

# LOCAL Wicklow Times

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Tuesday 19th November 2024 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

# NO VOTES FOR INDEPENDENTS?

Last week's call by Taoiseach Simon Harris at a meeting of farm leaders for voters not to vote for Independent candidates shocked many and drew angry responses from non-party candidates standing in County Wicklow.

Independents seeking election in the Wicklow constituency are Shay Cullen, Rob Carry, Councillor Joe Behan and Charlie Keddy, while in the new constituency of North Wexford/Arklow, Councillor Pier Leonard is running as an Independent.

Clr Behan said "I was shocked to hear our Taoiseach urge voters not to vote for Independents in the general election. It is the

first time I have heard a party leader castigating a entire body of Independent candidates and more importantly their voters and supporters.

"I must remind the Taoiseach that the recent referendum result was a wake-up call for almost all of the political parties in Ireland. They joined forces in an attempt to impose a deeply un-popular set of changes to the Const-

itution and the people gave their answer loud and clear. They said No.


"The contribution to the national debate by a small number of Independent politicians, including Michael McDowell, Catherine Connolly and Aontu leader Peadar Tóibín, convinced people that the proposed Amendments were not acceptable and they voted accordingly.

"This demonstrates the importance of the




Last Thursday An Taoiseach Simon Harris TD signed his nomination papers in Wicklow to be on the ballot paper on Friday 29th November. "At the end of this month I will humbly ask for your number 1 vote," he said. "It is my honour to be your TD in Wicklow and to be your Taoiseach. I hope to continue in this role to deliver a secure future for you and your family in Wicklow. If you give me your trust, I will give you my all."

Bringing the DART to Wicklow & Kilcoole



**VOTE No.1**



**STEVEN MATTHEWS TD**

STEVEN MATTHEWS TD  
TO BOOK A CONSTITUENCY CLINIC PLEASE CONTACT:  
✉ [steven.matthews@greenparty.ie](mailto:steven.matthews@greenparty.ie)  
✉ @stevensgreen1 **f** STEVEN MATTHEWS TD

independent voice in Irish politics. The political parties operate on the basis that their needs come first and their TDs and Senators must always follow the party line. The inevitable result is groupthink, when bad decisions are made and nobody in the party is allowed or is even bothered to question them.

"The Covid experience brought home to us the dangers of groupthink. Decisions were made based on the advice of 'experts' in NPHE and were hardly ever subject to independent thought or scrutiny by any of the main political parties. The result has been a massive deterioration in mental health as a result of cruel decisions to isolate people,

often until they died, without any consideration of the emotional impact of this isolation. This must never happen again. In the next Dail, we need at least some TDs who are not afraid to ask the difficult questions or challenge the cosy consensus of the political parties. If we don't have those independent voices, we will end up like we did in the last Dail with political parties imposing their own agenda on issues such as gender identity, hate speech and euthanasia. The Taoiseach should reflect on the fact that he may need to rely on the support of Independents to return to his position and he might regret castigating

Continued on page 3

**Clr. Joe BEHAN**

**INDEPENDENT**

**VOTE No. 1**



☎ 086 8375602  
✉ [joebehan@outlook.ie](mailto:joebehan@outlook.ie)

**f** **X** **IG**



# SSE Renewables sponsors Arklow Christmas lights for third consecutive year

Cllr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach, Arklow Municipal District, recently joined with District Administrator, Alvina Brehony, and Deirdre Keogh from SSE Renewables to announce SSE Renewables' sponsorship of low energy Christmas Festival Street lighting in the Arklow Municipal District area. This marks the third consecutive year that SSE Renewables, through its Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund, has provided funding towards Christmas Festival lighting across the district.

Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager, SSE Renewables said: "SSE Renewables is delighted to come on board again to bring some festive cheer to local communities in the Arklow Municipal District. Funding for the low energy festoon lighting links in with other events that SSE Renewables supports through the Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund. We've linked in with and are grateful to the volunteer

members of the Arklow Christmas Festival Committee, the Arklow Town Team, management and staff in Wicklow County Council and Arklow Municipal District. The '2024 Design a Christmas Tree Decoration from Recycled Materials' for schools has already launched and the closing date for entries was extended to 16th November. The overall competition winner will be guest of honour at this year's

switching on of the Christmas tree lights marking the start of the Christmas festival period. This free community event takes place on Saturday, 23rd November in St Mary's Park, Main Street, Arklow and is always well supported."

Arklow Municipal District's Cathaoirleach Cllr Pat Kennedy said: "We're very grateful to SSE Renewables for its generous donation to support Christmas Festival lighting

in the Municipal District area. Low energy festival lighting supports local traders and creates a sense of magic and wonder in the lead up to, and over the festive period. At this time of year, it's important to acknowledge all those who support the district be it through funding, paid roles, volunteering, lending time and expertise, or simply being a good neighbour."

Alvina Brehony, District Administrator with Arklow Municipal



Pictured at Arklow Municipal District offices were Alvina Brehony (District Administrator), Deirdre Keogh (SSE Renewables) and Arklow Municipal District Cathaoirleach Cllr Pat Kennedy, marking the announcement that SSE Renewables will support Arklow's Christmas street lights for a third consecutive year.

District said: "In the darkest weeks running up to Christmas and New Year's there is nothing more cheerful than Christmas

lights. It's important that the public realm is inviting for residents and visitors to the area."

about upcoming Christmas festival events, please see the Arklow Christmas Festival page on Facebook. For information on the SSE

Renewables Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund, contact deirdre.keogh@sse.com

## St. Anne's Parish Christmas Fair

The St. Anne's Parish Christmas Fair will take place from 10am to 3pm in St. Anne's Resource Centre, Shankill, on Sunday November 24th. Donations for the Raffle would be greatly appreciated, for example Toiletry Gift Sets, Jewellery and donations for the Bottle Stall. Please drop your donations into St. Anne's Resource Centre. Thank you. Raffle tickets for the Christmas Fair are now available to purchase in St. Anne's Resource Centre and at all weekend Masses. Tickets cost €10 or 6 for €50.

## Bray Cualann Historical Society

John Brazil will be the guest speaker for the 8pm Thursday November 21st November meeting of the

Bray Historical Society in the Royal Hotel, Main Street, Bray, at which he will present 'DNA of people in Ireland from ancient times to today' All are welcome - admission is €8 for non-members.

## Soup & Sandwiches

The next soup and sandwiches lunch in the Swann Hall at St. Patrick's Church Greystones takes place on Tuesday 19th November from 12.30 until 2.00. Everyone welcome. Come and meet old friends and make new ones. Suggested donation of €7 for charity.

## Songs & Sleigh Bells in Roundwood

There will be a beautiful afternoon of music hosted by the Community Youth Choir and Lets Sing Together Choir.

They will be joined by other local music groups on the day. This event is on Sunday 15th of December at St. Laurence O'Toole Church Roundwood, 3pm. This is followed by refreshments in Kavanagh's pub. Donations bucket on the door and raffle with all proceeds going to Roundwood Cancer Support and local causes.

## Delgany Dramatic Society

Delgany Dramatic Society's upcoming November productions consist of 3 One Act plays: Winner Takes All, a comedy by Helen Taylor; Come Sail with Me, a play by Maeve Edwards; and Grimstone Halt, a drama by Peter Robbie. Dates 21st, 22nd & 23rd November Old Schoolhouse Delgany 8pm. Tickets at the Door

(one price) €15, children under 14 free (i.e. primary school age) Wine Reception & Raffle.

## Farewell to Famine with Historian Jim Rees

A talk with historian Jim Rees entitled 'Farewell To Famine' will be held in Wicklow Town Library Branch on Thursday November 21st at 7pm.

In 1850, Fr Thomas Hore led a group of people from their homes in counties Wicklow and Wexford to start new lives in the American Mid-West. This was no blind flight from famine, but a concerted attempt organised by the Bishop of Little Rock to establish an Irish Catholic colony in Arkansas.

A series of setbacks broke the cohesion of the group which splintered into six, settling in places as diverse as New Orleans, Arkansas, Texas, Missouri and Iowa (where some of them established a township called Wexford).

Based on his best-selling book 'Farewell to Famine' historian Jim Rees recounts the experiences of the various splinter groups after they arrived in Arkansas, Missouri, Texas and Iowa. The talk follows their progress, showing the other side of the famine emigration experience - what happened when they got to America.

Everyone is welcome and attendance is free. However, places are limited. To book your place please email Wicklowlocalstudies@wicklowcoco.ie or phone 0404 67025.

# Harold Offeh - Leisure Seekers

Mermaid Arts Centre Gallery, Saturday 23rd November. 12pm - 1pm. Free, all welcome. No booking required.

Harold Offeh returns to Bray on the final day of Leisure Seekers, his vibrant exploration of the town and its history as a destination for rest and relaxation. The works in the exhibition were made in collaboration with local communities including families, sea swimmers, boat rowers and visitors to the show, whose artworks covering one wall feature prints made with Offeh's rubber stamps depicting a selection of Bray's non-native garden plants. In an informal tour and exploration of the work and his approach to making art, Offeh will describe his experience of working in Bray and explain how each piece originated from his research and visits to the town.



Ray Murphy, Briget Murphy, Joe Merrigan and David Owens at the Remembrance Sunday event in the World War 1 Memorial Park in Woodenbridge. Over 1,000 people from Wicklow lost their lives during the First World War.

# CHARLIE KEDDY

Anti abortion candidate is contesting the general election



'What does it profit a nation to house the world and lose its soul?'

Charlie 6;1944:



# NO VOTES FOR INDEPENDENTS?

Continued from page 1

the only politicians in this country who serve the people not the party."

Speaking after hearing the Taoiseach urge farmers not to vote for Independents in the next government Shay Cullen said - "They are feeling the heat from the honest truths they are hearing in farmyards and fields across the county. It's second nature for me to attend the mart and farm meetings month in month out not just on election campaigns and let me tell you farming families are fed up of the Taoiseach telling them what to do.

Harris and Heydon's double act is a strategy that will backfire on them, they simply don't want to be held to account in the next Government by informed Independent candidates, many who like myself know what they're talking about because we come from a farming background and live in rural locations which have been mostly neglected or ignored by them. I'd encourage voters not to strengthen the hand of government further but to be of independent mind to vote for change so we can keep them in check.

"Independents won't stymie the work of

Government, they add balance and we need a stronger opposition than those presently in power. Time has shown coalition government has worked for this country, it's far better than leaving the 'big two' to their own devices. Look at the waste and mismanagement that has occurred over the last ten years. What people should stay clear of is handing FF and FG a massive majority so they can run riot on their own, they should elect Independents

like myself to have their voice represented as equally as all others.

"A recent farm survey actually showed nearly one third of farm voters saw FF FG and the Independents making up the numbers in the next Dail and with peoples votes in Wicklow I intend to be one of the non-party candidates elected to ensure they keep their campaign promises on Mercorsur, food production, succession etc and I'm sure farmers will give them their

answer at pollings stations when they take into account that under this government their incomes have lowered while their costs and regulations have risen."

Rob Carry, local business owner and community activist, will be contesting the general election as an Independent candidate. He says "If you look at the sitting TDs, there's really no real alternative to the political establishment. Three of the five seats are taken up by Government parties with

the final two held by Sinn Féin and the Social Democrats. The issue here is that Sinn Féin and the Soc Dems have spent the last five years voting with the Government instead of standing up to them. They backed the Government on Hate Speech, the Family and Care referenda and consistently failed to challenge the Government on its immigration policies. It's my view that Independent candidates are the only real opposition Ireland has."



An Taoiseach Simon Harris at the former Ashford Garda Station.

## New Community and Sports Centre for Ashford underway

An Taoiseach Simon Harris has confirmed that Wicklow County Council have signed a 30 year lease with the Ashford Development Association for the long abandoned old Ashford Garda Station.

