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Tuesday 4th February 2025 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

# BIG WIN FOR FISHERMEN

A trial of two high Court cases, one which commenced in 2016 and the second in 2024, relating to the right of Ivan Toole to use Greystones Harbour to run his commercial fishing business, and avail of services, started on 10th December 2024 and ran until 20th December 2024 and was due to recommence for 3 weeks on 21st January, was settled.

Mr Toole's family fished out of the harbour since the 1800's, and he was very passionate about saving the historical fishing rights in Greystones harbour which has now been achieved after a long and difficult battle.

Greystones commercial fishermen were promised facilities in the redeveloped harbour by Wicklow County

Council, and as a result supported the redevelopment during the An Bord Pleanála process. When the harbour was being reconstructed, the fishermen realised that the area promised had been redesigned so that a boat maintenance yard for the yachts took up the whole area and no facilities were available. When the North pier was opened, they

attempted to use the quay wall to berth the vessels which resulted in a long standing battle between the parties.

It was claimed by Mr Toole's senior counsel that efforts were made by the Plaintiffs to try to invite Wicklow County Council and Sispar to join in a multiparty mediation, but that was turned down by Wicklow County



Ciaran Dunne as Taxamus the Giant in the Roundwood Variety Group's Puss in Boots panto in the Brockagh Centre, Laragh. Pic: Michael Kelly.

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Council and by Sispar.

As part of the settlement, there will be three berths for fishing boats in Greystones moving forward, and a designated fishing area on the top of the North pier. Facilities will be put in such as access to water and electricity, and specific rights of access are included for the fishermen; fishery huts will also be made available for the fishermen in due course for storage etc. A new independent harbourmaster will be appointed, BJ Marinas who runs the marina and Sispar who developed the harbour and apartments will be relieved of all harbourmaster duties.

Wicklow County Council, Sispar and BJ Marina were levelled with the entire legal costs of the court cases and agreed to pay substantial compensation

which they insisted remain confidential.

The fishermen obtained an Interim Injunction in March 2024, after the cleats used to tie up the vessels to the harbour were cut off by Sispar while the vessels were at sea, that injunction will remain in place until the work is carried out on the fishing area.

A gate had been put up, which was frequently locked, preventing access to Mr. Toole and his crew members getting to their vessel. And, on occasion, they also put Kelly blocks, (big blocks of concrete), further on from the gate, again with a view to trying to prevent access to Mr. Toole, who had to bring a vehicle down to his vessel when he was unloading catch, and a vehicle had to be brought down if a ves-

sel was being refuelled.

Ivan Toole was represented by Colm Ó

hOisín SC and Peter Shanley SC who were instructed by Clare-Ann

Temple, Head of litigation at Bray solicitors, Beneville and Robinson.

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# Family-friendly disco to raise funds for children in Palestine

A unique event to support children in Palestine will take place in Bray on February 8th and organisers are urging anyone interested to get their tickets now before they sell out.

Get Down for Gaza is a family-friendly minidisco to raise funds for the 'Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF)', an organisation working with families in the region.

The event will take place from 3pm on Saturday, February 8, in the Wolfe Tone & District Youth Club with tickets priced at €8 for children, €10 for adults and €30 for families of two adults and two children, and are available from [www.getdownforgaza.com](http://www.getdownforgaza.com).

"Do you remember dancing the Macarena?" asks organiser Ali Byrne. "Well now you can dance it again, but this time with your kids!"

"We will be throwing out loads of fun dancing tunes and all in the name of a good cause."

There will also be a raffle, face painting and a colouring table for kids who'd like some time away from the dance floor.

The funds raised will primarily focus on immediate relief in Gaza, including providing essential med-

ical supplies, food, medical treatment, clean water, and other necessities for families affected by the conflict.

Additionally, PCRF's campaign will support rebuilding healthcare facilities and providing long-term support, including mental health and trauma counselling.

If you can't make it to this family event and would like to make a donation, you can do so on the website [www.getdownforgaza.com](http://www.getdownforgaza.com).



Siblings Georgia (l) and Jimmy (r) Teehan-Greene and their cousin Alma May Murphy (m) at the launch of Get Down for Gaza to raise funds for children in Palestine which takes place from 3pm on Saturday, February 8, in the Wolfe Tone & District Youth Club. Tickets are available from [www.getdownforgaza.com](http://www.getdownforgaza.com).



Sara Cullen as the narrator in the Roundwood Variety Group's 'Puss in Boots' panto production in the Brockagh Centre, Laragh.

## Barista Course in Wicklow Town

**Kickstart Your Career as a Barista! This full-time, 3-week programme is designed to equip you with the essential skills to work confidently as a professional barista.**

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## Dyslexia at Second Level in Irish Schools

*9 Youtube webinars for parents, teachers and students*

**The challenges at second level for students with dyslexia are very different to those at primary level. This can take students, their parents and subject teachers by surprise. At primary level the key focus is on developing literacy and numeracy. At second level they may face difficulties with organisation, note-taking, memory and learning, and continuing difficulties with reading, spelling and writing.**

Wyn McCormack is a former Guidance Counsellor and Special Education Teacher in St David's Greystones. She has written 2 books on dyslexia at second level and the Factsheets on Dyslexia at Second Level. Her interest in dyslexia comes from the fact that her three sons are dyslexic. When they were going through second level several decades ago, she became very active in campaigning for improvements in supports for students with dyslexia through writing and giving courses on dyslexia to teachers, parents and students. Her key focus has been to provide in-service to school staff.

She is retiring from these activities by September 2025 and in

order to share the resources and strategies she has collected, she has uploaded 9 YouTube webinars on dyslexia at second level. The majority are for second level teachers and schools. There are four for parents and one for students on study skills. The list of webinars are as follows:

### Dyslexia at second level

- Dyslexia at second level: How dyslexia affects the student
- How Parents can sup-

port the student

- The Dyslexia Friendly School
- Languages
- Organisation, Memory and Note-taking
- Reading, Spelling and Vocabulary
- Self-esteem
- Study skills that support the student
- Writing

The link is [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4-7\\_mnM91PKYhg1kwCKi\\_fHDFpEXFIYo](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4-7_mnM91PKYhg1kwCKi_fHDFpEXFIYo) and is also on the website [www.dyslexiacourses.ie](http://www.dyslexiacourses.ie).

## Kilmacanogue History Society

Kilmacanogue History Society has a very interesting Talk on Monday 10th February at 8pm in Kilmacanogue Parish Hall. The Speaker is Karl Brady talking about "Lost to the Sea: Mapping, documenting and preserving shipwrecks off the Wicklow Coast." He is a Senior Archaeologist with the National Monuments Service and co-author of a number of books on the subject including "The Shipwreck Inventory of Ireland: Louth, Meath, Dublin & Wicklow (2008)".

## Shankill Classical Music Club

The next meeting is on Wednesday 12th February. Usual time - 7:45 to 10:00 pm, including a teabreak, and venue - Shankill Day Centre, Lower Rd, Shankill (100 yds from the main street, car parking available). The March meeting will be on Wednesday 12th March.

The music will be as always: a varied programme of classical music on CDs, covering many genres - orchestral, instrumental, vocal, opera etc. - in a friendly setting. Visitors and new members are always welcome. You don't need to be an expert! There's no charge on the night. For further info phone or text John at 0872109175.

## Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee

The Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee is developing a new plan for Outdoor Recreation in Wicklow. There will be a Special public consultation event for everyone to share their views and help shape the preparation of the new plan. It takes place on Thursday, 6th February in Parkview Hotel Newtownmountkennedy; 7pm to 8:30pm. Please register your attendance in advance. Wicklow County Outdoor Recreation Plan: Public Meeting Registration.

## Active Retirement Laragh

Laragh Active Retirement will be back again on February 18th Don't forget to add it to your calendar for 2025. The active retirement group meets every Tuesday morning from 10.45am - 12.15pm in the Brockagh Centre. They enjoy meeting for a chat with refreshments and light exercise each week. Workshops, daytrips and monthly lunches are throughout the year. New members are always welcome. If anyone would like to offer their services or share their skills with the group please contact us by calling Denise on 0404 45600, email [laraghglendaloughara@gmail.com](mailto:laraghglendaloughara@gmail.com) or drop in to the centre.

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# Date set for first Cliff Walk Taskforce meeting

Tánaiste Simon Harris has set Thursday, 13th February for the inaugural meeting of the Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk Taskforce. The Taskforce, chaired by Tánaiste Harris, will convene at Government Buildings and include key stakeholders and agencies such as Wicklow County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Irish Rail, and others.

Tánaiste Simon Harris said: "I have written to a range of agencies and stakeholders this week to convene the first meeting of the Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk Taskforce which will take place in Government Buildings. There is an urgent need to see the re-opening of the iconic Cliff Walk which is a crucial local resource.

"I have heard the concerns and frustra-

tions from local residents and local businesses in the area regarding its prolonged closure. Put simply, any further delay to the re-opening is unacceptable.

"This taskforce will aim to drive forward the swift re-opening of the cliff walk so we can regain this resource which attracts many visitors to Bray and Greystones and helps sustain the towns' economies. Over the past few weeks I

have engaged directly with local stakeholders and look forward to putting all measures forward to see this issue finally resolved once and for all. As the chair of the first meeting of the taskforce I will be asking all relevant agencies and stakeholders to work together to prevent any further setbacks in the reopening process.

"I am also keenly aware that as the days get warmer and brighter the need for

this Cliff Walk to be operational will become ever more crucial for residents and businesses."

Tánaiste Simon Harris concluded: "I stand ready to do all I can as a TD for Wicklow to drive this reopening. I want to thank all who have worked with me so far on this issue especially Cllr Louise Fenelon Gaskin in Greystones and Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy in Bray."



Tánaiste Simon Harris TD.

# 'Shameful treatment of Arklow fishermen by Government ministers and officials must stop'

Sinn Féin TD for Wicklow-Wexford, Fionntán Ó Súilleabháin has slammed the continuous "passing of the buck by previous Ministers, as well as the callous and disgraceful treatment of Arklow fishermen CJ and Christy Gaffney by our own departmental officials. This is despite being offered a solution on a plate by the EU Commission."

"What CJ and Christy have been put through over the past 15 years is heart-rending. It is a classic David Versus Goliath case of a monstrous bureaucratic system with massive resources at its disposal trying to grind down an individual seeking justice," said Deputy Ó Súilleabháin. "It has cost this family enormously, breaking them financially, and trying to break them emotionally."

John Brady TD explained "In 2007, CJ Gaffney purchased a Dutch fishing trawler, the Mary Kate WD30, in

Holland and through several surveys was deemed fit for purpose by the Marine Service Office. Subsequently in 2009, the fishing trawler was found to have serious stability issues, tests showed 20 tonnes of unaccounted steel were in the vessel. An issue that was found to be a fault with this particular type of vessel across Europe, and indeed many EU states have taken action to protect their own fisheries.

"CJ Gaffney has been left with his life in ruins as a result of the callous indifference of the gov-

ernment to take on board the advice of the European Commission and provide compensation for the costs incurred due to the stability flaws in a fishing vessel, the MV Mary Kate, which had been certified by the EU. I cannot understand the continuing refusal of two senior ministers to come to an agreement as to whose department is willing to take responsibility for making a decision in relation to this issue, despite being offered a clear solution by the European Commission.

"Magda Kopczynska

has written on behalf of the European Commission, and laid out in explicit terms that the EU advised the Irish Government that compensation for CJ Gaffney could be drawn down under the European Fund for Maritime and Fisheries. The stipulation is that the Irish Government has to do this themselves as the EU had no authority to put forward the request themselves. If the Irish Government did so, the funds would be granted. Yet they refuse to take this simple action that

would bring to a conclusion an issue that has haunted the Gaffney family for years."

