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Tuesday 18th February 2025 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

# 'NO DOGS ALLOWED'

Launching the Irish Farmers Association's 2025 'No Dogs Allowed' campaign for 2025 in Newcastle last week, IFA President Francie Gorman said dog owners have to be confronted about their failure to take responsibility for the actions of their pets.

The campaign launch comes as incidents of sheep kills are increasing around Co. Wicklow in recent weeks, with a number of councillors raising the issue at last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council. Cllr Melanie Corrigan from Enniskerry said "there's been a lot of cases recently where dogs have attacked heavily pregnant sheep, so farmers are not only losing the mother, they're losing the lamb as well. As a Council I would ask again that we do as much as we can to support the farmers and support the IFA." Cllr Shane Langrell from Ashford said "In 2016 I was a victim of a sheep kill myself. Up to 20 sheep were killed. It's not a pretty site. You go into your field and you see sheep traumatised, sheep dead, sheep slaughtered. And I suppose it is not even what you find dead on the day, it's what you're left with after. The amount of sheep that passed away since that kill... They say the sheep don't get over trauma, and it is a fact. They don't. And I suppose it's just come to light again. Up in Roundwood last week there was a farmer that went to his field and he had sheep killed, 24 pregnant sheep. And it doesn't stop there. I



Catriona Healy, Linda Blake and Karen Dunne at the Tinahely GAA & LGFA Dinner Dance in the Amber Springs, Gorey. Pic: Michael Kelly.

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think this week now his remaining 120-odd flock of ewes will be scanned, and he's very fearful of the results to com. It is not the dogs' fault. The owners of these dogs need to have a good hard look at themselves. And dogs should not be allowed off the leads in forestry, on walkways, trails. It doesn't matter where it is." Launching the 'No Dogs Allowed' campaign, IFA President Francie Gorman said "The devastation caused has to be brought home to those who think their dog would not be part of an attack on livestock. Dog owners cannot absolve themselves of the wreckage left behind when sheep are attacked."

The IFA President said neither the Government or local authorities have done enough to address the issue. "The lack of

robust enforcement of the legal obligations on dog owners has allowed horrendous attacks to persist and increase across the country. It is unacceptable," Francie Gorman said. "We are demanding stronger regulations and stricter enforcement for those who disregard the safety and wellbeing of our livestock."

Among the measures proposed by the Working Group of Control of dogs were stricter regulations and increased enforcement on the ground to tackle the issue of irresponsible dog ownership

"It is unacceptable that these practical proposals have not been acted on. IFA has consistently called for appropriate sanctions and to develop a single national database identifying dogs and their owners, similar to that in other jurisdictions,"

Adrian Gallagher said.

"The critical issue in the first instance is to

have all dogs in the country microchipped, registered to the owner

and licensed in order to establish a national  
*Continued on page 9*

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## Arklow Active Retirement

Active Retirement Arklow weekly Social and Information Mornings have resumed. Members meet every Friday from 11-12 in Arus Lorcáin, Castlepark, Arklow to catch up socially, hear a talk on issues of interest or register to go on a monthly day trip. On alternate Fridays they also enjoy a novel Card Bingo game or two or a "Twenty Questions" General Knowledge Quiz. Some members enjoy Bowls from 2-4 on Monday afternoons. Others head off on Tuesday mornings for a leisurely walk. A monthly day trip takes place on Wednesdays and the first trip of the year will be to Malahide Castle and Demesne on 26th February. Members' subscriptions are due now and new members are always welcome. Their 8 person Management Committee is looking forward to welcoming new members who can call in any Friday at 11 am to Arus Lorcáin or text them at 086 6047132. Annual subscription is €25.

## Soup & Sandwiches

Greystones Soup and Sandwiches Lunch will be held in St. Patrick's Church, Greystones on Tuesday 18th February from 12.30 until 2.00. Suggested donation of €7 for local charities for the homeless. This an opportunity to relax in pleasant company while being plied with home baked food! Everyone welcome.

## Wicklow Lions Quiz nights

Wicklow & District Lions Club continue their annual series of Quiz Nights every Thursday at various venues. At least 20 local charities will benefit from the money raised each night. On Thursday last the quiz team were very busy in the Bridge Tavern supporting Parkinsons and Wicklow Town Team. This week (20th February) the quiz will take place in O'Shea's Corner in Wicklow assisting three local deserving charities Regatta Festival Wicklow Cancer Support and Holy Rosary school. Members of the winning team at the Lions Quiz in Fitzpatrick's in Wicklow with Lion Ann Chambers presenting the prize.

## Bray Cualann Historical Society

Isolda Moylan will recall 'William J. Moylan, a filmmaker in India, Pakistan and Ireland' at 8pm on Thursday February 20th in the Royal Hotel, Main Street, Bray. All are welcome - admission is €8 for non-members. Those wishing to join the Society can do so at this lecture. The AGM of the Society will precede this lecture.

## The Old Dublin Society

Brian Hughes will present 'Dublin: The Irish Revolution 1912-1923' at 6 p.m. on Wednesday February 26th in the Conference Room, Dublin City Library & Archive, 139-144 Pearse Street, Dublin 2. All are welcome - admission is free and no booking is required.

# Council Library Service wants you to get lost - in a good book

Libraries throughout County Wicklow are participating in Ireland Reads, a campaign aimed at encouraging the entire nation to read this month, leading up to a national day of reading on Saturday, 22nd February 2025. Irish libraries have collaborated with publishers, booksellers, authors, and other partners for this campaign, which is part of the government's Healthy Ireland initiative. The goal is to celebrate reading and highlight its many benefits for wellbeing and enjoyment.

The campaign encourages everyone to 'Get Lost in a Good Book' during the month of February, particularly on Ireland Reads Day, Saturday, 22nd February. Throughout the county, events for all ages will celebrate reading, books, and literature. Wicklow County Council Library Service will host various activities across our branch network throughout February in preparation for Ireland Reads Day. We invite you to visit your local branch library to participate in an event or simply to explore what's available. The theme for 2025 is 'Get Lost' and we hope you

will come to your local library to immerse yourself in a good book! A complete schedule of events will be announced on our website and social media pages.

The Ireland Reads website provides book recommendations tailored to your interests and the time you have available for reading. With over 1,500 suggestions from librarians across the country, there is something for everyone, regardless of interests or reading levels. Users can enter their favourite book genre and the amount of time they wish to read each day. The website will suggest the perfect

book and calculate how long it will take to finish, allowing you to set a reading challenge if you're looking to get back into the habit of reading. You can also recommend a book to a friend through the website.