The Taoiseach said, "I am delighted to confirm that the team behind the Ashford Development Association have signed a 30-year lease agreement with Wicklow County Council for the old Ashford Garda Station building. This building has been unused for far too long, and I am delighted now to see real progress made in turning this building into a resource for the community in Ashford.

"Having worked with the Association for the past few months, I can confirm that plans are in place to refurbish this building and turn it into a community centre for the people of Ashford, along with the construction of a new basketball/sports arena for community use."

"With the signing of this lease, full design plans will be submitted soon to Wicklow County Council, and I am really looking forward to working with local residents in Ashford to keep this project moving."

# JOHN BRADY TD

## Fighting for Wicklow Families and Workers

### Sinn Féin will:

- ✔ Abolish the USC for the average worker
- ✔ Abolish the Property Tax
- ✔ Abolish College Fees
- ✔ Deliver 9% VAT Rate for businesses
- ✔ €10 a day childcare



### WHO ELSE WILL STAND UP FOR YOU!



Published by Jason Doyle, 66 Carrigrohane Drive, Kilmacanogue, Co. Wicklow



# Aontú announce their two candidates



Ciaran Hogan.

Aontú have announced their 43rd candidate for general election, which means they now have representation in every Dáil constituency across the country. Ciaran Hogan who ran in the Bray East local elections is running for Wicklow and he's now joined by party colleague Sinead Boland who is a former teacher of 30 years and fierce advocate of environmental and ecology issues. She will be running in the newly created Wicklow-Wexford constituency.

The two candidates will be looking to take many votes from disaffected voters and capitalise on the work done by Aontú nationally. The party that stood alone against the Hate speech laws, that stood against the two constitutional referendums defeated earlier this year, and that has been heavily critical of the failures of the Government's immigration policy, could be poised to take a seat in the newly divided Wicklow constituencies.

Aontú has seen continuous growth since inception only five years ago in 2019. Its share in the

polls has increased to 6-7%, outgrowing Greens, PBP, Labour, and Independent Ireland. Last week Aontú also launched its immigration policy document which has been described as "firm but fair and an urgently needed policy shake up" by the Wicklow candidate Ciarán Hogan. The document is available to read on the Aontú website. Speaking on immigration policy Sinead Boland said "undoubtedly it is the biggest issue for voters and Aontú alone is addressing the issue in a way that accepts the humanity of people fleeing war but also respects

our national borders and carrying capacity of our state during a housing crisis."

Mr Hogan believes that "With the General election set for 29th November we could yet see a major shake up in light of scandals and failures of the current government such as the public funding waste on a bike shed, the allocation of €9 million in the budget for phone pouches for schools, and just last week €70,000 spent on three sets of curtains at Dublin Castle."

Aontú point out that Voters are looking for change.



Sinead Boland.

## Independent candidate slams Govt's 'slum landlord' housing strategy

An Independent candidate set to compete for a seat in the General Election in the Wicklow Constituency has slammed the Government for what he calls its 'slum landlord' approach to housing.

Local business owner and community activist Rob Carry announced that he will contest in Wicklow as an independent candidate and started his campaign with a blistering criticism of the Government's approach to solving the housing crisis.

Carry said the Government was "desperate to keep home completion figures up", adding that they had, "locked themselves into an endless race to cram as many high-density developments into the county as they can".

Carry, who graduated with a Masters in Journalism and spent 10 years writing mostly about property for publi-

cations in Ireland and abroad continued, "According to the CSO, the average size of a new property has fallen by 40 per cent in the last ten years. What the Government is doing is cramming ever more people into ever-shrinking housing units - and to hell with their standard of living. That's the economics of the slum landlord."

Carry, who also completed a degree in history and politics in UCD, will be going head-to-head with some big names in An Taoiseach Simon Harris, Health Minister Stephen Donnelly and Sinn Fein's former integration spokesperson John Brady.

Carry believes there are ways of tackling the housing crisis that don't involve "thrashing the county and condemning people to live in tiny flats and spending their lives sitting in traffic".

With 150,000 people arriving in the country last year and home completions stuck at around 30,000, Carry believes there is no hope of satisfying demand. He explains, "Increasing supply isn't going to cut it. We need to start making some tough decisions that will reduce demand."

Carry, who lives just outside Wicklow Town near the village of Glenealy, continued, "Countries like Denmark,

Thailand, New Zealand, The Philippines, Switzerland and Cyprus all have restrictions on property ownership. In other words, I can't just turn up in New Zealand tomorrow and buy any house I want. Laws are in place to prevent the market being flooded by overseas buyers. In Ireland, meanwhile, it's a free-for-all and locals just can't compete."

Carry added, "If Ireland introduces similar restrictions on foreign ownership, it will trigger an instant drop in demand, prices will fall and the need for these super-sized developments will ease."

Carry decided to stand

in the election over what he sees as a "lack of alternatives to the political establishment" among Wicklow's sitting TDs.

He added, "Three of the five seats are taken up by Government parties with the final two held by Sinn Fein and the Social



Rob Carry.

Democrats. But the issue here is that Sinn Fein and the Soc Dems have spent the last five years voting with the Government instead of standing up to them. They backed the Government on Hate Speech, the Family and Care referenda and consistently failed to challenge the Government on its immigration policies. It's my view that Independent candidates are the only real opposition Ireland has."

Carry left the media 10 years ago to go into business. Along with a commercial gym and a martial arts equipment brand, Carry also runs one of Ireland's leading martial arts clubs, Jai Sua:

Carry fought at a professional level both in Ireland and in Thailand during his fight career and

says "If I'm successful I'll be making a donation of €20,000 to the mental health fund for young people in Wicklow."

Aside from improving access to mental health services for young people, Carry feels more needs to be done in support of the people of Wicklow in a number of other areas.

"The housing crisis is forcing people from the county and all too often, the country," he says. "People can't get a doctor's appointment or even a school place for their children. The population of Wicklow - and the country - is growing at break neck speed and the consequences of that are becoming apparent. Services, housing, education, healthcare - even the road infrastructure - just can't keep up."

## Tune in to hear from your General Election candidates

Wicklow PPN and Wicklow Older People's Council are Teaming Up to Invite You to Tune in to Hear from your General Election Candidates.

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Brian Robinson B.B.L.S., L.L.M. State Solicitor Eilish Bradshaw B.A., L.L.B., L.L.M. Clare-Ann Temple L.L.B.	Ciara O'Sullivan B.B.L.S., (Euro) Hannah Stockwell-Quinn B.C.L., L.L.M. Peter McQuillan B.A. (Mod) Leg Sc TCD
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**24A Florence Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.** Tel: 01 276 1330  
E-mail: [info@benvillorobinson.ie](mailto:info@benvillorobinson.ie)  
Web: [www.benvillorobinson.ie](http://www.benvillorobinson.ie)

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

During the summer, Wicklow PPN and Wicklow Older People's Council invited people to Meet the Candidate webinars for the local elections. The webinars were recorded and uploaded to the PPN's YouTube Channel. The events and the recordings proved to be popular with over 250 people either joining the webinar or watching the recordings. Consequently, these two networks for citizen engagement are running these events again for the General Election.

Tune in to Hear from the Wicklow General Election Candidates on Tuesday 19th November from 8pm to 10pm and Tune in to Hear from the South Wicklow, North Wexford General Election Candidates on Wednesday 20th November from 8pm to 10pm. The recorded sessions will be uploaded to Wicklow PPN's YouTube Channel.

Carina Holmes, Chairperson of Wicklow Older People's Council

said "This year's General Election is different to previous years as we have two constituencies that cover our county. There are thirteen candidates competing for four seats in the Wicklow Constituency and eight candidates competing for three seats in the South Wicklow, North Wexford Constituency. It is impor-

tant for people to find out about those that will make the decisions which will impact on their quality of life, so we are delighted to be able to provide this alternative opportunity for them to do so. This will help to inform people before voting on Friday, 29th November."

Helen Howes, Wicklow

PPN Resource Worker explained iLike most people we were expecting the election date to be called for the end of November so as we toured around the county with our Connecting Communities Roadshows in October, we asked people to put questions that they'd like to ask the candidates into a box.

We will combine them with the questions from our member groups and put as many as we possibly can to the candidates in the allocated time."

Find out more and access the webinar here: <https://countywicklowppn.ie/tune-in-to-hear-from-the-general-election-2024-candidates/>



The PPN Meet the Candidates event in 2019.



# 'Commuter chaos in Wicklow unacceptable'

**Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has criticised Irish Rail for their handling of rail cancellations last Monday morning, after commuters were left stranded and without adequate information.**

The issue stemmed from a cancelled train out of Gorey and an electrical fault south of Bray station. Deputy Whitmore has criticised the lack of information provided to commuters who turned up at stations that morning to find there was no trains for them to board.

Speaking on the day, Deputy Whitmore said:

"There was utter chaos facing commuters this morning from Arklow to Greystones from the early hours. The 5:50 service from Gorey was cancelled, but the cancellation was not announced until after 6:10 on social media. This resulted in eighty people left standing on a platform in Arklow.

"There was a bus transfer announced to replace the 05:35 from Rosslare to Connolly, and then that was changed to Go-Ahead honouring bus tickets. I have been contacted by constituents who were advised that Go-Ahead were to honour tickets, who got on buses with drivers completely unaware that they were to

honour those tickets.

"Wicklow Town station was not open. Commuters were met by the station master this morning outside telling people there were no trains morning. Some of whom had already paid for their parking there for the day and then had to turn around. This is impacting workers and students alike this morning across Wicklow. Many of whom could have found alternatives by bus or car sharing

had they been given adequate notice.

"Commuters coming from the Northside were also affected trying to get to Greystones as DART services have been suspended between Bray and Greystones, but as one commuter told me this morning there was no announcement of that on the train, so she was in Bray before she learned that she could not continue to Greystones.

"As a result, the M11

has been experiencing very heavy traffic with cars bumper to bumper from Kilpedder, as far as Loughlinstown. We all know that signalling issues happen, and commuters know it more than anyone, but the issue here is that Irish Rail did not provide enough information for commuters in station, on board services and through mobile apps to give people time to plan properly for these changes."



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

## Wicklow Bus Connects implementation deferred

**An Taoiseach Simon Harris has confirmed that the upcoming implantation of Phase 6a of the Bus Connects Plan, which was due to come into effect on the 8th of December, has been deferred to January of next year.**

The Taoiseach said "In recent weeks, I have spoken with a number of local residents of Bray, Greystones, Kilcoole, Enniskerry, Newtownmountkennedy and Newcastle regarding the new Bus Connects Plan. While the new plan offers some fantastic new services for our communities, I understood that a number of local residents were concerned about the confusion and difficulties that may have been caused by the changing of our bus routes and services so close to Christmas.

"Having discussed this with the National Transport Authority, the decision has been made to defer this change, to ensure the holiday season goes without unnecessary transport disruptions. A great benefit of this decision is that now additional resources have been freed up in the short-term

run up to Christmas, and will allow us to provide additional bus services, including additional night services, to operate over Christmas, making it much more convenient for people to travel in and out of Dublin over the coming weeks."

The Taoiseach concluded "Once the details of these new services have been finalised, I will be sure to keep local residents informed. I want to take this opportunity to thank the National Transport Authority for working with me and for listening to the concerns of local residents on this issue, and I look forward to the full implementation of Phase 6a of the Bus Connects Plan at the right time, as the holiday season winds down in January."

## PBP candidate calls for free and frequent public transport

**Wicklow People Before Profit candidate Kellie McConnell has highlighted her party's election manifesto call for the abolition of all fares on public transport.**

Kellie said "I am delighted to highlight our election manifesto calls for free and frequent public transport to reduce emissions and to end car pollution and traffic jams. The heavily traffic-congested roads from Wicklow into Dublin city centre is testament to the need to get people out of their cars and onto public transport, which also must be vastly improved.