Fionntán Ó Súilleabháin adds "Thankfully, they are strong, tenacious and courageous individuals. Such a lengthy struggle would have broken down many other individuals. The Gaffneys work, at massive expense over 15 years, has been used across Europe, especially

by the Dutch, to try to address the safety of boats in EU waters. However, Irish officials have tried to sabotage their campaign! Perhaps they're afraid that their shameful inaction and bick-passing will be exposed?

"The European Commission previously informed Mr Gaffney that while the issue was outside of their remit, the Irish government would

be able to draw down EU funds from the European Fisheries Fund to compensate Mr Gaffney, given the very unique circumstances of his case. It wouldn't have cost them a cent.

"The Irish government has failed to do this, and what we have witnessed is a case of 'passing the buck' between government departments, as they

work to avoid taking responsibility for the matter. Several Sinn Féin elected members from our MEPs, TDs and Senators have pursued justice for CJ and Christy during the past Leinster House term. I now give my commitment to continue this campaign for justice in the new Leinster House term. I want to see cross-party co-operation to bring justice for this family. That's the very least they deserve!"

# Bumpy start for Bus Connects

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore and Sinn Féin TD John Brady have raised concerns about the recent rollout of the Bus Connects programme, citing numerous issues that have affected commuters in the area. The service changes came into effect last week, on the 26th of January.

Deputy Whitmore stated "The rollout of the Bus Connects programme has gotten off to a bumpy start. Commuters have experienced significant delays, with some spending up to two hours traveling in and out of town on the so-called Xpress buses.

"I heard of constituents spending over an hour on the X1 getting from Kilcoole at 7:30am to Southern Cross. The weather does have an impact on traffic, but that journey should never take so long. On top of that, I heard reports of the X1 and X2 not showing up for ages and then multiple buses arriving back-to-back. This is not acceptable.

"Last night (Monday 27th January), the last L2 of the day was cancelled. The last bus should always be covered. People are left in very vulnerable and insecure situations when it isn't. This came at the end of a day full of cancellations. I have spoken to commuters about their experiences this week and I have sent a list of issues to the NTA in hopes that they can smooth things over. Teething issues are normal with any new service, but it is crucial

that these issues be addressed promptly to ensure reliable and efficient public transport for all," Deputy Whitmore concluded.

Deputy Brady has sought an immediate meeting with the National Transport Authority and for immediate action to be taken to address the many issues.

Deputy Brady said "Since the rollout of new phase (6a) of the BusConnects network redesign of bus routes in Wicklow on January 26th, significant issues have emerged, particularly with the L1, L2, L3, L15, and 45A routes, all operated by Go-Ahead Ireland. Buses are frequently late, cancelled, or fail to show up, causing children to be late for school, workers to miss work, and individuals to miss critical medical appointments.

"Last year, I expressed serious concerns when Go-Ahead was awarded the license to operate these routes, given their previous track record in Wicklow. Regrettably, these concerns have proven valid. Go-Ahead has had many months to ensure they possess the capacity and capability to operate these routes effectively.

"Their failure is now adversely affecting the daily lives of those who depend on these services. If Go-Ahead is experiencing capacity issues, they must address them immediately. Alternatively, the National Transport Authority (NTA) should revoke Go-Ahead's license and reassign these routes to Dublin Bus, which is better positioned to provide the reliable service that residents deserve.

Additional problems have arisen with the new X1 and X2 routes, leading to significant delays and overcrowding for passengers. Safety concerns have also been identified at the new bus termini in Bray and Greystones that should have been identified and addressed before the bus routes commenced.

"Despite extensive planning and delays in implementing these new routes, the NTA has fallen short. They must act swiftly to provide an efficient, effective, and safe public transport system. I have requested an immediate meeting with the NTA to discuss these pressing issues and to convey the urgency felt by the Wicklow community."

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Avondale Intermediate Hurling Player of the Year Zach Cullen and Aoife Sharkey at the Avondale GAA and Camogie Club dinner dance at the Arklow Bay Hotel.

# 'This is not Malibu - it is Ireland'

*Ó Súilleabháin offers best wishes to ARROW Campaign ahead of court case*

Wicklow-Wexford TD Fionntán Ó Súilleabháin said he would like to wish the ARROW Campaign and the people of Arklow and surrounds the very best of luck as they embark on their court hearing. The hearing, which was due to begin last week, has been moved to 10th February.

Deputy Ó Súilleabháin said "It's crucial the community wins this to ensure that of Ireland's coastlines are open and accessible to all. This is not Malibu-it is Ireland where our people have fought and died to vindicate such rights. For nearly eight years the people of Arklow have been deprived of their right to access the public seashore and Arklow's coastal paths to North Beach and Seabank Beaches. This blockage was done by the Management of Arklow Holidays who lease the site from a local family on a 99 year lease which will expire in 2064. The first blockage was the padlocking of the access path from Arklow on Seaview Avenue. This path has been used by the local population and during the summer months by the many visitors to Arklow for over 150 years. The second blockage to local access occurred soon after when the public pathway on the Foreshore was blocked by rock armour and steel girders, thus making access to our

public beaches and seashore impossible. I would like to point out that this pathway was maintained by Wicklow County Council and paid for by Irish taxpayers. Yet a private firm has been allowed to deprive Irish citizens of accessing their own beaches and seashore. This is a very serious matter and it's for issues like this-vindicating people's rights-that I am in politics. The whole population have suffered as a result.

"Seabank Beach was designated a Natural Heritage Area many years ago because of the rare flora and fauna that grow there, in particular "Moore's Horsetail". This plant does not grow anywhere else in Ireland, except in Courtown, Co Wexford where it grows in very small quantities, yet it grows in profusion on Seabank headland. Such a shame that such a facility has been denied to young students who once frequented Seabank, and learned so much about the rich diversity of the area. Over the past 150 years this playground has been used by gener-

ations of local people for walking, jogging, swimming and sailing, it is a shame that such a facility has been illegally blocked for so long.

"There is an additional safety issue, as caravan park residents now have their way blocked from getting to the amenities in the area and the children have to use the road instead when there is a walkway already there but blocked off by a locked gate that is slowly becoming overgrown with briars and ditch. The latest Wicklow County Development states that 1500 houses will be built in the North of Arklow. If the present situation is allowed to continue Arklow will be a seaside town without proper access to beaches in the area. It is my fervent hope that this blockage to our beloved beaches will be removed." It is not just an Arklow issue-it's crucial for Ireland as a whole, that we as citizens win. It goes to the heart of what kind of "republic" we live in, and for which so many people gave their lives."

## RISE Community Fund to award cash grants in Wicklow

The RISE Community Fund has announced plans to award new cash grants to small businesses, farms, social enterprises, schools, charities and community groups in County Wicklow, with funding available to those who can demonstrate innovative plans to use technology to scale the positive impact of their work and benefit the local community.

Supported by National Broadband Ireland (NBI), the company responsible for delivering the Irish Government's National Broadband Plan, as well as other corporate partners including KN Circet, KPMG, Test Triangle, DreamDev Technologies and TLI Group, the RISE Community Fund has travelled the breadth of the country in recent years to provide a cash injection for community organisations thinking creatively about how they can use technology.

Previous Wicklow groups to receive grant funding from the RISE Community Fund include 121digital, Brockagh Resource Centre, Shuttle Knit CLG, Wicklow men's shed, Sylvester Bourke Farming unlimited, The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland (Wicklow Regional office) and Kilmacanogue NS.

David McCourt, Chairman of NBI and founder of RISE, commented: "At NBI we've always been clear that our mission is about more than bringing

Netflix to rural Ireland; it's about empowering communities to embrace new technologies with the foundation of world-class fibre broadband, which NBI is delivering at scale. In partnership with RISE, we're finding and rewarding entrepreneurial uses of technology, and we've already awarded over 130 cash grants across the country, including many great examples here in Wicklow."

Applications for the cash grants open on 3rd February and close on 28th February 2025. Grants of up to €1000 will be available to successful applicants across the county.

"The application process is incredibly quick and easy, and successful applicants will be notified in March, with the money following in quick succession. We can't wait to see the entrepreneurial ideas

from Wicklow," added McCourt.

With 11,100 premises in Wicklow already able to order or pre-order a service on its network, NBI is reminding Wicklow residents and businesses to visit their website at [www.nbi.ie](http://www.nbi.ie) to order from their broadband provider of choice.

Read more about the RISE Community Fund and gain access to the grant application at [rise-globalfoundation.com](http://rise-globalfoundation.com).



The RISE Community Fund, supported by NBI and partners, has distributed over 130 cash grants to date.

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# 'Government's refusal to recall Dáil was unforgivable'

Social Democrat TD Jennifer Whitmore says the Government's response to Storm Éowyn lacked urgency and imagination. "The government must urgently identify vulnerable groups of people most impacted by Storm Éowyn to ensure they are prioritised for supports in any future event," she said.



Jennifer Whitmore TD.



Fallen trees and roads closed in Bray following Storm Éowyn. Pihotos by Joe McQuillan

"For many of those hit by this devastating storm, including the elderly and those living with chronic medical conditions, the power outages and water shortages were more than just an inconvenience - the situation presented a real risk to their lives.

"There have been harrowing reports of senior citizens struggling in freezing conditions, while others have been left without functioning medical equipment or access to healthcare services.

"More than 130,000 homes, farms and businesses were still without power last week - with work on reconnecting them expected to run well into this week - making this an unprecedented situation that required a multi-agency response by every arm of the State.

"While ESB crews and first responders were/are doing incredible work under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, I believe that the Defence Forces could have had a role to play in supporting their efforts.

"This could have included the transporting

of elderly and vulnerable people to community hubs where they could be warm for a few hours and get a hot meal; the distribution of food and water to isolated households; the transportation of generators and gas bottles or even assistance with closing off roads where damaged power cables presented a public hazard.

"These are all ideas that could have been put forward and discussed if the government had agreed to recall the Dáil last week to outline their planned response to the crisis. Their refusal to do so was unforgivable."



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FREE PARKING



# Newtownmountkennedy Town Team formed

A Town Team was formed for Newtownmountkennedy on the 18th November last in the Parkview Hotel and are now meeting on a monthly basis. This positive step for the town was facilitated by Wicklow County Council and followed on from several information sessions and an expression of interest process, both of which were open to all members of the public. The Town Team is comprised primarily of local residents, with support from local elected members of Wicklow County Council and members of An Garda Síochána stationed in Newtownmountkennedy.

The Town Centre First policy was launched by the government on 4th February 2022. It was set up to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and to transform town centres into viable, vibrant, and attractive spaces for people to live, work, and visit, while also serving as hubs for services, social, cultural, and recreational activities. The Town Centre First policy lays the foundation for each town to develop, at a local level, their own plan-led path forward. This is expressed through a tailored plan which is underpinned by a clear diagnosis of local strengths and challenges. This plan will be driven by the local community and businesses who are represented on the Town Team and will be supported by the Town Regeneration Officer and technical expertise within each Local Authority.