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, encourages everyone in County Wicklow to participate in Ireland Reads, stating, "Getting lost in a good book is one of the best things you can do, at any age. Reading is great for your wellbeing; a good book can relax you, it can teach you, it can take you places you've never been and introduce

you to people you've never met."

Cllr Paul O'Brien, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, added: "Reading has the power to bring people together, spark imagination, and open new worlds. We encourage everyone in Wicklow to pick up a book this month, whether it's your first time or you're rediscovering the joy of reading."

Several well-known ambassadors are promoting the campaign, including Booker Prize winner Paul Lynch, Marian Keyes, Rick O'Shea, Laureate na nOg Patricia Forde, Dave Rudden, and more. You



Stuart Hamilton, Head of Libraries Development with the Local Government Management Agency.

can find out what reading means to them and why they support the campaign at <https://www.irelandreads.ie/>

Discover all that is happening for Ireland Reads,

or to get or share book recommendations, visit [www.irelandreads.ie](https://www.irelandreads.ie/) or <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Libraries> for more information on local events.

## Rathdrum St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee proposes new community forum

The Rathdrum St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee held a meeting earlier this month to discuss preparations for this year's celebrations. A key item on the agenda was fundraising for the parade and broader community initiatives. During the meeting, Marge Hughes was elected as the new Chairperson of the committee. Warm tributes were paid to Jimmy O'Shaughnessy, who has stepped down after an incredible 38 years of dedicated service as Chair. Committee members expressed their deep appreciation for his unwavering commitment to the community and his leadership in making Rathdrum's St. Patrick's Day celebrations a highlight of the local calendar.

### Proposal for a Rathdrum Forum

As part of the discussions, it was proposed that a Rathdrum Forum be established, bringing together representatives from all local community and voluntary groups.

The forum would act as a collaborative platform to strengthen community ties, pool resources, and enhance

access to funding opportunities.

### Benefits of the Rathdrum Forum

The forum would serve as a platform for:

- Joint fundraising initiatives to support events and community projects.
- Capital funding applications for shared equipment, such as sound systems, marquees, staging, and other resources that multiple groups could use, reducing costs for individual organisations.
- Improved communication and cooperation between different community groups, ensuring more effective planning and event management.
- A stronger collective voice when engaging with public bodies and funding agencies on local development projects.

An initial meeting is being planned to gauge interest and explore how best to establish the forum.

All local community and voluntary groups in Rathdrum are invited to participate in this important discussion about the future of community collaboration in the area.

For further details or to express interest in attending, please contact the Secretary, Stephen Kearon, at [RathdrumPatricks-DayParade@gmail.com](mailto:RathdrumPatricks-DayParade@gmail.com).



Open Door held a coffee morning on Thursday 13th February. The Centre was very busy with visitors including members, carers, supporters, friends and Trustees. A number of guests had never been to Open Door before and they were amazed at the activities available to adults with physical disabilities. Tea and coffee was served with a wide selection of scones, cakes and biscuits and there was also a raffle with some lovely Valentine's Day prizes. €815 was raised which will go towards equipment and materials for physiotherapy, art, ceramics and woodwork. Open Door Trustee, Maureen Mc Gettigan, presented Open Door with a very generous cheque for €10,000 on behalf of the Mc Gettigan family and the Royal Hotel & Merrill Leisure Club. This is very much appreciated by the members, staff and Board of Trustees at Open Door.

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# Progress made on reopening Cliff Walk?

Tánaiste Simon Harris TD has confirmed 'progress is being made' in efforts to reopen the Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk following a key meeting with stakeholders last Thursday. The cliff walk has been closed by Wicklow County Council for the past 4 years due to safety concerns. The first meeting of the task force, which included representatives from Wicklow County Council, Irish Rail, the National Parks & Wildlife Service, and Failte Ireland, focused on identifying a safe and sustainable way forward for one of Wicklow's most popular walking routes.

The 6.5-kilometer trail attracts between 250,000 and 300,000 visitors each year, has been closed due to safety concerns, including a major collapse and ongoing erosion issues.

The meeting heard of the serious safety concerns related to the cliff walk's current status and of all the measures taking place to restore access while ensuring public safety and environmental integrity.

Speaking after the meeting, Tánaiste Simon Harris said "The Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk is a treasured route for locals and visitors. I know from speaking to people from the area and tourists that the closure of this route has caused serious frustration.

"Today's meeting was an important step forward, with all parties committed to finding a workable solution.

"There are serious challenges that need to be addressed and with long term solutions needed to make the cliff walk viable for years to come.

"While there are challenges to address, including erosion risks, land access, and environmental protections, it is clear to me that stakeholders are committed to making real progress toward a safe and viable reopening.

"The meeting also addressed concerns raised by the National Parks & Wildlife Service regarding the area's Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designation."

Discussions with Irish Rail acknowledged their role in managing sections of the route. Failte Ireland shared concerns of the economic impact on businesses and local communities from a tourism perspective.

Tánaiste Simon Harris added: "This was a constructive discussion with

clear momentum behind it. "There is still work to do, but with continued cooperation, we are on the right track and I stand ready to do whatever is necessary in Government to help drive the delivery of the reopening of this cliff walk. I look forward to further updates as we

move closer to a solution."

Next steps will include further engagement with relevant stakeholders, additional environmental assessments, and discussions on funding options. A clearer timeline for reopening is expected in the coming months.

Tánaiste Simon Harris

concluded: "As your representative for County Wicklow in Dail Eireann and in Government, I will continue to push for progress at every opportunity and will continue to issue regular updates on this issue which is so important for the people of Bray and Greystones."



The meeting was attended by Tánaiste Simon Harris, Wicklow County Council Chief Executive Emer O'Gorman, Irish Rail CEO Jim Meade, National Parks and Wildlife Service Director General: Niall O'Donnchu, Failte Ireland Regional Manager and Sarah Fitzpatrick.



Emma Katus and Aoibheann O'Neill at the Tinahely GAA & LGFA Dinner Dance in the Amber Springs, Gorey.

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Cllr Danny Alvey (Wicklow District), Cllr Stephen Stokes (Greystones District), Cllr Shane Langrell (Wicklow District), and Carol Coad (County Wicklow Partnership).

# Public consultation sessions held on Council's Outdoor Recreation Plan

Planning for the Wicklow County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025-2030 is underway. Two consultation evenings were recently hosted in Blessington and Newtownmountkennedy.

On February 6th, 2025 over 106 people gathered at the Parkview Hotel in Newtownmountkennedy. The plan aims to enhance and develop outdoor recreational facilities across County Wicklow, promoting health, well-being, and sustainable tourism. Interactive consultation sessions took place. Cllr Stephen Stokes was among those who attended in Newtownmountkennedy. Cllr Stokes stated: "The Wicklow County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2025 outlines a strategic vision for the development of trails, parks, and other outdoor amenities, ensuring that residents and visitors alike can enjoy the natural beauty of our county."

