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Tuesday 28th January 2025 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray, A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

# 'HOUSING PLAN IN TATTERS'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady said last Thursday "Throughout 2024, the Taoiseach, Tánaiste, and Minister for Housing repeatedly claimed that 40,000 new homes would be built. These claims persisted despite CSO quarterly data clearly showing a significant drop in housing completions."

"The final CSO figures for 2024, published today, reveal a nearly 7% decline in completions compared to 2023. Only 30,330 homes were built last year, down from 32,695 in 2023."

Deputy Brady criticised the government's housing strategy, stating: "The government's housing plan has completely unraveled. Their targets for public and private housing in 2024

were far too low to begin with, and they still failed to meet them. Social and affordable housing goals have been missed, and their overall targets have also fallen short.

"In the election just gone Simon Harris and others clearly misled the electorate when they falsely stated that the housing completion figure would be close to 40,000. They clearly and intentionally misled

the electorate.

Brady attributed the lack of progress to a failure to reform housing delivery systems: "The slow pace of housing delivery stems from the government's refusal to implement the necessary reforms to both public and private housing development. If this approach continues under the current government or a future one following the same path, the housing crisis will



Charlotte Doyle, Laoise Doran and Karen O'Brien at the Wicklow Adult Camogie Awards in Jacob's Well, Rathdrum.

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only deepen."

He concluded by calling for significant policy changes: "Only a fundamental shift in housing policy, as proposed by Sinn Féin and endorsed by the Housing Commission, can address the crisis and deliver the increase in public and private housing supply that is so urgently needed."

Independent councillor, Joe Behan asserted "The confirmation by the CSO that the number of houses built in 2024 is actually down on the previous year by 6.7% is clear proof of the abject failure of the outgoing Government to provide houses in a time of housing emergency."

"When taken with the record number of homeless people in this country of 15,000, it is clear that a complete revolution in housing construction is desperately needed.

"Sadly, the incoming Government looks very like the outgoing Government and has the same old policy of putting enormous sums of taxpayers' money into the hands of property speculators and private property funds rather than build homes on public land for affordable purchase and social housing."

"Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael are not going to solve the housing problem with the policies they have pursued up to now. The CSO figures have proven that these policies are ineffective and severely damaging for the young people of this country. The rocky start to this new Government when they tried to pull a fast one by trying to reduce speaking time for opposition parties indicates an arrogance which we have seen when they continually try to assert that

they have the answers to the housing emergency. Unless they have a

major change of direction, the hopes and dreams of so many fami-

lies who need a home of their own will be severely dashed."

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Treasurer of the Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club Jerry Dixon and Deirdre Keogh from SSE Renewables present Sam Czwalina with his prize at the Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Awards in the Bridge Tavern, Wicklow Town. See page 12.

### Holy Rosary Soup & Sandwiches

Why not make a date for lunch on Wednesday January 29th at Kilian House Family Centre in Greystones (from 12.15 to 2pm.), and enjoy a choice of delicious food in a friendly atmosphere! Suggested donation €7. All proceeds go to local charities.

### GARA Greystones: Enduring Power of Attorney

Greystones Active Retirement Association will hold a coffee morning on 31st January where there will also be a talk by Aine Flynn, Director of the Decision Support Service (DSS), on the topic of the enduring power of attorney. It will take place in Kilian House, behind Holy Rosary Church, at 10:30am.

The DSS exists to promote the rights and interests of people who may need support with decision-making. They register decision support arrangements and supervise decision supporters.

Aine will focus on Enduring Power of Attorney/Assisted Decision Making. The law in this area has

been updated and changed. It is vital to be aware of the new requirements in order to protect your wishes. Please do not leave these arrangements until it is too late.

This talk is open to the general public, you do not have to be a GARA Greystones Member to attend. Please feel free to ask a friend or neighbour to join you.

For seating arrangements, it would be most helpful if you could let GARA Greystones know you will be there on the day. Details from 087 2845 465 or garagreystones-plus@gmail.com.

### 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.

Get your tickets at [eventbrite.ie](http://eventbrite.ie).

### Quiz Night in Aid of Scoil Chaoimhin Naofa

St Kevin's primary school in Laragh are holding a fundraiser night in Lynhams of Laragh, Friday 31st of January at 8.30pm. Raffle and prizes on the nights. Table of 4 people for €40.

### County Outdoor Recreation Plan for Wicklow

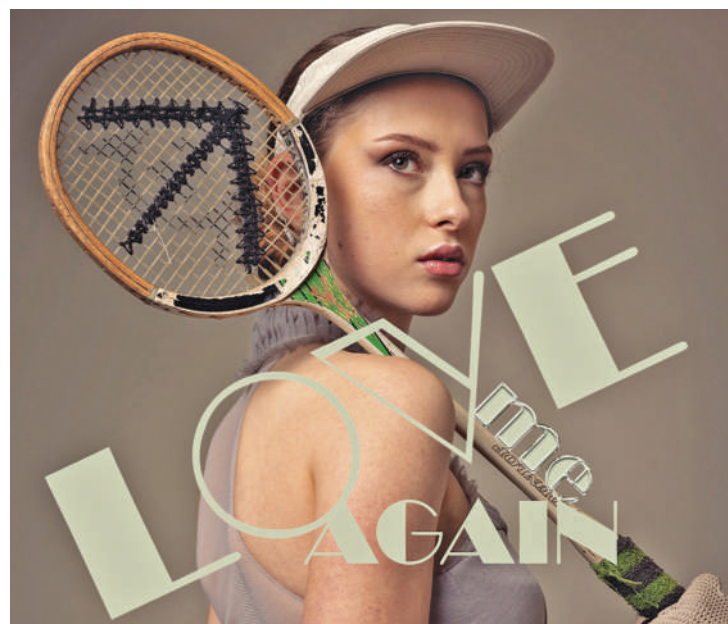
Outscape is preparing a new County Outdoor Recreation Plan for Wicklow in partnership with key county outdoor recreation stakeholders. Two public consultation events have been arranged to give everyone the opportunity to share their views and help shape the preparation of the new County Outdoor Recreation Plan for Wicklow.

• BLESSINGTON, Wednesday 5th February, 7-8.30pm, Tulfarris Hotel  
• NEWTOWNMOUNTKENNEDY, Thursday 6th February 7-8.30pm, Parkview Hotel

Attendees are asked to register their attendance in advance. <https://wicklowsp.ie/have-your-say/>

## Love Me Again: SCFE presents Pop-Up Fashion Styling exhibition

Love Me Again, is the second Pop-Up Fashion Styling exhibition, brought to you by students from Sallynoggin College of Further Education and supported by Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council. It takes place Tuesday 28th to Thursday 30th from 10am to 5pm and Friday 31st from 10am to 12pm



The exhibition presents two styling projects in which all clothing has been sourced from the treasure troves of charity and vintage shops along the Dun Laoghaire high street!

SCFE sated: "Sporting Fashion is a series of photographs styled by students of Fashion Industry Practice, QQI Level 6. The winning combination of this Sport and Fashion theme, continues our Sallynoggin College spotlight on ethical fashion.

"Last year was such an inspiring year for sport, that we decided to hit the starting line for 2025 with a sport and fashion themed photoshoot. We got the ball rolling by looking at what amenities and sports clubs there are in our community through the DLR Sports Partnership website. With such a diversity of activities on our doorstep, that anybody can try out, become part of a team, or even follow a dream, there was plenty of inspiration.

"The energy, celebration and joy surrounding the Olympics was captivating, and we were especially proud to have cheered on SCFE graduate Katie Taylor and Sallynoggin boxer Jack Marlay. Through the Sporting Fashion photoshoot, we have tried to bring some of that energy and joy into creating outfits that spark joy and fun.

"The project also explored how to look creatively and sustainably at sportswear items that are increasingly fil-

tering down into charity shops. We wanted to show how active and leisure wear can be given a new, and different lease of life. We hope you enjoy these ideas on how to be a winner, by slowing down the race to landfill!

Love Me Again 2 is a series of photographs styled by students of Fashion Buying, Styling and Visual Merchandising, QQI Level 5.

"With a focus on fostering individuality, our students traversed fashion, culture and history for inspiration as they crafted and created their vision. The magic happened when they bravely embarked on deconstructing the garments, before reworking them into entirely new outfits. Individuality, sartorial choices, dreams and ideas abound throughout these images.

"Our styling students showed us that by celebrating individuality, we can each contribute towards transforming how the fashion industry works. Through taking back our creativity and our power, we can express our own style, while also being committed to supporting sustainable and ethical fashion.

"The Fashion Department in Sallynoggin College cares about these issues and we want to affect change in the fashion industry for the future. We invite you to

join us by exploring how to make a difference. Experiment with your own style. "Choose to promote environmentally and socially responsible clothing. Visit your local charity and vintage shops to get inspired and have fun creating personalised looks out of clothing that can be Loved Again! Start the inspiration by visiting the exhibition: **Tuesday 28th to Thursday 30th from 10am to 5pm and Friday 31st from 10am to 12pm.**"



National ICA President Mary D'Arcy and Wicklow ICA Federation President Margaret Stevens present Hilda Roche of Ashford ICA with the May Condon Cup for Best ICA Group at the Wicklow ICA 69th Drama Festival in Glenealy Village Hall. See more, page 16.

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# NTA award €8.65m to Council's Active Travel projects

Wicklow County Council has welcomed the announcement by the Department of Transport, of €8,655,000 in funding, which has been granted to 30 Active Travel projects across Wicklow. Within that figure, funds have also been allocated specifically to the bus stop enhancement programme.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has distributed these funds as part of a broader €283 million investment dedicated to new and existing walking and cycling infrastructure Active Travel projects throughout Ireland this year.