The Newtownmountkennedy Town Team currently includes the following six working groups: Community, Education & Youth Services; Culture & Built Heritage; Economic Development & Tourism; Natural Environment & Biodiversity; Public Spaces & Streetscapes; Sports & Recreation. Each working group nominated two of their members to the Town Team Executive Committee. Officers of the committee including the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Public Relations Officer were elected by this committee. Jen Quinn, who is chairperson of the local Tidy Towns group, was elected as the first chairperson of Newtownmountkennedy Town Team. The working groups of the Town Team are open for anyone resident in Newtown and new members are being urged to join. If you are interested in joining, please contact townregeneration@wicklowcoco.ie

"This is a really positive development for the town," said local Councillor Danny Alvey, who sits on the Executive Committee of the Town Team. "I want to thank Stephen Clarke, our Town Regeneration Officer in Wicklow County Council, who has done a huge amount of work facilitating the formation of this new Town Team and Huw O'Toole, a local community activist, who has championed this idea for many years. There is a great variety of local residents who have joined all of the working groups, each with diverse skills and experiences of already volunteering with local community groups. Newtown is a town that has grown exponentially in the past few years and the town infrastructure and place-making is struggling to catch up with this. However there is also huge potential to make this a great place to live



Pictured in the photo from left to right: Shane Stokes, Grace Garde, Brian Purcell (PRO), Ruth Prenderville, Sarah Flynn, Tina Donohoe, Jen Quinn (Chairperson), Eva Kearns, Kevin Graham (Secretary), Cllr Danny Alvey, Dominic Leech and Gary Kelly. Not in the photo but also on the Executive Committee: Cllr Shane Langrell, Garda Lorraine Heffernan, Sarah Gregory and Ciara Martin.

and work, and the development of an attractive town centre will be key in this. I really urge anyone living in the town, with one free evening a month and an interest in any of the working groups, to please get involved - especially those in the recently built estates, this is your community now too and only together can we make it a great place for us all."

Councillor Shane Langrell is also a member of the Executive Committee and said: "I am

delighted to see the establishment of the Newtownmountkennedy Town Team, a significant step forward for our community. As a member of the executive committee, I look forward to collaborating with local residents

and elected officials to address the needs of the town. This initiative, supported by Wicklow County Council and aligned with the Town Centre First policy, aims to revitalise underused properties and spaces,

making our town more inviting and functional. I encourage all residents and local businesses to get involved and share their ideas to make Newtownmountkennedy a vibrant place to live, work, and visit."

## Whitmore announced as Spokesperson for Climate and Agriculture

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore, has been appointed as the spokesperson for Climate, Nature, Energy, and Transport, as well as Agriculture, Food, and the Marine. This announcement was made last Thursday as the Social Democrats' revealed of their front bench.

"In Dail Eireann, I have been a dedicated advocate for environmental and transport issues. My background in environmental law and marine biology provides me with invaluable insights for my now expanded spokesperson role. Having been a fisheries scientist and having worked on fish stocks and aquaculture in a past life, I am excited to use my experience in those sectors to promote sustainable fishing and a responsible use of our marine resources," commented Deputy Whitmore.

"Sustainable practices are essential in both our natural and agricultural environments. Wicklow's diverse landscape, with its extensive farmland and rich natural resources, is a testament to the need for balanced and thoughtful policies. I look forward to working on policies that will benefit my local community and beyond," added Deputy Whitmore.

"Addressing climate change and promoting sustainable agriculture are two sides of the same coin. I am committed to ensuring that our policies reflect the needs of our environment and our farmers, and I will work tirelessly to support both," concluded Deputy Whitmore.



Jennifer Whitmore TD, Social Democrats spokesperson for Climate, Nature, Energy, and Transport, as well as Agriculture, Food, and the Marine.



Billy and Bernie Byrne at the Avondale GAA and Camogie Club dinner dance at the Arklow Bay Hotel.



# Council makes statement on public lighting

Wicklow County Council is responsible for approximately 15,500 public lights throughout the county. These lights consist of both ESB Network (21%) & non ESB Network (79%). These are provided across a various pole types, primarily Steel (70%) and Wood (27%), with the remainder made up of Aluminium, Cast Iron, Concrete, Wall Mounted and Composite materials. Additionally, approximately 500 of these lights are heritage types.

The Council last week stated: "The maintenance of public lighting is contracted out on behalf of Wicklow County Council. There are only a limited number of companies in Ireland that provide these services, which are typically put out to tender every few years. In Q2 2024, the contractor notified several local authorities (15-20) of their decision to exit the Irish market effective July

2024. A tender process for a new maintenance contract occurred in June/July 2024. Two companies submitted tenders, and Killaree Lighting Services Ltd (KLS) were found to be the most economically advantageous tender. KLS were awarded the contract for the provision of public lighting maintenance for a period of three years for Wicklow, beginning in September 2024. Typically, around

1.3% to 1.8% of lights may be out due to various factors. However, the current number of faults exceeds these percentages. Wicklow County Council's roads engineering staff have met several times with KLS to establish a work program aimed at reducing the backlog of faults, which the contractor is committed to addressing. KLS have indicated that they have added additional resources

to their team to help clear this backlog, and since January 1st, they have repaired a total of 305 faults. Due to the recent storms, all ESB Networks crews have been focused on restoring power supply across the country. ESB Networks has confirmed that their priority is to restore power; they will only begin work on public lighting once the power supply network has been repaired.

"Wicklow County Council reminds the public that to ensure all faulty lights are reported, all faults should be logged onto the maintenance system via the dedicated webpage <https://deadsureapp.com/>. The prioritisation of repairs and maintenance depends on several factors, including the timeframe of the fault, the number of lights out and the nature of the repair. When a significant number of lights are out in close proximity, it often indicates a more complex issue than simply replacing a lantern or bulb. This can lead to an extended delay in repairs and may

require cooperation with other agencies to resolve the issues. In recent weeks, Wicklow County Council has allocated additional engineering and administration resources to address the concerns raised by the public and elected officials. Ongoing efforts will continue to ensure that the new maintenance contractor addresses the existing backlog of faults and provides the necessary resources to meet these requirements. Wicklow County Council wishes to thank the public for their patience and will endeavour to have all public lighting restored in the coming months."



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 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 provides 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,
- (iii) 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 of the Council website at <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Planning/Residential-Zoned-Land-Tax>



# Doctorate for former minister

## *Liz McManus graduates from University of Limerick*

It was a proud day on 21st January for award-winning writer and former Minister of State Liz McManus who celebrated her graduation from University of Limerick.

Liz, who served in Dail Eireann for 19 years - two-and-a-half of which she spent as Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal - was conferred with a PhD in Creative Writing, joining 1,705 others graduating as part of the University's winter conferring ceremonies.

It was the end of an "amazing experience" for Liz, who originally qualified and worked as an architect before entering politics. Writing was always a passion for the mother-of-four, who wrote a column with the Sunday Tribune for several years before publishing her debut novel, *Acts of Subversion*. Following her retirement in 2011, she undertook an MPhil in Creative Writing at Trinity College Dublin, going on to publish two more novels - the latest of which, *When Things Come to Light*, was published in 2023.

Liz said she was encouraged by a friend, Lia Mills - who had previously completed the PhD in Creative Writing - to come to UL. The draw of

studying under the tutelage of her supervisors, Professor Joseph O'Connor and Professor Tina O'Toole, played a significant role in her decision.

"Here I was, with these two very fine academics standing by me like two guardian angels - that is a very privileged position to be in," said Liz.

For her creative dissertation, she chose to "trace the history of modern Ireland through fiction". She studied the work of Irish resistance writers Liam O'Flaherty, Sam Thompson and May Morton, producing a series of short stories spanning the 100 years of Irish independence, from 1919 right up to the pandemic.

It is a testament to Liz's talent and dedication that at her viva - the final hurdle of the PhD process - she achieved something incredibly rare by passing with no corrections.

"It was a terrific experience, and I know not everyone feels that way," she said.

"You get to a certain age, to tell you the truth, where you become a little bit invisible.

So, when you have two academics that you think highly of - Donal Ryan and Glenn Patterson - taking your work terribly seriously, and reading every inch of it, it's kind of satisfying."

The PhD process was not without its challenges, with self-proclaimed 'technophobe' Liz admitting that the technical and formatting aspects of the work proved tricky at times.

However, she is adamant that budding scholars should embrace the journey at any age and stage.

"People look at me aghast when I tell them I've just done a PhD, and I just want to say - it's big, but it's not that big a thing that you couldn't do it. To have the resource of a university, a library, academic teachers who are going to be there for you - that's a rich resource."

And it seems the journey was just as enjoyable for Liz's supervisors, with Professor Joseph O'Connor describing her as "an immense pleasure to

work with".

"I learned a great deal from working with her and we had many a laugh, too, along the way, becoming good pals," Professor O'Connor said.

Liz achieved the very rare accolade of passing her viva with no corrections. Extern Glenn Patterson of Queens University Belfast and internal examiner, my friend and colleague Donal Ryan, praised Liz's work as exceptional. To receive this response from two such internationally acclaimed authors and teachers is a well-deserved tribute to Liz's gift."

Looking to the future, Liz hopes to publish her dissertation and share the fruits of her PhD with the world, while a memoir is also in the works.

"I decided to write it partly for my own family, but also, because one of the things I realised when I was doing the PhD was the mammoth changes that have occurred in Ireland that I have not just witnessed but, in a way, been a participant in - and that's worth recording."



Liz McManus graduating from the University of Limerick. Photo by Arthur Ellis.

## 20 Wicklow students receive entrance awards from Trinity

Twenty students from Wicklow were among 593 students who were awarded prestigious Entrance Exhibition Awards for the 2024/5 academic year from Trinity College Dublin. The awards go to students accepted into the first year of a full-time undergraduate degree programme who achieved the highest points among Trinity entrants from their secondary school, above a minimum of 500 CAO points (or equivalent).

Many former awardees have gone on to make a significant contribution to the economic, cultural, and political life of Ireland and beyond. Past Exhibitioners include former Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.

The students come from 452 different schools and from 30 counties on the island of Ireland as well as 38 countries overseas.

The awards were delivered at three ceremonies

at Trinity's Old Dining Hall, starting on 21st January 2025, to which the students and their school principals were invited.

The Wicklow students' were Lana Bilen and

Naomi Devereux from St. Mary's College; Oliver Purser from East Glendalough School; Ella Ann Redmond Bolger from Woodbrook College; Daniel Nolan from Presentation College; Eva

Harbourne from St. Gerard's School; Jessica Woods from Loreto Secondary School; Conor Anthony Keogh from St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School; Abbie O'Brien from Dominican College; Nola Mc Donnell and Donal Walsh from Temple Carrig Secondary School; Thomas Parker from Scoil Chonglais; Pia Karels from Blessington Community College; Eimear Murphy from Colaiste Bhríde Carnew; Cian Smyth, Joseph Megannety and Sadhbh Caffrey Cummins from Colaiste Raithin; Sahar O'Sullivan from Colaiste Chill Mhantain; Naomi Cairnduff from Gaelcholaiste na Mara; Patryk Fusek from St. Kilian's Community School.

Trinity's Provost, Dr Linda Doyle, said: "I am delighted that the award winners have chosen Trinity College Dublin for their higher education. My own experience of going to university was absolutely transformative and I want nothing less for our students. I encourage them to avail of all that life in Trinity



Naomi Cairnduff from Gaelcholaiste na Mara.



Patryk Fusek from St. Kilian's Community School.



Joseph Megannety from Colaiste Raithin.

has to offer, from the top-class academic environment to the huge array of clubs and societies, all of which are situated in an outward-looking university with a strong international perspective.

"I also want to acknowledge the huge role played by school principals and the wider school community in nurturing the talent of

these students. This year, our Principals' Forum, taking place alongside the Entrance Exhibition Awards, is focusing on the challenges and opportunities of Artificial Intelligence, which I hope they will find very useful."

Students who achieve the highest points among Trinity entrants from their secondary school with at

least 500 points in the Leaving Certificate (or its equivalent EU/EEA second-level final examinations) are eligible for an Entrance Exhibition Award. This includes bonus points for Mathematics. When more than one student from a school get the same high points, all receive an award.



# Boost your UK pension before the April 2025 deadline

If you worked in the UK for even a single year, you may be entitled to a UK State Pension that could be worth up to €280,000 over a typical 20-year retirement. However, a key rule is changing in April 2025, and if you don't act soon, you could lose out on thousands in retirement income.

by John Ring, Head of Operations, XtraPension Ltd.