Local residents are encouraged to have their say online until February 26th, 2025. Cllr Stephen Stokes added: "As someone who grew up in Greystones and has long been an advocate for enhancing our local amenities, I am thrilled to see this plan come to fruition. Investing in outdoor recreation not only promotes healthier lifestyles but also supports sustainable tourism, benefiting our local economy. I look forward to working with the community and relevant stakeholders to implement these initiatives and make County Wicklow a premier destination for outdoor enthusiasts."

# Whitmore applauds Ballydonagh Lane tree planting

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has congratulated Reforest Nation and EcoSikh Ireland for their recent tree planting event in Ballydonagh Lane. The event saw a huge turnout, reflecting the community's commitment to environmental conservation.

"I would like to recognize the tremendous work done by all the volunteers and commend the landowner for generously providing the land for this initiative," said Deputy Whitmore. "This event, planned and organised by Reforest Nation and EcoSikh Ireland was a huge success. Their efforts have not only enhanced the local ecosystem but also brought the community together in a shared mission to protect and restore our natural environment."

"The overwhelming participation underscores that nature is high on the agenda for many people. Seeing such a diverse group of people come together for a common cause is truly heartening. This event reflects a growing awareness and dedication to protecting our natural surroundings within our community. This commitment is evident not only through the efforts of these groups but also through our home-grown group, ReWild Wicklow, which boasts hundreds of dedicated volunteers."

"To truly make a significant impact, we need a state-led response to environmental conservation. The government must recognise the importance of such initiatives and take decisive action to support them. By purchasing the Glen of the Downes and committing to similar projects, we can ensure a sustainable future for our environment and communities."

"The Glen of the Downes is a vital natural area that boasts rich biodiversity and serves as a crucial habitat for various species. Its preservation and expansion are essential for maintaining ecological balance and providing a space for community engagement with nature. Before the election, 200 acres of agricultural and forestry land adjoining Glen of the Downes came up for sale on the private market, and I called on the government to purchase this land in order to expand the Glen of the Downes ancient forest. This call was not only supported by thousands of local people but also national environmental organisations, and my petition gathered 5,000 signatures."

"Tánaiste Simon Harris committed to setting up a meeting to discuss purchasing the Glen of the Downes, and it is crucial that we see this happen now. I look forward to this meeting and to continuing our campaign, building on the momentum we have generated," Deputy Whitmore concluded.



Deputy Whitmore at the tree planting event at Ballydonagh Lane.



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Karen and Eamon Bermingham at the Arklow RNLI's recent Hurry to the Curry event in the Arklow Bay Hotel.



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# Newly refurbished Bray Most Holy Redeemer Parish Centre officially opened

The official launch of the newly refurbished Most Holy Redeemer Parish Centre in Bray took place on Friday morning, 7th February. Originally built in 1907, the building underwent extensive renovations that included repairing its original sash windows, doors, brickwork, and cast-iron gutters. Special care was taken to restore the original features of this protected structure. Interior renovations included complete electrical rewiring, fireproofing, and new plumbing. Kitchens and accessible toilet facilities were installed to ensure full wheelchair accessibility on the ground floor.

This project was partially funded by the 2023 Community Recognition Fund, which was established by the Department of Rural and Community Development to acknowledge the significant efforts of communities in welcoming and supporting individuals coming to Ireland from Ukraine and other countries. This funding aims to support the development of community infrastructure and facilities that benefit the wider community.

Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Cathaoirleach of Wick-

low County Council, thanked all those in attendance, including Fr. Michael O'Kelly, parish members, councillors, and Wicklow County Council officials. He acknowledged the hard work and vision of everyone involved in the project. "Your dedication and time have made this transformation possible to create a space to foster connection, promote inclusivity, and to serve the needs of the community for many years to come."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief

Executive, Wicklow County Council, expressed her appreciation to the hardworking contractors, architects and project teams who dedicated countless hours working on this project. "You've worked hard to ensure that this Parish Centre will continue to be a vital resource for everyone who calls this community home." Emer also further acknowledged that this project exemplifies what can be achieved when we collaborate, support one another, and build with purpose.



Wicklow County Council officials, members of the Holy Redeemer Parish and local elected councillors, celebrating the opening.

## Wicklow tourist spots make Google Maps list of most reviewed places

Twenty years ago, Google Maps transformed how we see and navigate the world. Today, it's become an indispensable tool for more than 2 billion users per month - shaping the way people navigate and explore, whether they're traveling to new places or rediscovering their hometown.

To mark 20 years, Google Maps has shared some of the most popular and all-time favorite features - along with helpful hidden gems that might have been missed over the years.

A number of Wicklow tourist spots featured, including Powerscourt Waterfall was No. 6 on the list of visitor attractions and Wicklow Mountains National Park was No.8 on the list of parks.

## Applications sought in Wicklow for Heritage Council's Adopt a Monument Scheme

Community groups in Wicklow are being encouraged to apply to join the Heritage Council's Adopt a Monument scheme which is all about empowering local communities to become involved in the care and conservation of a much-loved local monument. The Adopt a Monument scheme offers communities expertise, mentoring and support to help them to care for their local heritage

New Crusher Building, Baravore, Glenmalur in Wicklow (photo below) was 'adopted' by Glenmalur PURE Mile Committee in 2016 to preserve this building for future generations. The large nineteenth century ore crusher building at Baravore stands as a testament to the hard working miners and entrepreneurial pioneers who sought to delve into the rich nat-

ural resources that lay hidden in the valleys. The New Crusher building is a two storey building of cut stone granite built in 1859-60. It is recognised as undoubtedly the finest extant example in Ireland of a rolls crusher house.

The Glenmalur PURE Mile Committee received funding from Coillte and Wicklow County Council, to conserve and record the building and mining complex and more publicly accessible walks around the mining complex have been established to raise awareness of the mining-related heritage of Glenmalur.

Since the scheme first began in 2016, 30 groups across Ireland have 'adopted' monuments in their locality ranging from ring forts to 19th century industrial buildings to medieval churches as well as a Gaelic castle.

All over Ireland there is an incredible variety of heritage sites, including ancient tombs, stone circles, early monasteries, castles, churches and graveyards, landed estates, mines, kilns, mills, traditional houses and battlefields. The Adopt a Monument Scheme takes a very broad view of heritage and is open to applications from enthusiastic community groups all over Ireland to apply to

the scheme to adopt a site that is important to them.

The aim is that the chosen monument will serve as a focal point for heritage-related, educational and recreational activities and will encourage greater appreciation and understanding of local heritage.