"The transport sector in Ireland is the second highest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions, after agriculture. Transport emissions increased in 2023 and were up again by 2.7% in the first quarter of 2024 as petrol sales increased by almost 10%.

"Eamon Ryan's transport and climate policies have delivered rising transport emissions, more pollution and endless traffic chaos. He has wasted almost 5 years in office, so now we need emergency action, starting with the immediate abolition of all public transport fares to reduce emissions and traffic.

"Today we also highlighted our manifesto pledge to double capital investment in public transport infras-

tructure and the allocation of €500 million towards rapid expansion of bus services. This is necessary immediately to make public transport frequent as well as free.

"We also commit to return privatised bus routes into public control. Ireland is an amazing country, with the political will to make changes focussed on the majority of people's needs, we can have a really vibrant future, both in the short term and for our next generations. But we must act now."



Kellie McConnell.

## Taoiseach calls for expansion of public transport service for Greystones commuters

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An Taoiseach Simon Harris TD.

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**Cllr. Paul O'BRIEN**  
Cathaoirleach Wicklow County Council



**VOTE NO.1**  
Labour



# EirGrid consulting with local communities on plans to strengthen electricity grid

EirGrid, the operator and developer of the national electricity grid, is consulting with local communities and stakeholders on the redevelopment of a critical substation in Co Wicklow.

The Arklow 220kV Station Redevelopment will see the construction of a replacement transmission substation, to help deliver a consistent and reliable supply of electricity to the region.

With the existing substation in Arklow approaching end of life, the initial consultation will focus on an adjacent site which has been identified as the most suitable

to develop the replacement substation.

This essential piece of infrastructure will connect electricity from the national grid to the local network, ensuring a secure future power supply for homes, schools and businesses in the region.

EirGrid will hold drop-in public information events over the coming weeks, where attendees

can view details of the project and speak with EirGrid's community liaison officer and a member of its technical team.

This development is part of the critical Powering Up Wicklow programme, which will strengthen key electricity infrastructure in the county and the surrounding areas, helping to deliver a consistent and reliable supply of electricity to

local communities.

Multiple potential sites were assessed for suitability for the project, with factors such as technical feasibility, deliverability, socio-economic impact and environmental impact considered.

Construction is expected to commence in 2028 and be completed by 2030, with the substation due to be fully energised by 2035.

"This development is key to ensuring a continued reliable supply of electricity for Wicklow," EirGrid Chief Infrastructure Officer, Michael Mahon, said.

"It will also provide capacity for future projects such as offshore wind development, which will bring more renewable power onto the grid, helping the country reach its renewable energy targets."



"We at EirGrid are committed to putting communities at the centre of our work to transform our electricity system for future generations, and we will continue to engage

with the public on how we move forward with our plans.

"Later in the process, we will share details of the associated community benefit fund, which recog-

nises the role of local communities in hosting critical grid infrastructure projects," Mahon concluded.

For more information visit [eirgrid.ie/wicklow](http://eirgrid.ie/wicklow).



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

## 'Green Party was more interested in greenwashing the report than accepting its findings'

Green Party leader Roderick O'Gorman must explain why a Green Party spin doctor put an independent state agency under pressure to edit a report on carbon emissions, according to Social Democrats climate spokesperson Jennifer Whitmore.

"According to a report in today's Irish Independent, the SEAI rewrote a report on carbon emissions after coming under pressure from Eamon Ryan's spin doctor about "bad press. The original report had stated a reduction in electricity emissions was largely down to importing more power - which is not counted in our emissions - rather than any domestic action.

"However, this was changed after the Green Party spin doctor contacted the

SEAI to demand a meeting about "poor press" and negative narratives around the report. This raises major questions for the Green Party - as well as the SEAI. For a start, why is a political party contacting an independent state agency about "poor press". This suggests the Green Party was more interested in greenwashing the report than accepting its findings.

"For ethical reasons, it is highly problematic for a special advisor to the

former Green Party leader to put a State agency under pressure in this way. As a matter of urgency, Roderick O'Gorman must explain why his predecessor's spin doctor felt empowered to put the SEAI under this kind of political pressure. He should also explain if Green Party staff or politicians have done this on other occasions and whether he believes it is appropriate.

"Serious questions also need to be answered by the SEAI. Internal corre-

spondence, published by the Irish Independent, reveals an unhealthy and unwarranted preoccupation with government reaction to its report.

"The SEAI must now clarify if it met Mr Ryan's advisor before it changed its report; if it has received other inappropriate correspondence from this, or any other, spin doctor or government official; and publish a clear outline of when and why a decision was taken to edit this report's findings."



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## 30 Wicklow Tidy Town groups to benefit from special grant

An Taoiseach Simon Harris has announced that 30 Wicklow Tidy Town Groups are set to benefit from a special grant of between €1,000 and €4,000. This level of investment from government in our Tidy Town Groups demonstrates its commitment to communities, the Taoiseach said.

The Taoiseach paid tribute to the tireless and dedicated members of Tidy Town groups across the country and in Wicklow. An Taoiseach Simon Harris said: "Today I am thrilled to announce 30 of Wicklow's Tidy Town Groups are going to benefit from a special grant of between €1,000 and €4,000.

"This is good news for members of the groups, good news for the community and shows the true recognition my Government have for the tireless and dedicated work of Tidy Town groups right across the county and country.

"I have always been in awe of the amazing work done by Tidy Town individuals. They are truly inspirational and serve the community in so many positive ways. They are the ones who preserve our towns and villages, make them cleaner, sustainable and vibrant.

"Thanks to Tidy Town groups we feel that little bit prouder of the communities we live in. Volunteers working in these groups prove that small gesture can make for a better town and foster that sense of belonging within the community.

## Tinahely Community Recycling Centre wins Pride of Place award

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has congratulated the Tinahely Community Recycling Centre on their Pride of Place award and praised the local community for their innovation and hard work to establish the community recycling centre for the Tinahely and Carnew areas in Southwest Wicklow.

Tinahely Community Recycling Centre was one of two community groups chosen to represent Wicklow at the annual National Pride of Place awards and were awarded a silver award in the Creative Communities category.

"This is a well-deserved award for the Tinahely Community Recycling Centre, and I am delighted that the important work they are carrying out here has been recognised. The community in Tinahely have come up

with a creative and successful project which not only encourages locals to recycle, but it also makes it easy and accessible for them and helps educate people about other climate friendly actions such as composting," commented Deputy Whitmore.

"The provision of a weekly collection point in the neighbouring town of Carnew is helping to make recycling more accessible for the community there. Whilst the Composting Education Site at the

Tinahely Community Recycling Centre is helping to spread awareness of the benefits of composting and teaching people how to compost properly.

"I look forward to hearing more about projects they have planned for the future. We need to be engaging communities and encouraging and supporting creative Community Climate Actions and initiatives like this community recycling centre, across Wicklow."



# 'Urgent leadership needed as school's ASD classes neglected'

Wicklow Educate Together National School is appealing to the Department of Education, Norma Foley TD, Taoiseach Simon Harris TD, local politicians and political candidates for urgent action to get the school's specialised autism rooms open again.

After a storm and flooding in March of this year, the roof over the ASD classes was severely damaged and that part of building had to be subsequently evacuated and closed due to serious health and safety risks. The school relocated the ASD classes to pop-up areas, storage rooms and support rooms within the mainstream part of the building on a temporary basis in March. The classes and the students have remained in this temporary location for over eight months now.

The school was hopeful that its Emergency Works application would be granted by the Department, but the application and appeal were both rejected. The school was told, on both occasions, to raise this with the original contractor, even though this state-appointed contractor went into liquidation in 2018.

This situation has persisted without resolution for much of 2024. It has created incredible stress and upset for children, staff and families. It is the opinion of the school's Board of Management that the Department of Education are not dealing with this as an urgent manner.

The school has been unable able to offer any places for 2025-2026 which means the closing of at least one ASD class. School leadership are also extremely concerned about the impact of future adverse weather events on the building.

Despite the hard work and dedication of the Wicklow ETNS staff, under very difficult circumstances, this situa-



One of the ASD classrooms.

tion has become untenable for the school community. Wicklow ETNS is today calling on the Department of Education, Norma Foley TD, Taoiseach Simon Harris TD, local politicians and political candidates to intervene and to take immediate action to get the school's specialised Autism rooms open again.

Since March, these state-of-the-art specialised classrooms have lain empty, and the student sensory room is inaccessible to the children who need it to self-regulate. The makeshift sensory rooms are wholly inadequate, and one class is now operating out of a very small room, which houses the school's server, which generates intolerable levels of heat and noise.

A hall for the three classes has also been lost, whilst an office has had to be turned into a sensory room, staff are being forced to work out of a storage cupboard and children are crammed into unsuitable support rooms.

"I believe that providing appropriate facilities and resources is not merely a matter of comfort, but a fundamental necessity for our students' success," one staff member said. "Our additional needs classes had access to excellent facilities before the damage done during the storm. These classrooms, quiet spaces and hygiene facilities are now empty when they should be providing for our chil-

dren with the most needs. I believe it is imperative that the emergency repairs be addressed now to ensure that once again our students have access to suitable learning environments that fully promote their development."

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has written to



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

Minister Norma Foley expressing his concern.

Deputy Brady said: "I am appalled to hear that the Department has refused Wicklow Educate Together Primary School's appeal and thrown it back on the school to pay for the cost of repairs to the roof. This will mean that the school will be forced to turn to parents to fundraise for repairs. I am actually shocked that this is the case.

"There is a shortage of Autism units in schools across Wicklow, and the fact that a dedicated area has been condemned for use because of a leak in

the roof highlights this government's failure to deliver for children with additional needs.

"I have written to Minister Norma Foley outlining my concerns and appealing to her to release funding for the much-needed repairs. The prevailing attitude of the Minister and her Department is unacceptable, and there needs to be a sharp change of attitude here, and they need to be quick about it."

Social Democrats TD for Jennifer Whitmore, has also called on the Department of Education to take urgent action and provide emergency funding to Wicklow Educate Together National School (WETNS)

"I've been contacted by several concerned parents and the Board of Management from Wicklow Educate Together National School about their current situation. The temporary measures that they have had to put in place since last March, almost 8 months ago, are unsustainable and unfair to the students, teachers, SNAs and school staff. They have been forced to use pop up areas, room dividers, corridor spaces, storage rooms, stair wells, common areas, and even bathroom spaces as classrooms," commented Deputy Whitmore.

"Unfortunately, the school were unsuccessful in their application for funding through the Emergency Works fund from the Department of Education and again

when they appealed this decision in September. Instead of offering the school and school community the support and help that they need during an extremely stressful and worrying time, the Department of Education have exacerbated the situation by making school management jump through endless hoops to try to access funding," explained Ms Whitmore.

"I have been told by parents at the school that despite the best efforts of



the school, the situation is negatively impacting the whole school community. The school have now made the very difficult decision to not accept any new enrolments for their Autism class for 2025/26. This will have a hugely negative impact on the community here in Wicklow Town and further afield. The families of children with additional needs


find it hard enough to access the supports and school places that their children need and now they are facing the prospect of a reduction in Autism class places in the area," said Deputy Whitmore, who is the Social Democrats spokesperson for Children.



"I am calling on the Department of Education to make urgent contact with the school and help

WETNS to access the funding needed to carry out these vital repairs to the school roof. Every child deserves a safe and suitable space to learn, and I will work with and support the Wicklow Educate Together National School community and management in any way I can to ensure that this situation is resolved," concluded Jennifer Whitmore.



John Brady TD.