Projects to receive funding in Wicklow include the Bray Dart Interchange scheme, Wicklow Port Access Road Link, the Wicklow and Greystones Pathfinder projects, as well as funding for eight schools in the county that are part of the Safe Routes to Schools programme. Additional walking and cycling infrastructure projects will be developed across all five municipalities in Wicklow.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Paul O'Brien, expressed his satisfaction with the strides made by the Active Travel Team in enhancing walking and cycling infrastructure across the county. Cllr O'Brien said, "It's fantastic to see the progress achieved in promoting alternative transport options beyond the car. This continued support from the Department of Transport and the NTA for 2025 funding will significantly bolster our efforts. I'm particularly encouraged to see so many residents already



Roundabout at the recently finished scheme at Arklow Road South R772.

embracing this change, choosing to walk, cycle, or wheel their way to school, work, or local amenities."

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Emer O'Gorman, highlighted the importance of ongoing investment in Active Travel initiatives, stating it warmly welcome this crucial funding from the NTA, which will enable our Active Travel team to advance the delivery of key projects throughout the County. The Bray DART Interchange project, which has been allocated significant funding, is a major initiative for Wicklow County Council, with completion expected

by March/April 2025. This project will provide a high-quality public realm interchange, seamlessly linking walking, cycling, taxi, bus, and rail services at Bray Train Station. We look forward to the positive impact this scheme will have on enhancing pedestrian safety and accessibility in this busy and vital area."

Joe Lane, Director of Services for Transportation and Infrastructure Delivery at Wicklow County Council acknowledged the vital role of the Department of Transport and the NTA in supporting these initiatives, saying "We are grateful for the continued investment in Wicklow,

which is instrumental in progressing 30 schemes across the Bray, Arklow, Wicklow, Baltinglass, and Greystones Municipal Districts. Notable, 8 schools in the county will benefit from the Safe Routes to School Programme. Ensuring the safety and well-being of our children is a top priority, and this funding will help create safer, less congested environments outside schools, benefiting not just the students and their parents, but also the wider community."

For further information on the complete list of schemes receiving Active Travel funding, please visit <https://www.wicklow.ie/Active-Travel>.



Daisie Summer and Poppie Rose Cullen Dunne at the 2024 Wicklow Adult Camogie Awards in Jacob's Well, Rathdrum.

## Bray tackles traffic issues with new committee

Cathaoirleach of Bray Municipal District (MD), Sinn Fein Councillor Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien, has announced the establishment of a new committee dedicated to addressing Bray's growing traffic and transport challenges.

The decision follows extensive lobbying and community engagement, including a deputation by the Alliance of Bray Residents Associations to the Bray MD Council last October. Councillor O'Brien initiated discussions with Council officials, who responded positively, paving the way for this new initiative. The committee's Terms of Reference will be drafted in collaboration with Bray's eight Councillors and presented at the next Council meeting for approval.

"This is a significant step forward for Bray," said Cllr O'Brien. "There's no doubt that traffic and transport issues are deeply impacting our town, and every projection shows the situation will worsen if we don't act now. The incredible engagement from the community has inspired this initiative, challenging the Council to step up and play its part. With support from Council officials in Bray and Wicklow, the commitment of local Councillors, and the input of key stakeholders, I'm confident we can find proactive and productive solutions both in the short and long term."



Residents can expect regular updates as the committee begins its work, ensuring a collaborative approach that reflects the community's needs and priorities.



Cllr Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien.



Recently finished Scheme at Arklow Road South R772.

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# 'We are not impressed'

*Disability campaign group says the 'Programme for Government denies human rights and equality for disabled people and older people'*

'Equality, Not Care', was a campaign group founded in February 2024 when activists noticed the government intended to change the constitution to enshrine that carers would be, by constitutional mandate, the family members of those who are disabled, sick or elderly.

Spokesperson for the group Dr Margaret Kennedy from Greystones says "In one nifty sleight of hand the government intended to abandon all duty of care and all human rights for disabled, sick and older people. We felt this was an ageist and ableist direction against all our human rights. We fought against the referendum proposal vigorously and successfully.

"The voting public understood our position. The referendum was defeated. We believed then, and still do, that all political action should be focused on human rights and equality. Following the referendum we disbanded and went back to our original causes of work. We now reconvene for the very purpose that we founded 'Equality, Not Care'. The new Government in their 'Programme for Action' have retreated back into the 'care model' for disabled, sick and older people, thus replicating what they did prior to the referendum. They learnt no lessons, ignored our perspective, our wishes for 'equality, not care'. The Programme of Government document puts 'disability' (we are in fact, 'disabled people') under a section entitled 'a Caring society'. It would have been far more helpful to put this chapter heading as; 'creating a more just and equal society for disabled and elderly citizens'. It is clear to us that the Government are deliberately not using a human rights perspective or an equality perspective, in order to deny us those rights.

"Our real concerns; The Model of 'caring', just as a model of childhood, convey to society, messages that those who have impairments or illnesses or are older, automatically we need 'caring' for.

"This leads to a loss of independence, autonomy, agency, self-respect, confidence, and competence. and the right to a personal belief or decision making of the disabled person or older person. This is a deliberate attempt by the government to not give independence to disabled people or older people. Not to locate power within these groups.

"This is a control mechanism also, just as the disability community and the elderly community are becoming more powerful.

"We have argued for a change of framework, ethos, to one of 'Rights and Equality', a social model perspective. This is precisely what the

'Equality not Care' protest group during the last referendum was fighting for. The government tried to portray and enshrine within the Constitution, that families would 'look after', 'care for' disabled and older people. In doing this, the government would be relieved of any duty to support Disabled or older people.

"Luckily, the country saw what they were trying to do. The government proposes to retain the Cabinet Committee on Children, Disability (people is omitted thus objectifying us) and Education. Even though the Guidance states that there will be a 'Whole of government' approach. We presume that means that all government Departments will tackle issues around disability. That all proposed Legislations and any Policy Decisions in other departments will have to relate to and include Disabled people.

"Placing adult and older disabled people within education and Children in the Cabinet committee is demeaning and humiliating. The juxtaposition suggests that we are to be viewed as children and not in our own right as adults. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that there will be an equal balance of attention for each group when this committee meets.

"We are seriously concerned that if the Government do not understand that we are asking for a human rights and equality perspective, a social model perspective rather than a 'caring' and 'child-focused' perspective, which is the slant of the 'Programme for Government', then disabled people and older people will not be fully served. We will continue to languish under a patronising, ableist and ageist Government regime. We have other concerns.

"The government say they will 'prioritise the publication and fund a new national disability strategy with enhanced political oversight to ensure the delivery of the strategy. Also a national implementation and monitoring Commission; a new national disability strategy; enhanced political oversight; a national implementation and monitoring Commission'.

"All this seems to us to be more committee work, as documents of policy and procedure have to be written before implemented, which will take an enormous amount of time given the way the Irish government works. Furthermore create a cache

of funds diverted from provision. There is no mention of who will be on these particular committees, or how the work will be done. Or even what they have in mind.

"There's no guidance on how this department will operate. There is no guidance on the age banding and remit of this department. And we are assuming that those who are over 65 and disabled will not be included in this department.

"We contend all disabled people from cradle to grave should be under one department. Under a specific designated Minister for disabled people.

As it stands all over 65 disabled people have to move to the Elderly Care Department whether they wish to or not. This has huge implications for Mental health and activity and provision of services.

"We know from personal experience, that once you reach 65, you lose a great deal of benefits under the disability remit and become lost in a perspective of 'looking after/being cared for' under elder care remit. Services which are designed within banding of age should be abolished. You are disabled at 64. You are disabled at 65. The issues are the same. Aside from acquired Injury and impairments, those born with Impairment will remain disabled people for life.

"The programme for action says; 'We will consider the development of a multi-annual approach for disability services'. 'Consider' is a little bit woolly in terms of practise and procedures! A 'let out' clause. We are not entirely sure what they mean by a multiannual approach to disability services? Could they explain? They will ensure; Implementation of the 'action plan for disability services 2024-2026'. How is this different from the new national disability strategy that they intend to prioritise and fund.

"The Programme for Government is going to 'explore' the establishment of a national safeguarding body to ensure the health, safety and welfare of vulnerable adults.

"Using the word 'explore' is outrageous. Like 'consider' used elsewhere, it seems to be another 'let out clause'. Disabled adults are four times more likely to be abused than non-disabled people. There have been a great many cases of adults being abused in residential care, hospitals and in care situations in their own homes.

"Safeguarding legisla-

tion for 'vulnerable' people is minimal and totally ineffective. There needs to be specialised training in safeguarding work with disabled people and older people. What to look out for, how to spot abuse, and how to act upon any allegations of abuse or harm of disabled or older persons. It is clear victims do report, equally clear staff do not take note or respond appropriately.

"How this new government could put in the programme for action that they're only going to explore and not take Definitive action to safeguard our vulnerable adult population is mystifying.

"Are they still 'exploring' the 'Grace' case? Which Inquiry still hasn't been Completed. Indicative of sheer contempt for 'Grace', her family and all disabled people and older people? Safeguarding surely comes under human rights legislation.

"We are not impressed by the stated plans for disabled people and older people. The government disability plan is filled with terms like 'consider', 'work towards' and 'explore'. Reflecting intentions rather than legal guarantees.

"A point further reinforced by the plan's reliance on future strategy reviews and consultations. Key areas such as health-care, education, transport lack binding timelines and accountability mechanisms. Critical gaps include the absence of statutory right to personal assistants (PAs), enforceable timeline for transitioning from congregated setting. And guaranteed accessible transport.

"Disabled people's repeated call for 'cost of living payments' have been refused time and time again. This continues to cause much hardship and poverty for disabled people. Promises like increased personal assistance hours, personal budgets and expanded support for education and employment remain discretionary, not rights based.

