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Tuesday 21st January 2025 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray, A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

## 'NEW BUS ROUTES ARE A FAILURE'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has criticised the upcoming rollout of the new 6a phase of the BusConnects Network Redesign, set to take effect on January 26th, for failing to address what he describes as 'key manageable issues'. Brady expressed particular concern over the cancellation of vital routes and the failure to ensure adequate public transport connections for commuters and students.



John Brady TD.

He highlighted the removal of the 143 and 144 routes, previously operated by Bray-based commercial operator Finnegan's Buses, as a major misstep, leaving no public transport link between Bray and the LUAS.

Deputy Brady said "The rollout of the 6a phase is a major redesign of the bus network for North Wicklow and Dublin, yet it's difficult to understand how commuters in Bray will now lose direct access to the

LUAS in Sandyford following the termination of the 143 and 144 routes. This is nothing short of a major backward step. Despite extensive planning and consultation, Transport for Ireland (TFI) has failed to provide an integrated public transport service for Bray and its surrounding areas. Crucially, the removal of these routes was never flagged during consultations.

"I welcome the new L14 around-the-town service in Bray, which I had



An Taoiseach Simon Harris and Shay Walsh from BT Ireland with students from Glenart College in Arklow, Isobel Weadick, Goda Baranauskaite and Aimee Ciara Keogh at the Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition in the RDS. Their project was an 'Analysis of the abilities that different age groups have to detect artificial intelligence and how it can spread misinformation on social media.' See more, pages 16 & 17.

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campaigned for. However, I have concerns about the use of double-decker buses on this route. The introduction of the L14 is a positive development, but using double-decker buses is problematic. In areas like Palermo, where the 185 route has struggled with tight residential spaces and roadside parking, the large buses caused damage to cars and congestion. Smaller buses, like the Imp buses used in the past, are much better suited to these areas.

"Similarly, the decision to use double-decker buses on Meath Road is questionable, given its narrow layout with cars parked on both sides. A smaller, more practical bus would serve this route far better.

"In the redesign of the routes there was an oppor-

tunity to have a public transport link between Newtownmountkennedy and Kilcoole. So, extending the new L1 route to Newtownmountkennedy and Kilcoole is essential. Many secondary school students in Newtown must travel to Coláiste Chraobh Abhann in Kilcoole, and a direct bus service would meet an urgent need for this community.

"The decision not to connect Bray with LUAS stops in Cherrywood or Sandyford in the redesign is a serious shortcoming. We must have a public transport system that works and is connected. I will continue to work with Transport for Ireland on all these important issues to ensure that we have a public transport service that is fit for purpose."

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## Comhaltas Bray

This month, Comhaltas Bray will resume their traditional Irish music and singing lessons for children and adults in Bray and Greystones. Term 2 begins in Colaiste Raithin, Bray on Wednesday the 29th of January and in Gaelscoil na gCloch Liath, Greystones on Thursday the 30th of January. New members welcome! Please see their website for more information: <https://www.bray-ce.ie/> or email them at [bray@comhaltas.net](mailto:bray@comhaltas.net).

## Events in Bray & Wicklow Town Library

On Tuesday January 21st Wicklow County Council Library Service invites the community to Bray Library, Eglinton Road, Bray, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. for an evening of local history with the Active Transport Team's Bray Dart Interchange Project. Heritage Officer Deirdre Burns who will speak about the Wicklow online community heritage archive and how to get involved, followed by local historian Robert Butler who will give a short presentation 'Remembering the Arcadia Ballroom' followed by opportunities for all to share related memories and memorabilia with the team. All are welcome, no need to book.

The first of the Wicklow Local Studies monthly local history talks will take place in Wicklow Town Library at 7 p.m. on Thursday January 23rd when Pat Power will present 'The Ascendancy in Wicklow' in which he will delve into the rise and social dynamics of the ascendancy in the county, tracing its development from the early 1600s through to 1829. The talk will be richly complemented by a variety of rare illustrations and drawings. Key topics include the impact of the Big House, the workings of Wicklow's Grand Jury System, cultural life and social themes within the community, as well as the roles of the Established and Roman Catholic Churches. To reserve a place email: [Wicklowlocalstudies@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:Wicklowlocalstudies@wicklowcoco.ie) or call 0404 67025.

## Roundwood Variety Group Production of Puss in Boots

The wait is over! The Roundwood Variety Group is thrilled to announce that tickets for their much-anticipated 2025 production of 'Puss in Boots' are officially on sale! Get ready for an unforgettable night of laughter, adventure, and magic as we bring this classic fairy tale to life on stage!

Show Dates: Friday the 31st of January, Saturday Matinee 1st of February and Sunday the 2nd of February.

Secure your seats now and be part of the excitement. But remember, when selecting your seats, the system will automatically suggest one for you. If you don't want that particular seat, you must deselect it before proceeding, or it will be added to your order. Double-check your selections before finalizing your purchase to ensure your perfect spot! Get your tickets at [www.eventbrite.ie](http://www.eventbrite.ie)



Fr. Aquinas Duffy and Rev. Jack Kinkead with crew members and supporters of the Wicklow RNLI at the annual Wicklow RNLI Service of Remembrance.

## Spotting the signs: Indications ageing loved ones might need help at home in cold weather

**With the country emerging from the cold snap and the New Year finally beginning to take shape, some people may have concerns that their older relatives aren't as capable of looking after themselves as they were this time last year. Events of the last few weeks may have highlighted the struggles ageing adults have with mobility, preparing meals or doing light housework.**

It can be difficult for adult children to come to the realisation that their parents are getting less independent, especially if they are busy raising a family or live too far away to pop in and see how they are as often as they like. However, "it is essential to address potential issues early on, even if that initial conversation may be awkward or met with resistance from a proud parent or ageing relative," according to

Danette Connolly, National Clinical Lead at Home Instead.

### Knowing the signs

Some signs can be subtle, others might be more obvious, either way, the first step in figuring out if a loved one needs support is noticing if there is an issue that could potentially impact their independence.

"Falling is a common issue affecting ageing adults, but many people who experience a fall might not want to say anything about it, so keep an eye out for bruises or cuts and don't be too shy about asking what happened," Ms Connolly said.

"Your loved one's home being unusually untidy or unclean could mean that they're struggling to maintain a house-keeping routine. They may be in pain, or it might just take too much out of them," Ms Connolly continued.

"A lack of food in the fridge or noticeable weight loss can also be indicators that they're struggling with mobility issues, as it's not as easy to pop out to the shop or cook for themselves anymore," she added.

"Trouble recalling events from earlier that day or recounting the same story over and over can be indicators of cognitive decline, as can losing

track of medications or a reluctance to leave the house," explained Ms Connolly.

### What to do

"If you are concerned about your loved one's health, it is important to broach a conversation about it with them in a compassionate way, bearing in mind that they may feel a little embarrassed to acknowledge they need support," Ms Connolly says.

"For any physical or mental health concerns you may have, consulting your loved one's GP might be the best thing to do. You may want to keep a list of concerns to bring up with them. It's better to address a concern early rather than waiting until it becomes a health emergency," she said.

"If it's a case that they need some support with daily activities, companionship, or services that support their independence and participation in the community, reach out to your local home care provider to see how they can help," Ms Connolly concluded.

## Redmond O'Toole at Mermaid

*Classical Guitar Recital, Friday 24th January 8pm. €21*

Bray native Redmond O'Toole makes a welcome return to Mermaid with a concert exploring some of the most sublime and beautiful music of the late twentieth century. Redmond will debut an entirely new programme celebrating the work of some of the greatest composers of our time including Arvo Part, Phillip Glass and John Cage. The concert will also include music by Derek Gripper, Nils Frahm and Carlo Domeniconi. Bookings through [mermaidartscentre.ie](http://mermaidartscentre.ie).



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



# Planning approval for Greystones Primary Care Centre

*Project can now move immediately to tender stage and construction can commence in 2025*

Outgoing Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly last week welcomed the news that planning permission has been granted for the Primary Care Centre in Greystones

“As the outgoing Minister for Health, I am delighted to see that planning approval has been granted for the Greystones Primary Care Centre. This state-of-the-art facility will serve the communities of Greystones, Kilcoole, and Delgany, providing essential health services in a modern and accessible environment. The centre will include:

- A large-scale GP practice with five consultation rooms
- Two primary care teams comprising doctors, nurses, home helps, health and social care professionals, and healthcare assistants
- Dental services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

- (CAMHS)
- Adult Mental Health Services
- National Counselling Service
- Older persons day services
- Disability services
- Future expansion for a second GP practice and diagnostics

“This development represents a significant investment in our community’s health infrastructure and reflects the government’s commitment to delivering high-quality healthcare services locally. I extend my gratitude to the Health Service Executive, Wicklow County Council, and all stakeholders involved in bringing this project to fruition. I can confirm that I

have included significant funding in the 2025 Health Capital Plan, which will be published shortly, to ensure this project can continue to be delivered at pace, as the community of Greystones, Delgany and Kilcoole have waited long enough for a Primary Care Centre.

“With planning approval secured, I would anticipate moving to the tender process for construction immediately, with construction commencing in the second half of the year. We can look forward to the Greystones Primary Care Centre opening its doors to patients in 2026, enhancing healthcare accessibility and outcomes for our community.”



*It was a great start to the new year for Jennie Morrison who was the first winner of the Dominican College Wicklow Lotto jackpot of €2,000, being presented here by Principal Neal Martin.*

## ‘Raw sewage discharge at Bray North Beach only stopped after EPA complaint’

The Environmental Protection Agency has informed Sinn Fein TD John Brady that raw sewage was discharged onto Bray’s North Beach was due to a power and communication failure at the Corke Abbey wastewater pumping station. They also stated that the discharge took place from December 26th to 30th. The incident, which went unnoticed by Uisce Éireann for five days, was only identified and stopped following Brady’s complaint to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

While Brady welcomed the EPA’s instruction to Uisce Éireann to investigate, he criticised the fact that such an investigation was initiated only after his intervention. He called for Uisce Éireann to proactively investigate and publish findings for all environmental incidents

involving wastewater infrastructure. Deputy Brady said: “I welcome confirmation from the EPA that they have contacted Uisce Éireann to instruct them to conduct an investigation into the discharge of sewage into the sea at North Beach, Bray over the Christmas period.

“I have been informed by the EPA that the serious discharge occurred because of a power and communication loss at the Corke Abbey wastewater pumping station and alarmingly they have established it went unnoticed by Uisce Éireann from December 26th to the 30th. I find it deeply

concerning that Uisce Éireann would lose power and communications with one of their pumping stations for five days, and yet this did not trigger any alarms or lead to an investigation of the cause or impact of the power and communication failure.

“How could this not be

picked up on, why was there no automatic back-up power supply that kicked in once there was a power failure. Why did someone not carry out a physical inspection as soon as communication with the station was lost? It leads me to believe that if I had not contacted the EPA to express my alarm

at the fact that sewerage was being pumped into the sea - would Uisce Éireann have done anything at all if I would still have a situation where the North Beach in Bray was being contaminated with sewage. This is simply not acceptable.

“It is essential to determine the full environmental impact of this incident and receive confirmation of the corrective and preventative measures now in place to avoid a recurrence.

Without my complaint, it is likely raw sewage would still be discharging onto the North Beach. I have written to Uisce Éireann seeking a meeting with the Chief Executive and senior officials to discuss the incident and broader issues at wastewater facilities in Bray, Greystones, and the Murrough in Wicklow Town. We need an urgent review of all treatment plants in Wicklow to ensure they meet the highest operational stan-

dards, with robust infrastructure and up-to-date maintenance capable of supporting the county’s growing population.

“The people of Wicklow deserve a safe, modern sewage treatment system that protects public health, preserves our environment, and safeguards the natural beauty of our county. Anything less is unacceptable, and I will continue to demand transparency, accountability, and urgent action from Uisce Éireann.”



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# 'Bathing restrictions were lifted without a water sample been taken'

Cllr Lourda Scott said she was "very concerned" to learn that the recent bathing water restrictions in Greystones were lifted after nine days despite no water sample being taken, following an incident of sewage flowing into the sea. She has now secured agreement from the Council that the sea in Greystones will be tested.