Speaking in support of the scheme Virginia

Teehan, Chief Executive of the Heritage Council, at the Heritage Council, said: "The Adopt a Monument Scheme is a wonderful way of ensuring our monuments remain an integral part of a community. Maintaining them and caring for them requires much-needed expertise and resources

which is exactly what the scheme provides. We can already see the positive effect the scheme has had on the areas where a monument was adopted, and the pride of place and increased civic value brought about the efforts of our dedicated community groups is very satisfying to see."

The Heritage Council is now calling for interested groups to apply for the scheme. The closing date for applications 21st March 2025. Further information about the scheme and the application process can be found here: <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/aam>

**Schnittger Bourne**  
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Schnittger Bourne Property Services, based out of Greystones in Co. Wicklow, is incredibly proud to be sponsoring the Annual Local Hero Award again this year.

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The Irish Heritage Trust, an independent, non-profit organisation, is offering the benefits of its membership programme with the chance to explore some of Ireland's most captivating heritage houses and gardens from just €1 per week, unlocking a world of history, heritage, and natural beauty. Membership of the Irish Heritage Trust grants unlimited access to Ireland's most cherished heritage properties, exclusive event discounts, and the satisfaction of directly contributing to the preservation of the cultural treasures including Johnstown Castle Estate, Museum & Gardens in Wexford (pictured above). With its 800-year history, Johnstown Castle continues to reveal its fascinating stories, thanks to the support of visitors, members, grants, and philanthropic contributions. A jewel of Gothic Revival architecture, the Castle opened to the public in 2019 following a major conservation and development project. Since then, it has evolved into a thriving visitor attraction in the heart of Wexford, under the stewardship of the Irish Heritage Trust which has overseen further conservation efforts and visitor experience enhancements.



# Concerns for Wicklow over Bord na Móna Recycling sale

*SIPTU calls BNM Recycling sale 'an act of economic vandalism' that will be opposed*

SIPTU has demanded a halt to the sale of Bord na Móna (BNM) Recycling and an investigation into the attempt to privatise part of a profitable public company in a manner which runs counter to economic and environmental best practice. Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore, has called for immediate clarity on the proposed sale of Bord na Móna's recycling arm to a private operator, KWD Recycling.

SIPTU Divisional Organiser, Adrian Kane, said: "The announcement on Friday (7th February) that Bord na Móna has concluded a deal to sell the last remaining publicly operated domestic waste collection service in the State to the Killarney Waste Disposal Company is deeply concerning and should be the focus of intense scrutiny.

"This semi-state company is part of a group which generated more than €100 million profit for the State in 2024. It also sets the gold standard for environmental and workers' rights compliance in the sector. That the decision to sell it runs completely counter to best international practice in the waste collection sector and the recommendations of several governmental reports should set alarm bells ringing throughout the political system.

"The Kerry-based company, which it is proposed buys Bord na Móna Recycling, at what is reportedly a very attractive price, was last year fined €500,000 for carrying out activities contrary to section 39

of the Waste Management Act, 1996. The whole nature of this proposed sale needs public investigation and scrutiny.

"SIPTU members have already stated that they will ballot for strike action to defend their terms and conditions of employment. In support of our members, SIPTU representatives are seeking to urgently meet with opposition party leaders to discuss what can be done to halt what amounts to a gross act of economic and environmental vandalism. This proposed deal can be stopped by the new Minister for Climate, Environment and Energy, Darragh O'Brien. We will seek an urgent meeting with him in which our members and experts can outline the many concerns about this privatisation scheme."

He added: "We should look at the past to inform the present. The corrupt privatisation of Eircom nobbled our telecommunications sector for decades. The privatisation of local authority bin services over 20 years ago has been an unmitigated disaster in terms of the

cost to customers, adverse environmental impact and decline in industry working standards. The sale of Bord na Móna Recycling would end any possibility of bringing the correct mix of public and private services to the domestic waste collection sector.

"SIPTU will fight this attempt to further degrade our public services. This proposed sale raises very serious concerns in terms of it making no economic sense for the State, having an adverse environmental impact and undermining employment standards. We cannot return to the dark days of gombeen economics that this Government and proposed deal seem to be pointing us in."

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore said "Bord na Móna's recycling services are crucial for many customers and workers in Wicklow. There are over 135,000 households serviced by Bord na Múna, with many workers based in the county. The proposed sale to a private operator raises significant concerns about potential price increases for Wicklow customers



Sarah Hogan and Ciara Stokes at the Tinahely GAA & LGFA Dinner Dance in the Amber Springs, Gorey.

and the impact on local jobs.

"A reduction in operators will inevitably lead to price rises for consumers, which is in complete contravention to recommendations by the Dublin Taskforce and Joint Oireachtas Climate Committee last year. These reports advised that the State should assume responsibility for waste collection, a move that will be almost impossible if this sale goes through. Recent price hikes by other bin collection com-

panies, such as Panda Recycling, have already had significant impacts on customers. The state should be stepping in to prevent the furthering of the cost of living crisis, not facilitating it.

"The sale of Bord na Móna Recycling cannot proceed without the approval of the Consumer Protection Commission and the Minister," Deputy Whitmore emphasised. "Minister Darragh O'Brien needs to clarify his plans to

this House and urgently meet with SIPTU to address these issues. Workers and their SIPTU representatives have been completely overlooked in this process. This is a critical concern, especially for the many employees based in Wicklow."

Deputy Whitmore is urging the Minister for Environment to take immediate action to ensure that these concerns are addressed without further delay.

## 'Government must adopt a common sense approach to road safety'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady, has criticised the Government's approach to road safety, arguing that a singular focus on reducing speed limits will not effectively tackle the issue. He stressed the need for a more comprehensive strategy that prioritises road maintenance, education, and enforcement to improve safety on Wicklow's roads. Also speaking on the topic last week, Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has called for immediate action to address road safety issues in Wicklow, emphasising the need to prioritise pedestrian safety, improve infrastructure and ensure safe routes to schools.

Deputy Brady said "The Government's approach to road safety is failing communities across Wicklow. While reducing speed limits in certain areas is necessary, a blanket reduction is not the answer. Road safety is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive strategy, including investment in road maintenance, education, and proper enforcement. For too long, Wicklow County Council has been underfunded and unable to carry out essential repairs and upgrades to our roads. Poor road conditions are a major factor in accidents, yet the government continues to ignore the need for real investment in infrastructure. If we are serious about saving lives, we must ensure our roads are safe and fit for purpose.

