes country, bluegrass, swing and more, with plenty of harmonious duets. Niall has played bluegrass and country in Ireland for many years, including with the Sackville String Band, and currently with the Niall Toner Band. He presented the Roots Freeway programme on RTE Radio 1 for many years. The event is on donation basis and we hope you will be generous! Places can be reserved on Eventbrite or by emailing arklowrootsmusic@gmail.com



Pictured are members of The Penston Vocal Academy, who performed at the Arklow Culture Night Crawl.

Roundwood National School triumphs in battery recycling competition

Students in Roundwood National School in Wicklow collected the equivalent to 95,000 used AA batteries for recycling during the last school year, earning them the title of Battery Recycling Champions. As part of WEEE Ireland's nationwide Schools Battery Recycling Competition, Roundwood NS was awarded a €2,000 sports voucher for its commitment to sustainability.



The annual initiative, now entering its 13th year, collected the equivalent of 1.5million AA batteries from schools across Ireland from last October to March 2024 - the weight of almost four school buses.

A total of 12 schools from Wicklow participated in the campaign, collecting the equivalent of 125,350 AA batteries for recycling.

With a record number of schools participating last year, the country's largest e-waste and battery recycling scheme is once again calling on primary and secondary students throughout Ireland to participate in the vital circular initiative this year with registration open from October.

TV and radio presenter, Laura Woods, was joined by representatives of Roundwood National School in Wicklow to launch this year's contest, which also supports LauraLynn Children's Hospice.

"A huge congratulations to Roundwood National School whose recycling efforts not only make a significant envi-



TV and radio presenter Laura Woods was joined by Leo Donovan, CEO of WEEE Ireland as well as students Billie Byrne, Quin Cunningham, Michael Fanning, Ailbhe Malone, Anna May Kelly, Cillian Lowe, Etain Power, Evaine Healy and Millie O'Rourke of Roundwood National School who collected the equivalent of 95,000 AA batteries to win in their category.

ronmental impact but also provide essential support to the children and families who depend on LauraLynn's services," said Laura.

"It's inspiring to see so many schools engage in this important drive to rescue millions of batteries that might otherwise sit forgotten in drawers or old devices and ensure their valuable materials can be recovered for reuse."

The WEEE Ireland's Schools Battery Recycling Competition is open to all primary and secondary schools in WEEE Ireland battery recycling counties that collect at least 10 full 5kg battery boxes.

By actively encouraging the involvement of teachers, families, and the

broader community to collect used batteries for recycling, students can ensure that valuable materials like lithium, nickel, cobalt and copper are recovered and reused, rather than lost to landfill.

"The new European Battery Regulations, applicable from earlier this year, introduces comprehensive rules to manage the entire lifecycle of batteries within the EU," said Leo Donovan, CEO of WEEE Ireland.

"Minimum material recovery targets for materials like cobalt, lithium, and nickel will apply to various battery types, ensuring valuable materials are recaptured."

"These new targets will require increased participation in battery recycling across all sectors, so

we'd urge even more to join the drive this year and make a real difference to saving materials that are increasingly in scarce supply."

Kerry McLaverty, CEO of LauraLynn, expressed her gratitude as each battery recycled through WEEE Ireland contributes to a donation fund for LauraLynn.

"The funds we have received from WEEE Ireland as a result of the battery campaign have had such a positive impact on the children and families who avail of LauraLynn's care and specialised supports all across Ireland," she said.

"This year's donation brings the total fundraising to €590,575 - an incredible level."

WEEE Ireland has

been partnering with and supporting us since day one and we are grateful for their continued support as we grow our community of care and support more children and families than ever before.

"We'd also like to say a huge thank you to everyone who took the time to recycle their batteries. It may seem like something small, but for the children and families who rely on LauraLynn, and for the environment, it is huge and very impactful."

Schools interested in participating in the WEEE Ireland Schools Batteries competition can visit weeireland.ie for more information on the competition and to order WEEE Ireland Blue Battery boxes.

Record number of Wicklow home energy upgrades

Green TD Steven Matthews has welcomed the announcement that record numbers of Wicklow houses were retrofitted in 2024. According to the SEAI, energy efficiency upgrades were carried out on 948 properties in Wicklow this year, the highest number ever recorded.

Discussing the Green Party's role in delivering these upgrades, Deputy Matthews said: "More Wicklow residents than ever before are benefiting from warmer and healthier homes under the national retrofit programme. These home energy upgrades are crucial to lowering energy costs, reducing emissions, and improving health outcomes. We are making significant progress towards our ambitious targets to retrofit thousands of homes each year. It is fantastic to see this strong level of demand for the SEAI's home energy upgrades in Wicklow."