Cllr Scott said "We had a serious incident of sewage flowing into the sea, just south of Greystones Harbour, recently. This was due to a serious malfunction in Rathdown treatment station and resulted in a bathing water restriction was put in place on December 29th. This of huge concern both from an environmental and public health perspective, particularly given the amount of people who sea swim in Greystones all year round. Everyone was relieved that the bathing restrictions were lifted after 9 days. However I was very concerned to discover that this was done without a water sample been taken and tested to make sure that the sea was safe again for swimming. This would be routine practice during the bathing season over the summer. Given the amount of people swimming in

Greystones all year round, I find it extraordinary that this step wasn't taken.

"After you see raw sewage flowing into a place where you swim every day, people need reassurance that the sea is safe to swim in again. The only way to provide this is through robust scientific testing, as would be done routinely during the official bathing season. In Greystones we are very proud of our coastline, it is a massive asset to the community and it's of the highest priority to us that the waters are kept safe and clean for all to enjoy. At a recent Council meeting I challenged the reasoning behind this. I got agreement from the Council that the sea in Greystones will be tested and I hope that this will confirm the water is clear of any contamination. I also have requested more frequent



Cllr Lourda Scott.

testing of our bathing water, year round, particularly after a serious incident such as this. I will continue to follow this up through the Climate and Environment policy committee."

# Stapleton secures €1m for footpath upgrades across Wicklow

*'I'm hopeful that this can form the basis of increased and ongoing funding'*

West Wicklow Fine Gael councillor Peter Stapleton has achieved a significant milestone with the passing of his motion to secure €1 million in funding for the upgrade and replacement of footpaths across the county.

This investment represents a minor but crucial step toward improving everyday infrastructure that directly impacts the quality of life for residents. Of the total funding, €200,000 will be allocated to the Baltinglass Municipal District (MD), which includes the towns of Carnew, Shillelagh, Tinahely, and Coolboy - key areas where Councillor Stapleton received strong electoral support.

Speaking about the initiative, Councillor Stapleton highlighted the importance of focusing on practical, everyday issues raised by constituents: "It was an issue that came up over and over again when I was out on the campaign trail. It's easy for people to roll their eyes when they hear complaints about footpaths. However, I very quickly realised the importance of addressing the bread-and-butter issues that people interact with almost every day. When someone goes out for their morning or evening walk, their abili-



Cllr Peter Stapleton.

ty to do so on a footpath that is safe and in good condition can have a huge impact on their sense of whether the country is delivering for them."

He added: "People pay their taxes, including local property tax, which goes directly to the county council. They should reasonably expect that certain infrastructure and services are available to them. €200,000 is a small drop in the ocean,

but I'm hopeful that this can form the basis of increased and ongoing funding to ensure the upkeep of the footpaths we have for the safety and enjoyment of all."

Reflecting on the challenges he faced in bringing the motion forward, Councillor Stapleton said:

"I grew hugely frustrated when the state of footpaths was discussed at each council meeting, yet no funding allocation was made for their upkeep in the annual budget. I know politics is not always easy and I would have to put myself out on a limb to request that we reallocate some funding toward footpath maintenance. But this was something I was willing to do, as it had been a huge issue raised on the doors in Coolboy, Tinahely, and Carnew during my canvassing just months earlier."

He emphasised the broader importance of the project: "Bread-and-butter infrastructure projects and delivery are hugely

important to me. People work very hard in this country and need the state and councils to work hard for them by delivering essential services. Footpaths that were not safe or fit to walk on and were actually hazardous were simply unacceptable. This funding is a start, and while it's small, it gives me huge satisfaction as a newly elected councillor to know that you can influence change."

Councillor Stapleton also expressed gratitude to his colleagues and council officials: "I would like to thank the council officials for helping facilitate this and my fellow councillors who unanimously supported the motion. It's a clear demonstration that when we work together, we can make meaningful progress for the people we serve."

This €1 million investment will address long-standing issues with footpaths across Wicklow, ensuring safer and more accessible infrastructure for residents and visitors.



Kirsty Weldon with teacher Joanne English from St. Mary's College Arklow at the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition in the RDS, Dublin. Kirsty's project was a Pressure Alert System that's worn on the wrist. The device measures the pressure put on the hand and wrist to assist with rehabilitation from injury. See more, pages 16 & 17.

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# Works to commence to provide secure and sustainable water supply for Dunlavin community

Uisce Eireann is commencing works on a project to rationalise the water supply in Dunlavin. The project represents a €9 million investment in improving water supply security and resilience for homes and businesses in Dunlavin, and involves the construction of 7.3 kilometres of watermain, serving Dunlavin with a piped drinking water supply from the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) supply zone.



Edward Timmins TD.

The new pipeline will be constructed along the R412 between Dunlavin village and Brannockstown, Co. Kildare. When complete, the Dunlavin Water Supply Rationalisation Project will address current supply challenges for existing customers and provide the required capacity to allow new development in the area.

The project will involve construction of a new booster pumping station at the existing Brannockstown pumping station site; construction of 7.3km of rising main along the R412 between Brannockstown pumping station and Dunlavin village; decommissioning of the existing water supply to Dunlavin; and construction of approximately 200m of new pipeline in Dunlavin village between

St. Kevin's Community College and Dunlavin Soccer Club.

It is planned that works will commence at the end of this month, initially in Dunlavin village followed by pipelaying at Market Square.

Speaking about the project, Uisce Eireann's Paul McLoughlin said: "We are delighted to be delivering this critical water supply project for the community in Dunlavin. The existing drinking water infrastructure supplying the area is not sufficient to meet current demand. This project will not only improve water supply for over 1,000 customers in the area, it will also facilitate future growth and development, including the delivery of new housing."

Paul continued: "The works will require traffic management in Dunlavin village and along the R412. We understand that this type of work can be inconvenient and works crews will make every effort to minimise any disruption. We are confident

that the short-term inconvenience will be outweighed by the long-term benefits upon completion of this essential project."

Construction of the new watermain will commence in Dunlavin village in late January.

Works along the R412 from Dunlavin to Brannockstown are planned to begin in March 2025. To facilitate the safe delivery of works, local traffic management will be in place during the phased construction.

David Walsh Civil Engineering Ltd. have been appointed to deliver the works on behalf of Uisce Eireann, with completion of the project expected by the end of the year.

The works may involve some short-term water supply interruptions and the project team will ensure that customers are given a minimum of 48 hours notice prior to any planned water interruptions. Uisce Eireann has also launched a free text service, providing real-

time updates for local issues. Customers can sign up with their Eircode and mobile number at [water.ie](http://water.ie).

Speaking from Dunlavin, newly elected Fine Gael TD Deputy Edward Timmins stated: "I am delighted with the news that Uisce Eireann will shortly commence works to provide a secure and far more sustainable water supply for both homes and businesses in Dunlavin. This is an issue that was raised with me on several occasions during last year's General Election campaign."

"Investing in our water supply to meet the needs of local communities is something that I have long advocated for. In recent years, the demand for drinking water in Dunlavin has outpaced supply resulting in an inadequate service for the existing local community including business owners."

The Dunlavin Water Supply Rationalisation Project will address exist-

ing issues and act as a catalyst for future growth in the locality including the provision of more housing."

In terms of the project timeline, Deputy Timmins commented: "Construction of the new watermain will begin later this month, while works on the R412 from Dunlavin to Brannockstown are due to commence in March. The project is due to be completed by the end of 2025, and will be undertaken by David Walsh Civil Engineering Ltd on behalf of Uisce Eireann."

Regarding potential interruptions and how to stay informed, Deputy Timmins pointed out: "While water supply interruptions will exist during this period, Dunlavin residents can avail of a free service to keep them informed and updated in advance of any interruptions by visiting the [water.ie](http://water.ie) website and signing up with their eircode and mobile number. In all cases, 48 hours notice will be given in

advance of such interruptions. Ultimately, the end result, will be hugely beneficial for the wider area and more than 1000 households.

"Communities across County Wicklow must have access to safe drinking water. Continued countywide investment in water infrastructure is required to ensure the needs of homes and businesses are met. The quality of drinking water in Ireland continues to improve. A recent EPA 'Drinking Water Report' demonstrated that Ireland's public drinking water supplies remain among the best in the world, with 99.7% compliance with microbiological and chemical standards."

"I look forward to seeing the results of the Dunlavin Water Supply Rationalisation Project and working with communities in Wicklow to ensure the delivery of the most efficient water supply, and the provision of safe drinking water."

## Stapleton calls for urgent action on public lighting

Cllr Peter Stapleton has voiced strong support for Cllr Sylvester Bourke's motion calling on the Council to urgently address the widespread issue of public lighting outages across County Wicklow. Highlighting the scale of the problem, Cllr Stapleton pointed to recent Council figures showing that 617 public lights are currently out of order countywide.

"This isn't just about inconvenience; it's about safety," said Cllr Stapleton. "In real terms, that's 617 locations where people are unsafe. Entire towns and villages are being left in darkness, impacting everyone from children waiting for school buses to residents trying to stay active during the darkest months of the year."

Cllr Stapleton emphasized the urgency of resolving

the issue, especially given the safety and wellbeing implications for communities. "We've gone beyond the point of criticism and finger-pointing. The focus now is on ensuring that the Council has the resources and support to tackle the backlog effectively. Unfortunately, this situation is unlikely to be resolved before the worst of winter is over, but we must ensure we're not facing the same challenges next year."

The latest figures show that 242 lights are out in the West and South of the county alone. Cllr Stapleton welcomed the Chief Executive's announcement that the contractor responsible for repairs has secured additional resources for County Wicklow but stressed the importance of learning from past setbacks.

"This year, we were let down by contractors exiting the market without notice, leaving us scrambling. A contingency plan must be put in place to ensure this doesn't happen again. Whether that involves collaboration with other councils on shared resources or securing backup agreements with additional private contractors, we must act now to safeguard against future vulnerabilities."

Cllr Stapleton also called for greater transparency and accountability in addressing the issue.

"To ensure progress, I've requested that the number of lights fixed per month be included as a key performance indicator in the Chief Executive's monthly report. This will provide councillors and the public with better oversight and a clearer picture of the progress being made."

As Wicklow's communities face the challenges of winter, Cllr Stapleton reiterated his commitment to ensuring that public lighting becomes a priority for the Council.

"This isn't just about infrastructure; it's about safety, health, and happiness for the people of Wicklow."

We must act now and learn from this experience to protect our communities in the future."



Cllr Peter Stapleton.



Eva Belle Bradshaw at the Wicked Workshop in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow. Students from Arklow and surrounding counties met in St Mary's College Hall on Sunday to participate in a Wicked Workshop. They spent five intense hours learning the music with singing teacher Karla Tracey and the choreography with Ashling Minogue. Students came in style, channelling their inner Elphaba or Glinda, from the new movie musical released in November, which has created much hype and excitement among musical theatre audiences around the world.

## Arklow on the path to becoming an Autism Friendly Town

A public meeting will be held in the Arklow Bay Hotel on Wednesday 22nd January at 7pm, about making Arklow an autism friendly town.

Speaking in advance of the meeting, Cllr Warren O'Toole said "We're excited to announce our mission to make Arklow an Autism Friendly Town, in collaboration with ASIAM. Over the past number of years individuals and groups have worked to highlight the need for awareness around autism and now have come together for a shared vision of hope and inclusion. Unfortunately autism is on the rise and the hope is to help prevent some of the struggles that others have faced in the past as we move forward."

"Our goal? To create an inclusive community by removing the barriers Autistic individuals and their families face daily, so everyone can participate fully and meaningfully in our town."

"At this public meeting, we'll share our plans and invite everyone to join the conversation. Together, with input from Autistic people, families, and the wider community, we'll develop a plan for inclusion that truly represents our town."

"Autistic voices and community input are key to this project's success. Let's collaborate to make Arklow a town where everyone belongs. We look forward to seeing you on the 22nd!"



# 'Programme for Government lacks vision, ambition, and specific commitments'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has described the new Programme for Government (PFG), published last week following agreement between Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and a collection of Independent TDs led by former Minister Michael Lowry, as "a wasted opportunity, as lacking new ideas, derived of vision or purpose." He argued it was "nothing more than a reiteration of promises that have already been broken by the main government parties."