"Enforcement is another area where the government has fallen short. An Garda Síochána does not have the necessary



John Brady TD.

resources to properly tackle dangerous driving behaviours such as speeding and driving under the influence. Without proper enforcement, speed limit reductions alone will not be effective in preventing road tragedies. Sinn Féin has long advocated for a common-sense, evidence-based approach to road safety. Speed limits should be set based on

local conditions and accident data, not imposed as a one-size-fits-all measure. The government must listen to local communities, take expert advice, and ensure that any changes genuinely improve safety rather than simply grabbing headlines.

"I am calling on Minister for Transport Darragh O'Brien to conduct a full review of the road safety strategy and adopt a more balanced approach. We need real investment in roads, stronger enforcement measures, and policies that are rooted in evidence and local knowledge. The people of Wicklow deserve better.

Speaking in The Dáil last Thursday, Deputy Whitmore "I welcome the new speed limits introduced last week, but speed limits alone are not enough; we need proper enforcement and well-maintained infrastructure to ensure these laws are upheld. The Garda traffic

corps has had its numbers reduced, which has immensely impacted their ability to do their jobs. Without a well-funded Council and monitored roads, the situation will not improve," Deputy Whitmore explained.

"I receive emails weekly from constituents with road safety concerns. The population of Wicklow has increased hugely over the past couple of years, meaning that we have



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

more children walking on our roads and more cars driving on our roads. Our infrastructure has not keeping pace with this population boom, and this is seen particularly in areas like Greystones, where our roads are becoming less and less safe," Ms Whitmore added.

"I recently learned about issues in Glenealy, where there is a serious lack of road markings, ramps, and pedestrian crossings, and speeding on the main street is out of control. Residents should not be expected to wait for an accident to happen for their roads to be made safe," Deputy Whitmore argued.

"In Bray, the 'stop and go' traffic management system on Eglinton Road has been poorly managed, leading to confusion and increased risk for pedestrians," Ms. Whitmore continued. Another big concern for all is the safety of children walking and cycling to school. The Safe Routes to School initiative launched in 2021, but the first three schools in Wicklow were only connected to the network in 2024. With over 100 schools in Wicklow, at this rate, it will take

decades to connect them all to the Safe Routes to School," Ms Whitmore commented.

"Additionally, bureaucratic issues are causing delays, as schools must apply for funding to join the network whereas they should be automatically connected. Councils need

additional funding to deliver crucial projects like this in a timely manner," Deputy Whitmore stated.

"Wicklow is a county with narrow roads covered in potholes and uneven surfacing. We're also a county that is quite heavily dependent on cars because

of limited public transport options. It is not acceptable that our local council does not have the funding to address road safety concerns. The issues in Glenealy and Bray are stark reminders of the work that needs to be done," Deputy Whitmore concluded.

## PUNK ALLEY

A live original punk music & high energy dance show for everyone!

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Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray  
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Edward Timmins TD.

# Timmins targets Wicklow transport in Dail question

*N11 and N81 upgrades, along with increased train capacity highlighted by newly elected Deputy*

Speaking on Wicklow transport and commuting issues raised in his first parliamentary question to Taoiseach Micheal Martin in Dail Eireann, Deputy Edward Timmins stated that considerable cuts to funding of National roads in recent years has negatively impacted Wicklow.

"The N81 is one of the most dangerous roads in the country as noted in several studies including Gamma

Location Intelligence on collision rates. The N81 is the only national road out of Dublin that has never been upgrad-

ed. A preferred upgrade route previously chosen, was shelved in 2018. This needs to be put into our National Develop-

ment Plan," said Deputy Timmins.

Deputy Timmins continued: "Traffic gridlock on the N11 has become a

daily commuting nightmare. Despite Wicklow's 9% population growth, the N11/M11 Junction 4 to Junction 14 Improv-

ement Scheme has been on hold since 2022. The project still has not progressed to Phase 3. I'm confident with our new Programme for Government and positive solutions that we can reverse this."

Deputy Timmins added: "The reliability of DART and Wicklow Rail has declined in the last three years leading to more car usage and delays for example Greystones Journey time has increased by 15% over 20 years, while the distance has stayed the same. When the first daily Rosslare Train reaches Wicklow Town, it is almost full.

Wicklow passengers are often left standing for their entire journey to Dublin in just four carriages. More frequency and increased capacity are needed for Wicklow Commuters."

Deputy Timmins concluded: "The Programme for Government commits to increase funding for new roads, and to develop and enhance Rail services. I have implored the Taoiseach to ensure funding will be released for these projects in Wicklow and will be keeping the needs of Wicklow commuters on top of the political agenda."

## NTA opens public consultation on proposed service enhancements between Glendalough and Bray

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has today opened a public consultation on proposed service enhancements between Glendalough and Bray. This consultation seeks feedback from the public on proposed enhancements designed to improve service levels in the area.

The consultation will run for four weeks and will close at 5pm on Friday, 7th of February. The proposed upgrades between Glendalough and Bray focus on improving

access to public transport for the local communities and visitors by providing more frequent services.

Under the proposals, the NTA aims to introduce a new seven-day

week service between Glendalough and Bray, providing connections to Laragh, Annamoe, Roundwood and Kilmacanogue.

The proposed service

will provide five return journeys a day from Monday to Friday, offering greater connections regional and DART rail services at Bray (Daly) Rail Station.

The new services will connect seamlessly with the TFI Go app, enabling convenient journey planning and cashless payments are available through the Leap Card Scheme. Free Travel Passes will also be valid on eligible routes.

Furthermore, the NTA

is focused on introducing modern, accessible vehicles and enhancing bus stops to provide greater comfort and accessibility for all passengers.

Getting the community involved is key to shaping these changes, and the NTA is encouraging residents along the

corridor to share their thoughts.

To review the proposals and submit your feedback, visit: <https://consult.nationaltransport.ie/>

These proposed enhancements are part of the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan, a national initiative aimed

at strengthening rural public transport as part of the Transport for Ireland Network (TFI). The plan, which is developed and funded by the National Transport Authority, is aligned with the goals of Project Ireland 2040 and the Climate Action Plan.

## Signalling modernised along 120km of track

Sustainable mobility company Alstom has successfully completed the installation of the European Train Control System (ETCS) Level 1 on the Dundalk to Greystones route, marking a significant milestone in Ireland's rail modernisation.

Spanning approximately 120km, this system overlay integrates new safety features and enhanced interoperability

across the entire Dublin Area Rapid Transit (DART) commuter network and beyond, from Dundalk in the north to Greystones in the south.

The project, which has supported more than 50 roles globally - from the design stage in early 2022 to site testing in late 2024 - represents one of Europe's largest Level 1 ETCS installations. Delivered in partnership with Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail), this achievement reinforces Alstom's commitment to delivering reliable, efficient and safe rail solutions that are tailored to Ireland's needs.