"To truly empower disabled and older people, the plan must shift to a rights based framework with enforcement legislation, measurable targets and independent monitoring bodies. Ultimately, dignity and equality for disabled and older people require concrete rights, not vague aspirations or deferred commitments.

"This government needs to rethink the 'disability' section in the Programme for action. As it is written, it offends us greatly."



Evelyn Ullrich with Kate Marie and Colleen Clune at the 2024 Wicklow Adult Camogie Awards in Jacob's Well, Rathdrum.



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# Extension to closure of Varty Upper Reservoir walking trails

Uisce Eireann is continuing to work with Dublin City Council to remove a significant number of fallen trees in Varty Reservoir Woodland areas following the impact of high winds from Storm Darragh in December 2024.

Fallen trees have blocked the main access points to the Upper Varty Reservoir Park and Dam. A significant number of trees are also partially uprooted and at a heightened risk of falling.

Uisce Eireann, working with Dublin City Council, mobilised a contractor to clear all

uprooted trees, undertake a risk assessment of remaining trees, and remove additional trees which may pose a risk to the public. Large accumulations of snowfall during the cold snap in early January has delayed tree clearance works, as we temporarily stood down works to prioritise the safety of

crews on site. We are appealing to the public to avoid the Varty Upper Reservoir Park and surrounding areas until works to ensure the area is safe are complete. All public walking trails in and around the park will be closed until the end of February 2025.

In the interest of pub-

lic safety, the following areas will continue to be closed to the public:

- Varty Upper Reservoir Park - Varty Upper Dam Crest
- Roundwood Reservoir - Upper Varty Trail
- Varty Upper Reservoir - Car Park and Layby along R765
- Varty Upper - Woodland Trail
- Varty Upper - Roundwood Reservoir Woodpecker Trail
- All woodland walking trails in and around Varty Upper Reservoir.

Uisce Eireann said "we acknowledge the inconvenience that these closures may cause and appreciate the community's understanding and cooperation as we prioritise public safety and the safety of our contractors. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates when available. We would like to thank Wicklow County Council and Dublin City Council for their support with the ongoing clean-up efforts at the Varty Upper Reservoir."



Varty.



Alison and Lorna McCormack at Sean Kavanagh's Portrait Exhibition in recently in Wicklow Library.

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Jennifer Whitmore TD

# Majority of SEAI grants for 2024 only involved 'shallow' retrofits in homes

The incoming government has a mountain to climb if it is to achieve the original objective of retrofitting half a million homes to B2 Building Energy Rating (BER) standard by 2030, according to Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore.

Deputy Whitmore, who is the party's spokesperson on climate action, said: "While the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) paid out €420

million to assist households with home energy upgrades last year, it is concerning to note that the majority of work only involved so-called 'shallow' retrofits.

"Of the 54,000 homes that availed of SEAI grants, just 22,000 - or 40 per cent - achieved a B2 rating or higher. As this rating is considered the

benchmark for optimum energy performance, this figure is disappointing. Only one out of every 15 upgrade projects included a switch from oil or gas systems to a heat pump, a key retrofit measure in improving a home's energy efficiency.

"The figures highlight the

scale of the challenge ahead for the incoming government. When the National Retrofitting Scheme was first launched in February 2022, a target of 500,000 home energy upgrades to B2 BER by 2030 was set.

"However, based on the latest data from the SEAI, we are way

off course if we still want to achieve the original retrofitting goals. Given that the new government will be relying on the support of a number of climate-sceptic Independent TDs, it is crucial that these targets are not quietly revised downwards during the next administration."



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

## RESIDENTIAL ZONED LAND TAX (RZLT)

### PUBLICATION OF RESIDENTIAL ZONED LAND TAX ANNUAL DRAFT MAP FOR 2026 AND OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE REZONING REQUESTS ON FINAL MAP FOR 2025.

The Government's **Housing For All – A New Housing Plan** for Ireland proposed a new tax to activate vacant land for residential purposes as a part of the Pathway to Increasing New Housing Supply.

The **Residential Zoned Land Tax** was introduced in the Finance Act 2021. The process to identify land to which the tax applies is ongoing and the tax will be due from February 2025 and payable from 23 May 2025.

The tax aims to activate serviced, zoned land for residential or mixed use. This is to boost housing supply and regenerate vacant, idle urban land. These locations have been identified within statutory land use plans as being appropriate locations for housing and they have benefitted from investment in the key services to support the delivery of housing.

The RZLT process has two parts:

- 1) Identification and mapping of the land in scope for the tax. This is undertaken by local authorities through the publication of annual draft and annual final maps – see below.
- 2) Administration of the tax. This will be undertaken by the Revenue Commissioners.

#### Final Map for 2025

The final map for 2025, published by **31 January 2025**, identifies land that may be liable for the tax in 2025. This map may be viewed at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Planning/Residential-Zoned-Land-Tax>

#### Annual Draft Map for 2026

An annual draft map, prepared in accordance with Section 653C, as modified by Section 653M of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, will be published on or before **31 January 2025** on the website maintained by Wicklow County Council and will be available for inspection at its offices from that date.

The annual draft map for 2026 has been prepared for the purposes of identifying land that satisfies the relevant criteria and is to be subject to the residential zoned land tax.

**Residential properties, notwithstanding that they may be included on the annual draft map, shall not be chargeable to the residential zoned land tax.**

Land which satisfies the relevant criteria is a reference to land that—

- (a) is included in a development plan, in accordance with section 10(2) (a) of the Act of 2000, or local area plan, in accordance with section 19(2)(a) of the Act of 2000, zoned—
  - (i) solely or primarily for residential use, or
  - (ii) for a mixture of uses, including residential use,
- (b) it is reasonable to consider may have access, or be connected, to public infrastructure and facilities, including roads and footpaths, public lighting, foul sewer drainage, surface water drainage and water supply, necessary for dwellings to be developed and with sufficient service capacity available for such development, and
- (c) it is reasonable to consider is not affected, in terms of its physical condition, by matters to a sufficient extent to preclude the provision of dwellings, including contamination or the presence of known archaeological or historic remains,

but which is not land—

- (i) that is referred to in paragraph (a)(i) and, having regard only to development (within the meaning of the Act of 2000) which is not unauthorised development (within the meaning of the Act of 2000), is in use as premises, in which a trade or profession is being carried on, that is liable to commercial rates, that it is reasonable to consider is being used to provide services to residents of adjacent residential areas,
  - (ii) that is referred to in paragraph (a)(ii), unless it is reasonable to consider that the land is vacant or idle,
- (ii) the development of which would not conform with—
- (i) in a case in which the land is zoned in a development plan, the phased basis in accordance with which development of land is to take place under the plan, as detailed in the core strategy included in that plan in accordance with section 10(2A)(d) of the Act of 2000, or
  - (ii) in a case in which the land is zoned in a local area plan, the objective, consistent with the objectives and core strategy of the development plan for the area in

respect of which the local area plan is prepared, of development of land on a phased basis, included in the local area plan in accordance with section 19(2) of the Act of 2000, on the date on which satisfaction of the criteria in this section is being assessed,

- (iii) that it is reasonable to consider is required for, or is integral to, occupation by—
  - (I) social, community or governmental infrastructure and facilities, including infrastructure and facilities used for the purposes of public administration or the provision of education or healthcare,
  - (II) transport facilities and infrastructure,
  - (III) energy infrastructure and facilities,
  - (IV) telecommunications infrastructure and facilities,
  - (V) water and wastewater infrastructure and facilities,
  - (VI) waste management and disposal infrastructure, or
  - (VII) recreational infrastructure, including sports facilities and playgrounds,
- (iv) that is subject to a statutory designation that may preclude development, or
- (v) on which the derelict sites levy is payable in accordance with the Derelict Sites Act 1990.

Submissions on the annual draft map may be made in writing to Wicklow County Council **not later than 1 April 2025**, regarding -

- (I) either the inclusion in or exclusion from the final map of specific sites, or
- (II) the date on which a site first satisfied the relevant criteria.

Submissions should include a name and address, reasons for inclusion or exclusion of lands, along with a map of scale 1:1,000 (urban area) or 1:2,500 (rural area) where the submission is made by a landowner, clearly identifying the area of land subject of the submission.

Any such written submissions received by 1 April 2025 other than such elements of a submission which may constitute personal data, shall be published on the website maintained by the local authority concerned not later than 11 April 2025.

The proposed inclusions and proposed exclusions on the annual draft map are subject to submissions received. Any landowners who supports the exclusion of their land should make a submission in support of such exclusion.

#### Rezoning Requests

Where land is identified on the **final map for 2025**, published on 31 January 2025, as being subject to the residential zoned land tax, a person may from **1 February 2025 to 1 April 2025**, in respect of aforementioned land that such a person owns, make a submission to the local authority requesting a variation of the zoning of that land. Any such submission should include evidence of ownership, detailed reasons for any rezoning request, which may include continuation of an ongoing economic activity, along with a map to a scale of 1:1,000 (urban) or 1:2,500 (rural) clearly identifying the relevant plot of land.

Any such written rezoning requests received by 1 April 2025 other than such elements of a submission which may constitute personal data, shall be published on the website maintained by the local authority within the relevant statutory period. A rezoning request acknowledgement letter containing details of the recent planning history of the land will be issued by 30 April from the local authority to the landowner. This acknowledgement letter can be used to support a claim to an exemption from the tax arising in respect of the land which is the subject of the request for 2025. This claim must be made in the 2025 annual residential zoned land tax return, which must be made to the Revenue Commissioners on or before 23 May 2025. Please see [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie) for details

All rezoning requests made will be considered by the Local Authority having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

#### Submissions may be made in one of the following ways:

1. Write to Administrative Officer, Planning Department, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Whitegates, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96, **marked 'RZLT'**.
2. Email [RZLT@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:RZLT@wicklowcoco.ie)

More information can be found on the Council website at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Planning/Residential-Zoned-Land-Tax>



# ReWild Wicklow volunteers help to remove invasive species at Altidore Castle

Local environmental charity ReWild Wicklow had their highest ever turnout for a volunteer event with 45 attendees on Saturday 18th January at Altidore Castle and Demesne. They were there to help the Emmet family, owners of Altidore Castle, to clear the invasive shrub cherry laurel from the ancient woodland in their glen.