 **COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN**  
**WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028**  
**PREPARATION OF THE NEW BRAY MUNICIPAL DISTRICT**  
**LOCAL AREA PLAN (BRAY TOWN & ENVIRONS, ENNISKERRY**  
**AND KILMACANOGUE)**

**HAVE YOUR SAY!**

**Consultations under Section 20 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)**

Wicklow County Council intends to review the existing plan and prepare a new Local Area Plan for Bray Municipal District, which includes the settlements of 'Bray Town and Environs', 'Enniskerry' and 'Kilmacanogue'. An online consultation portal has been created, which makes reference to the significant planning topics that the Local Area Plan will address. The portal can be accessed through [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie) (consultation hub) and is accepting submissions from **20 November 2024 to 18 December 2024**.

The Bray Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018 – 2024 is the current land use plan for the municipal district and is available to view at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Planning/Development-Plans-Strategies/Local-Area-Town-Settlement-Plans/Bray/Bray-Municipal-District-Local-Area-Plan-2018-2024>

**PUBLIC INFORMATION DAY**

Everyone is invited to a drop-in public information day that will be held in Bray Civic Offices, Main Street, Bray, County Wicklow, A98 A9X9 on **Thursday 05 December 2024**, from **10.30-13.00** and from **16.00- 19.00**. The plan team will be available on the day to answer any questions on the plan process and to help guide the public on how to make a submission. Local community / sporting groups are invited to arrange a one to one meeting between 14.00 and 16.00 on that day. Please ring 0404 20148 to arrange a one to one meeting.

**HOW TO MAKE A SUBMISSION**

Submissions or observations regarding the review of the existing plan and the preparation of the new Local Area Plan are hereby invited from the public and interested bodies, between the period **20 November 2024 to midnight on 18 December 2024**. Children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children, are invited to make submissions or observations.

Submissions may be made in either of the following ways:

1. Write to: 'Bray MD LAP', Administrative Officer, Planning Department, Wicklow County Council, Station Road, Wicklow.
2. Through the online consultation portal at [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie) or scan the QR code above

**NOTE**

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



# Bray Dads' Network formed and holds its first meeting

A group of Bray dads with their respective children met together on Sunday 10th November in the playground by the seafront as part of a new group called Bray Dads Network. Founded by local dad Ciarán Hogan the group aims to get dads more engaged with their kids and also find support with other local dads facing the same challenges and sharing similar perspectives.

The group were a jovial mix from around Bray with their children running around together. Among the group are teachers, businessmen, IT professionals, mechanics, counsellors, barristers and many other backgrounds.

The network formed recently with a messaging group and social media page boasting more than 70 dads so far. They plan to hold more playdates with kids, and also 'dads only' game nights as well as workshops, hikes and other activities. On a leaflet they were distributing,

the group seeks to collaboratively teach the dads how to deal with tantrums, how to braid hair and importantly how to be a role model.

Ciarán Hogan said "I had my first girl at the start of lockdown, and I spend a lot of time with her walking around Bray and meeting other parents. I saw dads being engaged and spending lockdown with their children too. With my second daughter after lockdown I saw a lot fewer dads, who had generally returned to the workplace or didn't attend playgroups. The

problem was that dads feel less welcome and comfortable in parent groups which are often, and reasonably so, mother focused. Both mothers and fathers bring something to a child's upbringing; different but equally valuable. So we need a group for Dads to be with other Dads and do the type of things dads want to do."

In recent years behavioural scientists have been discovering more and more benefits of dads being actively involved in their kids' lives. When both parents

are involved with the child, infants are attached to both parents from the beginning of life.

Mr Hogan points out that father involvement is related to positive child health outcomes in infants, such as improved weight gain in preterm infants and improved breastfeeding rates, and that father involvement using authoritative parenting (loving and with clear boundaries and expectations) leads to better emotional, academic, social, and behavioural outcomes for children.

The quality of the father-child relationship matters more than the specific amount of hours spent together. Non-resident fathers can have positive effects on children's social and emotional well-being, as well as academic achievement and behavioural adjustment.

High levels of father involvement are correlated with higher levels of sociability, confidence, and self-control in children. Children with involved fathers are less likely to act out in school or engage in risky behaviours in adolescence.

Mr Hogan adds that father engagement reduces the frequency of behavioural problems in boys while also decreasing delinquency and economic disadvantage in low-income families.

Father engagement reduces psychological problems and rates of depression in young women.

There are no known disadvantages to having an engaged dad over non engaged dad for a child's development.

The group plans to hold two weekly meetings going forwards; on Sunday afternoons with kids and on a weekday afternoon as a dads' discussion and workshop group. And there are plans to expand to other townships across Wicklow.

"This group is a big win for mothers too, it means dads will be



Ciarán Hogan, founder of Bray Dads Network.



Members of the Bray Dads Network with their kids on Bray Seafront.

spending more time with kids and learning how to be better fathers and husbands," says Mr. Hogan. "There's nothing toxic about masculinity, and it's becoming clear that positive dads are a huge bene-

fit to their kids and the family as a whole. There are many dads who won't get to see their children this Christmas, and that's an issue society has to resolve soon. We also need young people to see

more positive examples of dads being happy parents and engaging with their kids. Being a dad is the best thing in the world, and I want every young man to see fatherhood as the best goal in life."



Members of the Bray Dads Network with their kids on Bray Seafront.



# 'Election 2024 offers Wicklow an opportunity to make a statement on their priorities'

Sinn Féin TD and party candidate in the general election John Brady has said that the election on November 29th offers the people of Wicklow an opportunity after 100 years of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil government to make a choice at the polls that prioritises the issues that matter to them for the next five years.

"Now more than ever the opportunity for change is here," he said. "The record of the outgoing government is one of overseeing a housing crisis, a homeless crisis, a health crisis, and a cost-of-living crisis, coupled with an outrageous record of overspending as evident in the cost of the Dail bike shed, and the security hut outside government buildings."

Deputy Brady said: "As we begin a three-week campaign, which allows the people of Ireland and Wicklow to choose how they want to be governed for the next five years, after 100 years of Fine Gael, and Fianna Fáil government, the time, the opportunity for change is in their hands."

"The people of Wicklow neither want, nor can they afford another five years of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in

government. Their record of overspending on bike sheds and security huts, are only a couple examples of the absolute wastage of public funds, of taxpayer's money.

"As a politician and a community activist it is part of my job to plan and deliver for Wicklow needs. My objective has been and remains to fight to ensure that Wicklow can achieve its full potential. I want to be part of a government that places the needs of the people first. That offers optimism and a vision for the future."

"I want to overturn the prevailing trend under Fine Gael where Wicklow is turning into a commuter hub for Dublin. While there is no doubt that having Dublin as a neighbouring county has advantages, but I want a lot more for Wicklow than just being a feeder

county for the capital. I believe in investing in our communities, our people, and the pursuit of a better way of life. We cannot continue to settle for spending up to four hours a day commuting to and from work. We need good quality well paid jobs here in Wicklow.

"We need a public transport system that works for the people of Wicklow. I want to prioritise our transport infrastructure here in Wicklow, bringing an end to the traffic chaos that plagues our county, by advancing the N11 / M11 upgrade scheme, the N81 Tallaght to Hollywood Cross upgrade scheme, and through investment in our rail infrastructure, including the fast tracking of the DART to Wicklow Town, the extension of the LUAS to Blessington, the extension of the 65-route to Baltinglass.

"We need to rebuild our sense and

wealth of community across the county. I want to see the delivery of services and amenities for our hard-pressed communities, who under this coalition have seen an ongoing and constant erosion across their communities. People across Wicklow need access to GP and Dental services, our communities need sports and recreational facilities that enrich the fabric of our towns and villages for young and old alike.

"My track record in politics is well established, for standing up for workers, families, and communities. I am determined to make a difference, to make the changes that are needed for the people of Wicklow right across this county. And I am again asking the people for their support, to return me to the Daail to allow me to continue to work for them over the next five years."



John Brady TD.

# 'Department of Government Efficiency needed in Ireland'

Aontú candidate for Wicklow Ciarán Hogan has called for an independent body to oversee government spending.

Recently we learned that in America the tech and space billionaire Elon Musk along with Pharma entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy will be appointed to a newly created Department of Government Efficiency or D.O.G.E. The spending of the American federal government is in the hundreds of billions dollars annually, and many believe there is significant waste. Elon who famously cut 80% of the workforce in Twitter now X, and kept it running is in a position to do the same on governmental levels. Though it is happening thousands of miles away it comes at a very pertinent time for Irish politics as the government

election machine has been hit by failures and overspend in many issue. "First it was the National Childrens Hospital which is now costing at least 2.2 Billion euro, but likely final figures closer to 2.9 Billion making it the most expensive building in the world and 400% over budget. Then information came to light about a Dail bike shed which cost the tax payer €335,000 or about 1000% over budget. Almost immediately afterwards we saw the €1.4m security shed for the Dail, and running closely behind that we discovered that the government were spending €9 Million on phone pouches

for schools. Even the Bray to Greystones cliff walk has been tied up in bureaucratic hold-ups for the last 4 years. And many speculate there are incidences of overspend and ineffective bureaucracy that we might not discover until after the election," explained Mr Hogan.

All of these pose the question: Should we in Ireland establish a Department of Government Efficiency?. Mr Hogan says Yes.

"We need to change the spending culture in government bodies. We have unfortunately too many career politicians who have spent taxpayer money all their life and never thought about best bang for buck, or how to be more frugal," he said.

"If elected I believe my entrepreneurial back-

ground has given me the insight and mindset to slash costs and inefficiency while maximizing delivery to the taxpayer. I have already promised to invest €45,000 from a TD salary back into community projects and I could see that money go very far to the people of Wicklow."

Mr Hogan says that the bodies who should be overseeing expenditure - the Comptroller - Auditor General, Department of public expenditure and The Committee of Public Accounts (PAC) - aren't working as designed. He argues the already mentioned examples of overspend prove it.

"The government expenditure is growing year on year, and without anyone to reign it in we risk being in a very diffi-



Ciaran Hogan.

cult position if another financial crisis hits. There is a man going to Washington who has expressly stated that he wants to take American jobs back to America. We have to be ready for how that might affect our heavily relied on tech sector," concluded Mr Hogan.

# Timmins pledges to open Wicklow Town constituency office if elected

Fine Gael election candidate Cllr Edward Timmins has given a commitment to open a constituency office in Wicklow Town should he be elected.

Cllr Timmins expressed his commitment to serving the community, stating, "Wicklow town and the surrounding areas deserve a dedicated office where residents can come to discuss their concerns, seek assistance, and engage with their local representatives. If elected, I will work alongside my fellow councillors, Cllr Graham Richmond, and Cllr Shane Langrell to ensure that we are accessible to the people we represent. Our goal is to create a space that fosters open communication and collaboration between the communi-

ty and its leaders." He emphasized the importance of having a local presence to address issues directly and effectively, ensuring that every voice in Wicklow town and surrounding areas is heard and valued.

Cllr Timmins elaborated on his vision for the constituency office, saying "The last office was Andrew Doyle who did amazing work, this office will not just be a place for meetings; it will be a hub for community engagement. We want to create an environment where residents feel



Cllr Edward Timmins.

empowered to share their ideas and concerns. Whether it's issues related to local infrastructure, environmental initiatives, or social services, we want to be at the forefront, advocating for the needs of our community." Today the people have to travel to Bray/Greystones

and it's just not good enough."

He also highlighted the importance of collaboration, stating, "Working closely with Cllr Richmond and Cllr Langrell, we will ensure that our office represents a united front for Wicklow town and surrounding areas. Together, we can tackle the challenges facing our community and develop effective solutions that truly reflect the needs of our constituents."