## Why this matters

Many people who spent time working in the UK don't realise they can claim a UK State Pension, even if they only worked there briefly. A single qualifying year could mean around €400 per year for life-which adds up over time.

But here's where it gets even better: you can buy additional years to significantly increase your pension entitlement. Right now, you can purchase up to 18 years of missing National Insurance (NI) contributions.

After April 2025, this will drop to just six years.

Given the long processing times at HMRC (which can take over a year), you must apply well before the deadline to be placed in the queue and secure your entitlement.

## Who qualifies?

You're eligible if you:

- Worked in the UK for at least one year and then spent two or more years working in Ireland or elsewhere in Europe.
- OR, you worked in the UK for three or more years, regardless of where you worked after leaving.
- Have gaps in your UK National Insurance record that you can fill by purchasing past years.



John Ring, Head of Operations, XtraPension Ltd..

to HMRC - HMRC will confirm whether you qualify for Class 2 or Class 3 rates.

4. Wait for approval - Once approved, you can purchase as many years as you choose.

## Should you apply yourself or get expert help?

The process can be complex, and HMRC frequently makes mistakes. If you apply incorrectly or if your application is wrongly assessed, you could end up paying €1,000 per year instead of €200.

Many people opt for professional help from XtraPension.com, an Irish company based in Galway that specialises in securing approvals at the lowest rate. Their team also handles appeals if HMRC makes an error, ensuring you don't overpay.

## How much does it cost?

If you qualify for the lower Class 2 contribution rate, buying a missing year costs just €200. This is a fraction of what UK residents pay (€1,000 per year for Class 3 contributions).

For example, purchasing 18 years at €200 per year costs €3,600 in total - but in return, this could mean a pension worth €144,000 over 20 years. If you also buy future years, your total pension income could reach €280,000 over 20 years.

## How to apply

Before you can pay HMRC, you need to get their approval to buy years. Here's what to do:

1. Get Your UK National Insurance Number - If you don't have it, you can retrieve it from a Jobs & Benefits office in Northern Ireland with two forms of ID. They hold records dating back to 1976.
2. Complete Form CF83 - This is the official application to pay Voluntary National Insurance Contributions.
3. Send the application

## Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity

The UK Government has extended the deadline before, but April 2025 is likely the final cut-off. After that, you'll only be able to buy six past years instead of 18 - so the chance to maximise your pension at a discount won't last forever.

To make sure your application is in before the deadline, act now. For more details, visit XtraPension.com, call (091) 335 583, or send a WhatsApp message to +353 899 609 855.

# '17 year high in mortgage drawdowns shows real progress in homeownership'

First time buyer drawdowns have reached a new high since 2007, with more than 26,000 mortgages drawn down in 2024 nationwide, Tánaiste and Wicklow TD Simon Harris has said.



An Tánaiste Simon Harris.

Simon Harris said "I am delighted to see more people in Wicklow are benefiting from an increase in mortgage drawdowns.

"Figures show another strong year for first-time buyers with 26,242 mortgages, worth €7.8 billion, drawn down in 2024. Housing is the country's biggest challenge and my number one priority. I want to get young people out of their parents' box rooms and into homes of their own. From the moment, I became party leader, I said we needed to scale up our ambition on housing and deliver for the people of Ireland.

"It's really encouraging to see so many first-time buyers drawing down mortgages, many of them being in Wicklow. Housing is a key issue for so many, so seeing the increased numbers getting a mortgage shows the dream of homeownership can be a reality. We've also seen a total draw-down of 43,030 mortgages in 2024, worth €12.6 billion. With more than 60,000 homes commenced in 2024, we can see there is a robust stock of new housing in the pipeline for those who have recently drawn down a mortgage.

"Real progress is being made on housing, and with more than 26,000 first time mortgages drawn down in 2024 we can see 500 people buying their first home every week. These new figures are showing real momentum for Wicklow and for Ireland's housing future. The surge in mortgage drawdowns shows that we're moving in the right direction on housing. This growth isn't just encouraging-- it represents families finding homes, communities growing stronger, and Fine Gael making real progress in tackling our housing challenges across Wicklow," concluded Simon Harris.



Niall Byrne as Puss and Jimmy Byrne as Colin in Roundwood Variety Group's production of Puss in Boots' at the Brockagh Centre in Laragh.



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



# Retail seminar brings together local stakeholders to explore strategies for revitalising town centres

The Town Regeneration Office, in collaboration with the town teams of Arklow, Blessington, Greystones, Newtownmountkennedy, and Wicklow Town, successfully hosted the Wicklow Retail Seminar on Monday 20th January. This event brought together local stakeholders to explore strategies for revitalising town centres and supporting the retail sector.



Cllr Peir Leonard (right) speaking with members of the Arklow Town Team.

Under the auspices of the national Town Centre First Policy, the seminar served as a platform for constructive dialogue and collaboration among town teams, elected officials, and local retailers. The focus was on practical and innovative interventions aimed at supporting local businesses, enhancing the shopping experience, and attracting footfall to town centres.

The event featured a series of informative presentations from a diverse range of industry experts, including:

- Margaret Bourke, Retail Consultant and Service Director, Positive Retail, who discussed the opportunities available to independent retailers in Irish towns.
- Tom Feeney, Chair, Blackrock Business Association, who shared



Cathaoirleach of Greystones Municipal District Cllr Tom Fortune and other members of the Greystones Town Team at the Wicklow Retail Seminar in the Brockagh Centre, Laragh.

insights into how a "liveable town centre" can positively impact local retail businesses.

- Ger Corbett, CEO, Sandford Business District, who explored business leadership in the face of rapid changes in the retail environment.
- Stephen Hallahan, CEO, Tap-Retail, who examined the growing importance of digital retail and how small businesses can compete with larger e-tailers.

Following these presentations, the seminar showcased three local independent retailers from County Wicklow, providing attendees with firsthand perspectives on how businesses operate in the current environment. These retailers shared their challenges, successes, and how they are partnering with town teams to improve the local retail ecosystem.

The event concluded with small group discussions that encouraged participants to brainstorm and share actionable ideas for enhancing their town centres. These interactive sessions allowed attendees to discuss practical interventions for increasing footfall, fostering local economic growth, and creating a more vibrant and accessible town center experience.

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council Emer O'Gorman, stated, "The seminar provided a platform for the Town Regeneration Office and local town teams to strengthen their ongoing collaboration with local government and business owners in revitalizing town centres across the region."

Cllr. Tom Fortune, Cathaoirleach of the

Greystones Municipal District and Chairperson of the Economic Development & Enterprise Support Strategic Policy Committee stated "The seminar provided an excellent opportunity for retailers, elected members and town teams to come together, learn from one another, and develop solutions that

will help our communities thrive.

"We are incredibly pleased with the outcome of the Wicklow Retail Seminar," said Stephen Clarke, Town Regeneration Officer at the Co. Wicklow Town Regeneration Office. "The level of collaboration, creativity, and commitment demonstrated

by all participants is a testament to the strong desire to improve our town centres."

The Town Regeneration Office is committed to maintaining this collaborative momentum and exploring further opportunities to support local retailers and revitalize town centres across the county.



Stephen Clarke - Town Regeneration Officer, Ger Corbett - CEO Sandford Business District, Stephen Hallahan - CEO Tap Retail, Margaret - Bourke Director of Digital Revolution, Tom Feeney - Chairperson Blackrock Business Association.



Cllr Avril Cronin speaking with members of the Blessington Town Team.



Aine O'Leary in discussion with retailers from Wicklow Town.



Tom Feeney delivering his presentation on 'The impact of a liveable town centre on local retail'.



# Brady raises alarm over proposal to cut the Aircoach Service connecting Wicklow to Dublin Airport

Wicklow Sinn Féin has expressed serious concern at proposals currently with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to discontinue the Aircoach bus service from Dublin Airport to Bray and Greystones. Under the proposals the 702 route which is operated by commercial operators Aircoach will cease servicing Wicklow in late February or early March. Deputy Brady has called on the NTA and the Minister to intervene to ensure that a direct service linking Wicklow and the Airport continues.

"I am deeply concerned about the proposal to curtail the Aircoach service between Dublin Airport and Wicklow. Currently the 702 Aircoach service provides a critically important bus service between the Airport and Bray and Greystones. Currently there are plans with the National Transport Authority to change this route and terminate the service in Dalkey, the result would be that there would be no service to Wicklow. The proposal is to end this vital service from late February or early March. This decision would have a significant impact on residents who rely on this

essential bus link to access Dublin Airport.

"The removal of the service will leave people with few viable alternatives, forcing many into their cars, which will increase traffic congestion and emissions. I was very critical of the decision taken by Aircoach last year in July to amalgamate two routes, with the 703-route absorbed by the 702 from Greystones. This change required the 702 to service stops previously covered by the 703 in Killiney, Dalkey, D'n Laoghaire, and Monkstown. During peak times, this has led to journeys tak-

ing nearly three hours - a completely unacceptable situation for passengers. I had called on Aircoach to review their decision to amalgamate the routes which made it less appealing for people to use.

"Now, under new proposals before the National Transport Authority (NTA), the service will only go as far as Dalkey, effectively cutting off Greystones, Bray, and other areas from direct bus access to Dublin Airport. This would be a serious blow to people in these communities who depend on this route.

"While I understand that Aircoach operates on a commercial licence and must make commercial decisions, the provision of accessible and reliable public transport is crucial. I am calling on the NTA and the Minister for Transport to intervene and ensure that a bus service is maintained for residents in Wicklow to connect them directly to Dublin Airport. This is a critical service, and I urge the NTA and the Minister to act urgently and to guarantee that Wicklow residents are not left without a viable direct bus option to Dublin Airport."



John Brady TD.

## Relief as water works begin on site at St Ernan's

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore, has welcomed the commencement of water connection works at St Ernan's in Rathnew. This development comes as a relief to many residents who have been eagerly awaiting the finalisation of their home purchases.



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

"Since July 2024, 44 affordable purchase houses have been completed at St Ernan's, but due to delays in logistical works, residents were unable to move in. Many of these residents have mortgage approvals that are only valid for six months, and as we approached the end of that timeframe, concerns were rising," explained Ms Whitmore.

"I am pleased to hear that Irish Water have been on site, and that households are being connected. This progress means that residents can finalise their purchases and move into their new homes within the coming weeks," she added.

Deputy Whitmore worked closely with the residents and Irish Water to resolve the issue. "I understand the anxiety of having to reapply for mortgages, especially when homes have been ready since July. This recent development is a significant step forward, and it's great to know that residents will soon be able to settle into their new homes," concluded Ms Whitmore.

## Worrying rise in reported domestic violence cases

The new government must prioritise the full implementation of the third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, according to Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore.

Deputy Whitmore made her comments after new figures revealed a 20 per cent rise over the last two years in the number of domestic violence incidents reported to gardaí. It is both shocking and shameful that there were 65,000 reported cases of domestic violence last year - an average of 1,250 every week - which is further proof that this problem has reached epidemic levels in Ireland. Despite the previous government's talk of taking a zero-tolerance approach to this issue, we saw very little evidence of this in practice. The reality is that services in the sector continue to be overstretched and underfunded, unable to meet increasing demand from women experiencing domestic or sexual violence.

"While the new programme for government commits to the full implementation of the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, this must be matched by sufficient funding and fast-tracked reform of the courts to make our legal system more victim-centred. The Social Democrats believe that consideration should be given to the appointment of a Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Commissioner, with appropriate resources and powers to monitor the implementation of the national strategy.