Deputy Brady said: "The overriding impact of the Programme for Government is one of concern around the level of vagueness contained in the document. Which goes to extraordinary levels to avoid offering specific commitments. The only thing that we can be sure of is that the government, including its new Independent allies will increase the cost of petrol and diesel every year, for the next five years. Which will come as a staggering blow to workers and families already struggling under the cost-of-living crisis."

"The majority of the document lacks specific commitments. There are a lot of 'reviews', a lot of 'considerations', and a continuation of existing policies - which have not been delivered."

"Throughout the document we see the word continue appearing 249 times, the word examine appears 86 times, and the word explore 34 times. We witness a further seven promises to 'work towards', over 120 mentions of reviews, further references to continue to review, 50 issues they will

consider, a further 20 matters they will assess, and many more promises to aim for something."

"Hardly a document to be considered an iron clad agreement to deliver. This refusal to offer concrete commitments illustrates a lack of purpose, a lack of vision, and a real sense that there is a lack of commitment to the delivery on the content of the Programme for Government. This vagueness around delivery extends to commitments around roads infrastructure, there are ill defined references to new roads, which will be a matter of concern to commuters in Wicklow, given the poor track record of the government here - what roads, where are they - how are they going to differ from previous empty and broken promises?"

"There is a huge onus here on the government to convince us on the validity of the PFG, which can only be considered in terms of delivery on much needed infrastructure projects here in Wicklow. We need to see real and tangible commitments for transport infrastructure here in

Wicklow. We have been forced to lag behind for far too long."

"Our public transport system here in Wicklow has been grossly neglected by previous FF and FG Governments. The lack of ambition displayed towards our county in last year's Strategic Rail Review, which set out plans to spend €37bn across the State but stated that the solutions required to put in place a first-class rail service in Wicklow are, in the words of the report, 'unlikely to be justifiable'."

"This is unacceptable and needs to be reversed. We need more investment in transport in Wicklow not less. We need to see the extension of the DART service as far as Wicklow Town. We need to see the long-awaited upgrades to the N11 and N81 take place. This government will be held to account by Sinn Féin. It will be made to answer for every failing, for every delay, and every obfuscation and attempt to weasel out of its commitments. FF, FG, and their Ind allies, have set out the PFG and now it must be delivered upon."

## BirdWatch Ireland expresses serious concerns over risks to wild birds and biodiversity

BirdWatch Ireland, Ireland's largest and most active wildlife conservation charity, is deeply concerned that the newly announced draft Programme for Government presents a very worrying future for Ireland's wild birds and other biodiversity.

The incoming Irish Government proposes significant increases in infrastructure development, presented in the context of 'fast tracking', 'cutting red tape' and de-regulation. While there is significant scope to improve implementation and enforcement of laws and processes, especially through providing adequate staffing and resourcing, BirdWatch Ireland warns against weakening of laws or cutting corners on the protections afforded to biodiversity which would be disastrous.

Despite the fact that Ireland is experiencing a twin climate and biodiversity emergency, as officially declared by Dail Eireann in May 2019, the actions for biodiversity in the Programme for Government are few and far between, Birdwatch Ireland said.

"There are startlingly few new ideas which demonstrate any real ambition to halt the loss

of biodiversity. The most important elements are the continued strengthening of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which is critical and very warmly welcomed by BirdWatch Ireland, alongside the commitment to develop a National Restoration Plan, which is a legal obligation on the State. However, the lack of ring-fenced funding for nature in the Climate and Nature Fund to implement the actions in the National Restoration Plan is worrying. In addition, it is crucially important that the lands of Coillte and Bord na Mona are included for nature restoration, not just State lands, otherwise it is unlikely we will meet the targets in the Nature Restoration Law. The exclusion of these lands from the Programme for Government is both a massive oversight and a wasted opportunity.

"There is also no commitment to publish and enact the Marine

Protected Area Bill, despite the fact that both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael supported this legislation during the term of the last government. The Programme for Government's proposal to expand Marine Protected Area designations, another legal obligation, without the MPA legislation makes no sense."

Oonagh Duggan, Head of Advocacy at BirdWatch Ireland said: "There are significant risks for Ireland's biodiversity in the 5-year draft Programme for Government. The tone and tenor are ones of 'fast-tracking' development, 'cutting red tape' and of de-regulation, which could do very significant harm to our wild bird populations and the habitats they need if the laws, processes and licensing protecting nature are targeted. Remember, this is at a time when, shamefully, 63% of Ireland's wild bird species are officially at risk of extinction. This

potential harm will not be compensated by the Programme's very limited proposals for biodiversity. Ireland's bird species are at risk of further devastating declines instead of hope to restore populations which is outrageous in the context of the biodiversity emergency declared by the Dail in 2019.

"The proposal to remove all barriers to planting and felling of trees is particularly worrying and threatens safeguards for our beleaguered natural heritage and ecosystems, such as the avoidance of tree-planting on peat soils and in areas important for breeding waders and on High Nature Value farmland, inevitably leading to catastrophic consequences for these important features of Ireland's biodiversity. We need to plant a lot more trees but they must be planted in the right places avoiding unintended consequences to climate and biodiversity."



Emma Lewis, Temple Carrig School's Junior Hockey captain with An Taoiseach Simon Harris at the recent opening of Temple Carrig's new hockey pitch.



### HSE INJURY UNITS

Visit your nearest HSE injury unit for recent injuries that are not life-threatening such as breaks, sprains, dislocations and minor burns.

**St. Columcille's Injury Unit Loughinstown**  
D18 V9K1

Monday - Sunday: 8am - 7pm  
For ages 14+  
Phone: 01 211 5048

Check [hse.ie/injuryunits](https://www.hse.ie/injuryunits) before you go.





# Extensive waiting lists at Centre for Obesity Management in St. Columcille's

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has raised serious concerns about the extensive waiting lists at the Centre for Obesity Management in St. Columcille's Hospital, Loughlinstown. The clinic, one of only two public facilities in Ireland offering specialised multi-disciplinary obesity treatment, is struggling to cope with demand.

Figures shared with Deputy Brady reveal that 5,442 patients are currently on the waiting list for the clinic, with 703 of these individuals waiting over four years.

Alarming, some patients have been waiting for as long as seven years. Despite this, the clinic operates with just 4.4 dietitian positions.

Speaking on the issue, Deputy Brady said: "According to the HSE, 23% of Ireland's population is obese. This is an alarming figure that places immense pressure on an already overstretched health service. The HSE has an obligation to prioritise prevention

and early intervention in tackling public health challenges like obesity.

"The model of care for managing obesity promotes a multi-disciplinary approach, addressing factors such as lifestyle, genetics, and socioeconomic circumstances. However, the resources allocated to this clinic are woefully inadequate to meet the demand.

"Many constituents have contacted me about their inability to secure an appointment at the Centre for Obesity Management. Some have been waiting up to seven years while their health continues to deteriorate.

"Patients are becoming so desperate that they are considering traveling abroad for expensive surgical procedures, despite the financial burden and the risks to their health. Tragically, some Irish people have died following medical procedures carried out overseas.

"For those left waiting, the stress, anxiety, and worsening physical and mental health are taking a heavy toll. It is unacceptable that patients are being forced into this situation.

"The staff at the clinic are doing everything possible within their limited resources. Effective treatment

plans and procedures are in place, but there simply aren't enough staff to manage the volume of patients.

"It is disgraceful that nearly 5,500 people are on the waiting list, with hundreds waiting over four years. I have been raising this issue with the Minister for Health since 2022, but my calls for additional resources have fallen on deaf ears I am once again urging the Minister and the HSE to act now and provide the funding and staffing needed to ensure that those on the waiting list can finally access the treatment they urgently require."



John Brady TD.

## 'Nine-hour wait for an ambulance: scarcity of advanced paramedic cover needs to be addressed'

The scarcity of advanced paramedic cover in the Wicklow-Wexford constituency needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency, newly elected Sinn Féin TD from Gorey, Fionntán Ó Súilleabháin has said.

"Whilst it is shambolic that any member of the public should have to wait almost 9 hours (in total eight hours and fifty-seven minutes) for an ambulance to even be dispatched, it is equally as shocking that this emergency ambulance with two highly

trained members of staff on board, one an advanced paramedic, was unavailable to service their own area for a period of nearly three hours," said Deputy Ó Súilleabháin.

"Many within the service believe the delay is most certainly down to

staffing issues which will continue to be an issue, as many paramedics are actively looking for other lines of employment outside of the NAS due to the simple fact that there is no longer any progression within the role of Paramedic.

"The NAS Director was in front of the Leinster House Public Accounts Committee last year and was questioned at length regarding the current capacity of the NAS and the future projections for meeting the demand and alternative care pathways that the NAS can engage to treat patients in their own homes, thus, easing the pres-

sure on our ED's.

"These projects, however great they may sound are at the present time understaffed and under resourced and have been placed at the forefront of the NAS training programme at the expense of the Advanced Paramedic Programme. This programme was the only one that offered clinical progression for Par-

amedics within the NAS and which just about brings Paramedics in this country up to international standard.

"This progression has now been removed from staff, decreasing the level of Advanced Paramedics on ambulances across the state. Lives are being put at risk. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency."



Fionntán Ó Súilleabháin.

## Whitmore calls for access to free HRT for Wicklow patients

Jennifer Whitmore TD has called for the roll out of free Hormone Replacement Treatment access to be urgently delivered. €20m was allocated in Budget 2025 to fund HRT products on prescription from January of this year, however due to lack of planning the scheme has now been delayed.

Speaking about this Deputy Whitmore said: "The failure to deliver this scheme has left GPs and patients across Wicklow in the lurch. Many people have factored in this planned reduce to cost to their personal finances and healthcare, and it is completely unacceptable that it has not been delivered.

"I have had women from across Wicklow reach out to me on this issue very upset that this much anticipated measure has been delayed. Much political hay was made from the announcement by the outgoing Minister for Health that €20 million in funding was made available to fund this programme in the last budget. To not have this scheme in place by the announced start date looks like nothing short of playing politics with people's health.

"The Department of Health must immediately explain the reasons for this unacceptable delay and outline what steps now need to be taken to get the scheme up and running. Consideration should also be given to reimbursing women for any HRT costs they incur between now and the eventual introduction of the initiative."



Jennifer Whitmore TD.



Pictured is Everlast athlete, Katie Taylor at Sports Direct's Carrickmines store today. Sports Direct and Everlast hosted a fan event today in the Dublin store to launch Everlast's new partnership with Olympic gold medallist and two-weight undisputed champion Katie Taylor. Fans in attendance were treated to an exclusive audience with Katie and renowned boxing pundit, Steve Bunce, before getting a chance to meet the World Champion boxer.



# Get involved in the iconic Whale Theatre's next chapter

*An open invitation to Greystones community to participate in Whale Working Group's proposal*

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. This leaves the doors of the Whale Theatre open for new, fresh and exciting ideas to continue the venue's legacy as a thriving arts hub in Greystones.