Cllr Timmins acknowledged the hard work of local volunteers and organizations, saying, "We are fortunate to have a vibrant community filled with passionate individuals and groups. Our office will serve as a resource to sup-

port their efforts and promote initiatives that benefit Wicklow town and surrounding areas."

He concluded with a call to action, inviting residents to get involved in the political process: "I encourage everyone to participate in this journey. Your voice matters, and together we can build a stronger, more connected Wicklow. Let's work together to create an inclusive and thriving community where everyone feels heard and valued."

Cllr Richmond stated "This is a fantastic position for the people of Wicklow Town and surrounding areas to once again have a functioning manned office, one we three will utilise for the community."

# 'An effective promise to increase energy costs is a bizarre election promise'

Fine Gael's VAT proposals for hospitality would result in increased energy costs for everyone in the country, according to Social Democrats energy spokesperson Jennifer Whitmore.

"If Fine Gael abolishes the 9% VAT rate, and replaces it with a permanent 11% rate, the energy bills of every single person and business in the country would increase. One of the few measures the government took to reduce energy costs, was to apply a lower 9% VAT rate to bills. Now, they are effectively saying that reduced rate should increase. Energy bills are already at a record high, having nearly doubled in cost in the past number of years. Instead of proposing measures to bring these exorbitant costs down, Fine Gael wants to drive them even higher.

"An effective promise to increase energy costs is one of the most bizarre election promises I have ever heard. It really shows that Fine Gael has cobbled together this plan at the last minute and they are grasping at straws.

"The Social Democrats' plan to support hospitality would bring down



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

the costs for cafes and restaurants - while ensuring households and businesses don't face higher energy costs. We would split hospitality into accommodation and food and apply the reduced 9% rate to food and beverages only. That is a plan that actually makes sense."

VOTE #1

INDEPENDENT ✓

ROB CARRY



# Council launches 'Choose Wicklow' campaign

Wicklow County Council last week launched a new campaign, 'Choose Wicklow' aimed at promoting both the lifestyle and professional benefits of living and working in Wicklow.

Speaking about the campaign at the opening of the GRID in Greystones, Taoiseach Simon Harris highlighted the health, environmental and economic benefits of remote working. He said that he firmly believes in remote working and remote learning to enable a more even spread of high value jobs and skills across the country and praised Wicklow County

Council for coming together to promote the hubs across Wicklow under the brand of Choose Wicklow.

The Choose Wicklow campaign showcases the experiences of remote working in Wicklow through testimonials from professionals working from hubs. These business owners highlight common advantages, such as the guaranteed short, consis-

tent, often traffic-free commutes and access to state-of-the-art facilities equipped with the latest technology and reliable Wi-Fi services.

In addition to these benefits, local business owner Helen McNulty talks about finding inspiration from the beautiful natural environment at Brockagh Resource Centre, where she runs her marketing agency.

While Thierry Peurois, producing gourmet pate at Wicklow Enterprise Centre for his company La Paysan, appreciates being close to both home and his main market in Dublin.

Work-life balance is also a common theme, Keith Slowey, who owns Wicklow Enterprise Suites and operates Slowey Technology from there, appreciates having more leisure time. Peter Baxter, running Create-School.ie from Screen-Hub in Clermont, values the balance between work and life, allowing him to train his son's football team in the evenings.

Unique to Wicklow, the hubs are in convenient and picturesque locations nestled amidst forests, on the edge of Glendalough, in towns with the sea on one side and mountains on the other.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Paul O'Brien said, "iRemote working is playing a significant role in the growth of towns and cities. In Wicklow, we have seven working and enterprise hubs located across the county, offering manufacturing sites, contemporary and customisable working spaces with the latest tech-



Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council - Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Minister for Health - Stephen Donnelly, Taoiseach Simon Harris, Wicklow County Council Chief Executive Emer O'Gorman and Cllr. Tom Fortune - Cathaoirleach of Greystones Municipal District and Chairperson of the Economic Development and Enterprise Support SPC.



Peter Baxter, Taoiseach Simon Harris and Thierry Peurois.

nology. We're committed to building a thriving rural community in Wicklow that fosters economic, cultural, social and environmental development and wellbeing. We recently opened the GRID in Greystones and will continue to invest in this

essential infrastructure for our county."

Leonora Earls, Director of Services for Wicklow County Council commented, "We're excited to launch the Choose Wicklow campaign. The enterprise hubs in Wicklow provide far more than just

a workspace; they offer improved work-life balance, heightened productivity, enhanced creativity, clear separation between home and work, and an overall better lifestyle. Plus, it significantly reduces the stress and hustle of urban commuting."

The Choose Wicklow campaign will be running online from 12th November to 10th December 2024.

For more information on the working spaces and enterprise hubs available in Wicklow, visit Choose-Wicklow.ie

## Local Enhancement Programme launched

The launch of the Local Enhancement Programme 2025 was announced on the 7th November 2024 by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, and Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Joe O'Brien TD.

This fund is being provided by the government to support community and voluntary groups, totalling €7 million to be allocated across the local authority network.

County Wicklow has received €199,044 as part of the Local Enhancement Programme 2025, details of which were shared by Ministers Humphreys and Joe O'Brien TD. The allocation is broken down as follows: Capital Allocation (€170,609), Current Allocation (€28,435), Total Allocation (€199,044).

Under the Local Enhancement Programme 2025, there will be €6 million in capital funding available nationally to assist community and voluntary groups, particularly in disadvantaged areas. This funding can be used for minor capital works, improvements to facilities, and the purchase of equipment for community use.

Additionally, this year's fund includes €1 million in current funding to support community and voluntary groups with non-pay running costs, such as energy bills (electricity, refuse charges, heating), and other operating expenses (rental or lease costs, insurance bills).

The Department of Rural and Community Development administers the Local Enhancement Programme 2025 through Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs), with support from Local Authorities in each area.

It should be noted that groups applying under the €1 million current fund are not precluded from applying for the capital funding and vice versa.

The Wicklow Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is responsible for allocating funding through this scheme. Applications must relate to one or more key priority areas identified in their LCDC's Local

Economic and Community Plan (LECP) to be eligible for consideration.

Further information and application forms will be available in early January 2025, with the closing date for applications set for March 7, 2025.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Paul O'Brien mentioned "This funding is vital for many groups and organisations it will enhance our ability to support local communities, foster social connections and provide essential services".

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman, commented that "The LEP funding is about helping our communities, local groups and clubs. This funding will empower our communities to become even more vital hubs for activities and services. Together we are building stronger, more vibrant communities."

Minister Heather Humphreys added: "Supporting local communities to shape their future is a key focus of the government's rural development policy, Our Rural Future. The funding I am announcing today will benefit every single county and ensure that important small scale, ground-up projects can be delivered by local communities for local communities."

Minister Joe O'Brien said: "Once again, this Local Enhancement Programme funding will provide practical support to community groups at a grassroots level to help them to ensure that they can improve and enhance their facilities and equipment which they need to support their communities."

For further details, please visit the press release issued by the Department of Rural and Community Development, which includes allocations for each Local Authority and Local Community Development Committee.



Sue Gaskin, Valerie Halligan, Mary Gaskin, Hannah Fox and Ann Gaskin at the An Tochar Football Festival celebrating 50 years of Women's GAA and 35 years of An Tochar ladies football in the An Tochar Clubhouse, Roundwood.



# Christmas in Wicklow

## Beyond the Trees Winter Wonderland

15th November to 19th January

**Experience the Enchantment of Avondale's Winter Woodland! - Ireland's ultimate Night Cation destination. Beyond the Trees Avondale is embracing the Winter Season this year with a range of enchanting adventure perfect for families and friends of all ages and abilities to experience together during the winter season.**

The Bright star is the return of the unique award-winning Tree Top Night Lights - this year brighter, more magical with a 'must see' huge Christmas tree and maybe even some snow!! 'Treetop Night Lights,' is a captivating nocturnal adventure that unfolds among the majestic trees of Avondale Forest Park.

'Winter Woodland' is also introducing Forest skating on a real Ice Rink in front of Avondale House. The 19th century Avondale House will also be beautifully transformed and where you can step back in time and spend 'Christmas with the Parnell's' - There will be 30- and 60-minute tours available. The Seed café and Pizzeria will be open daily until 8pm serving delightful winter treats and family meal offerings. Wicklow Brewery will also be joining the experience this year and will have a pop up bar in the Seed café offering their local beers.

Snacks and hot drinks will also be

available at the Tree Top Walk tower base and the Ice-Rink will also have hot festive offerings available.

Food markets will be open in the historical Courtyard at the weekends from 29th November offering seasonal treats and goodies, including crepes, pulled burgers, mulled wine and hot chocolate. You will also be able to browse and purchase gifts from the visitor centre Seed Store and the Tree Top Walk Treasures Shop. The courtyard will also feature a Craft market where you can pick up some authentic gifts. Enjoy the Winter carnival atmosphere in the beautiful Walled Garden where you will find some extra Vintage carousels to keep the children entertained. There will be further activities and events as the Winter Woodland festival gets underway.

Keep an eye on their social media channels and Website for further updates.

**As the festive season nears, County Wicklow is lighting up in anticipation of Christmas. With dazzling light displays, charming markets and cozy pubs, and holiday workshops, Wicklow is brimming with Christmas spirit.**

The Christmas season is officially underway as Greystones and Wicklow Town have already switched on their festive lights, creating a warm glow and kicking off the festivities. This coming weekend, Bray and Arklow will join the celebration, illuminating their town centers with festive displays and hosting family-friendly lighting ceremonies.

Christmas in Wicklow means indulging in delicious seasonal fare, and the county's pubs, cafes, and restaurants are ready to serve up holiday feasts. Many local spots offer Christmas menus featuring traditional roasts, puddings, mulled ciders, and holiday-inspired cocktails.

Wicklow is also embracing the spirit of giving this season. Many local charities are hosting Christmas fundraisers, toy drives, and food donation events to support families and individuals in need.

A new campaign is urging the Bray community to continue shopping, hiring, and sourcing locally, helping to strengthen the foundation for economic growth in the District. It also invites everyone to participate in the town's many festive events and activities taking place through late November and December.

This year's Bray festive season is bursting

with a fantastic lineup of events, from watching 'Christmas Movies at Mermaid', visiting 'Santa and The Ponies at Festina Lente', and exploring the 'Killruddy Christmas Markets' to catching enchanting 'Candlelight Concerts' and, of course, the sparkling town centre Christmas lights. So, don your cosiest winter coat and get ready to spread the festive cheer.

Come along on Saturday, November 23rd, at 4:45 pm, to the Civic Plaza in Bray for an outdoor festive celebration, which will coincide with the official switch-on of the Town Centre Christmas lights on Main Street. While you wait for Santa's grand entrance, enjoy a Christmas DJ spinning festive tunes, a heart-warming sing-along with MC Adam Burke, and a mischievous Grinch causing chaos. There's something foreveryone! Plus, one lucky family will have the chance to switch on Bray's Christmas Lights.

Cllr Dermot O'Brien, Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District, said, "Join us to kick off the festive season at Bray's Christmas lights switch-on event! Why not make a day of it enjoy a delicious lunch at one of the many local eateries, get a head start on your Christmas shopping, and then find the perfect spot in the plaza to enjoy



Santa arriving in Greystones.

the festivities!"

With its Christmas lights now illuminating the streets of Greystones and Wicklow Town, and Bray and Arklow's lights

set to follow this weekend, Wicklow is the perfect destination for a festive escape.

From artisan markets to cozy woodland trails,

Wicklow is ready to welcome you this Christmas season. Bundle up, explore, and make holiday memories in the Garden County.