"The completion of the Dundalk to Greystones ETCS Level 1 project is a testament to our technical expertise and commitment to enhancing rail safety and efficiency in Ireland. This landmark achievement lays the foundation for the future of Irish rail, ensuring safer, smarter and greener transport for passengers," said Piers Wood, Managing Director for Ireland at Alstom.

He added: "Our teams have worked tirelessly to deliver this milestone, and we are all proud to support Ireland's journey towards a modernised, sustainable rail network."

Central to the railway's digital future, ETCS is a train control standard, based on in-cab equipment that is able to supervise train movements, including stopping the train. Information is received from balises in

between the rails, of which more than 1,200 were installed as part of the work between Dundalk and Greystones.

Equipment - including 337 signals - was provided from Alstom's globally-proven trackside portfolio, with more than 450 Micro-Coder lineside electronic units (LEUs) overlayed on legacy equipment to provide enhanced safety and minimise disruption.

All equipment was configured, installed and tested in one year between October 2024 and November 2024. An IE 22000 Class - 22001 - was fitted out as the trial train. Safety was paramount throughout and the project completed without a lost time incident (LTI). This transformational project is currently undergoing safety approvals with Iarnród Éireann and the Commission for Railway Regulation. Once operational, it will support the introduction of Ireland's next-generation fleet for the DART+ network.

Alstom has a ten-year framework agreement with Irish Rail for up to 750 new commuter rail cars as part of the DART+ programme, with firm orders for 37 five-car X'tropolis trains (including a 15-year support services contract).

Currently being manufactured at Alstom's Chorzow facility near Katowice in Poland, 31 of the ordered trains are Battery Electric Multiple Units (BEMUs) - a first

for Ireland - while six are Electric Multiple Units (EMUs). The first train from the fleet arrived in Dublin in November 2024, where it is undergoing testing before entering service next year.

DART+ is the transformative programme that will ensure train travel is at the heart of Ireland's sustainable transport network. Funded under the

National Development Plan by the National Transport Authority, DART+ is an investment that will double the capacity and treble the electrification of the Greater Dublin network - Ireland's most populous suburban area - facilitating sustainable mobility and development to enhance quality of life in the capital and its surrounding counties.



### HSE INJURY UNITS

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For ages 14+  
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Check [hse.ie/injuryunits](https://hse.ie/injuryunits) before you go.



Irish Rail signalling equipment.



# 'A dereliction of duty'

*'Government has questions to answer as suspect of multiple stabbings previously charged of breaking immigration law'*

**Aontu Leader and Meath West TD Peadar Tóibín has stated that the Government has serious questions to answer as to the immigration status of Gabriel Ferreira Motta Valladres, the man charged with the multiple stabbings in Stoneybatter on Sunday 9th February.**

Deputy Tóibín stated: "It was reported in the Irish Daily Star in October 2023 that that Gabriel Ferreira Motta Valladres, the suspect charged with the stabbing of three people in Stoneybatter in Dublin overstayed an expired visa and was charged with an offence contrary to the Immigration Act. It's incredible but Gabriel Ferreira Motta Valladres, like thousands of others who break our immigration law, never left the country. This is a very serious issue. Aontu has been raising this issue for more than two years now. Thousands of people who fail the asylum application process, receive deportation

notices, but only a tiny fraction of these notices are enforced. The government cannot confirm as to how many actually leave the country.

"The Government don't know where these people are. This is incredible. Here we learn that the suspect of multiple knife attacks was supposed to leave the country but didn't. If the government did their job right, it appears Gabriel Ferreira Motta Valladres would not be in the country at all.

"Justice Minister Jim O'Callaghan had stated firstly that the suspect was 'unknown' to Gardai. He then stated that there was a minor interaction between the suspect and



**Wicklow Aontu rep, Ciaran Hogan**

Gardai before. However this is not true. On top of the charge for noncompliance of Immigration law, it is also reported that the suspect was accused of possession of

€6,500 of drugs for sale or supply in 2023.

"We do have a responsibility to try and help those who are fleeing famine or war. However ever we have no responsibility to provide asylum to those fleeing peaceful countries. We have no responsibility to provide residence to people who are involved in crime. It appears that the man charged with the multiple stabbings in Stoneybatter should not have been in Ireland if this government did its job. This dereliction of duty by the government is needlessly putting Irish citizens at risk. The government has questions to answer. Was Gabriel Ferreira Motta

Valladres illegally residing in the country? Did he receive a deportation order? Why was it not enforced? How many people have overstayed expired visas and are still resident in Ireland despite having received a deportation order."

Local Wicklow Aontu advocate Ciaran Hogan added "We have long advocated for a stricter immigration system to plug the gaps left by incompetent Ministers who oversaw a system without rules or consequences. Overstaying a visa or any other act in contravention of the Immigration Act is breaking the law, and it must be enforced without fear or favour."



*David and Majella Dillon at the Tinahely GAA & LGFA Dinner Dance in the Amber Springs, Gorey.*

## 'NO DOGS ALLOWED'

*Continued from page 1*

database for all dogs and the person responsible for the dog," he said. "Implementing stronger legislation and sanctions reflective of the damage and trauma these dogs cause on farms has been key to our campaign and would be a significant step in delivering for farmers," the IFA Sheep Chair said. Increased resources as recommended in the Working Group of Control of Dogs report is vital in order for owners of dogs found worrying livestock to be sanctioned with significant on the spot fines while providing stronger powers of enforcement for dog wardens and Gardai particularly at a time when a dog owner is liable for damages associated to an attack on livestock. Wicklow IFA Chair Tom Byrne said it's a critical time of the year as lambing commences and has warned dog owners that dogs are not allowed on or

near farmland and to behave in a responsible way and adhere to this. "It is also important to remind dog owners that they are fully liable for any damages caused to farmers and their livestock and dogs found on our lands can be shot," he said. Also speaking at last week's Wicklow County Council meeting, Cllr Stephen Stokes said "Legislation needs to be amended in this area. Because my understanding is that it says dogs should be under effective control. Now, that can mean a lot of things to a lot of people. I personally believe that it needs to be amended to say dogs need to be under 'complete control', which means that they are on a leash at all times. There are some breeds that have no recall if they get off the lead. That has to be considered. I also believe the legislation needs to be enforced that is currently in place. And something I have been saying for some time is

the need for more dog parks. A lot of owners do want to let dogs off leash so they can have a run around, and dog parks are the solution to that. I think we need to be getting to a situation where we have a dog park in every town and village with over a thousand people." Director of Services Michael Nicholson said "We did agree to support the IFA and we do support the IFA. It is appalling what happens every year during lambing season, and we will do everything we can."