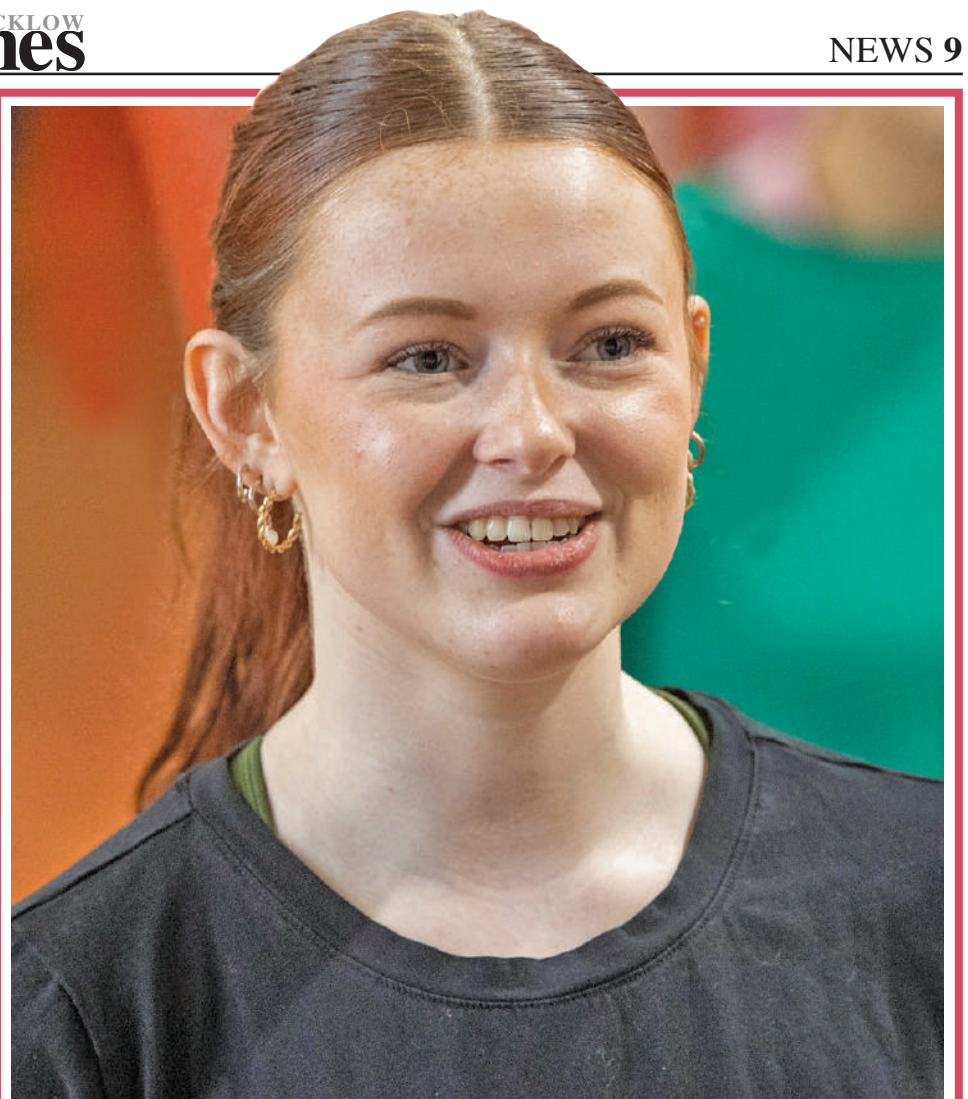
In response to his invitation for proposals, members of two local community groups, Making Waves Youth Theatre (a registered charity) and Greystones Players Community Theatre Group, acting as the 'Whale Working Group', are in the process of putting a proposal together, whereby invested members of the community will assume management of the theatre.

The Whale Working Group's mission is to continue to build on the legacy that this unique entertainment amenity and arts hub has already given to the community.

A representative from Whale Theatre Working Group said "We propose to further develop its potential as an accessible and welcoming resource for local

artists, musicians, community, business and cultural groups as a performance, educational, meeting, workshop and practice/rehearsal space.

"The Whale Working Group invites members of the community in Greystones and the wider local community to participate in this proposal. If you are an arts or community group, a business, an artist or an interested individual and would like to register your interest in using the theatre or contributing through sponsorship, fundraising, ideas, support or endorsement, please go to <https://forms.gle/Juauba9mqw6BzRXV6> to complete our Expression of Interest form or email [whaleworkinggroup1@gmail.com](mailto:whaleworkinggroup1@gmail.com) by 22 January 2025."



Olivia Connell at the Wicklow Workshop in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow. Students from Arklow and surrounding counties met in St Mary's College Hall on Sunday to participate in a Wicked Workshop. They spent five intense hours learning the music with singing teacher Karla Tracey and the choreography with Ashling Minogue. Students came in style, channelling their inner Elphaba or Glinda, from the new movie musical released in November, which has created much hype and excitement among musical theatre audiences around the world.

## Raising Resilience

*Local mother shares personal struggles and insights in memoir*

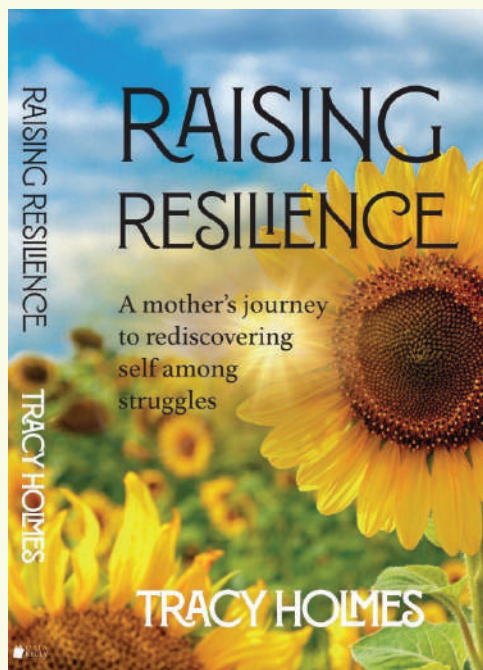
Local Wicklow writer Tracy Holmes has just written her first book, a memoir, which is being published on February 6th. It is titled **Raising Resilience: A Mother's Journey to Rediscovering Self Among Struggles**.

Tracy is a devoted mother of three. Since embarking on her work life at the age of 15, Tracy has developed a passion for food retail, climbing the ranks within a prestigious food establishment before co-founding her own catering business with her husband, Andrew, in 2013.

Though career-driven and fiercely independent, Tracy's life took an unexpected turn with the birth of her twins in 2021. Born prematurely, one of her twins required extensive medical care, spending his first year in hospital. The postnatal diagnosis of Down Syndrome and the subsequent challenges prompted Tracy to reassess her priorities and values.

Now, in 2024, Tracy and her family enjoy a contented life in Greystones. Her experience as a mother to a child with additional needs has brought its share of fears and anxieties, but it has also revealed moments of joy and hope. Tracy is committed to sharing the positive

aspects of her journey with others. Motivated by her personal battles, including overcoming a postnatal mental health crisis in 2021, Tracy has penned a book to share her story. She believes her experiences offer valuable insights for other women facing similar challenges, providing inspiration and support in their own journeys.



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



### N81 IMPROVEMENT SCHEME N81 WHITESTOWN LOWER (SECTION 1) AND N81 HANGMAN'S BEND AND TUCKMILL (SECTION 2) PROJECTS NON-STATUTORY PUBLIC CONSULTATION NO. 2 – EMERGING PREFERRED OPTIONS

Wicklow County Council is progressing the development of the N81 Route Improvement Scheme namely the N81 Whitestown Lower (Section 1) and N81 Hangman's Bend and Tuckmill (Section 2) Projects in conjunction with Kildare National Roads Office, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the Department of Transport.

Wicklow County Council is currently progressing two separate projects on the N81 in parallel; the N81 Whitestown Lower Project and the N81 Hangman's Bend and Tuckmill Project, which aim to address road deficiencies contributing to the poor road safety record on the network. The project team are progressing the planning and design of the project in accordance with the TII Project Management Guidelines. The project is currently at the Option Selection Phase (PMG Phase 2), which includes the development and assessment of options.

#### Public Display Event

The public, stakeholders and interested parties are invited to attend and view the Emerging Preferred Options and all project related information at this second non statutory Public Consultation for the N81 Improvement Scheme. This second non-statutory consultation event provides an opportunity for feedback and observations to be submitted regarding the process and conclusions reached to date, which may inform the further development of the scheme in the next phases.

**The public display and in person Public Consultation No. 2 event will be held in the Inis Fail Germaines, Main Street, Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow, on Thursday the 30th of January 2025 between the hours of 14:00 and 20:00.**

Members of the Project Team will be available at the in-person event to provide guidance and to answer questions.

The public display documents will also be available to view on the project website [www.N81whitestownandtuckmill.ie](http://www.N81whitestownandtuckmill.ie) from 14:00 on Thursday the 30th of January 2025.

Submissions will be accepted via the online feedback form available on the project website [www.N81whitestownandtuckmill.ie](http://www.N81whitestownandtuckmill.ie) or by post marked as 'N81 Improvement Scheme Whitestown Lower and Hangman's Bends Submission' addressed to the **Senior Executive Officer, Transportation & Infrastructure Delivery Department, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Whitegates, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96**. Submissions will be accepted from Thursday the 30th of January 2025 and must be received no later than 12:00 noon on Thursday the 27th of February 2025.

Wicklow County Council values the opinion of the community on this project and welcomes feedback and submissions from the public and interested parties. The knowledge gained from the engagement will be considered by the project team as part of the next stages of the development of the scheme in order to finalise the Stage 2 Options Selection process with the identification of the Preferred Options, and where possible, the impacts of the scheme on the surrounding environment and communities.

Linda Healy, Senior Executive Officer,  
Transportation & Infrastructure Delivery.





Senator Pat Casey.

# Casey confirms over 2,000 homes commenced construction in Wicklow over past 12 months

*Record 60,243 new homes commenced nationwide in 2024*

Fianna Fail Senator Pat Casey has welcomed the publication of monthly data by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the number of Commencements Notices (residential construction starts) for 2024. The data shows that between January and December 2024, there were 60,243 new homes commenced, up 84% from the 32,801 recorded in 2023.

This equates to, on average, 239 new homes commenced every working day during 2024. This is the highest number of annual residential commencements since records began in 2014.

In Wicklow, 2,109 houses commenced construction last year. Welcoming the figures, Senator Casey said: "I'm delighted that these figures have confirmed positive momentum in housing supply here in

Wicklow. Over the past year, we have seen over 2,000 new homes commence construction in Wicklow. This is positive progress for our communities here and we need these and more new homes to be delivered.

"As a party, Fianna Fail has placed a top priority on doing everything we can to help people to afford to buy or rent a home.

"I am pleased that these statistics show we are making progress, that homes are being built and my focus will be on doing whatever I can to keep this positive momentum going."

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien said: "Strong figures on home starts in 2024 confirm that a robust stock of new housing is in the pipeline.

"Government initiatives such as the development levy waiver and the Uisce Eireann rebate have had a positive impact in getting projects off the ground with the ultimate goal of increasing our housing supply to meet housing needs.

"This significant rise in housing supply will enable more people to become homeowners and also help increase access to a wider range of secure housing options."

## Wicklow house prices rise 4pc in 12 months

The price of the average second-hand three-bed semi in Co Wicklow has increased to €375,600, up 4pc from €362,000 in the last twelve months, according to a national survey by Real Estate Alliance.

Across the county, the Q4 REA Average House Price Index shows that buyers coming from outside the county accounted for 5pc of purchasers between October and December, with landlords selling accounting for 8pc of sales.

In 2024, Blessington prices rose 4pc in 2024 to €375,000, while prices in Baltinglass rose by 8.2pc to €265,000.

"At an average, second-hand sales in the area figure below the national," said Simon Murphy of REA Murphy Baltinglass and Blessington. "It is expected that the increase in supply in locations closer to employment centres will cause current prices in secondary locations to stabilise.

"My predictions are based on the interest rate rises having an impact on the market. The short-

age of supply not only countered the interest rate rises, but also delivered a rise in market prices. An expected improvement in supply to the private market in areas closer to the capital may contribute to a stabilising of prices."

The REA Average House Price Index concentrates on the sale price of Ireland's typical stock home, the three-bed semi, giving an accurate picture of the second-hand property market in towns and cities countrywide.

House prices in western counties increased at twice the rate of the east coast last year as buyers battle over the lowest supply on record, the survey found. The absence of new home building, and historically low supply has seen three bed semi-detached

homes in counties Clare, Donegal, Galway, Limerick, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo increase by over €10,000 in the past 12 weeks - with an average annual rise of 16pc.

This is twice the rate of increase in commuter counties, which rose by 7.5pc over 2024. The actual selling price of a three-bed, semi-detached house across the country rose by 2.1pc in the past three months to €330,602, and 9pc overall annually.

REA agents nationwide are predicting a 6pc rise in house prices in 2025.

Actual selling prices in Dublin city rose by 1.8pc in the last three months, and the average three-bed semi in the capital is now selling at €542,000.

Prices in the major cities outside



the capital rose by an average of 2pc to €348,000 in the last three months - an annual rate of increase of 7.7pc, with agents predicting a further 9pc rise in 2025.