*Thank you to all our customers for your loyalty and support. Have a Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year*

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Chicken Caesar Salad Served with grilled Chicken, baby gem lettuce, croutons, crispy Bacon parmesan cheese, caesar dressing (1,3,6,7,7b,10,11)  
Cajun Chicken Risotto Pan-fried chicken in a creamy risotto topped with parmesan cheese and roast red pepper dressing (7a,7b,7c,9,12)  
Asian Pork Belly Slow braised crispy pork belly coated with bbq sauce, on Asian noodle salad (1a,3,6,7c,9,11,12)  
Pan-Fried Prawns & Chorizo Cooked in a white wine and garlic cream sauce with spring onion and garlic crouton (1,2,7a,7c,9,12)

**MAINS**  
8oz Sirloin Steak (€5 sur) Onion ring flatcap mushroom, pepper sauce and chips (1,6,7a,7c,9,12)

**PLATTERS**  
Shared Platters Classic - €12pp Sausages, Chicken Goujons, Chicken Wings, Onion Rings, Fries  
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Stuffed Roast Turkey & Ham Parcel Creamed potatoes, roast potatoes veg, Yorkshire pudding, rich gravy (1,3,6,7a,7c,9,12)  
Pan-Fried Seabass On a bed of crushed sauté baby potatoes, buttered green, chill and mango salsa (1,4,6,7c,9)  
Vegetarian Risotto Roast butternut squash, red pepper basil pesto, garlic bread (1,7a,7c,9)  
Grilled Chicken Supreme With champ potatoes carrot puree smoked bacon and onion jus (1,6,7a,7c,9,12)

**DESSERT**  
Christmas Pudding With brandy custard and ice cream (1,3,7a)  
Ice Cream With chocolate sauce and popping candy (7,7a,);  
Chocolate Profiteroles Filled with fresh cream and covered in chocolate sauce (1,3,7a,7c)

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# NLN Bray organise sponsored walk in aid of Ark Housing

Each year the students from NLN Bray organise a number of Charity events for local and national charities. The latest fundraising event was a sponsored walk at the beginning of the month in aid of Ark Housing Association Bray.

Ark Housing is located in Bray and beside the Recycling Centre is the closest neighbour to NLN and the students in the centre are very aware of

the important work this charity does.

The 5km sponsored walk took place on 1st November in nice mild weather. All walkers completed the walk and came back to the centre for some hot food and a great raffle raffle.

The event included very generous sponsorship from NLN Bray's colleagues in NLN Stillorgan, and €1,950 was raised. The project was a huge success and NLN staff and students would like to thank everyone who sponsored us and helped ARK Housing.

NLN's next charity fund raising event will be their Christmas Fair, which will be held on Friday 6th December in their campus in Beechwood Close, Boghall Road ( beside the Recycling Centre.

"Our charity partner for this Fair will be Jigsaw Wicklow Mental Health Services and we are looking forward to raising as much as we can for Jigsaw!" NLN Bray stated.



Heather Marshall and Kate Murphy at the National Learning Network 5k walk in Bray.



Gary Messett and John Scanlon of KWET, Colette O Loan, Shay Hiney and Jane Watson at the National Learning Network 5k walk in Bray.



John Heavy, Kumar Riaz, Ross King and Fahad Ahmed at the National Learning Network 5k walk in Bray.

## Wicklow Foróige volunteer attends annual Volunteer Conference

Foroige volunteers from all over Ireland came together in Salthill, Galway, from 8 - 10th of November for the organisation's 52nd annual Volunteer Conference. This year's event welcomed over 220 dedicated volunteers, celebrating their essential role in youth development across the nation.

This year's conference featured psychologist Shane Martin as the keynote speaker, who addressed the resilience in volunteer work. "Empowering volunteers not only enhances their well-being but also enriches the lives of the young people they interact with," Martin noted. "The impact of dedicated volunteers on young people is immeasurable."

The event included a variety of workshops and group discussions designed to foster collaboration and idea-sharing among volunteers. Participants connected with speakers and each other, exploring new ways to enhance their impactful work within their communities and sharing stories of how volunteering has changed their lives.

Odhán O'Mahony, Chairperson of Foroige, opened the conference with a message of gratitude and inspiration: "Each of you plays a crucial role in shaping young people's lives. Your dedication and passion are what make Foroige a pillar of strength in communities throughout Ireland."

Reflecting on the future, O'Mahony added, "Foroige aims to ensure that every young person who wishes to engage in youth work has the opportunity to do so. Our vision is to have flourishing Foroige clubs and projects in every county, attracting and retaining passionate volunteers to continue our mission."

Foroige, now in its 72nd year of service, boasts over 4,500 volunteers across 450 clubs and 180 projects and programmes. Initiatives such as Leadership for Life, Be Healthy Be Happy, Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), and Big Brother Big Sister engage over 50,000 young people each year, empowering them to take responsibility for their futures.



Wicklow Foroige volunteer Dave O'Reilly at the conference in Galway.



Ellen Donovan and Mark Browne at the BIFE Graduation Awards.



# 'Students deserve more than supersized classrooms'

Independent general election candidate for Wicklow Shay Cullen spoke with some future voters at Colaiste Chraobh Abhann community college in Kilcoole School on Friday, 8th November before he headed out onto the campaign trail.

Shay reported "Young people starting out in life are stifled and feel stuck, they are worrying about their capacity to afford an education no matter how their results turn out, they see cost of transport and rents as hurdles hard to climb and feel unheard. One young man said at 18 they are paid lower wages or benefits because of their age yet face the same bills as older adults with car insurance, taxes etc, it's unfair and I agree with them, it's ageism reversed."

After the visit Shay commented "This government is saving up to €100 million per year on unpaid teacher salaries due to shortage of teachers. This money should not be subsumed back into Government coffers but be redirected to schools in the form of enhanced capitation grants or fund the therapies and assessments the Dept of Education will not provide at all levels. We might be talking with 6th years today but the key to a good education is getting the right supports from the start and there is money, it's just not being managed efficiently or effectively."

"Primary school principals are telling me some schools have to combine classes because they can't get teachers. This is resulting in supersized classes in schools in Greystones, Bray, indeed across Wicklow. Half of our county schools are reporting unfilled teaching posts despite the record number of graduates available but these qualified teachers are affected by the on-going housing supply crisis and high living costs so are often not able to take up a position either."

"The sums don't add up, this is due to the failure to plan to have an adequate number of teachers in our schools. According to the INTO the numbers stretch into the thousands, with 2,767 teacher shortages over 2024/2025 made up of 951 current vacancies and a predicted 1,816 vacancies by the New Year. This government is under resourcing education from pre-schoolers to young adults and we need to better tackle these on-going issues and remind the Taoiseach and Minister for Education they are failing to make the mark in Wicklow."



Shay Cullen with students from Colaiste Chraobh Abhann in Kilcoole.

# New offshore wind academy launched by Skillnet

Skillnet Ireland, the national talent development agency for businesses, in partnership with Wind Energy Ireland, have launched a new national initiative, Skillnet Offshore Wind Academy. The Initiative will support professionals through a career switching model, which aims to rapidly create a pipeline of skilled workers for businesses operating in offshore wind services. The Skillnet Offshore Wind Academy will focus on mid-career professionals interested in a career within the industry.

Paul Healy, Chief Executive, Skillnet Ireland, said: "Skillnet Offshore Wind Academy will provide new opportunities for skilled workers from a range of industries with transferable skills, to upskill and become future leaders

for the offshore wind sector. Offshore wind energy presents a unique opportunity to secure a supply of sustainable, indigenous energy, that will contribute to our energy economy in a meaningful way, for generations to come.

Skillnet Ireland is committed to supporting this important sector to address its skills and workforce requirements

and develop a pipeline exceptional talent." Noel Cunniffe, CEO, Wind Energy Ireland, said: "Our members are working every day to build the wind farms, on and offshore, which provide Irish families and businesses with the clean, affordable, energy

they need. To accelerate the development of renewable energy, to build a more sustainable economy, we will need thousands of skilled workers in the years to come. Whatever your skillset or your experience or your passion there is a place, and an

opportunity, for you in the wind energy industry. We look forward to working with Skillnet on this exciting new project to help a new generation of Irish workers build sustainable careers while playing their part in Ireland's energy revolution."

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# Over 200 people attend AGM of Older People's Council

The Chair of County Wicklow Older People's Council, Carina Holmes welcomed the Chair of the Wicklow Age Friendly County Alliance, Michael Nicholson, Director of Services of Social Development Directorate Wicklow County Council, to the event in the Arklow Bay Hotel. She also welcomed the attendance from a wide range of community groups and networks across the county.

Carina Holmes, Chair of the County Wicklow Older People's Council, welcomed Michael Nicholson, Chair of the Wicklow Age Friendly County Alliance and Director of Services at the Social Development Directorate of Wicklow County Council. She also acknowledged the presence of various community groups and networks from across the county.

Carina noted "The importance of integrating the services provided by the Alliance members noting that over 27% of the population of Wicklow is now over 55 years old. The OPC Executive in County Wicklow sees the great benefits that can be derived from the implementation of the five-year strategy which will help to make County Wicklow a great place to grow old. The OPC very much looks forward to the Interim Review on the progress made against the Age Friendly Strategy over the last two years."

Staff from the multi-agency Wicklow Age Friendly County Alliance attended the event to share information about services and supports available for older people. These included Age Friendly Healthy Homes, the Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána,

Citizens Information Services, County Wicklow

Libraries, Local Sports Partnership, Healthy Age Ireland, County Wicklow Partnership, Bray Area Partnership, and the Public Participation Network.

Michael Nicholson, Chair of the Wicklow Age Friendly County Alliance, stated, "Wicklow County Council has made significant progress in embedding an age friendly approach to all of its work and is committed to the Age Friendly Programme in the county. As Chair of the Wicklow Age Friendly County Alliance, I can confirm that the other Agencies represented on the Alliance are also committed to implementing the Wicklow Age Friendly County Strategy, for 2023-2027, and it is great to see so many of them here today to connect with the older people they serve."

Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Cathaoirleach Wicklow County Council said he was proud to attend the AGM: "It is crucial that we continue to work together to ensure that seniors are heard, respected, and supported in every aspect of society. By collaborating with the Council, we can help create a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable future for older

adults in our community," he said. Senator Pat Casey, Age Friendly Ambassador for County Wicklow, stated: "I encourage older adults in our community to get involved with our projects and initiatives. Your participation is crucial in ensuring that our community remains inclusive and supportive for everyone. Whether it's through volunteering, attending workshops, or sharing your valuable insights, your involvement can make a significant difference. Join us in creating a community where everyone feels valued and included. Our commitment to creating an age-friendly community remains steadfast, and I look forward to engaging with our members and partners to continue making a positive impact for people in our community."

Stephanie Lang, County Wicklow Age Friendly Programme Manager, provided an update on the Age Friendly Strategy for 2023-2027 and discussed future projects for 2025, including Information Clinics for older adults around the county and the piloting of the Care and Repair Programme.

Emer Coveney, Regional Manager for Age Friendly Ireland in the Southeast, updated attendees on



Back row: (L to R) Michael Nicholson - Chair of the Wicklow Age Friendly County Alliance, Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly, Cllr. Paul O'Brien - Cathaoirleach Wicklow County Council, Senator Malcolm Byrne, Emer Coveney - Age Friendly Ireland. Front Row: (L to R) M-ire Halvey - Acting/Senior Executive Officer Wicklow County Council, Mai Quaid - Vice Chairperson Older Peoples Council, Carina Holmes - Chairperson of the Older Peoples Council and Stephanie Lang - Wicklow County Council's Age Friendly Programme Manager.

the operating guidelines developed by the National Network of Older People's Councils. She praised County Wicklow's innovative and creative approach to making the region a great place to grow old and

encouraged individuals over 55 to volunteer for active engagement with the OPC Executive to support the actions in the strategy.