This plant is a growing issue in Ireland as it is spreading rapidly through all our woodlands, especially along watercourses. It is originally from Asia and is used here in ornamental hedging. However when established in our native woodlands it's thick glossy, evergreen leaves block out the sun and suppress growth around it. It spreads through its roots, which also contain a poison, and left unchecked it is now starting to destroy large areas of woodland in Wicklow.

"Our volunteers have been really keen to fight back against the spread of cherry laurel for quite some time," said ReWild Wicklow chairperson Danny Alvey after the event. "We've

been hoping to work with a partner on a project to tackle it and so we were delighted to partner with the Emmet family at Altidore Castle. Our volunteers spent the morning cutting back the laurel in three main areas and dragging all of the branches and leaves out of the woodland - it was tough but rewarding work to see large areas of woodland opened up to the light again. Especially considering the woodland here is a rare fragment of our once great ancient oak forest in Wicklow."

Altidore Castle is a 200 acre estate that has been organic since 1994 and it contains a fifteen hectare glen that has been in woodland for many centuries, it is

featured on the list of Ancient and Long Established Woodlands compiled by ESRI Ireland. It has unusual bryophytes such as Dumortier's Liverwort. Altidore is the only place in Wicklow this is currently found. The river that runs through this woodland has been designated a "Blue Dot" high quality status river. There are also three native woodland plantings which are now approaching maturity, having been planted eighteen years ago. The castle opens as a historic house to the public and the owners also run various biodiversity events as well as a forest school separately being based there.

Philip Emmet, owner of Altidore Castle, said

"The laurel has been a pervasive problem at Altidore. We were a finalist for the RDS Native Woodland Conservation prize last year but the judges did note that we had a lot of laurel in our long established or ancient woodland. It's fantastic to see so many people coming together on a project like this and to see such quick results in only a morning."

Thomas Emmet, his son said "It's great to be working with ReWild Wicklow, which do such fantastic work across the county. Their values really align with the work we do at Altidore preserving existing biodiversity and educating people about their role in nature. We can't wait to work with them



ReWild Wicklow Chairperson Danny Alvey with Philip Emmet and volunteers Jen Huang and Niamh Malin.

again."

ReWild Wicklow will have volunteer days every weekend across the county doing

tree planting, invasive clearing, peatland restoration and working in their native tree nurseries. You can find out more and join the volunteer list at [rewild-wicklow.ie](http://rewild-wicklow.ie).



Cllr Lourda Scott.

# Greystones Cove awarded designated bathing area status

Greystones Councillor Lourda Scott has welcomed news that The Cove has been awarded the status of being identified as a designated bathing area. This is in addition to the South Beach Greystones which was successful in retaining its Blue Flag status in 2024. Local authorities must identify official bathing areas in their area every year so that they can be monitored for safety, water quality and their level of use.

"Following many representations to the Council, I finally received news that The Cove has been classified as an identified (designated) bathing water. This follows several years of water quality testing and is great news for all the people that swim there. The popularity of The Cove

as a place to swim has grown hugely over the years, and it's only right that this much loved beach is awarded official status. This now means that the Council must continue water testing here over the bathing season from June to September. It also means that the Council must provide

details of actions taken if pollution occurs and outline risks of pollution to the area. Following recent bathing restrictions, these steps are very welcome in helping provide safe, clean water for the benefit of people and environment alike. Another benefit of this classification is that The Cove will be monitored for safety and any issues that swimmers have should be reported to the Local Authority. Overall this is good news for Greystones swimming community, many of who have been advocating for this classification for years."



## ÁIT DUIT FÉIN

Tá campais againn i bPort Láirge, i gCeatharlach agus i Loch Garman. Anois an t-am is fearr chun d'áit a aimsiú ag Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Oirdheiscirt.

setu.ie



# First Look at Wicklow film 'Seven Moments in Time' as trailer is released

*A heartfelt exploration of generational connection by local filmmaker Dave Thomas*

Acclaimed filmmaker Dave Thomas unveils the first look at his upcoming short film, *Seven Moments in Time*, a poignant exploration of the generational divide and the profound connections that can blossom in unexpected places. Set to captivate audiences with its heartfelt narrative, the film beautifully contrasts the wisdom of age with the vibrancy of youth.

*Seven Moments in Time* tells the story of an elderly man who finds solace in his weekly ritual on a park bench. His routine is interrupted by a spirited teenager, who embodies the energy and innovation of the younger generation. Initially, their interactions are fraught with misunderstandings,

highlighting the cultural and lifestyle barriers that separate them. The young man's attempt to share his rap song - a modern creation filled with contemporary references - only serves to deepen the confusion, accentuating the gap between their worlds.

As the film unfolds over seven pivotal

moments, the characters begin to bridge their differences through simple yet meaningful gestures. A shared sandwich, a sip of tea, and a light-hearted joke transform their relationship, showcasing the universal human experiences of connection, sharing, and laughter. These moments reveal that

despite their generational differences, both characters share an intrinsic need for companionship and understanding.

The film challenges audiences to recognize that meaningful interactions, though sometimes fleeting, can have a lasting impact.

*Seven Moments in Time* advocates for empathy and understanding, encouraging society to foster deeper connections between generations. With its heartfelt narrative and relatable characters, the film promises to resonate with viewers of all ages.

Dave Thomas, known for his thoughtful storytelling and keen insight into human relationships, brings his signature touch to this exploration of age, connection, and the moments that define us.

The film has been submitted to several Oscar Qualifying national and international festivals, including the prestigious Galway Film Fleadh.

The film, written, produced and directed by Dave Thomas, stars well known actor from stage and screen Pat Nolan, along with rising star Daniel Ryan. The film also features support-



*Seven Moments in Time* Director Dave Thomas goes through the script with actor Pat Nolan.



*Seven Moments in Time* Director Dave Thomas goes through the scene on set with actor Michael O'Mara.

ing performances from Rúisín Bohan and Michael O'Mara.

Shot in Arklow town, Woodenbridge and at Woodenbridge Hotel and Lodge, the film was made possible thanks to many generous people who donated through a

GoFundMe campaign, along with a donation from Arklow Municipal District, TJ

O'Mahony, Donut Express Ireland, Unique café, Woodenbridge Hotel and Lodge to name a few. "Thanks to the generosity of so many people, I was able to get this film made," says Dave Thomas. "I've put my own savings into the film too, because I wanted to make a quality film that would tell a very important story while showc-

ing Arklow and County Wicklow to a global audience.

"I had a wonderful cast and crew, who worked extremely hard bringing their A-game to the entire production", says Dave. The film was produced by Dave for his film production company Bella Vision Ltd., trading as Dave Thomas Films, based in Arklow.

The trailer is now available at Dave Thomas Films YouTube Channel and Vimeo.

As the film gears up for its festival circuit, Dave hopes for official selections that will allow *Seven Moments in Time* to reach audiences worldwide, fostering discussions about empathy and the importance of bridging generational gaps.



Choreographer Aishling Minogue and singing teacher Karla Tracey with the group who took part in the *Wicked* Workshop in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow.

# Adam Gibney - Cybernetic Reorientations of Being: NOVA

Showing at the Mermaid Arts Centre until 8th February 11am to 4pm Monday to Saturday. 11am to 8pm on evenings when there is an event in the auditorium

An array of softly sighing, whirring objects sit in a neat grid on the gallery floor. Drawing power from the weak winter sun through a set of solar panels placed on the roof of Mermaid Arts Centre, these units form a kind of semi-sentient being responding to the surrounding environment.

Conceived by artist Adam Gibney, this new commission explores self-replicating systems. A touchstone is research in the context of rapidly expanding AI systems, referencing Cambridge mathematician John Conway's Game of Life (1971), a grid of cells that can thrive or die depending on a set of rules imposed by the player. A cellular automata of sorts, as a kind of artificial intelligence it uses very simple rules to replicate early life systems.

The prospect of fully autonomous machines poses questions and conundrums in common with the philosophical theory of humanist dualism, a predominantly Western understanding that posits a separation between the mind and the body, the 'I' and the 'other'. This notion of a separated thinking is proposed as existing in both computers and human bodies.

Gibney explains, "My interest lies in re-orienting notions of intelligence, both artificial and

natural, beyond these human-centric and dualistic understandings, towards a more integrated and holistic perspective."

Through a practice that spans electronics, coding, digital fabrication and sound to explore meanings of reality, Gibney often devises immersive installations that react and are activated through audience or environmental interaction.

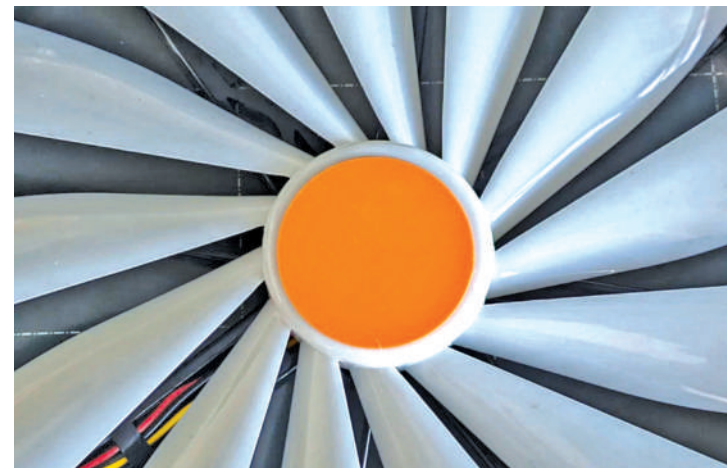
In this new installation, each unit exists in an equilibrium with its

peers, sharing and storing solar energy through an interconnected battery system. The units respond collectively, creating a decentralized network of intelligence, a miniature data centre, a distributed consciousness that invites us to commune with the ghost in the machine.