Homes in the country's large towns continue to show the biggest growth nationwide, up 11.5pc on last September and 2.6pc this quarter to an average of €249,448.

Homes in commuter counties rose by 2pc over the past three months to an average of €343,778, an annual rise of 7.5pc.

## House rebuild costs in Wicklow have increased by average of 3%

The latest House Rebuilding Guide published by the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland (SCSI) shows that national average re-build costs, which include demolition and site clearance, have increased by an average of 6.2% over the past 12 months.

The rate of increase in the Dublin region - which includes Wicklow - was half the national rate at 3%, but the region still has the highest rebuild rates in the country. The SCSI's House Rebuilding Guide, which has been published annually since 1989, is used by homeowners to calculate the rebuilding costs of their home for house insurance purposes.

While welcoming a moderation in the rate of increase - last year's national average increase was 12% - Chartered Quantity Surveyor Kevin Brady said labour costs and skills shortages are continuing to drive rebuild costs.

"Due to covid, the war in Ukraine, high energy prices and supply chain issues the construction market experienced significant volatility over the last five years. The resolution of some shortages and supply chain issues has led to the cost of some materials moderating - the price of insulation, timber and paint for example have generally settled down."

"However, we are continuing to see increased costs in labour intensive tasks such as demolition and disposal of waste material while skill shortages across plumbing, electrical, heating and other trades are also contributing to increased costs. SCSI members are saying the demand for builders throughout the country remains at an all-time high and this is also a contributory factor to the increases we are seeing in this year's figures. The introduction of the concrete levy has increased the cost of pre-cast and pouring concrete while the introduction of two new

levies on waste and disposal in September is likely to increase costs going forward."

### Regional Breakdown

This year's Guide shows that increases in rebuild costs range from 3% in the Dublin/Wicklow region to 10% in the North-West. Although Dublin / Wicklow recorded the lowest increase, the region has the highest rebuild costs while the North-West, which recorded the biggest increase, has the lowest. This year three discernible groups emerged across the regions. In the Dublin region and Galway rebuild costs increased by 3% and 4%, in Limerick and Waterford the figures were 5% and 6% respectively while at the higher end the increases ranged from 8% in Cork and the North East to 10% in the North West. Kevin Brady says the main reason for regional variations are differences in demand for builders and tradespeople.

"Higher increases were reported in the Dublin region some years back and it clearly has the highest rebuild costs now. This probably explains why the rate of increase there is somewhat lower, but demand for builders in Dublin and neighbouring counties remains very high. Cork has experienced a boost in activity over the past two years and that is reflected in higher rates there. Similarly, the North East is experiencing significant development and the increased pressure on labour and availability of builders has we believe resulted in an increase in rates in this region also.

Again, in the North West we are seeing increased market activity and continuing labour shortages with many builders and trades people pursuing the higher rates which are on offer in other locations."

### Importance of being properly insured

While price increases may have moderated, the Dublin region, not surprisingly as Fig 1 one shows, still has the highest rebuild costs, while the North-West has the lowest.

According to these figures the minimum base cost of rebuilding a 3-bed semi, the most common house type in the country is €312,620 in Dublin / Wicklow (98sqm x €3,190) while the minimum base cost of rebuilding a similar house in the North-West, is €247,744 (98sqm x €2,528) - a difference of close to €65,000 (See Fig 2). The SCSI is urging homeowners to take the time to ascertain the correct reinstatement cost based on house type and location.

"Homeowners need to ensure their house is adequately insured so that in the event of a total or partial loss situation ie a fire, they are covered under their insurance policy when reinstating or rebuilding. For example, rebuild costs for a 3-bed-semi - see Fig 2- the most common house type in the country have increased over the past 12 months from €9,400 to over €22,500 depending on where you live.

"While these increases are significant it does not necessarily mean premiums will increase on a pro-rata basis and homeowners are advised to shop around when seeking insurance cover for their homes. It's really important for Wicklow homeowners to put aside ten minutes to use the SCSI Home

Rebuild Calculator, which is free to get an accurate reinstatement figure and ensure their home insurance is up to date. If it's not they need to contact their home insurer. Some insurers are now auto adjusting insurance policies on an annual basis and homeowners need to satisfy themselves that any quotes they receive are aligned with current rebuild rates," Mr Brady said.

The SCSI points out that the rebuild figures are based on estate type houses and people with one-off homes or period properties are advised to contact their local chartered surveyor. A list of chartered quantity and building surveyors who carry out these assessments is also available on the SCSI website.

### Dangers of under insurance and underestimating reinstatement costs

The President of the SCSI Kevin Hollingsworth, who's from Dublin, said two related issues which come up on a regular basis regarding insurance are consumers underinsuring their property and underestimating the cost of reinstating the property.

Many homeowners do not realise that if they are not adequately insured, they may be penalised under their policy by having to pay a certain proportion of the reinstatement costs out of their own pocket.

"If the actual rebuilding cost of a property is €400,000 but the sum insured is for €200,000, that property is massively underinsured. In the result of a genuine claim for damage covered under the policy of €90,000 being made, the insurance company payout will only be €45,000 as the policy holder was 50% underinsured.



# Colliers Funeral Home

## A tradition of care & respect

Serving our community for over five generations, the Collier family has consistently provided compassionate funeral services.

Our mission has always been to respectfully care for the person who has died, while guiding families with the best advice and services available. Care coupled with meticulous attention to detail is at the heart of what we do.

Funerals have always held deep significance in Ireland, although what has changed in recent years, are the types of funerals available to the public that go beyond the traditional.

We are here to help you create a meaningful occasion to honour and remember those who have died. We offer guidance and support to ensure your personal wishes are fulfilled. Here are some modern trends and practices in funeral arrangements:

- Traditional funeral: this may include a gathering (public or private) in the funeral home, residence or other location, with a funeral service or mass the next day, followed by burial, cremation or \*resomation
- Secular/non-religious: this may include a gathering in the funeral home, residence or other location, a chance for people to pay their respects. The following day there is a funeral service/celebration of life. Our funeral home offers a beautiful

space for the service, and with ample parking it makes for a stress-free choice. This service is bespoke, and can include favourite music, poetry, readings, together with eulogies/tributes and a slideshow of photos capturing the person's life. After the service there is a burial, cremation or \*resomation. An experienced funeral celebrant will lead you through the process including planning and performing the service.

• Direct Funeral: this option is a personal choice whether for its simplicity or as a cost-effective way of ensuring a respectful funeral. The person would be removed from their place of death, then taken directly for burial, cremation or \*resomation.

• Pre-planning: the opportunity to pre-plan your funeral can bring peace of mind to you and your loved ones

\*Resomation – or water cremation is a process of alkaline hydrolysis which like cremation provides, at its conclusion, the ashes of the deceased.

From flowers to funeral notices, booklets and all the finer details, we are at hand to organise and make the arrangements that matter to your family.

Is there a service you are curious about?

One of our team will be here to answer your questions.  
01 -272 0777 info@colliersfuneraldirectors.com



Serving Wicklow and South Dublin since 1880, the Collier family offers bespoke funeral services for all faiths and philosophies.



Our Service room can comfortably accommodate up to 130 people.



There is parking space for 60 cars available on-site.



A separate drawing room with a fireplace provides a comfortable room with added privacy.

Old Connaught Avenue, Bray, Co. Wicklow, A98 PX65

T: +353 | 272 0777

www.colliersfuneraldirectors.com E: info@colliersfuneraldirectors.com



# Arklow Roots Music: Jessica Pearson and the East Wind

**Arklow Roots Music - Jessica Pearson and the East Wind from Canada, Thursday 23rd Jan at The Bridge Hotel Arklow 8.30 pm. Support by Arklow singer Tamara Penston. This is a donations based concert and places can be reserved on Eventbrite.**

Jessica Pearson and the East Wind are a vibrant folk trio from Canada and their work can be found on Spotify, YouTube and the usual channels. Their version of Morning Star, Live at the Chelsea Hotel gives a good idea of their work, but their repertoire is very varied. Whether through the melodic storytelling of their songs or the engaging twists of their live shows, Jessica Pearson and The East Wind invite their audience on a journey that celebrates both the tradition of folk music and the excitement

of modern-day entertainment. They have toured extensively in Canada, Ireland, the UK and are currently in Ireland for the Roots are Showing folk conference in Killarney. During the Covid lockdown they performed for Arklow Roots Music on a Zoom gig!

Tamara Penston is an up and coming Arklow Arklow singer-songwriter who has impressed at the monthly informal sessions at the Bridge Hotel (2nd Thursday of each month).



Jessica Pearson and the East Wind.

## Arts Council announces first round of direct grant funding worth €68.5m

*Two organisations in Wicklow to receive a total of €352,800 in funding*

**The Arts Council has announced its first round of funding decisions for 2025, awarding 175 arts organisations, arts centres and arts studios grants amounting to €68.5 million. These grants will support arts organisations and centres to support and develop the arts nationwide.**

41 arts centres were awarded a total of €10 million in this round of funding, which will support the running of each centre. In addition, 30 Art Studio Spaces will receive €746,000 in funding grants, providing a workspace for 1,117 Visual Artists in 15 counties.

In Wicklow, the

Mermaid Arts Centre will receive €330,000 through Arts Centre funding while Signal Arts Centre will be awarded €22,800, supporting 85 artists through the Visual Artists Workspace Scheme.

Applications for funding to the Arts Council are continuing to rise with an unprecedented

amount of grant support sought, now at 245% that of 2019 levels. The gap between the amount of funding offered and the amount requested is also at a record level.

In its 2025 awards, the Arts Council will prioritise support to the arts organisational infrastructure, while continuing its investment in individual

artists, focusing on those not previously supported by the organisation in line with its inclusion objectives.

Chair of the Arts Council, Maura McGrath said: "The Art Council's budget for 2025 will be used to support, strengthen and help develop arts organisations across the country. This first round

of funding decisions for 2025 will help allow artists, audiences and communities to come together through the unifying power of art. However, we recognise the difficulties and challenges that the current level of available funding brings. We commit to advocating for increased funding for our sector."

Maureen Kennelly, Director of the Arts Council, commented, "Grant supports are vital to the continued growth and development of the arts in Ireland. These funding decisions will help ensure that organisations throughout the country are empowered to realise compelling visions across all artforms. This financial support will allow people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with and experience the very best of the arts in our country."

All recipients of this funding will play a role in sustaining and developing the arts in Ireland. These organisations, centres and studios provide an organisational infrastructure for the arts sector and have been awarded grants following an application process and in line with Arts Council strategic goals. Specific criteria against which applications from organisations are assessed are artistic quality and development of the arts, public engagement, organisational capacity,

the importance of the organisation in the arts infrastructure and their commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

• In 2025 there will be 33 direct grant schemes, all are open and competitive.

• In 2024, as part of its work programme, the Arts Council provided grant support through its schemes to: 1880 individuals, 588 organisations, 318 schools, 201 projects, 140 festivals, 31 local authorities, 19 Creative Places (communities).

## Wicklow finalists announced for Business of Craft Awards at Showcase 2025

**Two craft and design businesses from County Wicklow have been shortlisted for the finals of the Business of Craft Awards, which will take place as part of the Local Enterprise Showcase at the Showcase Craft Trade Fair 2025 in the RDS, taking place from Sunday, 19th to Tuesday, 21st January.**

Culu Design and One Dame Lane, both of which are supported by LEO Wicklow, have been shortlisted in the 'One to

Watch' category in what is the second year of the Business of Craft Awards. They will be joined in the LEO Wicklow area by

two other local companies: Amurelle Bedlinen and Living Earth Photography.

Culu Design is owned by Louise O'Hara from Bray, while One Dame Lane is run by Lyndsey Cavanagh from Greystones. Both businesses specialize in designing and manufacturing beautiful women's jewellery with a contemporary twist.

Amurelle was founded by Hannah Sanusi in Greystones and focuses on high-quality linen and cotton bedding, while Aidan White's Living Earth Photography sells exquisite prints of Irish landscapes.