County Wicklow residents aged over 55 who are interested in volun-

teering for active engagement with the Older People's Council Executive group should contact the County Wicklow Age Friendly Programme Manager by email at [agefriendly@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:agefriendly@wicklowcoco.ie)

## Never too old to learn

Wicklow County Council and Music Network invite Wicklow residents aged 55 and over to take part in an exciting music project

County Wicklow residents aged 55 and over are invited to pick up instruments they used to play and start playing again with the help of Making Music with Trio Accord: the Wicklow Teaching Residency, a partnership between Wicklow County Arts Office Arts Office, funded by Creative Ireland and Music Network.

The project is focused on helping participants return to playing an instrument and sharing the joy of group music-making. It provides participants with free tuition from professional musicians, access to instruments for the duration of the

programme and opportunities to connect and learn with other budding musicians along the way.

This year's participants will receive tuition on piano accordion, violin, harp and piano with renowned musicians Dermot

Dunne (piano accordion/piano), Aoife Dowdall (violin) and Claire O'Donnell (harp). The project will run from November 2024 to April 2025. Participants will receive eight one-to-one lessons and three group lessons with others playing the same instrument. The project will conclude with three large ensemble sessions, where all participants will join together with the professional musicians to play music learned during the project. As well as playing together, participants will meet for coffee sessions and chats on wide-ranging musical topics and more.

Mary Walsh, a previous participant in the project, spoke about her experience of returning to playing an instrument through the residency: "I really loved the course and am so glad that I took that first step of applying - I think after the ripe old age of 65, you tend to lose a lot of your confidence in your musical ability, and I can truly say this project has brought my love for music back to life again."

Applicants must be aged 55 or over, resident in County Wicklow, and have some previous experience of playing music. Some experience of reading music is an advantage. The project will



be based at Wicklow County Campus, Clermont House, Newrath, Rathnew.

Commenting on the announcement, CEO of Music Network Sharon Rollston said: "We are thrilled to announce the call out for this our fourth Wicklow Teaching Residency in partnership with Wicklow County Arts Office. Following on from the previous residencies, we're delighted to be able to give even more people the opportunity to rekindle their love of learning and playing music. We warmly welcome Dermot, Aoife and Claire on board, who we know will guide and inspire participants with their vast musical knowledge

and expertise."

Wicklow County Council Chief Executive Emer O'Gorman said: "Drawing on the musical backgrounds of ensemble-in-residence, the tuition programme will offer participants the opportunity to explore music across the classical, folk, pop and world music genres."

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Paul O'Brien, said: "Wicklow County the Council's County Development plan is committed to making provision for the county as an 'Age Friendly' region. This Music Residency is a good example of a series of actions the County Council will take to fulfil this com-

mitment over the course of the Plan 2022 - 2028."

Places on the residency are limited to 15 and priority will be given on a first come first served basis. Participants must be available on all project dates; a full list of dates is available on Music Network's website. You can find out more about the project and apply to take part online at [www.music-network.ie](http://www.music-network.ie) or by calling Sarah Ledwidge on 083 016 2718 or 01 475 0224.

The closing date for applications for Making Music with Trio Accord the Wicklow Teaching Residency is 19th November at 2pm.





# ROOTS: A Dialogue in Textile and Poetry

*The Coach House Gallery, Dublin Castle until 19th January*

Wicklow writer Jane Clarke's poetry has inspired a major art exhibition in Dublin Castle.



Jane Clarke.

Fifteen artists have created new textile and multimedia artworks, giving visual expression to the quiet, powerful words of the poet which echo throughout the exhibition as a sound installation. The exhibition speaks to the eternal human concerns of living, loving and dying. "It opens doors", says Jane Clarke, "into memory, emotion, ideas and possibilities." There has been a great response from the public to the combination of the poetry and art work and many visitors recommend it to friends or return themselves to see it again. The Director of the Arts Council, Maureen Kennelly, launched the exhibition, remarking that it is a perfect example of "how something new, miraculous and magical can be made by artistic collaboration."

Entrance to the exhibition is free and it runs until the 19TH January 2025.



# Bray author pens picturebook inspired by her name

Inspired by the mythology behind her name, a new children's book by Wicklow author Sadhbh Devlin has just been published. On the heels of *An Feileacan agus an Ri* and *Cluasa Capaill ar an Ri* comes a third beautiful instalment in publisher Futa Fata's multi-award-winning series of reimagined myths in picturebook form.

This latest addition, *An Fia sa Choill*, tells the love story of Fionn Mac Cumhaill and his mysterious wife, Sadhbh, who was transformed into a deer for refusing to marry against her will. Readers young and old will be captivated by this age-old story, retold masterfully by Sadhbh Devlin and brought to life in the magical illustrations of Anastasia Melnykova.

"When I was growing up, my name was very unusual," says Devlin. "In

fact there were only three babies registered as being named Sadhbh the year that I was born. When I was a child I used to be really jealous of my friends with more 'normal' names like Michelle or Sarah who could easily find necklaces and keyrings, etc with their names inscribed on them. That just didn't exist for my name! What I did have, however, was this wonderful story from Irish mythology about a beautiful young woman

who shared my name. It felt very special to me to see my name in such an ancient and magical story."

When Devlin was invited to pitch an idea for a reimagined version of a story from Irish mythology to be added to Futa Fata's award-winning series, she knew immediately that she wanted to choose a story from 'An Fhiannaiocht' or the Fenian Cycle (i.e. stories featuring the hero Fionn Mac Cumhaill). There are many stories associated with this Irish superhero - most famously, the story of the Salmon of Knowledge - but for Devlin there could only be one choice.

"The one thing that

always frustrated me about the older versions of the story featuring the character Sadhbh is that beyond her being 'a beautiful young woman' there was never very much information about what kind of person she was. I knew that in my retelling I would have an opportunity to give her more of a personality and, especially, more of a voice so that the younger generation could get to know her better and see what an important character she is in Irish mythology."

Ukrainian artist Anastasia Melnykova who created the stunning illustrations for this book was inspired by visits to the National Museum of Ireland and by the natural landscapes of her adopted home in Cork. "It was a true pleasure to work on the illustrations, letting this book pass through

me and become a part of me. It's been an inspiring journey," she says.

These days, the name Sadhbh is not as rare as it

once was and it has been steadily growing in popularity over the years. In fact, in 2023 there were 120 babies named Sadhbh

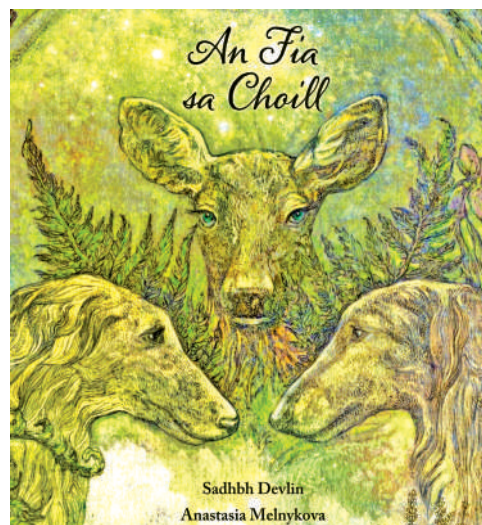
registered compared to just twelve Michelles and ninety three Sarahs!

An Fia sa Choill will be launched on Saturday

9th November in Tales for Tadpoles children's bookshop in Bray at 2pm. Failte roimh chach! All are welcome!



Sadbh Devlin.



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Kevin Murphy and Aobha Harmon at the Tinahely GAA & LGFA Lip Sync in the Amber Springs, Gorey.

# ‘I will Love Them Dearly’

An exhibition by Mary St Leger. Signal Arts Centre, Monday 25th November to Sunday 8th December

"I WILL LOVE THEM DEARLY" is a new body of work from Mary St Leger. Combining paintings and ephemera it is a personal exploration into the eccentric and often isolating world of St Leger's childhood. Her obsession with the theatrical and dramatic play out in a continuous loop in these recent pieces. The use of imagined backgrounds and repetitive pattern act as backdrops for a story that each painting tells.

A graduate in painting from Limerick School of Art and Design St Leger holds an M.A in Fine Art from the University of Central England and an M.A. in Women's Studies from the University of Limerick. St Leger has exhibited extensively including the Chianciano Biennale and The London Biennale.



Crow's Nest 1, by Mary St Leger.



Frith by Mary St Leger.

## Oliver Jeffers Book Signing

Oliver Jeffers book signing with *Halfway up the Stairs* at The Whale Theatre.

Saturday 30th November, 11.30am Sold Out but register at [www.whaletheatre.ie](http://www.whaletheatre.ie) or call the booking office on 01 2010550 for any returns.

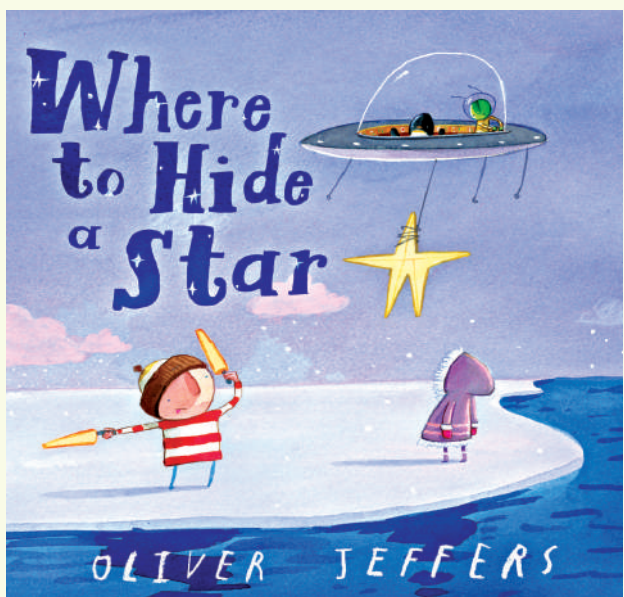
A very special Oliver Jeffers signing will be held in The Whale Theatre, Greystones to celebrate Oliver's new book, *Where to Hide a Star*. Celebrate twenty years of The Boy in this highly anticipated new adventure from the internationally bestselling picture book creator of *Lost and Found*, Oliver Jeffers!

Where to Hide a Star is an out-of-this-world, long-awaited sequel to the much-loved Boy stories, loved all around the world - now introducing a brand-new character! Once there was a boy who

would often play hide-and-seek with his friends the star and the penguin. The star was always easy to find, but one day it went missing. So, the boy radioed the Martian for help and soon found himself on an

exciting spaceship rescue mission to the North Pole! But there, he discovered that he wasn't the only one who had always dreamed of having a star as a friend...

Oliver Jeffers is a visual artist and author working in painting, bookmaking, illustration, collage, performance and sculpture. His engagements and practice are truly international in scope. His critically acclaimed picture books have been the recipients of numerous awards, including a New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Books Award, TIME Best Book of the Year, Bologna Ragazzi Award, an Irish Book Award, a United Kingdom Literary Association Award and two Emmy Awards for the Apple TV adaptation of *Here We Are: Notes For Living on Planet Earth*. He has exhibited at institutions such as the Brooklyn Museum in New York, the National Portrait Gallery in London, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. He also recently received a Member of the Order of the British Empire Award (MBE) for his Services in Art.



## New children's book introduces the topic of neurodiversity

Children's author Candice Samons has written a children's book about autism. With the book, her aim is to introduce the topic of neurodiversity and encourage children to feel comfortable being themselves and to always embrace their unique abilities.

The book series is inspired by Candice's 5 year old daughter Taylor, who is autistic and non-verbal.

"When Taylor was diagnosed with autism at 18 months, we began a journey to show others that being different is beautiful. Though non-verbal, Taylor communicates in her own special way and has so much to teach the world," says Candice.