### Biography

Adam Gibney is an interdisciplinary artist with numerous awards that include the Aileen MacKeogh Award, the

Siamsa Tíre Emerging Artist Award, the IMOCA graduate residency award, and the Arts Council Visual Arts Bursary award. His solo exhibitions include Can you breathe for me? (Oonagh Young Gallery, Dublin, 2021 and The Dock, 2022), Projective Verse 9: Deep Breadths (Daegu Foundation of Culture, South Korea, 2017) and Euclid, I miss you... (Artbox, Dublin, 2016). Other notable exhibitions include I am sitting in a room (Solstice Arts Centre,



Navan, 2022), Embracing Language, in St. Catherine's School, Rush, Co. Dublin. He was commissioned to create a temporary public art project for Graft, a project curated by both the Glucksman Gallery and the National Sculpture Factory and he is currently working on a public art project for Fingal County Council.

Adam has recently

completed a practice-based research master's degree at the Technological University of Dublin. Drawing on his interdisciplinary approach to technology in fine art, interaction design, and emerging media practices, he has lectured at several universities, including the Technological University of Dublin and The University of Limerick.

Adam has recently

# YARN Story Circle in Bray

A Mermaid 'offsite' event, taking place upstairs in Bray Town Hall (enter by the door opposite the Credit Union). Wednesday 5th February 7pm. Pay What You Can From €3. Age Suitability: 14+ years. Duration: 1 hour 15 mins approx

"Join us for a relaxed storytelling circle upstairs in the Town Hall. Our special guest teller Catherine Brophy will launch our monthly storytelling story circle and then open to the floor. No pressure to tell - listeners welcome!"

The YARN Story Circle will take place on the first Wednesday of the month from February to June and then in September and October before culminating in a Story Swap at the YARN Storytelling Festival.

Catherine Brophy is a writer, story-teller and broadcaster, she also facilitates workshops. She

leads a blameless life in Ireland but travels whenever she can. She's been rescued by a circus troupe in Serbia, had breakfast with a Zambian chief, ate camel stew in the Sahara, and was kicked by a horse on the Mexican plain. Yeah...she has a couple of stories to tell.

Catherine's stories often humorous. She tells a

wide variety of stories: Fairy stories, ghost stories, myth and legend, folk stories, travel and personal stories. The choice depends on the audience. She has performed and facilitated workshops at festivals, in public libraries, the Abbey Theatre and at story venues in Germany, Poland, Netherlands, U.S. and Denmark and Scotland.



Catherine Brophy.

## 'WHAT I WANT TO DRAW' & 'WHAT I WANT TO SAY'

An Exhibition by Primary School Students of Bray & An Exhibition by Secondary School Students of Bray

Signal Arts Centre is delighted to have the opportunity to showcase some of the fantastic talent of our local school student artists.



Signal Arts Centre is delighted to have the opportunity to showcase some of the fantastic talent of our local school student artists.

Last year saw the first Bray Schools Art Exhibition in Signal incorporating both primary and secondary school students work together in a single two week exhibition. This year we are having two separate one week exhibitions to allow for a larger selection of work to be shown.

Week one showcases the primary schools students exhibition "What I Want to Draw" from Tuesday January 21st to Saturday January 25th.

Week two is the secondary schools students exhibition "What I Want to Say" from Tuesday January 28th to Sat 1st February. The opening is on Wednesday Jan 29th from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm. The exhibitions incorporate monochrome works in a range of media and content as chosen by the students.

The Primary schools participating are: St. Peters, Ravenswell, St Kierans, Bray School Project and St. Andrews.

Secondary Schools are: St. Kilians, Woodbrook College, Presentation College, Loretto and Educate Together.



## 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.



# SSE Renewables supports Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club's Youth Angling Programme for a fifth consecutive year

*Leading renewable energy owner, operator, and developer SSE Renewables, supports Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club's Youth Coaching Programme for a fifth year.*

Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club members gathered for the annual awards ceremony in the Bridge Tavern function room, Wicklow Town on Saturday night, 18th January to recognise and celebrate this year's awardees in both junior and senior competition categories.



Secretary of the Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club Kitt Dunne and Deirdre Keogh from SSE Renewables presenting Oisín Dunne with his prize.

SSE Renewables, through its Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund, supported the Youth Angling Coaching programme awards for a fifth consecutive year with Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager on hand, to present this year's youth awards.

Kit Dunne, Club Secretary, acknowledged the Club's appreciation to SSE Renewables for its consistent support in sponsoring the Youth Angling Coaching Programme. He commented, "Angling is a sport which allows young people to participate in outdoor activities and shine. It offers important learning opportunities about conservation, sea safety and builds an appreciation of the marine environment. It's a skilled sport that can be developed and undertaken throughout life. We're very proud of all our youth members and tonight is a recognition of their hard work and commitment to the skills needed to become great anglers. We hope to continue to grow the Club in the coming year and are always open to new members of all ages and experience".

Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager, SSE Renewables presented the youth awards. She said: "SSE Renewables is delighted to support Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club's Youth Coaching programme and awards again. The Club offers an important oppor-



Secretary of the Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club Kitt Dunne, Treasurer Jerry Dixon and Deirdre Keogh from SSE Renewables with the prize winners at the Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Awards in the Bridge Tavern, Wicklow Town.

tunity for young people to participate in a maritime sport which facilitates important skills' development at an individual level, but also allows the feeling of being part of both a team and a club.

Our Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund has supported several marine-based clubs and projects along our development site from Wicklow southwards to Arklow and Courtown, Co. Wexford, and Wicklow Bay Sea

Angling Club's youth programme, fits well with our Sponsorship Fund's criteria. We look forward to continuing the positive relationship built over past few years with the Club as 2025 progresses".

For information about Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club or if you're interested in getting involved, contact [dunnekit@gmail.com](mailto:dunnekit@gmail.com). For details on the SSE Renewables Arklow Bank 2 Sponsorship Fund contact [deirdre.keogh@sse.com](mailto:deirdre.keogh@sse.com)



Secretary of the Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club Kitt Dunne and Deirdre Keogh from SSE Renewables presenting Morgan Delahunty with his prize.



Secretary of the Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club Kitt Dunne, Treasurer Jerry Dixon and Deirdre Keogh from SSE Renewables presenting Sam Jayden Hubbard with his prize.



Treasurer of the Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club Jerry Dixon and Deirdre Keogh from SSE Renewables presenting Paddy Kenny with his prize.



Treasurer of the Wicklow Bay Sea Angling Club Jerry Dixon and Deirdre Keogh from SSE Renewables presenting Peter McDevitt with his prize.

# Will Them Well

*Making a will is one of the most important decisions that anyone will ever make*

A will guarantees that appropriate arrangements are made for your family and friends, and your assets are allocated according to your preferences after your passing, considering certain rights and conditions.

The Community Foundation for Ireland says Legacies, either in a will or a 'letter of wishes', offer an opportunity for people to continue contributing to causes which they are passionate about to ensure future generations will live in thriving local communities.

The Foundation, which works with over 5,000 voluntary, community and charitable groups across the country and has distributed almost €100 Million in donations in the past 22-years, believes the full potential of legacies has not been reached and is seeking to increase

awareness. People who wish to leave a gift are being invited to support The Community Foundation which will ensure future support goes where the need is greatest but with a particular focus in four areas: Empowering Generations, an opportunity

to support people across all age groups whether strengthening young voices or standing up for the rights of older persons. Inclusive Communities, ensuring equality for all by leaving a gift for our migrant, Traveller or LGBT+ communities and others who are too often left on the sidelines or brushed aside.

Accelerating Change, which supports groundbreaking work across a range of issues like promoting cross-border civil society partnerships or shaping national debates on issues like poverty by supporting world-class research.

Sustainable Futures, which facilitates donors who want to be part of the response to the biggest challenges of our time, the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of The Community Foundation for Ireland says: "Making a will, putting affairs in order and planning for the future is something all of us have a habit of putting on the long finger. Taking action now not only prevents future uncertainty and confusion in families but also is an opportuni-



ty to show your intention to continue to support causes which you have held dear throughout your life. Many of those causes can in communities in Wicklow and a legacy can ensure they thrive into the future for the benefit of your younger loved ones.

"There are options. A legacy can be part of a will, however if you are not yet ready to take that step it can also be in the form of a Letter of Wishes.

A will is a formal legal document which appoints executors to administer

your estate and if you wish to leave a gift to a charity it will receive it tax free. Your will should be prepared by a solicitor who will advise you of the tax and legal implications of your decisions and who will use your outlined instructions to draft your will.

The Community Foundation for Ireland and its partners believe in equality for all in thriving communities.

"We work with individuals, families, corporates and other trusts and foundations as well as Government to translate

giving in the moment to giving that is strategic, sustainable and impactful. We use our skills and knowledge developed over 22-years to help donors turn aspirations into effective investments.

"Since our establishment, we have provided in excess of €6m to communities through strategic investments. Our Donors provide leadership and support across areas as diverse as engaging communities on climate action, restorative justice for young people, human

rights as well as identifying future priorities, including support for all-island civic society engagement.