"Ireland must also fulfil its obligations under the Istanbul Convention by significantly increasing the number of women's refuge spaces around the country. Behind the latest garda figures there are tens of thousands of lives shattered by the scourge of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. While it is regrettable there are so few female voices at the cabinet table, the issue of women's safety must remain a priority for the new government."



Springing into Action for St. Brigid's Day: Community Foundation Ireland and its community partners celebrating the start of Irish Spring. The Foundation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service partners with 213 communities to develop local biodiversity action plans. Pictured (l-r) are Mary-Anne Parsons; Denise Charlton; Deirdre Lynn; Nikiwe Mdziniso, with Sharon O'Brien (Performer - background) marking the re-awakening of nature. Pic: Naoise Culhane.



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.

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

**Period of closure**  
Wednesday 5th February, 2025 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.



# New initiative explores how Irish language and traditions can inspire environmental innovations

*Young people in Wicklow invited to apply*

A new Irish-language educational programme, which is open to young people in Wicklow, has launched last week. The initiative 'Treoraigh do Thodhchai' is a partnership with the CONNECT Centre's Academy of the Near Future and Gael Linn's Gaelbhratach. It will feature hands-on workshops addressing environmental challenges and explore how the Irish language and traditions can inspire creative, sustainable, and technological solutions for the future.

Young people in Wicklow aged 15-17 are being invited to apply for the week-long programme. Selected students will be encouraged to reflect on the role of the Irish language in their own lives and explore its significance in the wider context of environmental sustainability.

The initiative will run from Monday, 31st March to Friday, 4th April 2025 and it will be hosted at Stiúideo Cuan, An Spideal, Co. na Gaillimhe. It is the first Irish-language medium version of the 'Design Your Future City' programme, which has been delivered by Academy of the Near Future annually in Dublin since 2022.

Commenting on the launch, Dr Mairead Hurley, Assistant Professor in Science & Society Education, Trinity College Dublin, said: "We are excited to build on our innovative, youth-led approach to sustainability and citizenship education by delivering it through the Irish language for the first time. This step celebrates the creativity and transdisciplinary potential the Irish language brings to global citizenship education."

"This programme offers students from Wicklow a fantastic opportunity to build confidence, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, while exploring the role of Irish language and

culture in shaping a sustainable future. It will also draw on the expertise of Trinity School of Education's Critical Change Lab programme, an EU project exploring creative educational approaches to promote active citizenship and youth activism."

Also commenting, Edel Ni Bhraonain, Bainisteoir Gaelbhratach, Gael Linn said: "Gael Linn is thrilled to collaborate on Treoraigh do Thodhchai, creating opportunities for young people in Wicklow to lead and shape a brighter future. Through our Gaelbhratach initiative, we have seen the incredible creativity and passion young people bring when given the

chance to lead and shape their own future. This project is an exciting opportunity to amplify the student voice, combining their innovative ideas with the power of our language and culture to create a brighter, more sustainable tomorrow."

## Highlights from the programme

Over the course of the week, the selected students will have the opportunity to:

- Engage in interactive workshops that integrate Irish language and cultural elements with sustainability and technology.
- Collaborate with experts through Irish to develop a deeper understanding of



Caoilte, Déithín and Ferdia pictured at the launch of Treoraigh do Thodhchai.

Irish language and traditions.

- Experiment with citizen science to address the environmental challenges facing modern cities, all through the lens of Irish culture.
- Meet STEM, design, and innovation experts who will guide students in bringing their ideas to life with a sustainability focus

## Application Details

The programme is open to students aged 15-17. Applicants must commit to attending all sessions of the week-long course. Workshops will be conducted in Irish, and the main requirement is an enthusiasm for technology, sustainability, and Irish culture. With only 20

places available, interested students are encouraged to apply early to avoid missing out.

To apply, applicants must answer a few short questions about themselves, describe an environmental challenge in their area, and propose a technology-driven solution. The deadline for applications is 5pm on

Monday, 24th February 2025.

The programme is being run with support from the Department of Education's "Education for Sustainable Development to 2030 Fund."

For further information and the application process, visit: <https://near-future.ie/programmes/treoraigh-do-thodhchai>

# Community groups encouraged to apply to €1 million Collaboration and Innovation Fund

*Funding available to support unmet literacy, numeracy, digital and financial literacy needs in Wicklow communities*

The Adult Literacy For Life (ALL) Programme Office, supported by SOLAS, has announced its call for community partners in counties Kildare and Wicklow to apply for key funding to address local and national unmet literacy needs through its €1 million Collaboration and Innovation Fund 2025.

Launched by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Patrick O'Donovan (TD), the €1 million fund will enable community partners in Kildare and Wicklow and across Ireland, to

access important funding to reach adults with unmet literacy, numeracy, digital and financial literacy needs and help to create literacy-friendly communities.

The Minister made the announcement as the latest figures from the Programme for International Assessment for Adult Competencies (PIAAC), published by the OECD, were announced recently, with findings from the survey providing an overall picture of current literacy needs across the Irish adult population.

Findings show, that in Ireland:

- 1 in 4 adults struggle with everyday maths, 29% of adults are at Level 1 or below for adaptive problem solving, and
- 1 in 5 adults aged between 16-65, are at or below Level 1 in literacy, indicating that literacy is an important issue in society.

This means that around 700,000 adults in Ireland struggle with reading and understanding everyday text, and may have difficulty completing common daily tasks like filling in a form, reading instructions on medicines, adding up a bill, and helping kids with homework.

Over the last number of years, the ALL Collaboration and Innovation Fund has supported around 150 innovative projects in communities across

Ireland, with €66,000 awarded to support 8 local projects in Counties Kildare and Wicklow in 2024.

Deirdre Gallagher, Regional Literacy Coordinator at Kildare and Wicklow ETB said: "The ALL Collaboration and Innovation Fund has enabled community stakeholders across counties Kildare and Wicklow to come together to develop innovative projects that support the aims of the ALL Strategy. Through effective partnership our communities in Kildare and Wicklow are becoming more literacy-aware and literacy friendly. By working together and being innovative, community organisations are more successful in reaching those furthest behind in our communities. Regional initiatives that build confidence with literacy, numeracy, financial and digital literacy skills, and facilitate all to participate meaningfully in our communities are having a transformative impact. I encourage partners in Kildare and Wicklow to think about a community initiative that could drive positive literacy outcomes, and to apply to the Fund by 5pm on Friday, 7th February.

Yvonne McKenna, Director of the ALL Programme Office at

SOLAS said: "Through the ALL Collaboration and Innovation Fund we can move towards our goal of ensuring that all adults in Ireland have the literacy to meet their needs, and ensure we have a more literacy-aware and literacy-friendly society in Counties Kildare and Wicklow and beyond. This Collaboration and Innovation Fund will help a range of learners including older adults, Travellers, migrants, lone parents, and early school leavers gain access to key supports to benefit their needs to participate more fully in society."

"This year, we are delighted to have the Competition and Consumer Protection

Commission (CCPC) provide €250,000 towards the Fund to help support adults with unmet financial literacy across Ireland. We look forward to helping local communities deliver on a diverse range of innovative literacy projects to benefit adults with unmet literacy needs across Ireland."

Applications to the ALL Collaboration and Innovation Fund 2025 will close on Friday, 7th February 2025 at 5pm. Find information on how to apply to the Collaboration and Innovation Fund at [adultliteracyforlife.ie/](http://adultliteracyforlife.ie/).



Simon Harris TD with Grattan and Claire Evans at the recent official opening of Temple Carrig School's new hockey pitch.



# Creative Wicklow grant scheme announced

Wicklow County Council is inviting applications for the Creative Wicklow Grant Scheme 2025. A total of €30,000 is available for this fund, with a closing date for submissions set for 4pm on Friday, 7th March 2025.

Now in its fourth year, this scheme supports Wicklow County Council's role in delivering the Creative Ireland Programme. It is open to not-for-profit organizations, local community groups, and arts, heritage, biodiversity, and cultural organizations, as well as venues and societies.

The scheme welcomes activities that effectively capture and showcase the richness of County Wicklow's arts, culture, creativity, heritage, nature, biodiversity and history. Individuals applying for funding must partner with local community, arts, heritage, biodiversity, and cultural groups.

Grants ranging from €1,000 to €3,000 will be allocated to selected projects that creatively and innovatively communicate and celebrate the aspects of Wicklow's people and place. Applications will be assessed by members of Wicklow County Council's Culture Team, which includes representatives from the Heritage, Arts, Libraries, and Archives departments.

Applications must be submitted online at <https://wicklowcountycoun->

[cil.submittable.com/submit](https://cil.submittable.com/submit) by the deadline of Friday, 7th March 2025, at 4pm.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Paul O'Brien, stated: "Wicklow County Council aims to place creativity and culture at the heart of communities throughout Wicklow, recognising that creativity has a positive influence on wellbeing as well as community and economic success."

Wicklow County Council Chief Executive, Emer O'Gorman added: "We are delighted to be in a position to support the innovative projects that have earned Wicklow County Council recognition as a creative county, where local community groups showcase and celebrate the richness of county Wicklow's art and culture."

The Creative Ireland Programme is led by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media. The program focuses on encouraging participation in cultural and creative activities to promote individual, community, and national well-being.



Pictured is of one of 2024 Creative Wicklow Grant Scheme projects.

# Gemma Hayes at Mermaid Arts Centre



Friday 21st February, €26

Gemma Hayes performs live at Mermaid on Friday 21st February! After a time of reflection and renewal in West Cork, Gemma's long-awaited album 'BLIND FAITH' is here, diving into themes of longing, empowerment, and freedom.

With delicate guitar, eerie synths, and swooning cello, Gemma's personal yet abstract songwriting invites listeners to sink into each song. Don't miss out on this intimate performance! Book through [mermaidartscentre.ie](https://mermaidartscentre.ie).

# Cinema at Mermaid: The Teacher (12a)

Monday 10th February, €10/8. Duration: 118mins. Language: Arabic & Hebrew with English subtitles.

Palestinian schoolteacher Basem lives alone following the tragic death of his teenage son and the breakdown of his marriage.

When one of his students is murdered, Basem and volunteer worker Lisa try to prevent the boy's younger brother from seeking revenge.

At the same time, Basem's support for political resistance embroils him in a hostage situation involving an American soldier.

Book through [mermaidartscentre.ie](https://mermaidartscentre.ie)





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# The 4 Of Us - Crescent Nights

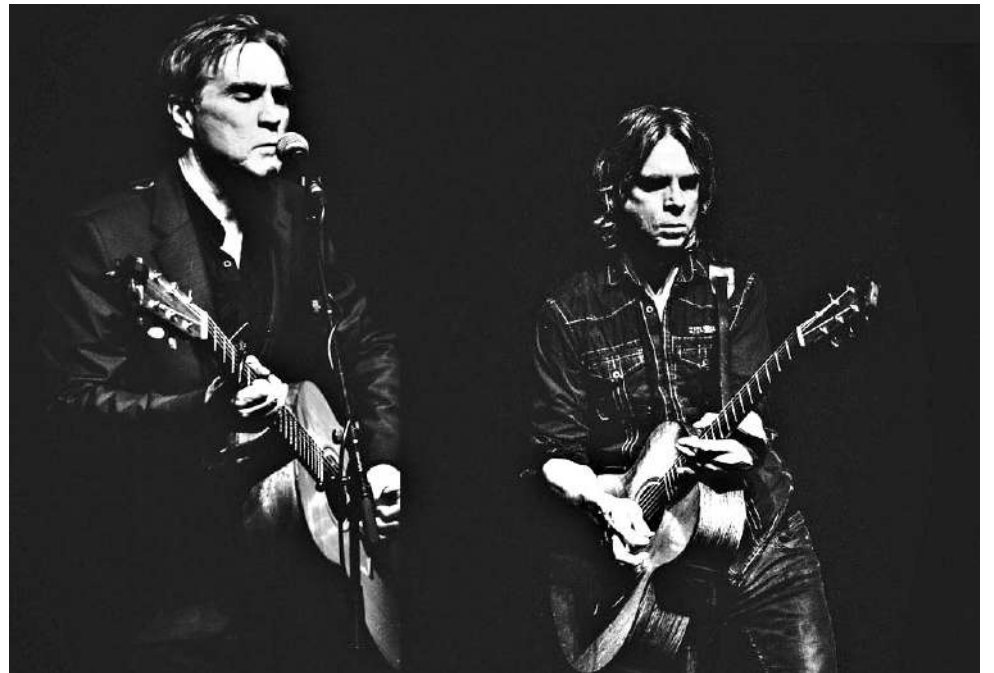
A legendary blend of rock, soul and folk

Whale Theatre, Friday 7th and Saturday 8th February, 8pm (doors 7pm) Tickets €30 and available at [www.whaletheatre.ie](http://www.whaletheatre.ie) or call the booking office on 01 2010550 for returns.