"The book features characters inspired by the wonderful people in Taylor's life who provide her with immense support and have learned to connect with her world. I hope you find as much joy in reading this book as I did in writing it. Always remember to celebrate your uniqueness and embrace who you are!"

The story is about Taylor the Turtle who is autistic and has a lot to teach the world, despite being non-verbal and at times being a little bit afraid of the world. She meets other animals in the Forest of Friendship and they each teach her a valuable life lesson, for example how to be brave or the importance of being caring. As the story progresses, Taylor becomes

more confident and comes out of her shell, feeling comfortable enough to play with the other animals and embrace her differences. Candice has also written an additional two books which will be available on the website [www.TailorsTales.ie](http://www.TailorsTales.ie) in the coming weeks; they also include the need for glasses, hearing aids etc.





# Whale Theatre owner announces retirement

*New interested parties sought for Greystones venue*

After 10 years of ownership, Ross McParland, founder and owner of the Whale Theatre, has announced that he will retire in the summer of 2025, leaving the door of the Whale Theatre open for new, fresh and exciting ideas to continue the venue's legacy as a thriving arts hub in Greystones.

Since opening in 2017, the Whale Theatre in Greystones has become Wicklow's premier cultural venue, hosting over 1,200 events and welcoming more than 100,000 visitors. The intimate setting has showcased a diverse range of performances, from music and comedy to theatre productions and film screenings. The Whale Theatre has hosted some of the biggest names in Ireland's

arts scene, while also serving as a home for local community groups and a range of different projects.

Ross McParland is not seeking to sell the venue to the highest bidder but is inviting proposals from arts organisations, cultural groups, social enterprises, entrepreneurs, and government agencies who share his passion for the arts and community engagement. "It is time

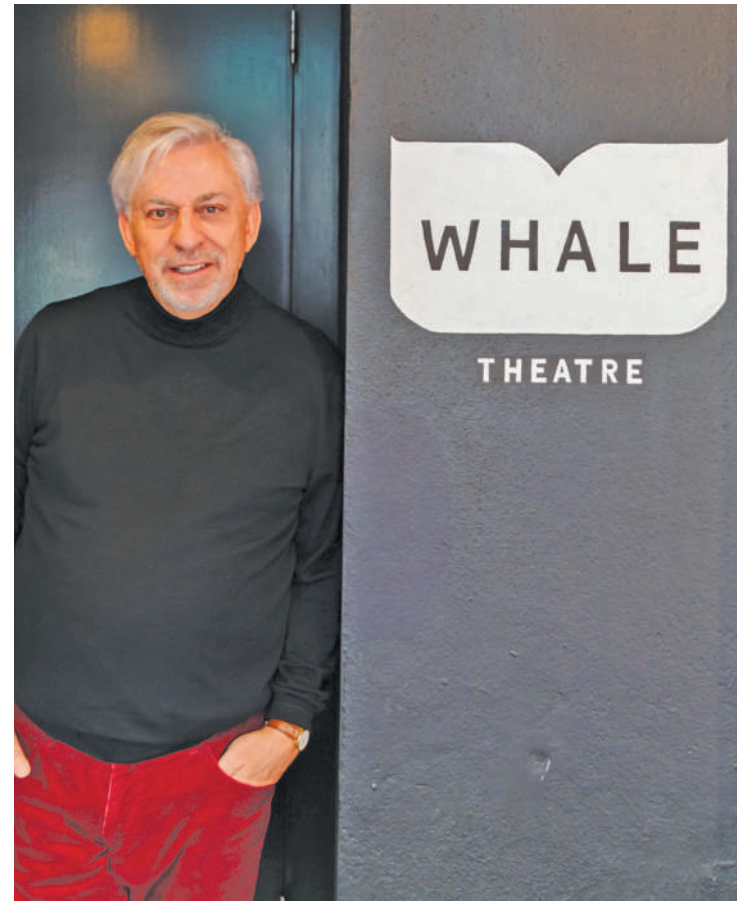
for me to pass the torch, and I truly hope that the venue, in whatever form, continues to be an important destination for artistic, cultural and community activities. Since we officially opened in 2017, I've loved every minute of it, and this announcement presents a unique opportunity for the local community to play a role in keeping the spirit of the Whale Theatre alive." McParland said.

McParland is open to offering leasing arrangements for the right proposal. A formal application process will ensure the best possible outcome for the venue's sustainable future. "We're looking for the right fit for Greystones, and I would happily offer a very attractive leasing arrangement for the right proposal. All applications will be assessed by a small panel of trusted advisors, and a

formal application process will be followed to make sure we find the best possible outcome which has the potential to be sustainable in the long-term.

Ross McParland is clear on one specific condition that will apply with any future proposals with no commercial activity to take place at the theatre after midnight. "I have included a specific condition for any new agreement - that no commercial activity will be allowed to take place after midnight, no late bar or nightclub. The wish is for the venue to remain as a hub to foster the arts and I am prepared to offer attractive terms to any party with this core vision" said McParland.

Gratefully acknowledging the enormous support that the venture has received during its lifespan, McParland said "I would like to sincerely thank everyone who has supported The Whale Theatre since we opened in 2017, including our amazing staff, volunteers, incredible performers and of course the thousands of audience members who have attended our events. I have had the honour of working with some truly incredible people, and without the amazing team



Ross McParland, founder and owner of the Whale Theatre.



Ross McParland, founder and owner of the Whale Theatre.

that we have here, none of this would have been possible. I wish to thank our core team Brian, Lisa, Nikki, Pete, Keah and Paul for their years of hard work, and for making this dream a reality. I also want to thank Dave, Charlie, our long-standing volunteers and everyone who has worked in our hospitality team over the years."

Located in the centre of Greystones, the Whale Theatre offers:

- 400m<sup>2</sup> of state-of-the-art space
- Advanced sound, lighting, and multi-media equipment
- Full bar setup and commercial kitchen

The Whale Theatre is

just one part of McParland's award-winning Theatre Lane complex, which also houses the Little Stars on the Lane crèche, and three stunning duplex loft apartments, as well as other commercial units. Mr McParland purchased the unfinished site in 2015, and oversaw its remarkable transformation over the last 10 years.

Prior to opening the Whale Theatre, Mr McParland had a successful career as an estate agent with his own company, which was subsequently acquired by Sherry FitzGerald. He retired early as a property advisor and opened the theatre with no prior

experience. Having managed the venue himself for the first two years, McParland appointed Brian O' Regan as Artistic Director in 2020, and the pair have worked closely together over the past 5 years to successfully realise the full potential of the Whale Theatre.

Brian O' Regan will continue to work closely with McParland until the transition is complete. The theatre will maintain its full artistic programme through May 2025.

Parties interested in the future of the Whale Theatre can find more information, contact details, and application forms at [www.whaletheatre.ie](http://www.whaletheatre.ie).

# Top Wicklow artists feature at Art Source

Wicklow artists took centre stage as their work features at Ireland's largest and most exciting art fair, Art Source. The best and brightest in Irish art appeared alongside world-class international artists at the RDS from November 15th to 17th.



Freedom by Emanuela Carvisiglia.

Kris Kirwan, Greystones, uses an unusual technique of pointillism, the art of creating a larger piece comprised of tiny dots, as a philosophical tool.

A former clinical psychotherapist, Kirwan's paintings are minimalist representations of geometrical abstracts, animals and even people.

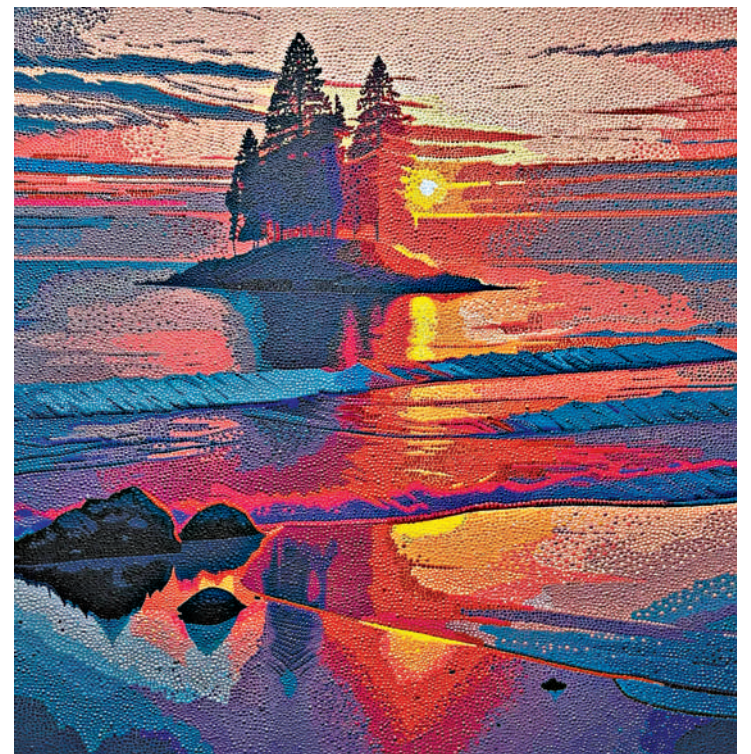
These pieces all carry the same philosophical message, which is that each dot is visible and unique, and is an essential element of the whole painting. In this way, each dot can be a symbol of a single human thought, emotion, experience, action or even whole human being.

A former art and book restorer and librarian, Emanuela Carvisiglia of Ema Carvi Art, originally from Italy, is based in Wicklow Town.

Her realistic oil on canvas pieces explore the interplay between water and light, touching on the relaxing inspiration of the Mediterranean.

Starting from a photograph chosen for visual impact and emotional inspiration, Ema Carvi pieces are sometimes finished with a layer of transparent resin to give them a shiny look and to highlight the reflection of light on water.

Art Source featured a huge selection of affordable art as well as a wide range of pieces from some of the biggest names in the art world, including Andy Warhol, Banksy and Julien Opie, making it an unmissable event for art lovers.



Melancholy by Kris Kirwan.







# Whitmore supports 9% VAT for food and beverage sector

Social Democrats TD Deputy Jennifer Whitmore has come out in support of the introduction of a 9% VAT rate for the food and beverage sector.

"Small businesses, especially in the hospitality sector, are the backbone of our towns and villages but unfortunately, we are seeing more and more of them facing closure. This has a hugely negative impact on their staff, their suppliers and ultimately our wider community," explained Deputy Whitmore.



Deputy Whitmore in Bray.

"This is a major issue for the small cafes and restaurants that are central to our communities and the lifeblood of our local economies. I've met with many coffee shop owners across the county, in our larger towns like Bray and Greystones and in our smaller villages, who are really struggling to make

ends meet. At the moment, a major hotel in Dublin, charging exorbitant rates for rooms, is paying the same VAT rate as a small coffee shop in Wicklow Town. They cannot and should not be comparable."

"We, in the Social Democrats would split food and accommodation businesses, for the purposes of VAT, and apply a reduced 9% VAT rate on food and beverages. VAT is a blunt instrument, but this is an emergency mea-

sure, designed to get support to businesses quickly, and is necessary to stop the closure of otherwise viable businesses," commented Deputy Whitmore. "Wicklow has so many wonderful cafes and restaurants across the county. These are the places we go to meet friends for a coffee and a catch up, or where we bring our children for a treat after school, where we celebrate special occasions with family or go for a cosy dinner for two. We have restaurants putting small villages like Grangecon on the culinary map and drawing in visitors to our county from Dublin and further afield. These businesses play a

huge role in our communities, and we need to ensure that they are protected and supported," added Ms Whitmore.

"In Government, the Social Democrats would also, conduct an urgent review of supports avail-

able to this sector because so much of what the outgoing government have provided to date has either been ineffective or overly complicated, to the point that businesses haven't been able to access supports."

## CLASSIFIEDS

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

### THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

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