"The Green Party is working to make retrofitting as accessible as possible to households across Ireland. I am particularly delighted that the number of fully subsidised retrofits as part of the SEAI Warmer Homes Scheme

delivered in Wicklow has more than doubled compared to the same period in 2023. This will support 184 lower-income households

in Wicklow that are at increased risk of energy poverty to stay warm this winter. There has also been significant progress in the

roll-out of solar energy, with solar PV installed in 534 properties across Wicklow since the start of the year.



Ayla, Ruth, Isaac and Beatrix Freeman-Kishida at the Ashford Honey Festival.

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Whitmore calls for increased investment and support for local businesses

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has called for increased investment and supports for local businesses which make up the heart and soul of towns across Wicklow. Deputy Whitmore was responding to the recent GeoDirectory Commercial Buildings Report.

The commercial vacancy rate in Wicklow stood at 12.9% in June 2024, an increase of 0.1 percentage points (ppts) compared to the same period in 2023, according to the report. This figure was lower than the national commercial vacancy rate of 14.4%. Of the main urban areas in Wicklow analysed, Arklow

had the highest commercial vacancy rate at 16.1%, while Greystones had the lowest at 5.6%.

Of the main towns and urban areas in Wicklow surveyed by GeoDirectory, Arklow had the highest commercial vacancy rate at 16.1%, while Greystones had the lowest at 5.6%.

Ballybofey, Co. Donegal was the town the highest commercial vacancy rate in the state at 33.6%, followed by Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford (30.2%) and Shannon, Co. Clare (29.8%). At the other end of the scale, Greystones, Co. Wicklow (5.6%) and Carrigaline, Co. Cork (7.2%) were the towns with the lowest vacancy rates.

Deputy Whitmore said "Local businesses such as restaurants, shops, beauticians, and cafes keep our towns and villages vibrant and alive. But without local support and targeted state investment we will see more and more vacant units appearing on our main streets. Although commercial building vacancy rates for Wicklow are just below the national average, coming in at 12.9%, this was an increase of 0.1% on last year's figures and we need to ensure that this trend does not continue.

"There was good news for Greystones which had the lowest vacancy rate in the country at 5.6% and it was encouraging to see that this was a drop of 1.2% from the 2023 figures. But we need to see this happening across the county," continued Deputy Whitmore.

"Both Arklow and Wicklow Town saw an increase in their vacancy rates, rising to 16.1% and 13.7% respectively, whilst Bray remained at 15.2%. This means that Arklow, Bray and Wicklow Town are all currently above the county average vacancy rate and Arklow and Bray are above the national average of 14.4%," explained Ms Whitmore.

"Vacant units are bad for our towns, they're bad for our communities and they're bad for our local economies. We need the introduction of targeted state supports for towns across Wicklow to address vacancy in the county. Vacant units result in a reduction in the overall rates collected by the council to reinvest in our local towns and villages. This is a crucial issue for towns across Wicklow and government need to step up for our local businesses," concluded Ms Whitmore.

Using NACE codes to classify commercial units by economic sector, the latest GeoDirectory Commercial Vacancy Rates Report has identified broad trends in the use of commercial units nationally. Of the 180,515 occupied units nationally, 154,217 have an assigned NACE code. The analysis found that the number of commercial units classified by NACE codes has decreased by 1,370 units between Q2 2023 and Q2 2024. The majority of this decrease



Jennifer Whitmore TD.



Emily O'Rourke performing at the Culture Night Crawl in Arklow.

can be attributed to the services sector and the retail and wholesale sector, which declined by 625 and 514 units respectively.

Looking specifically at the accommodation and food services sector, a total of 22,211 commercial units in this sector were recorded in June 2024. This represents a decline of 270 commercial units compared to the same period in 2023.

The highest proportion of accommodation and food service units were found in counties in the west of the country, accounting for 24.0% of all commercial units in Kerry, 20.5% of all commercial units in Clare and 19.2% of all commercial units in Donegal.

Commenting on the findings of the latest GeoDirectory Commercial Buildings Report, Dara Keogh, CEO of GeoDirectory, said, "The national commercial vacancy rate has increased steadily in recent years, and at 14.4%, is now at the highest level since GeoDirectory began tracking commercial vacancy data in 2013. Changing consumer habits, the growth of online commerce, remote working and rising business costs have all contributed to a realignment of the commercial property market. The reality is that some of these commercial units may never now return to the commercial stock, requiring action to provide opportunities for targeted regeneration projects and the repurposing of long-term vacant buildings.

Annette Hughes, Director at EY Economic Advisory, said, "Commercial vacancy rates increased in 14 out of 26 counties surveyed, which represents an improvement on the same period in June 2023, when vacancy increases were recorded in 20 out of 26 counties. While the national commercial vacancy rate has reached a new high of 14.4% in Q2 2024, the economic outlook remains positive and with inflation falling and a recent cut in ECB interest rates, there is a possibility that commercial vacancy rates will recede from its current peak."

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