**The IFA say the following are the measures needed to tackle the issue:**

1. A single National Database for all dogs correlating licensing and microchipping and identifying the person responsible for the dog, but at a minimum alignment of the existing licensing and microchipping records to one central access point.

2. Full enforcement of microchipping and licensing obligations of dog owners for all dogs.

3. Stronger powers of enforcement for dog wardens and Gardai and clarity on these powers.

4. Increased on the spot fines for failing to comply with the microchipping and licensing requirements.

5. Increased sanctions and on the spot fines for failing to have the dog under control.

6. Significant on the spot fines for dogs found worrying livestock.

7. Legal requirement for dogs to be microchipped and licensed and identified on the NVPS (National Veterinary Prescribing System) prior to any veterinary treatment or prescribing of medicines by veterinary practitioners.

8. Authority to apply the legislative obligations to dogs in border regions owned by persons not resident in the State.



*IEA members launching the 2025 'No Dogs Allowed' campaign in Newcastle*



**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 that it proposes the temporary closure of the following public roads.

**Roads to be closed:**

- Vevay Road north of Church Road.
- Killarney Road north of Church Road.
- Main Street Town Hall to Quinsborough Road.
- Quinsborough Road.
- Eglington Road.
- Seymour Road.
- Seapoint Road, east of Seymour Road.
- Strand Road.

**Period of closure:**

From 1.30 pm until 3.30 pm Monday 17th March, 2025.

**Alternative Routes:**

Alternative route for traffic accessing east Bray will be via Putland Road and Sidmonton Road or Meath Road.

Local north - south traffic through Bray will be diverted via Church Road, King Edward Road, Herbert Road and Main Street Bray, north of its junction with Herbert Road. Access will be available to the Herbert Road carpark.

The parade route is from the Town Hall, Vevay Road, Bray (opposite St Patrick's School) proceeding down Main Street, turning right onto Florence Road, Eglington Road, turning right onto Quinsborough Road, turning left onto Seymour Road, right onto Seapoint Road and concludes on the Strand Road.

Traffic management will be in place during the passing of the parade.

**Reason for Closure:**

To facilitate the Bray St. Patricks Day parade.

Any person wishing to object to the proposed road closure must lodge their objection in writing to **Transportation & Infrastructure Delivery, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow** or via email at [roadtrans@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:roadtrans@wicklowcoco.ie) not later than 12.00 noon on Tuesday 24th February, 2025.

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



# 16 historic buildings in Wicklow to receive over €170,000 in grant funding

*Funding will support the repair and restoration of older buildings with complex needs*

Minister of State for Nature, Heritage, and Biodiversity, Christopher O'Sullivan TD, has announced the list of over 650 projects to be awarded funding under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) 2025, with €170,635 going to 16 projects in Wicklow.

The scheme supports property owners to conserve and enhance our historic buildings and streetscapes, and at the same time preserve and develop traditional building skills. This year's grants will be used to repair, restore, and protect historic structures from modest traditional homes to landmark public buildings.

In addition to the funding provided under BHIS, owners and custodians will

themselves commit an estimated €29.5m to these projects from private sources, marking this as a very significant investment in our built heritage and the traditional building skills which support it.

€1.25m of the €8.1m in total funding will be allocated to thatched buildings. This consists of €600,000 from the dedicated Historic Thatched Buildings stream, and an additional €650,000 awarded from the main stream of the BHIS. A total of €5,000 in thatch funding

will be awarded to Wicklow.

Minister O'Sullivan said, "In keeping with the commitment outlined in our newly ratified Programme for Government to cherish and protect our heritage as a vital national asset, I am pleased to announce today the projects which will receive funding under this year's Built Heritage Investment Scheme.

"Ireland's built heritage is a national asset which enriches our countryside, villages, towns, and cities.

In maintaining and caring for our historic buildings, owners and custodians perform a valuable public service, and I am delighted to be able to support their efforts.

"Alongside related initiatives such as the Historic Structures Fund, Community Monuments Fund, and the THRIVE scheme, this vital funding will help to ensure the survival of Ireland's shared architectural inheritance for future generations."

Minister for Housing, Local Government, and Heritage, James Browne TD, said: "I am proud of the part the BHIS plays in protecting and enhancing the historic fabric and character of our streetscapes and countryside. When combined with existing and new initiatives to revitalise our town centres and bring vacant and derelict properties back into use, the BHIS and other conservation schemes will help ensure that our historic buildings can continue to serve as fine homes at the heart of our communities for many years to come."

Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, John Cummins TD, said "This funding from Government will greatly assist with protecting historic buildings which contribute to a community's sense of identity, often forming the heart of a city or town. This year's grants will be used to repair, restore, and protect historic structures from modest traditional homes to landmark

## Wicklow County Council Total: €170,635.00

- St John's Church, Manor Kilbride, Cloughleah, Other works: €9,000.00
- The Parochial Hall, Kevin Street, Tinahely, ACA Exterior door: €1,500.00
- Darraghville, Kilcoole, External walls: €15,000.00
- Market Square, Dunlavin, External walls: €520.00
- Knocknadruce, Vallemount, Roof: €15,000.00
- St Patrick's Church Barranisk West, Arklow, Roof: €10,000.00
- Old Bolting Mill, The Millhouse, NTMK, Consolidation: €1,000.00
- Nun's Cross Church, Ashford, External walls and roof: €39,000.00
- Vevay Road, Bray, Roof: €18,000.00
- Park Clogga, Arklow, External walls: €4,370.00
- Dawn Cottage, Ballinahinch, Roof: €8,000.00
- St Matthew's Church, Roof: €5,245.00
- Newcastle Church, External walls and roof: €21,000.00
- Aster Hollow, Kilballyowen, Aughrim, Roof: €8,000.00
- Kilcrouney House, Kilcrouney Lane, Bray, Roof: €5,000.00
- Massey Cottage, Killarney Road, Bray, Roof repairs (thatch and slate), windows: €10,000.00



Market Square, Dunlavin.



Newcastle Church.

public buildings. "Guided and supported by Architectural Conservation Officers and other local authority staff around the country, these projects will greatly enhance the vitality and amenity of our street-scapes." Subject to funding, both the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Historic Thatched Buildings Scheme will be open to new applications this July for projects for completion next year.



Ashleigh Tobin with Sharon Smith at the opening of Sharon's exhibition 'The in\_Visibility Project' in Wicklow Town Library.

## Wicklow Pride set date for 2025 Festival

This year's Wicklow Pride Parade will be taking place on Saturday the 5th of July, the Wicklow Pride committee has announced.

Starting from Abbey St. car park, they will be marching through the streets of Wicklow Town and will be joined by performers, community organisations, and LGBTQ+ members and local supporters.