Vibeke Delahunt, Head of Enterprise at LEO Wicklow, commented, "The addition of the Business of Craft Awards to the Local Enterprise Showcase at Showcase is a significant boost for the companies. It helps to highlight some of the best-in-class businesses from the design and craft sector across the country and we are doing that in

front of key buyers both nationally and internationally. So, it gives businesses that extra competitive advantage as we look forward to the event."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, congratulated the exhibitors, stating, "On the whole Showcase 2025 is going to be a huge event for our four Local Enterprise Office supported companies taking part. They get the chance to meet with buyers from all over the world and it's three days that could change their business forever. LEO staff have been working closely with them all to ensure they can maximise their participation so there is a lot of excitement ahead of the event this year."

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) awards were open to all LEO clients exhibiting at the event as part of the Local Enterprise Showcase, which showcases 105 small craft businesses from LEOs nationwide.

This is the second year of the awards, which celebrate the business aspect behind the remarkable craft and design products created across the country.

Mary Blanchfield, interim Chief Executive of the Design & Crafts Council Ireland (DCCI), commented, "Congratulations to all the finalists of the LEOs Business of Craft Awards. These awards are a great way to celebrate the business models of craftspeople across the country. Showcase 2025 promises to highlight the very best of Irish talent and creativity. At Design & Crafts Council Ireland (DCCI), we are delighted to have the opportunity to provide support a dynamic platform for businesses to connect and collaborate with both domestic and international buyers. We look forward to working closely with the Local Enterprise Offices to welcome all the exhibitors and to build on the success of last year's show."

Showcase 2025, a pinnacle event in the global

design and crafts calendar, attracts thousands of buyers from around the world, including those from Ireland, the UK, USA, mainland Europe, Asia, and Africa, generating millions of euros in sales orders during the show. Showcase is presented by the Design & Crafts Council Ireland, with support from Enterprise Ireland in promoting the trade show internationally through their network of offices overseas, along with the Local Enterprise Offices nationwide.

The Local Enterprise Showcase is just one of several initiatives run by the Local Enterprise Offices throughout the year to foster entrepreneurship and support the growth of small businesses. Other events include Local Enterprise Week, National Women's Enterprise Day, the National Enterprise

Awards, the Student Enterprise Programme, and the Local Enterprise Village as part of the National Ploughing Championships.



Lyndsey Cavanagh, One Dame Lane Jewellery.



Louise O'Hara, Cula Designs.



# Bray's Emmet Kirwan brings his transformative hit stage show ACCENTS home

*Opens at Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray (Feb 5th- 7th)*

Following two sold-out runs in 2022, Wicklow resident, Emmet Kirwan's ACCENTS returns to the stage this January for a much-anticipated tour of Ireland. Nominated for Best Soundscape at the Irish Times Theatre Awards in 2023. Written by Emmet Kirwan (Dublin Oldschool), and music composed by Eoin French (Talos) and directed by Claire O'Reilly (Malaprop Theatre), ACCENTS presents a powerful, poetic journey through a gentrified city.

This 2025 tour of the show is dedicated to the memory of the late musician Eoin French who sadly passed away earlier this year. The show tours to 6 venues, opening at Mermaid Arts Centre before continuing on to Limerick, Cork and Galway.

ACCENTS is a transformative show about the arrival of new life, the families we try to create, the families we may never have, and the post-crash boom generation living a life delayed. Prompted by the birth of Kirwan's first son, the actor-writer explores the sounds of our voices and how they define us, how we're perceived and how they can give us power.

The play takes the form of eight poems delivered against French's incredible soundtrack. The show has its own unique universe with its own gravitational pull, with

an expanding and contracting celestial rhythm driven by playwright and spoken word artist Emmet Kirwan, under the compelling and energetic direction of one of Ireland's most exciting directors, Claire O'Reilly.

It is Kirwan's Big Bang stage presence, his pulsating life-affirming energies through words and movement that make this show a must for your new year outings.

Accompanied by the amazing musical talents of Ben Bix and Brian (The Line) Dillon, two classically trained musicians and members of the experimental electronic super group Melty Brains. Through their multi-instrumental talents they bring Eoin's exquisite score to life.

Speaking about Accents, Emmet Kirwan said: "I am thrilled to bring Accents back

to Irish stage and to a larger audience. I set out to write a contemporary piece about life in modern Ireland five years ago alongside Eoin. Life has changed for everyone since then including myself and becoming a father and that changed the narrative of not only my own story but the narrative of this play, and the loss of Eoin has profoundly affected all of us and changed how we see the world and his work, we hope to bring Eoin French's incredible score and body of work back to the stage so it can be heard by new audiences and make sure that it still pulsates and lives on in peoples' memories. I know he was incredibly proud of what he made and we want people to hear that. This show is laugh out loud funny, energetic, entertaining, and also extremely life affirming."



Photo by Fruit Frame.

## 46th Bray One Act Drama Festival returns to the Mermaid

Drama enthusiasts, mark your calendars! The 46th Bray One Act Drama Festival is set to take centre stage at The Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray, from Tuesday, January 28th, to Saturday, February 1st, 2025. Each evening's performances will commence at 7:30 PM, promising five nights of exceptional talent and creativity.



Dorothy O'Brien William Mansfield Alan Mulligan Joan Gregg Andrew McClean Derek Pullen.

Tuesday 28th January 2025	
Salomé	Tragedy by Oscar Wilde Ardclough Youth Theatre
The Dream Collector	Drama by Fin Kennedy Bray School of Speech & Drama
Queens	Drama by Kristen Doherty East Glendalough School
Wednesday 29th January 2025	
Hey Hun!	Comedy by Byron Hayes Byron Hayes Theatre Group
Willow	Drama by Catherine McKiernan Balally Players
No Place	Comedy by Aoife Meagher Sandyford Little Theatre
Thursday 30th January 2025	
Millennial League	Drama by Kathy Ann Murphy An Aois Nua
The 39 Steps, Even More Abridged	Comedy Adapted by Patrick Bar St. Patrick's Dramatic Society
Grimstone Halt	Drama by Peter Robbie Delgany Dramatic Society
Friday 31st January 2025	
Lucy in the Sky	Drama by Tony Layton Delgany ICA
The Book Club of Little Witterington	Comedy by Joan Greening Ashford ICA
Surface Beauty	Drama by Simon Cunningham Dalkey Players
Saturday 1st February 2025	
Potential	Comedy by Noelle Clarke Square One TG
Missing the Point	Drama by Lua McIlraith Lilliput Players

The festival kicks off on Tuesday, January 28th, with a special Youth Night, featuring performances by Ardclough Youth Theatre, Bray School of Speech and Drama, and East Glendalough School. This evening highlights the budding talent of young actors and their passion for the dramatic arts.

From Wednesday to Saturday, drama groups from across Leinster will compete for coveted awards, with three different groups taking the stage each night. Festival adjudicator Geoff O'Keefe, renowned for his expertise in the dramatic arts, will provide insightful commentary each evening and determine the winners at the week's conclusion.


This year, the festival continues its proud tradition of supporting charitable causes, with

proceeds going to The Wicklow Hospice. Tickets are available now through the Mermaid Arts Centre's website at [www.mermaidartscentre.ie](http://www.mermaidartscentre.ie) or by calling the box office at 01 272 4030.

For the full festival programme and further details, visit [www.bray-oneactdrama.com](http://www.bray-oneactdrama.com) or follow us on social media.

Come along for an unforgettable week of drama, competition, and camaraderie!

The Bray One Act Drama Festival has been a cornerstone of the local arts scene for 46 years, showcasing outstanding dramatic talent from youth groups and seasoned drama teams alike. The festival is a celebration of creativity, performance, and community spirit, bringing people together through the love of theatre.



**COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**SECTION 75 – ROADS ACT, 1993  
PROVISION FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE  
OF PUBLIC ROAD**

Wicklow County Council hereby gives notice of the temporary closure of the following public roads.

**Roads to be closed:**  
Strand Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.

**Period of closure:**  
From 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

**Alternative Routes:**

**Southbound**  
Turn right onto Seymour Road, turn left onto Quinsborough Road.

**Northbound**  
Turn left onto Quinsborough Road, turn right onto Seymour Road.

**Reason for Closure**  
This road closure is necessary in order to facilitate reinstatement works by Gas Networks Ireland.

**Linda Healy,  
Senior Executive Officer,  
Transportation & Infrastructure Delivery.**



# Donnelly highlights 'unprecedented investment' in Wicklow health services as term of office concludes



Stephen Donnelly.

As Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly concludes his term, he highlights the substantial investments made in County Wicklow's health services, underscoring the government's commitment to enhancing healthcare infrastructure and community support in the region.

## 2025 Health Capital Plan

Minister Donnelly has agreed the 2025 Health Capital Plan with the HSE - the largest ever capital funding to date, totally over €1.45 billion. 2025 will see over €10 million invested in health infrastructure in Wicklow. Projects funded in 2025 include:

- Development of additional rooms and a new Day Centre at Baltinglass Community Hospital;
- Construction is expected to commence on Greystones Primary Care Centre (subject to planning permission);
- New 95 bed Community Nursing Unit at St. Coleman's Rathdrum.

## 2025 Funding for Wicklow's Cancer Support Groups

Minister Donnelly provided government funding for cancer support groups in 2024 for the first time, and secured permanent annual funding for ser-

vices in 2025. The following cancer support groups have been approved for funding by Minister Donnelly in 2025: Purple House Bray €145,000 - €158,000; Arklow Cancer Support €38,000 - €41,000; Greystones Cancer Support €34,000 - €37,000; Wicklow Town Cancer Support; €34,000 - €37,000; Rathdrum Cancer Support €12,000 - €15,000; Roundwood Cancer Support €5,000 - €7,000; West Wicklow Cancer Support €1,000 - €3,000.

## Enhancement of Wicklow Community Unit

A significant achievement during Minister Donnelly's tenure is the refurbishment and reopening of the Wicklow Community Unit in Wicklow Town. Formerly known as Wicklow District Hospital, with an investment of €1.5 million, it was extensively

renovated to meet modern healthcare standards and reopened to serve the needs of older adults in the community.

Minister Donnelly said: "The unit now offers 18 beds dedicated to short-stay services, including rehabilitation, convalescence, respite, and day services, making it the only public dedicated short-stay unit for older adults in County Wicklow."

## Support for Parkinson's Disease Services

In February 2024, Minister Donnelly officially launched the Wicklow branch of Parkinson's Ireland in Ashford, marking the 19th branch of the organisation. This initiative aims to deliver vital services to approximately 500 individuals living with Parkinson's in Wicklow, along with their families and caregivers. During the launch, Minister Donnelly acknowledged the impor-

tance of such community-based services and secured government funding for Parkinson's Ireland to ensure sustained support for those affected by the condition.

## Commitment to Community-Based Healthcare

Minister Donnelly emphasised the importance of community-based healthcare services throughout his time as Minister for Health. He opened four new Primary Care Centres in Wicklow (Bray, Arklow, Rathdrum and Baltinglass) and secured the submission of the planning application for another to serve Greystones, Delgany and Kilcoole.

The Enhanced Community Care Programme provides management of chronic disease conditions closer to people's homes and operates from the Bray and Arklow Primary Care Centres.

Minister Donnelly

added: "These services ensure people do not have to travel to hospital in Dublin for treatment of their conditions. I was pleased as Minister to show that we were able to respond to the needs of the growing older population of County Wicklow. New or upgraded facilities are vital to the delivery of our Enhanced Community Care Programme, enabling people to receive care close to home."

## Further Investment in Wicklow Healthcare:

- Over €20 million investment in Wicklow Hospice ensuring they could pay off the mortgage and hire additional staff
- Capital funding for 'Meals on Wheels' Services
- Secured the future of the St. Joseph's dementia service in Shankill
- Investment in mental health facilities in Wicklow
- Play Therapists for Schools in Greystones.

## Future Outlook

Reflecting on the progress made, Minister Donnelly said: "I leave office in the coming days confident that with the funding secured during my time as Minister that we will see the continued development of Wicklow's health services over the next five years.

"The investments and initiatives undertaken over the past five years have laid a strong foundation for future advancements, and will ensure the residents of Wicklow have access to high-quality healthcare services within their community for years to come.

"I'd also like to extend my gratitude to the healthcare professionals, community organisations, and residents of Wicklow for their support and collaboration. I leave office with an optimism about the future of healthcare in our great county, and I am confident that the momentum achieved will continue."