To celebrate the launch of their brand new album titled "Crescent Nights", The 4 Of Us return to the Whale Theatre to perform songs from their latest release, as well as familiar classics from an extensive back catalogue.

Hailing from Newry, Northern Ireland, The 4 Of Us has been captivating audiences for over three decades with their soulful melodies and compelling lyrics. With brothers Brendan and Declan Murphy at the helm, The 4 Of Us has left an indelible mark on the Irish music scene.

Their journey began in the late '80s, and since then, they've evolved into one of Ireland's most beloved and enduring musical acts. Known for their distinctive sound that seamlessly blends rock, folk, and pop influences, The 4 Of Us has produced a string of hits that have become anthems for fans across generations.



The 4 of Us.

## Screen Ireland launches 2025 slate of productions, with over 80 supported projects

Screen Ireland has launched its 2025 Slate of Productions of over 80 productions across feature film, TV drama, animation, documentary and short film. Total production spend generated by the Irish screen industry in 2024 is valued at over €430 million, representing a 33% increase on 2023 figures.

The national agency for the Irish film, television drama, animation, documentary and digital games industries will set out its new Strategic Plan 2025 - 2029, Fís Athnuaithe, which has been informed by an independent Economic and Skills Analysis of the Irish Creative Screen Sector commissioned by Screen Ireland, which was also published in January.

Despite unprecedented disruptions and challenges facing the industry globally, the Irish creative screen industry continues to experience record breaking production growth, driven by sustained Government investment. The new research (averaging data from 2021 - 2023) shows that the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the audiovisual industry in Ireland is valued at over €1 billion, across live action and animation, digital production, distribution, publishing transmission and exhibition. In terms of employment,

the industry supports a total of 15,899 full-time equivalent jobs (FTE).

At an event in Dublin's City Hall, multiple award-winning producer, filmmaker and educator David Puttnam will join Chief Executive of Screen Ireland, Désirée Finnegan in a conversation about the cultural and economic value of the screen industry.

This will be followed by a panel discussion chaired by Siomha Ni Ruairc, with creative screen talent who have new work featured on the its 2025 Slate of Productions, including Simone Kirby (Actor, Kneecap, Video Nasty, Irish Blood, Whitetail), Clinton Liberty (Actor, Feed, Holding, House of the Dragon), Rachel Carey (Director, Obituary Season 2, Deadly Cuts), Macdara Kelleher (Producer, Saipan) and Jo Spain (Screenwriter, Mix Tape, The Boy that Never Was).

Screen Ireland also announced plans to launch a range of new initiatives and funds. This year, the agency plans to ring-fence funding of €5.5 million for nationwide development and Irish language storytelling across all genres and formats. To prioritise talent development and direct initiatives for creative talent, 2025 will see the renewal of the agency's initiative The Voice, a concept development fund for projects led at the earliest stage by the creative vision of a director. In order to capitalise on the global opportunity for the digital games sector in Ireland, Screen Ireland will also launch a €500,000 digital games development initiative.

Chair of Screen Ireland Ray Harman said: "The research we are publishing today is a comprehensive overview of the development of our sector since 2021 and underlines the valuable cultural and economic con-

tribution that the Irish creative industry makes to the economy. Screen Ireland is proud of the role that we have played in nurturing film makers and strategically investing in industry development.

"In a rapidly changing and increasingly competitive marketplace, public funding for Irish film and television is now more essential than ever. Our new Strategy Fís Athnuaithe outlines how, as an agency, we plan to continue to build a sustainable future for filmmaking in Ireland."

Chief Executive of Screen Ireland Désirée Finnegan said: "At Screen Ireland, we are delighted to launch our 2025 Production Slate today - with over 80 projects across feature film, documentary, animation, TV drama and short film. Irish storytelling on screen has never been more visible or more acclaimed on the world stage. This success has really highlighted the significant cultural value of seeing Irish life, heritage and our national language on screens all over the world."

Ireland's audiovisual industry

continues to thrive, despite unprecedented global challenges. The new analysis, conducted by Alma Economics for Screen Ireland in 2024 looking at the years 2021 - 2023, demonstrates that the audiovisual sector is a key contributor to employment and economic impact in Ireland, supporting 10,450 FTE directly and 15,899 FTEs in total. The sector generates €890 million in labour compensation, with €594.8 million in direct labour compensation, demonstrating its contribution to local wages and economic activity.

While the analysis found that the sector is a key driver to economic growth nationally, it highlights the need for ongoing support for the development of the industry outside of the established regional hubs to generate a greater distribution of the economic impact of the industry around the country.

### Cultural impact of Irish stories on Screen

The analysis cites the audiovisual sector as a strong generator of cul-

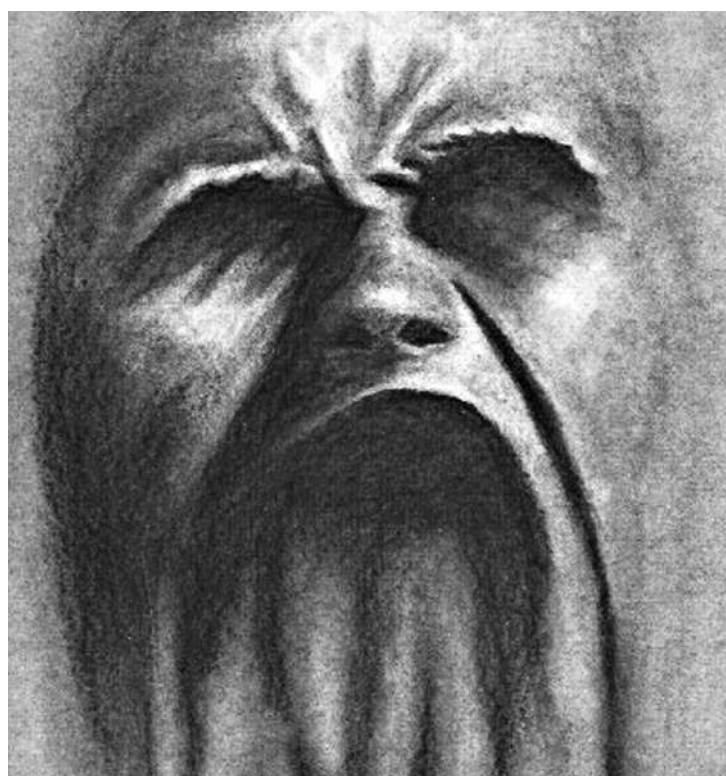
tural value, promoting the Irish language, identity, and values through the telling of stories on screen.

Productions like Banshees of Inisherin and Normal People have increased visitor numbers to filming locations, while films like Kneecap and An Cailín Ciúin raise interest in Irish language and heritage.

The report highlights Tourism Ireland's research from 2024, which revealed that 26% of tourists coming to Ireland indicated that film, television and travel shows were a source of travel inspiration. Initiatives such as Screen Ireland's NAPF, the WRAP Fund, and the Section 481 regional uplift (2019-2023), were designed to ensure this impact is felt as broadly as possible across the country.

Désirée added: "Since 2021, Irish films and talent have won over 300 international awards. This year there were several Irish films supported by Screen Ireland in contention for Academy Award nominations."

"It has been an incredible journey for the creative teams behind these projects, with so much achieved already."



## Who Else am I to Become

An Exhibition By Luca McAleese

Signal Arts Centre,  
4th to 16th February

"Who Else am I To Become", is the first solo exhibition by artist Luca McAleese. Luca creates powerful, emotive figurative works based on personal experiences.

Through his use of the raw and elemental medium of charcoal and chalk Luca seeks to capture fleeting and elusive emotions that are often beyond language.

Through his subtraction process with charcoal, Luca strips away the familiar representation of the human form to intensify the work's emotive impact. It is in the absence of what we are conditioned to see that has led Luca to this core body of work. His work serves as an attempt to visually articulate emotions that he himself has yet to fully comprehend resulting in an ongoing dialogue between himself and the work.

Opening Reception: Friday 7th February 2025,  
7pm to 9pm





# IFI School Screening at Mermaid: La Suprema

Monday 10th February, 11am, €5 per student (teachers free). Age Suitability: 12+. Duration: 83mins. This screening is open to schools only.

Mermaid Arts Centre is screening La Suprema in association with the IFI Schools Programme. A studyguide for this film is available from the IFI website. This screening is open to schools only. If you are a teacher and would like to book please contact [info@mermaidartscentre.ie](mailto:info@mermaidartscentre.ie) or call Box Office on 01 272 4030.

## About the film:

Set in 2001 Colombia and to La Suprema, a tiny and remote village in the Caribbean region that's far from any beach and seemingly lost in time. Laureana is a strong-willed teenager who's not about to conform to society or what her Abuela have in store for her. When she finds out via the newspaper that her estranged uncle is days away from fighting in a boxing world championship in Venezuela, she ignites a spark that gets the whole town on board with watching the match live on national television. The problem? It may be the 21st century, but the village has no electricity and no one has a TV set.

## Community:

A strong theme in the film is the theme of community. The village is closely knit, it seems everyone knows each other, and everyone comes together in communal areas. They live what appears to be a basic life in comparison to the



western world. The washing up takes place in the river, children play with dominoes and as mentioned there is no electricity. Initially everyone is hesitant to Laureana's idea.

Eventually Laureana rallies the village to fundraise for the cost of a TV and enlists the help of Efraín the local trainer

who discovered her uncle years ago, who agrees to follow her lead and set out on a journey for the big city.

## La Suprema and Colombia:

La Suprema is continually referenced in the film as being 'lost' it doesn't appear on any maps and during one of the scenes

at school this is linked to the historic rulers. Though this film is set in 2001 it's not unusual today for areas of Colombia to go without electricity.

The ZNI are regions that do not receive electricity through the Colombian national grid. These regions make up 52% of the nation's territory (equivalent to the

size of France). Much more than a setting or background, La Suprema and its inhabitants embody the endearing - and enduring - qualities of collective effort, joys, and pain.

## Music:

One of the most striking elements of this film is the sound and music throughout. You'll hear at different points the singing of the village, complete silence as the village is free from hum and noise of devices and then when Laureana and Efraín get to the big city, its big and loud and overwhelming both in noise and visually. Director Felipe Holguín Caro's captures the vibrancy of the town's inner life; the musicality of daily talk and chores being done by the river, time spent playing dominoes, and just kids being kids.

The film is a treat and ultimately a tale of a village going against all odds for this history-making moment might put their town on the map.