"We have a dedicated and committed team; they have extensive experience of grant-making from working with over 5,000 non-profit organisations at a national, regional and local level throughout Ireland and overseas. With over 1,800 community foundations globally, the community foundation model is proven and effective model for social change."



Martin Hennessy of Hennessy's Hardware in Blessington with Sinead Sweeney of AIB Blessington at the Wicklow Retail Seminar in the Brockagh Centre, Laragh.

**Benville Robinson LLP**  
SOLICITORS

## MAKING A WILL

It's never too early to plan ahead and give yourself peace of mind for the future.

Contact us today for information about making a Will on **01 276 1330**

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

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

# Wicklow teen contributes to important debates surrounding drug dependency

Erin Mills, a TY student from St. Mary's Arklow Secondary School, was awarded for her remarkable project, which investigates the effects of drug addictions and dependencies stemming from medications provided by the healthcare system, during the Scifest@Teen-Turn event held in IBM, Dublin.

Through extensive research and analysis alongside her studies, the final result culminated in a website that educates audiences on drug dependencies. The idea for the project, entitled 'Breaking the cycle: Evaluating the investment in non-addictive alternatives to current medications', came from seeking a way to help those struggling with opioid addictions and furthermore attempting to find a solution to drug addiction issues.

When asked what Erin is most proud about from working on the

project, she says "My final website. I coded it from scratch and I think it came out really good."

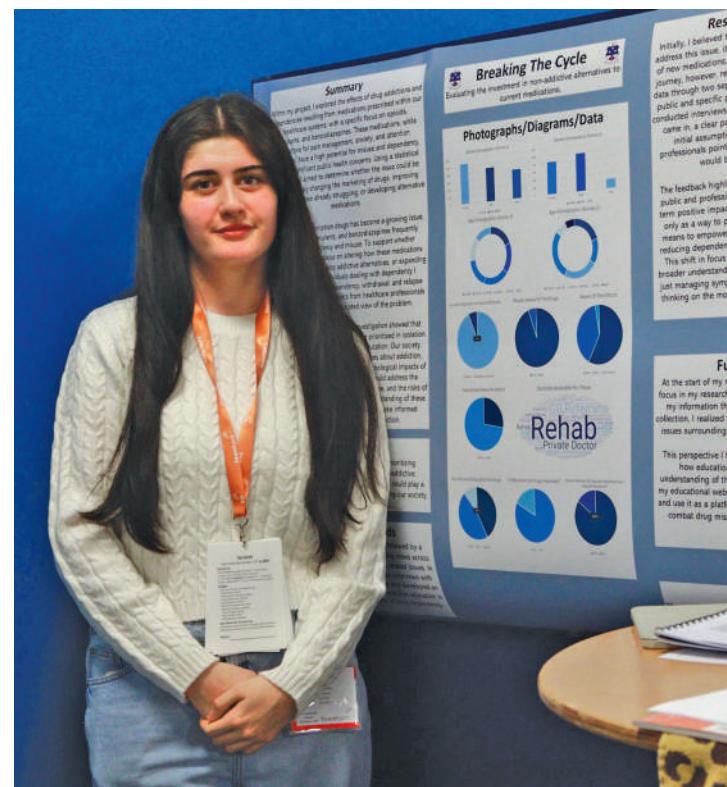
Teen-Turn, an Irish non-profit organisation that provides teen girls the opportunity to gain hands-on STEM experience and the support to acquire qualifications and jobs, provided Erin with company mentors to assist her with research, statistical analysis, and computer programming. Joanne English, Erin's teacher says "Erin's idea developed over the 12 weeks through

working with the Teen-

Turn/Project Squad mentors. Erin worked at a steady pace and always kept on track with her intended goals for the week. The project squad mentors gave Erin valuable feedback on all aspects of her project."

Erin won 1st place in the Senior Social Science Category Winners and was awarded an iPhone 16, with thanks to contributions from BNY Mellon towards Teen-Turn participants undertaking enterprise and innovation. She also qualified for BT Young Scientist and had the

opportunity to present her project to President Michael D. Higgins at the BYTSTE exhibition in the RDS. Through Teen-Turn's free afterschool programmes and activities such as Project Squad, secondary school students are informed on education and career options, often leading them to discover new skills and interests. As more girls explore and gain an interest in STEM, this will lead to more women earning STEM qualifications, thus leveling the playing field.



Erin Mills with her Project Breaking the Cycle.

## Knowledge seekers sought for 2025 Credit Union Schools Quiz

The Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) has announced the launch of the 2025 Credit Union Schools Quiz with children from primary schools across Ireland encouraged to participate.

The Schools Quiz, which attracts more than 25,000 participating students each year, is the largest competition of its type in Ireland. Run over three stages between the months of January to April, the competition culminates in a national final in the RDS Dublin on Sunday 6th April 2025.

Winners from the regional rounds will progress to the final where 100 teams will compete for the title of champions, with a prize fund of €4,000 to be shared among the competition category finalists and winners.

The competition is divided by age group into two categories. Competition A is categorised for entrants under 11 years of age and Competition B is for children under 13 years of age. A prize of



€1,250 is up for grabs for the prevailing teams of each category for their schools, with the runners up receiving €750 for their school. Prizes will also be awarded to teams at the local and regional

finals. Schools should contact their local credit union to see if they are participating in the Quiz. Additional information on the Schools Quiz is available at creditunion.ie.

## Schools concerned over use of nicotine patches among students

The new government must urgently act to halt the worrying use of nicotine pouches by secondary school students, according to Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore.

"It has been reported today that an increasing number of schools have been sending notices to parents to highlight the ongoing use of these products in classrooms. This follows calls from the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals for the HSE to issue a health advisory notice on nicotine pouches.

"Apart from the health implications of these pouches, there is now growing concern that nicotine dependency is causing some students to become irritable at school.

"These pouches come in the form of small bags and contain highly addictive nicotine, among other ingredients. The product is placed under the user's lip and up against the gum, making it very difficult for teachers to detect.

"While these pouches are cynically branded as a safer alternative to smoking, in reality they should be viewed as a gateway to lifelong nicotine dependency.

"In recent years we have seen welcome restrictions on the sale of vaping products and e-cigarettes to under-18s, as well as legislation to ban disposable vapes and increase the minimum legal smoking age to 21.

"Yet, bizarrely, the outgoing Minister for Health failed to regulate the sale of nicotine pouches in tandem with these other measures.

"The new government must not be so complacent about this growing threat to the health and wellbeing of our young people. I will continue to raise this important public health issue with the incoming minister to ensure that school principals' concerns are listened to and acted upon."



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

## Last call for early bird entry to Dare to Believe PEXpo '25

Although there's still plenty of time to finalise projects, schools who register for the 11th annual Dare to Believe PEXpo '25 before Friday January 31st can still avail of the 15% off 'early bird' entry fee. Dare to Believe PEXpo '25 takes place on Thursday April 10th, at the National Indoor Arena in Abbotsdown, Dublin and schools from all over the country have already registered their interest.

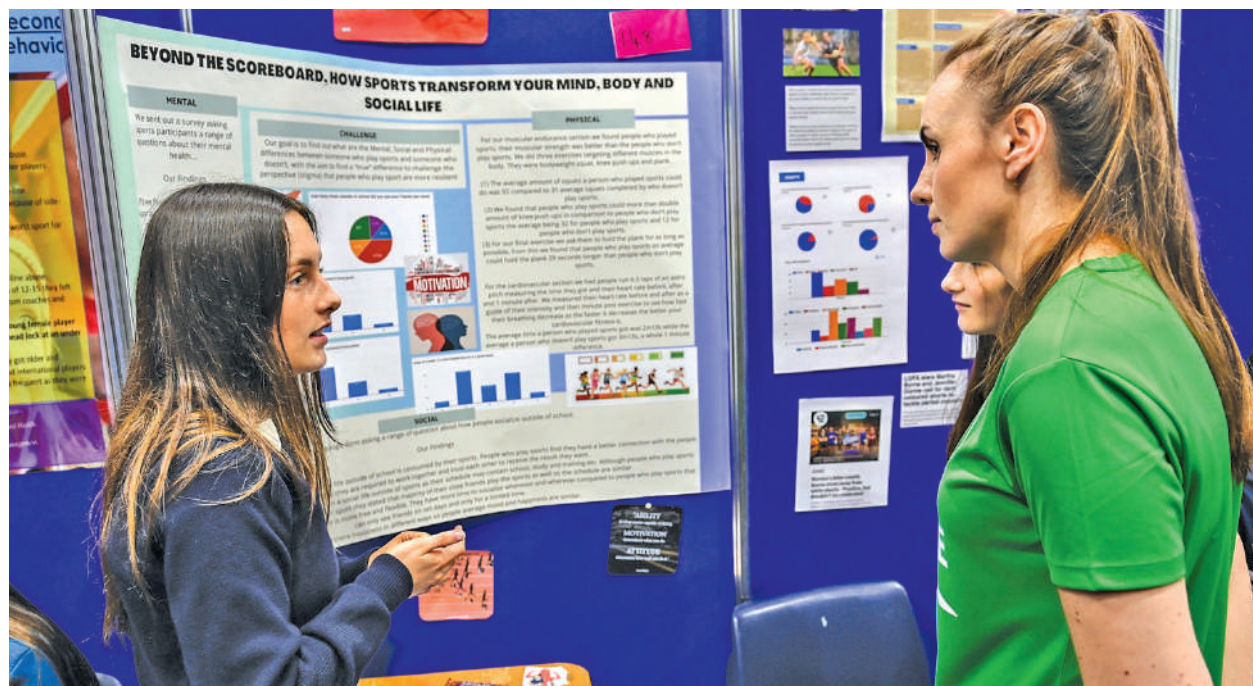
The exhibition is well established as a fun day out and after their projects are assessed, students can mingle with stars of the Irish Olympic team, and try out a variety of sports, courtesy of School Fitness Ireland, Orienteering Ireland, HerMoves, Bar Monkey Calisthenics, Hockey Ireland, Target Shooting Ireland, Volleyball Ireland, Judo Ireland, Boxing Ireland, Pitch and Putt Ireland and The Kick Company.