# Wicklow students lead the way in promoting online safety

Three students from Wicklow are among over 100 students across Ireland taking part in the Webwise Safer Internet Day (SID) Ambassador Training Programme 2025.

This peer-led initiative equips students with the knowledge and skills to run their own online safety campaigns in their schools and local communities. As part of the programme, Shriya Mishra, St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School; and Ruby Wallace and Ruby Dixon Colaiste Bhríde Carnew attended an in-person training day in Dublin, where they received support and guidance from the Webwise

Youth Advisory Panel.

The Ambassador Training Programme empowers students to take a leading role in creating a safer, better internet by tackling key issues like online bullying, misinformation, wellbeing, privacy, and digital rights.

The theme for Safer Internet Day 2025, happening on Tuesday, February 11th, is "Prepare / Protect / Thrive: Navigating Algorithms

and Influencers." This year's campaign encourages schools, parents, young people, and educators to explore how algorithms and influencers shape young people's online lives. The aim is to equip children with the skills to navigate the opportunities and challenges of these powerful online influences.

Safer Internet Day (SID) is an EU wide initiative to promote a safer

internet for all users, especially young people. It is promoted in Ireland by the Oide Technology in Education and Webwise, with over 200,000 people

taking part in last year's celebrations.

Everyone has a role to play in creating a safer internet. Schools, parents, and young people can

access free resources and activity ideas! Here are 3 simple steps to take part in SID 2025: Register your activity; use the free resources; and visit the

Safer Internet Day Hub. Webwise is the online safety initiative of the Department of Education and co-funded by the European Commission. It

promotes safer, better internet use through awareness campaigns and educational resources for teachers, students, and parents.



Pictured at the Webwise Safer Internet Day Ambassador Training Day are, from left Shriya Mishra (St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School); Ruby Wallace and Ruby Dixon (Colaiste Bhríde Carnew).



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

## SECTION 75 – ROADS ACT, 1993 PROVISION FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF PUBLIC ROAD

Wicklow County Council hereby gives notice of the temporary closure of the following public road:

**Roads to be closed:**  
Greenpark Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.

**Period of closure:**  
Monday 27th January and Tuesday, 28th January 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. both days.

**Alternative Routes:**  
Traffic will be diverted to lower Dargle Road, continue straight and turn left onto Sutton Road.

**Reason for Closure**  
This road closure is necessary in order to facilitate works being carried out by Gas Networks Ireland.

Linda Healy,  
Senior Executive Officer,  
Transportation & Infrastructure Delivery.



# Nominations now open for 2025 EY Entrepreneur of The Year programme

The 2025 EY Entrepreneur Of The Year (EOY) programme is officially open for nominations with entrepreneurs from emerging, established and international businesses across all industry sectors in Wicklow invited to submit their nominations between now and 27th February 2025.

This year, the programme celebrates entrepreneurs from across the island of Ireland whose vision and innovation are creating long-term value and helping to shape the future with confidence. Business leaders that have the tenacity and determination to push conventional boundaries, think differently and create new solutions that change our collective future for the better are being encouraged to apply.

EOY Alumni and 2014 Finalist, Bill Walsh commented: "The EY Entrepreneur of the Year programme is such a positive and rewarding experience that offers so many benefits to participating entrepreneurs. I have gained so much from being involved and have forged lasting friendships and connections with inspirational entrepreneurs from a wide range of industries. I would encourage any Wicklow based entrepreneurs who may be considering getting involved to go for it!"

Roger Wallace, Partner Lead for EY Entrepreneur Of The Year Ireland said: "We are very excited to invite entrepreneurs from across Ireland to submit their nominations for the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year 2025 programme. Now in its 28th year, the purpose of the programme is to acclaim, inspire and encourage entrepreneurship across our island.

"Geopolitics, technology and environmental concerns are redefining our world. Irish entrepreneurs are leaning into the uncertainty that the modern-day business world presents and are identifying and realising opportunities for growth and innovation. Through their ingenuity, resilience and vision, Irish entrepreneurs are future proofing the prosperity of our island and our people. They are shaping their future and the future of our island

with confidence.

"Over the almost three decades that we have been running this programme in Ireland, we have seen first-hand just how impressively diverse the entrepreneurial community is on this island, and we are actively seeking and encouraging nominations from entrepreneurs of all ages and from all industries and locations across the country.

"There will be 24 finalists selected to take part in this year's programme, who will participate in an exciting strategic growth programme over a 10-month period, including a week-long CEO Retreat to Tokyo, Japan. The finalists will also be welcomed into our acclaimed alumni community of more than 600 of Ireland's greatest and most successful entrepreneurs, where they will have the opportunity to forge valuable connections, learn from each other and in many cases do business together."

The EY Entrepreneur Of The Year programme is open to entrepreneurs from all sectors and growth stages in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The awards programme is divided into three categories - Emerging, Established and International - with eight finalists chosen per category.

The EY Entrepreneur Of The Year Sustainability Award will also be presented to one of the finalists in recognition of their business' significant contribution towards achieving and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Roger Wallace added: "The EY Entrepreneur Of The Year Sustainability Award recognises entrepreneurs that are providing sustainable solutions to today's most important environmental challenges. This award shines a light on the business leaders that are developing and executing innovative

ideas that will help protect our planet for future generations."

The EY Entrepreneur Of The Year alumni community comprises more than 600 entrepreneurs representing some of the greatest business minds across the island of Ireland. Collectively these businesses employ more than 250,000 people and generate revenues in excess of €25 billion.

The 24 finalists will be selected by an independent judging panel comprising of former winners and chaired by Harry Hughes, CEO of Portwest. Speaking at the launch, Harry Hughes, CEO of Portwest and Chairperson of the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year Judging Panel said: "Ireland has an incredible pool of innovative entrepreneurs who are leading businesses that are achieving significant national and global success. Despite the challenges that face any entrepreneur they show relentless determination and resilience in their pursuit of excellence, continuing to create jobs, strengthen communities and bolster economies. We want these brilliant entrepreneurs across all sectors to submit their nominations for this year's EY Entrepreneur Of The Year programme. As an alumni of the programme I can attest to its incredible value and I'm looking forward to welcoming the next generation of inspiring leaders from across the island to the programme."

The EY Entrepreneur Of The Year Ireland programme is supported by Premium Corporate Sponsor Julius Baer International, and Government sponsors Enterprise Ireland and Invest Northern Ireland. Anyone interested can find out more or complete an online nomination form at [www.eoy.ie](http://www.eoy.ie). Those nominating someone else must do so with the entrepreneur's consent.



Summer O'Regan at the Wicked Workshop in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow.



Pictured at the launch of EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2025 were (l-r): Eimear McCrann, Director, EY Entrepreneur of The Year, EY Entrepreneurs of the Year 2024, Orlaith Ryan and Sharon Cunningham of Shorla Oncology, Roger Wallace, Partner Lead for EY Entrepreneur of The Year. Photograph: Naoise Culhane.

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# Seven awards for Wicklow at 2025 Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition



Erin Mills from St. Mary's College Arklow shows An Taoiseach Simon Harris and BT Ireland MD Shay Walsh her project.

From January 8th to 11th, 1,062 secondary school student finalists presented their STEM-focused ideas on how to change the world for the better to a panel of 85 expert judges at the 61st BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition (BTYSTE) in the RDS, Dublin. It was a good year for Wicklow schools with seven awards handed out to local students, and an especially proud year for St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School in Greystones who had four winners. In total there were 19 projects from Wicklow schools at the exhibition.

Greystones Community College student Oisín Ward was awarded 2nd place in the Junior Individual Technology category for his project NeuroLingo, a mobile app for the self management of stuttering.

From St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School in Greystones, Isabel Deane-Jermin was awarded 2nd place in the Junior Individual Biological and Ecological category for her project which looked at the differential impact of climate change in regions in Ireland.

Also from St. David's, Alannah Lynch was Highly Commended in the Intermediate Individual Chemical, Physical & Mathematical Sciences category for her project 'Innovative Recycling: Sustainable Distillation of Ethanol from Waste Hand Sanitiser for Perfume Production'.

Again from St. David's, Kate Macadam was Highly Commended in the Senior Individual Health 7 Wellbeing category for her project titled 'I still haven't found what I'm looking for: Evaluating the attitudes of teenagers towards youth mental health services in my local area'.



Shriya Mishra from St. David's Holy Faith, gets a selfie with Tanaiste Micheal Martin.

## Wicklow students learn about the benefits of beef at BTYSTE

Students from St Mary's College Arklow visited ABP's stand at the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition 2025 at the RDS in Dublin.

This marks the eleventh consecutive year that the company has been involved in the event. ABP staff were on hand to discuss some of the benefits of beef and potential careers in the meat production sector with visitors. Attendees learned about some of the health benefits of eating beef, which is a source of protein and vitamins.

This year ABP sponsored the Sustainable Farming Practices category at the exhibition. The company has extensive experience with research in Irish agriculture including its demonstration farm in Carlow, which aims to help beef farmers reduce their carbon emissions.

Pictured at the ABP stand at the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition are: ABP's Michael Doyle with Jadesola Fatus from St Mary's College.



Teacher Jake McDonnell with Alannah and Amy Lynch from St. David's Holy Faith. Alannah was Highly Commended in the Chemical, Physical & Mathematical Sciences category for her project 'Innovative Recycling: Sustainable Distillation of Ethanol from Waste Hand Sanitiser for Perfume Production'.





Therese Gunning, Legal Director at BT Ireland. Presenting the 2nd place Junior Individual award in the Biological & Ecological Sciences category to Isabel Deane-Jermin from St. David's for her project which looked at the differential impact of climate change in regions in Ireland.



Ashley Cahatol from St. David's explaining her project to An Taoiseach Simon Harris. Ashley won a Display Award in the Health & Wellbeing category for the project 'Better Sleep and Brighter Moods in Teens: Is Vitamin D the solution?'



A Display Award was also handed out to Elodie O'Brien from Woodbrook College in the Biological & Ecological category for her project which asked 'Are environmentally friendly fertilisers a viable alternative: comparing the impact of different fertilisers on crop yield'.

Alannah Lynch was also given a Display Award for her project, and a Display Award was also handed out to Elodie O'Brien from Woodbrook College in the Biological & Ecological category for her project which asked 'Are environmentally friendly fertilisers a viable alternative: comparing the impact of different fertilisers on crop yield'.

A Display Award was also given to Ashley Cahatol from St. David's in the Health & Wellbeing category for the project 'Better Sleep and Brighter Moods in Teens: Is Vitamin D the solution?'

St. Mary's College from Arklow were also well represented at the exhibition with five projects, and other local schools represented included Glenart College and Gaelcholaiste na Mara.

Thousands of members of the public descended upon the RDS for the exhibition, which also saw the Primary Science Fair.

The Primary Science Fair, which is an integral, non-competitive part of the exhibition, gives third to sixth class primary school students across Ireland the chance to learn more about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), make friends, and have fun.

The overall winner of the 61st BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition (BTYSTE) has been announced. From Presentation School in Tralee, sisters Ciara Murphy, age 17 in 5th year, Saoirse Murphy, age 15 in 3rd year, and Laoise Murphy, age 12 in 1st year, won the top prize with their project, ACT (Aid Care Treat): App-timising emergency response. The BTYSTE perpetual trophy was presented to the winner this evening at the RDS by Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD and Managing Director of BT Ireland, Shay Walsh.

The 2025 BTYSTE winners is / are the 61st person / group of people to win the overall prize, and as this year's winners, take home €7,500. This year, for the first time ever, the overall winner, along with one senior project from each of the four remaining categories, will be awarded a trip to the World Expo, in Osaka, Japan. Held every five years, World Expo brings the world together to explore the future of industry, technology, and progress. Inspired by Ireland's theme 'Creativity Connects People', the winners will have the opportunity to create meaningful intercultural connections, experience cutting-edge science, and showcase their research on a global stage. The overall winner of BTYSTE 2025 will also represent Ireland at the European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS) in Riga, Latvia this September.