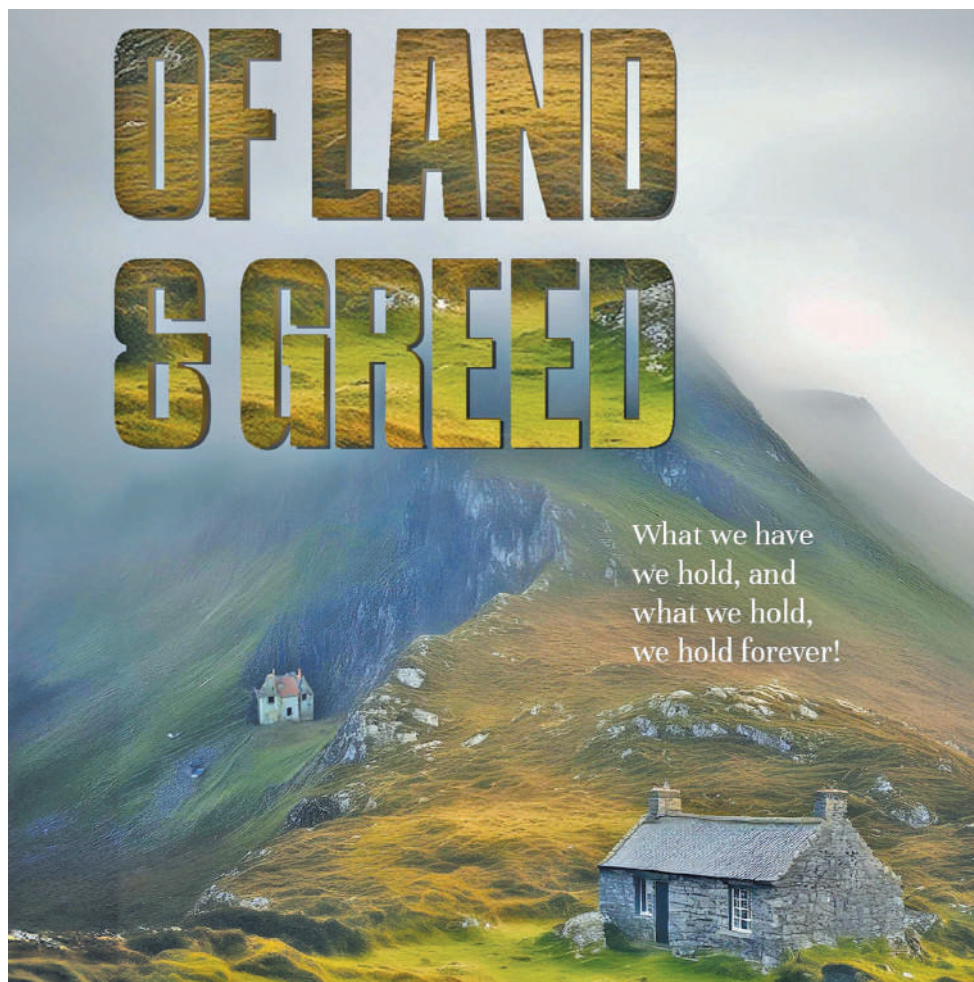
## Housewife of the Year

Whale Theatre, Thursday 6th February, 8pm (doors 7pm) Tickets €12 and available at [www.whaletheatre.ie](http://www.whaletheatre.ie) or call the booking office on 01 2010550 for returns.

In the Ireland of today, it might look like a lost episode of Father Ted but there was a time when Housewife Of The Year ruled the waves on RTÉ. Basically The Rose Of Tralee for Irish mothers and wives who were a dab hand at keeping the house nice and tidy. And hot meals on the table three times a day, of course.

Filmmaker Ciarán Cassidy clearly wasn't just looking for laughs with his eponymous documentary, speaking to former contestants in a competition that ran from 1969 to 1995, moving up quite a few gears when RTÉ began broadcasting it annually in 1982.

These ladies share our bewilderment at their acceptance of societal structures and recount their experiences of marriage, contraception, Magdalene institutions, financial vulnerability, marital breakdown and shame. It makes for a surprisingly warm and affectionate experience. And yep, there are laughs too.



## Uncovering the Dark Obsession with Land: Denis Cronin's Of Land & Greed explores Ireland's most brutal feuds

In a country where land is woven into the very fabric of identity, Ireland's deep-rooted connection to the soil has fuelled some of its most brutal feuds and murders. Denis Cronin's gripping new historical fiction novel, *Of Land and Greed*, examines how the relentless pursuit of land divides families, destroys relationships and leaves lasting scars. Why does the allure of ownership or the fear of loss drive people to desperate, even violent, acts?

"These deep-rooted sentiments find powerful expression in *Of Land and Greed*, a narrative that blurs the lines between truth and fiction," remarks author Denis Cronin. "By exploring Ireland's turbulent relationship with land ownership, it sheds light on its profound effects on family dynamics."

Cronin's novel taps into the age-old Irish sentiment: "What we have we hold, and what we hold, we hold forever!" This mindset, deeply embedded in Irish culture, captures the fierce tenacity of those who view land as an extension of self—a belief that has historically driven individuals to desperate and violent acts. This theme echoes John B. Keane's *The Field*, where Bull McCabe's murderous

obsession with land reflected real-life conflicts throughout Ireland.

Set against the backdrop of Ireland's fight for independence, *Of Land and Greed* follows Seán Óg Crowley, the first in his family to own the land they once farmed as tenants. His hard-won victory spirals into a personal war at home, fuelled by obsession, betrayal and ambition. This is not a simple tale of tenant farmers versus landlords; it is a deeper exploration of how land ownership fractures families and communities. As tensions within the Crowley family escalate, a violent storm becomes the stage for a final, explosive confrontation. A long-buried family secret emerges, threatening to shatter their legacy and haunt future generations. Readers are left ques-

tioning whether the pursuit of land and legacy is worth such devastating costs.

*Of Land and Greed* is more than a story of inheritance and rivalry. It is a reflection on a nation's turbulent birth and a sobering examination of how greed can corrode family bonds and identities. Even those who emerge victorious in battles over land are often left grappling with irreversible loss. Denis Cronin is an acclaimed writer with a deep connection to Irish heritage and history. His passion for storytelling and understanding of Ireland's cultural landscape shine through in his work. His debut novel, *The Stain* (2022), received critical acclaim, establishing him as a compelling voice in historical fiction.





Pictured are Bord na Móna Recycling Brand Marketing Manager Shane Mackey alongside Lucy & Amira of Newbridge College.

# €5000 upcycling challenge for secondary schools

Bord na Móna Recycling, one of Ireland's leading waste management companies has launched the 'Secondary Schools Challenge', an educational competition centred around the U.N.'s Sustainable Development goals (SDG's), with over €5,000 in prizes to be won.

The SDG's are 17 global objectives designed to address the world's most pressing challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, and peace and justice. Their aim is to create a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all.

Building on the success of its multi award-winning Primary School's Upcycling Competition this new initiative aims to raise awareness and educate students about upcycling and environmentally friendly practices, while fostering creativity, innovation, and critical thinking.

Open to secondary schools across the Republic of Ireland, the

challenge provides students with an opportunity to explore sustainability through upcycling projects, sharpening their communication and presentation skills in the process.

Participants can work individually or in groups of up to four, with the Top 10 finalists invited to a Grand Final where they will present their projects and respond to questions from a panel of expert judges.

Speaking on the Secondary Schools Challenge, Bord na Móna Recycling Brand Marketing Manager Shane Mackey stated:

"Following the incredible enthusiasm and creativity showcased in our Primary Schools Upcycling

Competition, there has been overwhelming demand for a secondary schools initiative. The Secondary Schools Challenge builds on this momentum, inspiring older students to engage with the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals through innovative and impactful projects. This initiative empowers students to think globally while acting locally, fostering environmental responsibility. We're thrilled to support such brilliant young minds in making a real impact."

For more information or to enter, visit [www.bnmrecycling.ie/secondary-schools-competition/](http://www.bnmrecycling.ie/secondary-schools-competition/). Closing date for submissions is April 18th 2025.

## Launch of first ever digital wellbeing awards

The EU's first Digital Wellbeing Award programme for primary and secondary schools was launched today with a school in Rush, Co. Dublin becoming the first to be awarded the accolade. The Awards framework has been developed by Digital Schools Awards in conjunction with webwise.ie along with the backing of major tech companies HP and AMD for this unique education-industry partnership.

St Joseph's Secondary School, Rush, took part in the pilot programme for the initiative and in doing so became the first school to be awarded the Special Recognition Badge. The launch is putting a call out to all national and secondary schools in Ireland to join the Digital Wellbeing Award initiative.

Open to register and free to all schools in Ireland, the awards pro-

gramme underscores Ireland's commitment to fostering healthier digital habits. To achieve the award, schools must show that they have set out and adopted a whole-school digital wellbeing strategy. Through practical support and access to resources, the programme will help participants to build positive attitudes and behaviours and to be able to anticipate, recognise, recover and learn

from online risks.

To attain a Special Recognition Badge for Digital Wellbeing, schools must complete a self-assessment to identify their expertise. Where gaps in the knowledge exist, Digital Schools Awards will provide the necessary guidance to achieve accreditation. The stand-alone badge will be available to all schools that demonstrate a strategic approach to

cyber resilience and internet safety.

Recent research by the UCD School of Medicine looking at the level of digital skills among children aged 10 and 11 found those with a safe and positive understanding of technology and smart devices enjoyed overall higher levels of contentment compared to their less digital savvy peers.

The Digital Wellbeing

Awards will help schools to support students with the knowledge and tools to be responsible and confident online.

Speaking at the launch in St Joseph's Secondary School, Daragh Nealon, Principal, said; "Every school is different but digital wellbeing is universal and should be a core part of the full digital learning experience. I have observed firsthand the curiosity and creativity that flourishes in a safe and supportive digital environment, as showcased

through our students' work and achievements. The promotion of wellbeing is at the core of the ethos of St Joseph's, and we are truly honoured to be the first school in Ireland to be awarded this Special Recognition Badge for Digital Wellbeing."

According to Anna Doody of the Digital Schools Awards; "The Digital Wellbeing Awards framework provides the roadmap, resources, and support to help each, and every school build tailored practices that promote healthy technology use and a positive digital culture. It's so important that schools embrace a digital wellbeing programme that works for

their students and teachers, and we are looking forward to a much-expanded level of participation in the upcoming year."

Jane McGarrigle, National Coordinator, Webwise.ie, commented; "We live in an ever-evolving digital world which offers many opportunities for learners. In order to support learners to thrive online, we need to equip them from a young age with skills and competencies to make sense of this complex digital world. We are delighted to be supporting Digital Schools Awards in launching the Digital Wellbeing."

The Digital Wellbeing

Programme represents a significant investment in the future of Ireland's youth. As students learn to harness technology for their benefit while maintaining balance, Ireland continues to lead the way in creating a healthier, more mindful digital culture. This is a journey not a jump and will reap huge benefits in the years to come as children who have experienced digital wellbeing in schools present enhanced digital literacy, healthier digital habits, improved career readiness and the ability to adapt to technological developments.

To register for the Digital Wellbeing Award programme, visit [awards-4SELFIE.eu](http://awards-4SELFIE.eu)



An Indoor Girls' Football Blitz was held on Thursday 16th January in Aughrim Community Hall. This was a 7-a-side blitz and all involved had a great day. Participating schools included Kilcommon, Crossbridge, Tinahely, Coolafancy, Laragh, Knockananna, Shillelagh, Annacurra, Ballycoog, Aughrim, Ballyconnell (pictured) and St. Saviour's.



Zuzanna Koman, Aidan Rebueno, Kim Coffey, Nathan St Lawrence and Kamaya Gogna launching Ireland's first ever programme to recognise and celebrate digital wellbeing in schools. The first award goes to St. Joseph's Secondary School, Rush.