A high standard of project covering a wide variety of topics is expected. At last year's PEXpo, when entries came from all four provinces and Northern Ireland for the first time, Aoife O'Keefe, Molly Collins and, Faithleann Sommers from St Brigid's Presentation School, Killarney took the top senior award for 'Sport Behind Bars' their

comprehensive study of the beneficial effect of sport on prisoners.

Other notable projects last year included 'Escape the Vape - Effects of Vaping on Young Lungs', 'Strikesock 360', 'Oppression in Sport (a History)', 'Toxic Positivity in Sport', 'From the Crossroads to Croke Park', 'Own your Cycle, Own your Game', 'Biobanding and Promoting Athlete Development', and 'Breaking Point - Unravelling Stress in Sports'. A significant number of projects dealt with the problems faced by women and girls who wish to take up sport and keep fit.

Full details on how to register projects are available at www.pexpoireland.com, or via the @PEXpoireland Instagram account. Final date for entries is February 14th, 2025.



# 'Desert Bonds - A Father & Son's Middle East Odyssey'

## *New book offers unique perspective on Middle East amidst ongoing conflict*

In a world grappling with ongoing tensions in the Middle East, a new book offers a timely and personal perspective on the region. The book 'Desert Bonds - A Father & Son's Middle East Odyssey' has been written by by Dermot and Denis Dwyer. Dermot is Chairman of Powerscourt Estate & Gardens and co-founded the Caroline Foundation for Cancer Research. Denis is a film producer who has worked on award-winning documentaries 'Abbeyfealegood' (2019) and 'The Irish Pub' (2013).

This extraordinary travelogue chronicles the authors' 3,500-kilometre road trip through Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine in 2024, mere months after the Hamas attack on Israel and the subsequent Gaza conflict. Father & son duo, Dermot and Denis, set off on a 22-day journey through Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine, including time at the Erez Crossing into Gaza. Their travels took them to historic sites such as Baalbek, Palmyra, and Petra; spiritual moments like the

Holy Fire Easter celebration in Jerusalem; and encounters with individuals ranging from Palestinian police officers in Bethlehem to Holocaust memorial attendees at Yad Vashem.

Through vivid storytelling, first-hand accounts, and stunning colour photographs, Desert Bonds - A Father & Son's Middle East Odyssey captures the rich tapestry of The Levant - a region often described as the cradle of civilization yet plagued by persistent conflict. The journey by

Dermot and Denis offered more than historical exploration, it is an eye-opening, often deeply personal engagement with the resilience, hospitality, and humanity of the people they met amidst the backdrop of civil war, political strife, and everyday life.

"This book goes beyond being a mere travelogue recounting a hugely memorable and often moving father-and-son trip through one of the most sensitive parts of the world," says author and journalist Frank McDonald. "It is full of awareness about the complexity of people and place, as the authors made it their business to find out what lies behind the harrowing conflict in Israel-Palestine, and were received with warm hospitality wherever they went by people whose chief characteristic is extraordinary resilience".

The Dwyers' encounters challenge preconceived notions of the region, painting a multi-dimensional portrait of The Levant's nations, tribes, and displaced communities, each with their own layered histories.

For Dermot Dwyer this was a trip in the planning for almost thirty years "Ever since early 1995, when I undertook a small tourism related assignment

in Jordan and Syria, I always hoped to return for a road trip to the Middle East. When the opportunity presented to do this with my son Denis - it was a now or never no-brainer. Little did we know what a unique window of opportunity this was to visit Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Israel just before the Gaza war exploded to engulf many of the people and places we visited. I am sure we may have been one of a handful of tourists in the entire region at that time. Knowing this we felt we have to share the story of our odyssey in Desert Bonds".

"Dad has an unquenchable passion for new projects & adventures, and when he suggested we travel around The Levant, it was clear this was a once-in-a-lifetime chance for us to take the trip. It wouldn't be simple, and it certainly wasn't. But it certainly was a truly mind-expanding and life-affirming journey meeting and visiting remarkable people & places. We learned so much about so much, and we were very lucky we could do it together." - Denis Dwyer

Described as a "quick-moving, very descriptive story," Desert Bonds - A Father & Son's Middle

East Odyssey invites readers to step into the world of travel, border crossings, and ancient wonders, while introducing them to the diverse lives and perspectives of the people of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine. The book also highlights an often-overlooked truth: that even amidst conflict, vast areas of these countries remain peaceful, with people pursuing everyday life with resilience and hope.

Dermot and Denis shared insights into their incredible journey and the stories that inspired the book at the launch event on January 23rd at the Whale Theatre, Greystones.

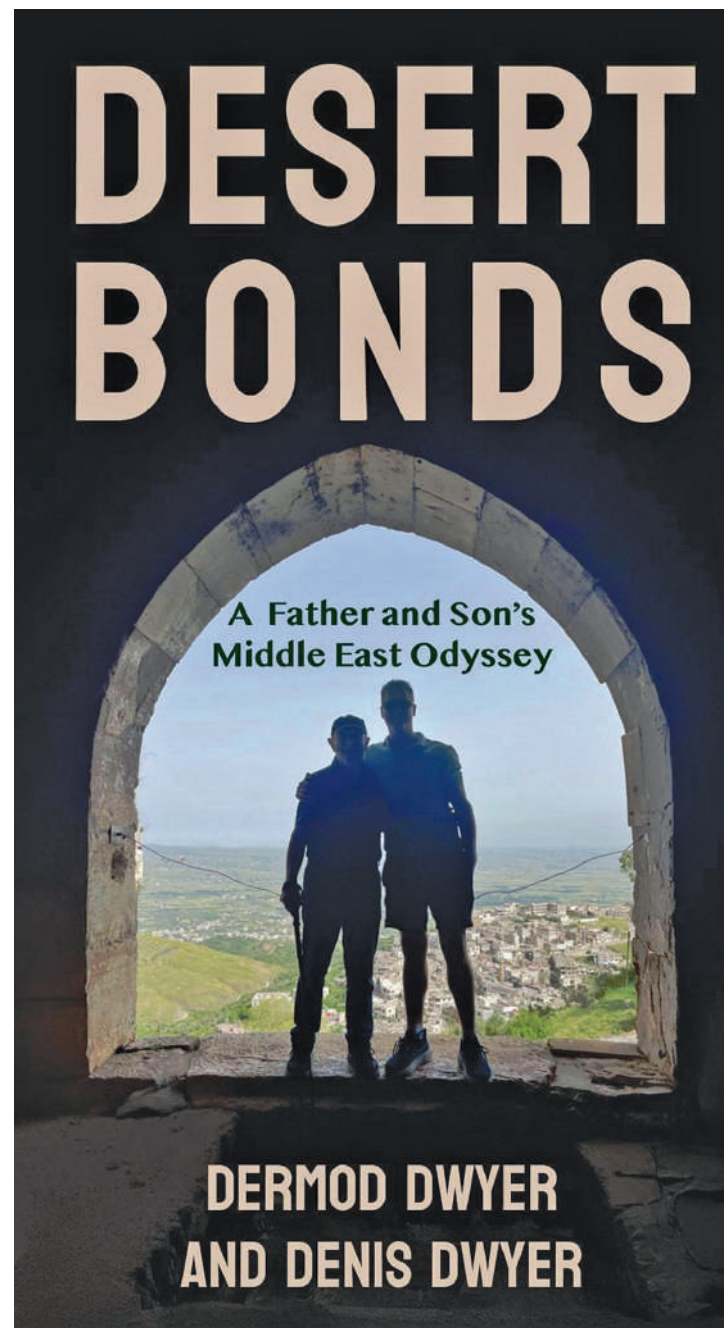
Desert Bonds - A Father & Son's Middle East Odyssey in association with Orla Kelly Publishing is available for pre-order now at: <https://www.buythebook.ie/product/desert-bonds-a-father-son-middle-east-3500-km-road-trip/>



Bedouin merchant & daughter at Palmyra.



Dermot & Denis in front of Jerusalem



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# Dramatic talent recognised at 69th Wicklow ICA Federation Drama Festival

A number of awards were handed out following this year's 69th Wicklow ICA Federation Drama Festival which took place in Glenealy Village Hall, showcasing the best in Wicklow's acting, writing and directing talent.

Lilliput Players won the Premier Award for Best Group, Best Director Lua Mc Ilraith, Best Actress Anna Fitzgerald and Best Actor Anthony Belton. Delgany Dramatic Society were Runner Up Group, Runner Up Actress Nicola Hogan and Runner Up Actor Patrick Dunne. The adjudicator's Award went to Chris ó Conchúir St Patrick's

Dramatic Society. Merit awards in the One Act Section went to Michael Fogarty St Patrick's D.S Frances O'Hara Lilliput Players, Shenna Griffin Byron Hayes Theatre Group and Madison Mc Keever Delgany ICA. The Best Moment of Theatre went to Geraldine Gilroy Delgany ICA. The Norah Ferns

Trophy for Most Appropriate Costume went to Dalkey Players and Mary Carroll from Dalkey Players won the adjudicator's actress award. Ashford ICA won the May Condon Cup for an ICA group. The Best Sketch/Short Play by an ICA Group was won by Bernadette Flynn Ashford ICA. Bernadette also won runner up performance.