Speaking at the awards ceremony this evening, Minister for Education Norma Foley TD said, "It has been an incredible week here at the RDS Dublin, and I would like to congratulate all the participants and finalists of this year's BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition, who have not only showcased some truly innovative project ideas, but have



Kate Macadam with teacher Jake McDonnell from St. David's in Greystones. Kate was Highly Commended in the Senior Individual Health 7 Wellbeing category for her project titled 'I still haven't found what I'm looking for: Evaluating the attitudes of teenagers towards youth mental health services in my local area'.

ACT is a medical assistance app designed to support emergency healthcare responses. It integrates crucial features to provide swift and effective aid during critical situations. This is the second year this project has been recognised at the exhibition having previously been awarded Runner-Up Group in 2024.

The 2025 BTYSTE winners is / are the 61st person / group of people to win the overall prize, and as this year's winners, take home €7,500. This year, for the first time ever, the overall winner, along with one senior project from each of the four remaining categories, will be awarded a trip to the World Expo, in Osaka, Japan. Held every five years, World Expo brings the world together to explore the future of industry, technology, and progress. Inspired by Ireland's theme 'Creativity Connects People', the winners will have the opportunity to create meaningful intercultural connections, experience cutting-edge science, and showcase their research on a global stage. The overall winner of BTYSTE 2025 will also represent Ireland at the European Union Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS) in Riga, Latvia this September.

Speaking at the awards ceremony this evening, Minister for Education Norma Foley TD said, "It has been an incredible week here at the RDS Dublin, and I would like to congratulate all the participants and finalists of this year's BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition, who have not only showcased some truly innovative project ideas, but have

also done themselves, their teachers and schools, and families proud. In addition to demonstrating boundless energy and ingenuity across topics ranging from Artificial Intelligence (AI), cyber security, mental health, sustainability, agriculture and many more, what has been most uplifting is seeing how STEM subjects can be used for the betterment of society and the world around us.

Over the last twenty-five years, since taking up the custodianship of the YSTE, BT Ireland has been honoured to play our part in evolving one of the most prevalent and longstanding STEM exhibitions in the world, and look forward to seeing what exciting endeavours our winners

have in store in the months and years ahead. To all of the judges, partners, sponsors, and BT volunteers, thank you for making this week so unforgettable for us all."

Shay Walsh, Managing Director of BT Ireland said: "It has been an incredible week here at the RDS Dublin, and I would like to congratulate all the participants and finalists of this year's BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition, who have not only showcased some truly innovative project ideas, but have also done themselves, their teachers and schools, and families proud. In addition to demonstrating boundless energy and ingenuity across topics ranging from

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Therese Gunning, Legal Director at BT Ireland presenting Greystones Community College student Oisin Ward with his 2nd place award in the Junior Individual Technology category for his project NeuroLingo, a mobile app for the self management of stuttering.



# 'Read Your Way' the message of the day as children in Wicklow encouraged to pick up a book on World Book Day

Whether it's a comic book, graphic novel or audiobook, all ways of reading are good ways of reading. That's Children's Books Ireland's main message for World Book Day, taking place this year on Thursday, 6th March.

"World Book Day is a moment for every child to lose themselves in a story, whether they're

looking at pictures, reading a text as Gaeilge, reading braille or listening to an audiobook." That's according to Elaina

Ryan, CEO, Children's Books Ireland, who launched this year's World Book Day Ireland, taking place on Thursday, 6th March.

World Book Day Ireland 2025 is sponsored by National Book Tokens

and delivered by An Post, in partnership with Children's Books Ireland. To celebrate, €1.50 book tokens will be made available to children and families in Wicklow through schools, online and in bookshops to redeem for

14 specially curated titles between 13th February and 23rd March.

An Post will also distribute 42,000 books to children in need across the country, with the support of Children's Books Ireland, bringing the joy

of reading to as many children as possible and ensuring that every child is involved in World Book Day. The books will be distributed to children in Irish hospitals, direct provision centres, homelessness services and Travelling communities.

'Read Your Way' is the theme for this year's celebrations, inviting children age 0-12 across Wicklow to embrace the freedom of choosing what and how they read - be it a comic book, graphic novel, or an audiobook. "It's about taking the pressure out of reading and rediscovering the pure fun of it," said Ms Ryan. "We want children all over Wicklow to take a moment to pick up a book or visit their local bookshop with their €1.50 book token, and escape into a brilliant book."

Books from Irish publishers include *Ag Buzzáil sa Ghairdín Áine Ní Ghlinn*, a delightful rhyming tale of Billi, the hardest-working bee in the garden, brought to life by Mr Ando's vibrant illustrations and published by An tSnathaid Mhor; *And Fox & Son Tailers* by Paddy Donnelly, published by The O'Brien Press - a charming story of a clever young fox, working in his family's shop creating tails for creatures tall and small, and challenging how things are done.

Cassie Chadderton, CEO, World Book Day added: "World Book Day is encouraging children to Read Their Way, because when children

have the freedom to explore reading and books on their own terms, many more will benefit from the well-being, educational and other benefits that reading for pleasure brings."

Debbie Byrne, MD of An Post Retail said: "An Post have had a long-standing commitment to promoting reading and improving literacy rates in Ireland. We believe that reading and writing is the foundation to unlocking life's opportunities and enabling everyone to reach their potential. We are delighted to be the official delivery partner for World Book Day in Ireland, delivering over 42,000 books to children in need across the country. By ensuring free access to books, we are helping to unlock imaginations, support learning, and create a brighter future for every child, no matter their circumstances."

Sean O Coinn, CEO, Foras na Gaeilge said: "Foras na Gaeilge are delighted to be supporting World Book Day Ireland 2025 with the inclusion of an Irish-language book for the fourth year in a row. We know that children and families will be 'buzzing' to read Áine Ní Ghlinn's wonderful book which will also be available in braille & digital formats, thanks to our friends at Vision Ireland. Once again, the Irish language will be at the heart of the campaign in Ireland, featuring lots of Irish-language resources and audiobooks on the World Book Day website and across social media channels. The demand for the Irish-language World Book Day title is increasing year-on-year, which is reflective of the quality and choice of Irish-language books available for young readers today. We hope that more children and families will be inspired to find their favourite Irish-

language story by visiting [www.loveleabargaeilge.ie](http://www.loveleabargaeilge.ie) as a result of World Book Day 2025 in Ireland."

Irish-language books and resources are sup-

ported by Foras na Gaeilge and accessible copies are provided by Vision Ireland. World Book Day 2025 will take place on Thursday, 6th March 2025.



Beau Johnston (2nd Class) with author Aine Ni Ghlinn.



The Fitzgerald family at the annual Wicklow RNLI Service of Remembrance.

## PLANNING

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, GER O'BRIEN & KATIE BYRNES, intend to apply for permission for development at this site CRONELEA, SHILLELAGH, CO. WICKLOW, Y14 YR72.

The development will consist OF DEMOLITION OF EXISTING EXTENSION TO REAR OF DWELLING AND PROPOSED NEW TWO STOREY EXTENSION TO REAR AND SINGLE STOREY EXTENSION TO SIDE, ALONG WITH ALL ASSOCIATED SITE WORKS.

The planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, at the offices of the planning authority during its public opening hours. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Pilgrim's Food Masters seeks planning permission for a 'New external containerised 1.1MW Combined Heat and Power unit (CHP), new 80,000 litre external thermal store in place of existing larger HFO tank. New flue added to the existing flue structure and repurposing an existing flue stack, both terminating in same location as existing flues. GRP enclosure as well as all associated pipework and electrical containment'. At Pilgrim's Food Masters, Coolattin, Shillelagh, Co. Wicklow, Y14 PY73, Ireland.

The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Anthony and Sharon Clarke seek planning permission for the addition of a new rooflight to the front of the existing dwelling at No. 2 Brickfield Cottages, Brickfield Lane, Killarney Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow, A98 A596.

The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Graham and Sharon Fitzpatrick seek planning permission for (a) construction of a new first-floor rear extension and (b) the addition of a new rooflight to the front of the existing dwelling at No.1 Brickfield Cottages, Brickfield Lane, Killarney Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow, A98 NX02.

The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

**ATTENTION**  
**Architects, Planners & Builders**  
 Reach the widest readership for your planning notices in County Wicklow with Wicklow Times  
 Call **01 286 9111** or email **pauline@localtimes.ie**



# Recruitment opportunities to grow by 5% in Wicklow this year

FRS Recruitment is forecasting a 5% growth in recruitment opportunities in Wicklow this year. On a national basis they also expect to see a 10% increase in recruitment around the country. In Wicklow, the sectors they anticipate will see the strongest growth will be commercial, healthcare, industrial and construction. While nationally IT, healthcare, commercial, industrial, life sciences, agribusiness and construction are expected to see significant growth.

A wide range of positions are expected to be available in Wicklow in 2025, across the growing sectors

and also in other industries. Some of the specific roles FRS

Recruitment is expecting to see become available locally include openings for nurses, healthcare assistants, occupational therapists, sales personnel and retail staff.

According to FRS

Recruitment, the expectation of increased job opportunities locally and nationally comes with several positive factors likely to influence recruitment across the economy in 2025. These

include the anticipated reduction in interest rates, the recovery of the IT sector, more employers seeking to grow their teams after consolidating in 2024, more flexibility in the market with candi-

dates seeking out new opportunities and the removal of the public sector hiring freeze in healthcare.

FRS Recruitment said they noted significant growth in roles coming to market in the last quarter of 2024 in Wicklow and other parts of the country, with employers already signalling a strong pipeline of demand for new staff for the year ahead.

Speaking about their outlook for the market, Lynne McCormack, General Manager of FRS Recruitment said, "We certainly think there will be an increase in recruitment opportunities coming to market in

Wicklow and around the country this year. There is more optimism in the market from employers and candidates alike. We saw this start to come through at the end of 2024 and our full expectation is that will continue locally and

nationally throughout 2025. For example we already have a significant number of employers in Wicklow who either have openings available or are preparing to bring them to market in the near future. They are making plans to grow their teams and we fully expect to see quite a bit of movement locally, especially in sectors like commercial, healthcare, industrial and construction.

"This comes after a very challenging year for recruitment in 2024, both in Wicklow and beyond. There was certainly a strong degree of caution in the marketplace last year as employers decided to concentrate on maintaining their existing teams and asking their staff to do more in light of wider economic concerns, high interest rates, cost of business challenges and other considerations. Qualified candidates were also tak-

ing a similar outlook, with many potential candidates seeking to enhance their terms and conditions with their existing employers rather than pursuing fresh opportunities. Candidates were primarily playing it safe.

"However we can already see that perspective has shifted. We've had a range of highly qualified candidates reach out to us either side of Christmas expressing their desire to be consid-

ered should new opportunities become available this year. There is also a strong pipeline of recruitment activity coming from employers locally. All things considered we expect this will lead to a rise in recruitment activity in Wicklow and around the country throughout 2025 and there will be a lot more opportunities both coming to market and being successfully filled this year," Ms. McCormack concluded.



Saoirse Rizo at the annual Wicklow RNLi Service of Remembrance.

## Hoteliers welcome commitment to support food service businesses

The Irish Hotels Federation (IHF) welcomes the commitment in the proposed programme for Government to bring forward measures to support SMEs within the hospitality sector, including in relation to VAT.

IHF President Michael Magner says: "A decision to reduce the rate of VAT for food service businesses would be a very welcome development. It would greatly assist the many vulnerable food-led businesses that have faced an uncertain future and escalating cost challenges in recent years. This would be an important step toward putting these businesses on a more stable footing.

"We see enormous opportunities for further development of tourism and hospitality as a major engine for growth and economic prosperity the length and breadth of the country. With the right policies and a positive businesses environment, we believe tourism and hospitality has a bright future ahead."

## CLASSIFIEDS

### THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

### 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 ..... Take it Dear Heart of Jesus. And place it within your own broken heart where your Father sees it. Then it will become your request and not mine. Amen. M.M.

### Gospel John 16:23-28

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I tell you most solemnly, anything you ask for from the Father he will grant in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and so your joy will be complete. I have been telling you all this in metaphors; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in metaphors but tell you about the Father in plain words. When that day comes you will ask in my name; and I do not say that I shall pray to the Father for you, because the Father himself loves you for loving me and believing that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world and now I leave the world to go to the Father.'

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