# Wicklow youth service awarded for LGBTQ+ inclusion

Crosscare Bray Youth Service based in Bray was last week awarded Belong To - LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland's Rainbow Award on Wednesday, 30 January at a ceremony at The Clarence Hotel, Dublin 2.

The youth service was recognised for its work as part of the Rainbow Award initiative which is dedicated to creating LGBTQ+ inclusive youth services. The organisation, which provides services such as developmental group work, drop-ins, one-to-one supports, outdoor adventure groups, and drugs education and prevention programmes, works with over 1,200 young people.

The event was hosted by newly announced RTÉ 2FM presenter Aisling Bonner and attended by a number of TDs and public sector representatives.

The Rainbow Award initiative was established by Belong To in 2023 to support and accredit LGBTQ+ safe and supportive youth services. Over the course of 12 to 18 months, youth services are supported in implementing evidence-based actions across a number of key areas, which research shows improve the wellbeing and safety of LGBTQ+ youth.

The initiative is supported by ETBI, City of Dublin ETB and the National Youth Council of Ireland.

## Providing LGBTQ+ people with a space to feel safe and welcome

Speaking about the awards, Deputy CEO of Belong To Sinéad Keane (she/her) said: "There are LGBTQ+ young people in every part of Ireland, including Wicklow. As a society, we owe these young people an adolescence that not only accepts their identities

but celebrates the diversity of their experiences and lives. That is what the Rainbow Award is all about - providing LGBTQ+ young people with a space to feel safe and welcome. Last year, our Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland report showed that 84% of LGBTQ+ people indicated that having a connection with the LGBTQI+ community through groups is one of the most important positive factors for their mental health. This work can have a huge impact on the life and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ young people. We would like to thank the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention and Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth for their continued support of our work with LGBTQ+ youth.

"It is great to have the opportunity to recognise the work of Crosscare Bray. The team there have done amazing work to make their services inclusive for all young people - and we're delighted to have been able to support them on that journey. The impact of their work is being felt by the people already in their services and will be felt by the many thousands that will come through their doors in the future. Also commenting was Paul Murphy, Youth Worker at Crosscare Bray who said: "As a youth service it can be easy to simply accept the idea that all of our projects provide a 'safe



Pictured at the Belong To - LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland Rainbow Award ceremony on 29th January in the Clarence Hotel, Dublin, were members of Crosscare Bray with National Network Coordinator at Belong To, Kate Cummins.

and supportive space' as something that goes without saying, but we feel that it is important to not just say it, but to be able to demonstrate it. The Rainbow Award enabled us to check in with the young people that use the space, and to review our processes, staff attitudes and our

organisational policies against externally recognised criteria.

"We know that we have young people right across our service that identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. For some, attending our LGBTQ+ youth group is of real benefit, but others don't need or want

to attend that group. It is important that if they wish to be open about their identity, that they know that all of our spaces are safe and supportive one. We're really pleased that Belong To as administrators of the award, have found that Bray Youth Service offers exactly that."

## Awardees

As well as Crosscare Bray, eight other services were awarded, including:

- Belvedere Youth Club, Dublin 1
- Southill Hub, Southill, Co. Limerick
- Young Social Innovators, Glasnevin, Dublin 9

- Br' Youth Services, Walkinstown, Dublin 12
- Belong To - Dublin Youth Service, Dublin 2
- Donegal Youth Service, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
- Bradúg Youth Service, Dublin 1
- Familibase, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10

Belong To - LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland is the

national organisation supporting LGBTQ+ youth across the country. Applications are now open for youth services and organisations in Wicklow and across Ireland which would like to work towards achieving the Rainbow Award in 2026. For more information, visit [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org).

# Fundraising table quiz for Greystones Family Resource Centre



Pictured are Lynne O'Connor, Cllr Stephen Stokes, Eileen O'Mahony-Bowe, Nicola Lawless, Anne Waithira-Burke, Oscar O'Brian and Rebecca Lowbridge.

The Greystones Family Resource Centre has announced a Fundraising Table Quiz on Thursday, March 13th, 2025, at the stunning Whale Theatre in Greystones. This exciting event, starting at 7:30pm, promises an evening of fun, community spirit, and lively competition, all in support of the Building Premises Fund.

The event aims to raise vital funds to help secure a permanent premises for the centre, which serves as a vital hub for local families, offering a range of essential services and programs. With plenty of fun questions, as well as a raffle on the night, the Table Quiz is shaping up to be a night to remember.

Nicola Lawless, Chairperson of the Greystones Family Resource Centre, expressed her excitement about the upcoming fundraiser: "This event is not just about raising money, it's about bringing the community together. We live in a wonderful area, and the Family Resource Centre is at the heart of it. Securing a permanent home for the centre means that we can continue to support local families for generations to come across Greystones, Kilcoole, Delgany, Newcastle and Newtownmountkennedy. We're calling on everyone to come out and join us for a fantastic evening at the Whale Theatre."

The Whale Theatre, known for its intimate atmosphere and state-of-the-art facilities, is the perfect venue for an event that brings people together for a good cause. Teams of four can enter for just €10 per person.

Ms Lawless added: "Every euro raised at this event will go towards building a brighter future for our centre and the families we serve. We're so grateful to the Whale Theatre for hosting us and to the local businesses and individuals who are supporting the night with prizes and sponsorship."

Advance tickets will be available to purchase. Don't miss the chance to test your knowledge, connect with friends, and support a cause that matters to the entire community.

To find out more please email [administrator@greystonesfrc.ie](mailto:administrator@greystonesfrc.ie).





Eamonn Coyle snapped this breathtaking photo of the morning fog rolling in at Clara Vale.

# XPENG - NEW KID IN TOWN

This week's introduction of a brand new (to us) car maker showed serious intent of capturing a goodly proportion of the luxury end of the Irish car market.

By Martin McCarthy

Xpeng - derived from a shortened version of the founder / owner's name - are being distributed by the blue-chip Motor Distributors Ltd. (MDL), with the MSL Outlet on Pottery Road Cabinteely servicing Wicklow - being just 15 minutes from Bray.

I drove the introductory model, the G6, whose exterior styling is similar to the BMW X4.

Xpeng are established 10 years and have been very successful in their home (Chinese) market - arguably the world's most competitive car market.

XPeng cars are all Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) and they are heavily invested in new technology including Autonomous driving. The interior oozes luxury and on the road the G6 is super smooth and refined. The tech - such as cameras, collision avoidance and usability is second to none.

There are three variants in the G6 - ranging in price from €42,200 for the

435km range model to €49,400 for the 570km range model. Both have DC, ultra fast charging capability.

The cars come with a five-year warranty or 160,000km with the battery guaranteed for 7 years.

Initially the G6 undercuts the Tesla Model Y by a big margin, while they will also be aiming to win new customers from the Audi e-tron and others top end family SUVs

In the coming months we will see the US sized

G9 and the P7 joining the Xpeng model line up - with the sleek Mona MO3 Coupe not far behind.

Xpeng have already made serious inroads into Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Holland - and they may well be the most exciting new market entrant to Ireland in 2025.



Xpeng G6 outside MDL's historic HQ on the Naas Road.



## PLANNING

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I, Hollie Brown, wish to apply for permission for Demolition of existing dwelling, construction of new replacement dwelling, removal existing septic tank, construction of new replacement sewerage system to current regulations and all ancillary site works at Castlekevin Lane, Roundwood, Co. Wicklow. 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 that a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee (€20.00) within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, Denise O'Leary & Muiris O'Connor, intend to apply for: Planning Permission for development at this site: 52 Newcourt Rd, Newcourt, Bray, Co. Wicklow, A98 K6D9, Ireland. The development will consist of: Attic conversion for storage, including a rear dormer. Construction of a two-storey side and front extension with a front-facing Velux window at attic level and new fenestration to the front and side elevations on both levels. Conversion of the existing garage at ground floor level. Widening of the front vehicular access.

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. The planning application may be viewed online at [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie), under planning online enquiries. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee (€20.00) within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

### WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Michael & Anna Higgins seek planning permission for a change of use of existing farm buildings to provide four self-catering holiday accommodation units.

The development will consist of a renovation and a change of use to existing farm structures providing (2 No. Two Bed Units) and (2 No. One bed Units) alterations to farmyard enclosures to provide car parking / amenity areas. A packaged effluent disposal system with mechanical aeration and polishing filter to current EPA standards together with all associated site development works at Ballynacarrig, Brittas Bay, County Wicklow.

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.

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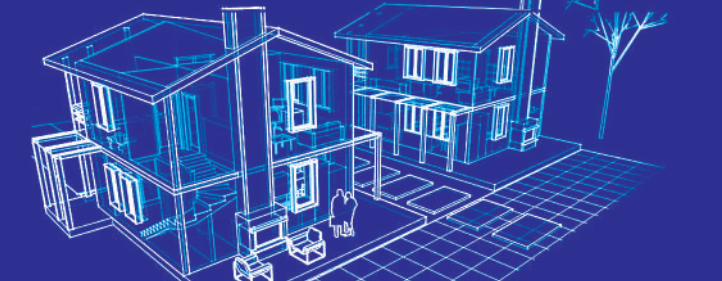
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# IHF Wicklow Branch names Employee of the Year



William Gregory, (Woodenbridge Hotel and Lodge), IHF Wicklow Branch with the 'Rising Star Award'.

Lavinia Byrne, Restaurant Supervisor at Glenview Hotel and Leisure Club has been announced as the 24/25 Irish Hotels Federation (IHF) Wicklow Branch 'Employee of the Year'. The announcement was made at an awards lunch in Glenview Hotel & Leisure Club, where guests gathered to celebrate and recognise nominees from hotels and guesthouses across Wicklow who have made an outstanding contribution to their workplace.

Congratulating Lavinia on the award, IHF Wicklow Branch Representative, Joesph Scott-Lennon said the judges highlighted Lavinia's ability to adapt, her awareness of the importance of ensuring the guests are looked after and openness to working with team members across the hotel.

At the event, IHF President, Michael Magnier congratulated all nominees and spoke about the exceptional people within the sector whose contribution to tourism and hospitality is key to its success as

Ireland's largest indigenous employer, supporting over 270,000 livelihoods - including over 14,700 jobs throughout Wicklow.

Lavinia has worked at the Glenview Hotel and Leisure Club for the last six years as Restaurant Supervisor where she is responsible for the breakfast team. As part of her role, Lavinia is dedicated to training new members of the team when they come in, including training students who join the team for work experience and through our international student programme. Colleagues say,

"Her dedication, hard work and commitment to excellence in hospitality have truly set her apart."

Other presentations on the day included a 'Rising Star Award' to William Gregory, Maintenance at Woodenbridge Hotel and Lodge and a 'Highly Commended Award' to Kevin Bishop, Bartender at the Arklow Bay Hotel.

The IHF Wicklow Branch extends its gratitude to the expert judging

panel comprised of Eileen Cullen,

Director of Kildare/Wicklow ETB and Dara Cruise, Group General Manager, Neville Park Hotels, who had the difficult job of selecting a winner from the nominees. The members of the IHF Wicklow Branch now wish Lavinia the very best of luck as she goes on to represent them at the upcoming National IHF Employee of the Year



Kevin Bishop (Arklow Bay Hotel), IHF Wicklow Branch 'Highly Commended Award' winner.



Michael Magnier, Irish Hotels Federation (IHF) President; Lavinia Byrne, (Glenview Hotel and Leisure Club), IHF Wicklow Branch Employee of the Year; and Joesph Scott-Lennon, IHF Wicklow Branch Representative. Photo: Tom Scott.

## 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. M.D.

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

### Gospel John 3:16-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because he has refused to believe in the name of God's only Son. On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world men have shown they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God.'

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