Fuinneoge Drama Group won the Terri Connolly Cup for Best Sketch, Best Performance (Killian Mc Crea), and the adjudicator's Award Noelle Clarke. Merit awards went to Katie Tolan Square One, Rita Byrne and Ger Gilroy Delgany ICA. Deirdre Wilson Lusk ICA and Brian Hogan Delgany Dramatic Society.



National ICA President Mary D'Arcy and Wicklow ICA Federation President Margaret Stevens and Imelda McDonagh, present Jackie Fisher and Lua McIlraith of the Lilliput Players with the Premier Award for Best Group.



National ICA President Mary D'Arcy and Wicklow ICA Federation President Margaret Stevens present Geraldine Gilroy of Delgany ICA with the Gloria Mulally Trophy for Best Moment of Theatre.



National ICA President Mary D'Arcy and Wicklow ICA Federation President Margaret Stevens present Noelle Clarke with the Teri Connolly Cup for Best Sketch.



National ICA President Mary D'Arcy and Wicklow ICA Federation President Margaret Stevens present Christopher O'Conchuir with the Adjudicator Award for Best Actor.



National ICA President Mary D'Arcy and Wicklow ICA Federation President Margaret Stevens present Mary Rigney of The Dalkey Players with the Nora Ferns Trophy for Most Appropriate Costume.



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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.

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Lili, Maria, Nancy and Stofra -are stepping up to make a difference.

# Four Greystones girls are on a mission to help end hunger

Imagine a world where no child goes to school hungry, where every child can focus on their education instead of worrying about their next meal. The charity Mary's Meals is making this vision a reality, and four Greystones girls are fundraising to provide much needed funds to Mary's meals so the charity can reach even more children who are waiting for hope, nourishment, and opportunity.

## A Local Story of Inspiration: Four Girls on a Mission

Closer to home, four remarkable young women- Lili, Maria, Nancy and Stofra -are stepping up to make a difference. These dedicated girls are raising funds for Mary's Meals by participating in a number of fundraising efforts and spreading awareness of this vital cause. Their passion doesn't stop there. This April, they will embark on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje with a group of 25 TY students from Wexford and Wicklow, where they'll visit Mary's Meals to meet the team who take part in this life-changing work.

Through their fundraising efforts, the girls are proving that anyone, no matter their age, can make a tangible difference in the fight against hunger. You can support their mission by donating directly to their crowdfund page at [idonate.ie](https://www.idonate.ie).

## Why Support Mary's Meals?

Mary's Meals is a charity with a simple but powerful mission: to provide children with one nutritious meal every day in a place of education. This approach tackles hunger while empowering children through education, helping break the cycle of poverty.

Currently, Mary's Meals feeds

over 2.4 million children in 18 countries, including Malawi, Haiti, and Ethiopia. However, there are millions more who still need support.

Your donation can help Mary's Meals reach more children, offering them not only food but also hope for a brighter future.

Join Lili, Maria, Nancy and Stofra in their mission to create a world where no child has to go hungry. Together, we can make a difference.

Please visit their [idonate.ie](https://www.idonate.ie) page to contribute to this great cause. Every penny goes directly to the charity. Because every child deserves the chance to thrive.

## Step up for children's palliative care with 150K in February

LauraLynn Ireland's Children's Hospice invites people in Wicklow to dust off their runners and challenge themselves to walk 150km throughout the month of February.

LauraLynn is asking the public to take on a sponsored challenge, fundraiser for the walking, jogging or running about 5.5km per day

in February. The challenge is an important fundraiser for the Children's Hospice supporting children with life-

limiting conditions and their families.

LauraLynn Fundraising Executive Cathy White commented: "Taking part

in the '150k in February' challenge is a great way to get outdoors now that the evenings are getting longer. We are asking people to walk or run and just have some fun while raising much needed funds for LauraLynn. These funds will allow us to

continue supporting children with palliative care needs and their families all over Ireland."

To take part participants register on the LauraLynn website where they will receive a T-shirt, as well as their own sponsorship page. Funds raised

from the '150K in February' challenge will help LauraLynn provide essential care and support to children with life-limiting conditions and their families from across the country.

Whether you walk or run regularly, or are trying

to get more active as part of your new year's resolutions this challenge is for everyone.

Participants can share their experiences and photos on social media using the hashtag #TeamLauraLynn and join the dedicated Facebook group to

connect with others taking part in the challenge.

## How to register

For more information or to register go to [lauralynn.ie/150K](https://www.lauralynn.ie/150K) or contact Cathy at [challenges@lauralynn.ie](mailto:challenges@lauralynn.ie).

## New Lord Mayor of Dublin visits homeless Café

On Friday, January 17th, newly elected Lord Mayor of Dublin, Emma Blain, visited Tiglin at the Lighthouse, Dublin City's busiest evening-time homeless café, located at 28 Pearse Street. Operated by the nonprofit organisation Tiglin, the café provides crucial support to the city's homeless community.



Lord Mayor of Dublin, Emma Blain and Aubrey McCarthy. Chairman of Tiglin chatting to a client.

The Lord Mayor visited the evening service, which operates from 7-10 PM, during one of its busiest nights, with 218 entries recorded over the three-hour period. The chairman of Tiglin, Aubrey McCarthy, led the Lord Mayor on a tour, highlighting the vital role the café plays in addressing homelessness in the city.

Tiglin at the Lighthouse offers services seven days a week, including meal services throughout the day, distribution of clothing and basic supplies, barber services, preparation for addiction recovery programs, employment upskilling, housing support, and assistance for rough sleepers and international protection applicants.

The origins of Tiglin's work date back to 2008, when Aubrey McCarthy and co-founder Phil Thompson launched the nonprofit's initiatives by purchasing a green bus to engage with individuals

experiencing homelessness and addiction. This mobile outreach eventually evolved into a permanent premises on Pearse Street in 2018. Since then, the café has been a cornerstone of support during the city's homelessness crises, including being the only food service available for the homeless during the Covid-19 pandemic and providing extensive assistance to international protection applicants over the past year.

During her visit, Lord Mayor of Dublin, Emma Blain, met with clients and volunteers who shared their personal stories. Many clients expressed their appreciation for the café's welcoming culture and the kindness of its volunteers, such as Margaret, a former client who now volunteers. Margaret's journey began when she sought help at the Lighthouse. Encouraged by the manager, Allen Bobinac, she availed of emergency accommoda-

tion and later completed the necessary vetting and training to become a volunteer.

The Lord Mayor also met Allen Bobinac, who manages the Lighthouse. Originally from Croatia, Allen first connected with Tiglin in 2016 when he was experiencing homelessness. With Tiglin's support, he accessed transitional housing and educational opportunities. Today, holding two Master's

degrees, Allen has transformed the café into what he calls "a living room for those in need of one." Drawing on his personal experiences, he has introduced numerous initiatives to meet the needs of the homeless community.

The chairman, Aubrey McCarthy, recalls his household issues, "I remember times when we had no food at the family home, I wish I had a Lighthouse then,

somewhere to receive food and meet good people."

Following her visit, the Lord Mayor commented, "It's amazing to see the happiness of the clients' faces, the work the volunteers are doing, the gorgeous meals they are providing and the warm and friendly atmosphere they are providing for everybody. It's a place of comfort and a place of joy."

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# Tackling Food Poverty Together: 'Food for Thought' think tank in Bray

Are you part of a voluntary or community group supporting families and individuals facing food poverty in the Bray area? If so, Bray & North Wicklow Area Partnership (BNWAP) invite you to come along to this important community event taking place at the Little Flower Hall just off the main street in Bray on Wednesday, 5th February, from 9:30 to 11:30am

This event aims to bring together voluntary groups and community organisations to collaborate, share information and discuss key challenges related to household food struggles in the Bray area. It will provide a valuable opportunity for networking and fostering stronger connections among those working to support individuals and families in need.

Key topics to be addressed include:

- The impact of the cost of living crisis on food poverty
- Overcoming the stigma associated with accessing food support services
- Enhancing coordination and communication among local organisations
- Improving the quality and suitability of emergency food provision

This event is part of BNWAP's ongoing series of Food Poverty think tanks taking place across County Wicklow in each

of the Municipal Districts. Building on the success of a very productive event in Arklow last October, with attendees sharing valuable insights and exploring collaborative solutions, BNWAP are eager to continue the momentum in Bray.

County Wicklow Food Coordinator Aisling Kirwan commented: "Food insecurity is an increasing challenge in our community, particularly with the ongoing rise

in living costs. Many families are really struggling to maintain a nutritious diet. Our previous event in Arklow which benefitted from a conversational, relaxed setting, was a huge success. 14 groups attended and a summary review of the draft report 'An Exploration of Food Poverty in County Wicklow' was presented. From this event, a smaller Arklow food partnership was established to work on key food poverty issues locally. We hope to form similar partnerships



Healthy Food Made Easy course participants in 2024 with their certificates.

in Bray next month."

An attendee from SPECS (Supporting Parents and Early Childhood Services) said: "Food for Thought was a really informative event, with lots of ideas explored by the group. It was great

to make contact and be informed of people and services working to make positive change in the area."

Aisling added: "Our goal is to unite local organisations and join forces to develop a more

cohesive and compassionate approach to tackling food insecurity in our region. Everyone is welcome! Tea, coffee, refreshments and snacks will be available.

The Little Flower Hall is located beside the Holy

Redeemer Church on Main Street, Bray, A98WK355, with ample parking available in the church car park.

For more information, contact: Aisling Kirwan, email: aislingkirwan@bnwap.ie



Stephen Clarke (Town Regeneration Officer), Ger Corbet (CEO of Sandysford Business District), Stephen Hallahan (CEO of Tap Retail), Margaret Bourke (Retail Consultant and Service Director of Positive Retail) and Tom Feeney (Chair of the Blackrock Business Association) pictured at the Wicklow Retail Seminar in the Brockagh Centre, Laragh.

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