In a statement, the Pride committee said "We ask the community to line the streets and wave their pride flags to help us celebrate. Do you want to walk the parade with us? Keep an eye on our website and register your business when the form goes live. <https://www.wicklowpride.com/support-us>."

### Pride at the Castle

"After a day of marching through the town with pride, join us at the Black Castle for an afternoon of fun and celebration. Featuring music, stalls, food, family fun and entertainment from a variety of speakers and performers. This event is free entry. Sensory-friendly zones available."

### The Festival

"Leading up to the parade, we are offering a huge variety of electrifying entertainment, drag events and community activities taking place all across Wicklow. With something for everyone, this festival is guaranteed to be an engaging and fun-filled week

to prepare for the annual Pride Parade."

Events taking place over the week of festivities include:

- Dip & Sip
- Coffee Morning
- Comedy Night
- Wine & Art Night
- Workshops
- Book Event
- Live entertainment

"We are so excited to be hosting another unforgettable celebration of love, pride and acceptance, as well as promoting visibility, education and fostering a stronger, more inclusive community. We look forward to hap-

pily celebrating and promoting pride with our community.

Chairperson Patrick Bracken says "Wicklow Pride 2025 will be another vibrant celebration of love, inclusivity, and community spirit in the heart of Wicklow Town, for all of Wicklow. But we can't do it alone. Every donation and sponsorship helps us create a safe, joyous, and empowering event for all. Join us in making this Pride another, unforgettable event!"

For more information, to donate, for sponsorship opportunities or volunteer sign-ups, visit <https://www.wicklowpride.com/>





# Timmins proposes 'American Presidents Trail'

Wicklow's newest TD, Deputy Edward Timmins (FG), has proposed the establishment of an 'American Presidents Trail' during a comprehensive speech in Dail Eireann last week.

Speaking ahead of eight Ministerial visits to the United States next month for St. Patrick's Day, and directly after his Dail contribution, Deputy Timmins outlined his new proposal: "I proposed something totally different in the Dail Chamber this week. I believe it's time to develop an 'American Presidents Trail' here in Ireland which links all the ancestral homes of US Presidents.

"The EPIC, Irish Emigration Museum website catalogs how 23 US Presidents boast Irish heritage. I believe such a

website, and indeed a future 'Presidents Trail' could be showcased in the US to boost tourism here in Ireland.

"My proposal would include the development of a cultural centre dedicated to the Irish contribution to the US from Presidents to Politics and indeed more generally. As documented in the book 'JFK in Ireland' written by Irish broadcaster Ryan Tubridy, President John F. Kennedy who travelled to this country just five months before his assassination, told his closest and most

trusted aides, that it was 'the best' four days of his entire life."

Regarding the wider impact of an 'American Presidents Trail' in Ireland, Deputy Edward Timmins concluded: "I strongly believe my proposal for an 'American Presidents Trail' could be a hugely positive North-South project. Half of US presidents have Irish ancestry. This could be a massive attraction for US visitors, especially those with Irish links and could be comparable to the Wild Atlantic Way.

"As President Obama told Irish people during his address in Dublin: 'Never has a nation so small inspired so much in another'. It's time for ambition and more creative, actionable, innovative ideas to bolster US tourism here in Ireland. As a new TD, I am eager to bring my ideas to the Dail Chamber and will be following up with my colleague, the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Minister Patrick O'Donovan. I am excited about what we can achieve."



Edward Timmins TD.

## Public reps vent frustrations with BusConnects

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has met with Dublin Bus to raise the concerns of her constituents with the new BusConnects services.

"Following on from my meeting with Go Ahead last week, I met with Dublin Bus representatives today to raise issues that people in Wicklow have experience with the E1 and the Xpresso routes, the X1 and X2," Deputy Whitmore stated, "such as delayed services, increased journey times, and overcrowding.

"The first couple of days of the BusConnects rollout saw delays and some overcrowding on some Dublin Bus services. In response, they have put in place measures to deal with these issues, including the placement of supervisors at key bus stops each morning to

monitor passenger numbers and try to avoid bus bunching as much as possible.

"I also raised issues that people brought to me about the Bray L14 bus terminus at Deepdales and the one at Raverty Villas. I told them about idling bus engines, issues with visibility for drivers and congestion during school pick-up times. They've told me they'll take this away to their Road Consultants Engineer and come back to me, which is promising.

"Regarding the Xpresso buses, the X1 and X2, we've heard from many people that the X2's current route, including the trip to

the LUAS and rerouting around the city centre, does not meet the expectations of an Xpresso service. Dublin Bus did speak to the importance of the 'day-time' 84X departures, that served students and ordinary commuters, and which are no longer available under BusConnects. The NTA is responsible for setting bus routes, so my office will set up a meeting with them to discuss these issues further and to push for the reinstatement of daytime Xpresso services.

"The purpose of BusConnects is to encourage people to leave the car at home and use public transport where possible.

This is not feasible without a reliable and efficient system that has the trust of its users. I will continue to represent you to bus providers, and I will issue a statement after my meeting with the NTA. Please continue to write to me with your experience on the new bus services - your feedback is invaluable," Deputy Whitmore concluded.

At last week's meeting of Wicklow County Council, several councillors also voiced strong criticisms of the new service.

The new BusConnects service in North Wicklow "is just not delivering as it had promised", Cllr Melanie Corrigan said. "The term 'ghost buses' is being heard more and more. Buses are just are

not turning up. We had the NTA in here not too long ago and we were promised great things but it is just not happening. I would like the Council to write to them and say they need to take this up, the delivery of the service is not there, and children have been left not being able to go to school. It's actually gotten worse instead of better since the new service has come in, so I would like that addressed and if a letter could be sent by the Council."

Cllr Joe Behan agreed, saying "One of the ridiculously mad things they have done in Bray is they have cut a bus terminus outside a row of houses in Palermo where people can't get up and down the road past the terminus.

This was obviously passed and consulted with staff of this Council, and I think it is going to have to be re-examined."

Greystones Green Party councillor Lourda Scott said "The BusConnects roll out is nothing short of disastrous in the Greystones, Kilcoole and Newcastle areas. One specific thing I wanted to highlight to the Council is the issue of the L3 terminus on Chapel Road. That is causing a great deal of

disruption to traffic trying to get past in the morning. Could it be flagged by the Council to the NTA to look at moving that terminus elsewhere? If it is going to stay there when works are going to happen on Chapel Road? In general the roll out has been nothing short of abysmal. The booklet was supposed to be sent out in advance of the local council but it came about a week or ten days late, the page in particular in rela-

tion to my own area was virtually impossible to read the print was so small - it wasn't accessibility friendly, let alone for people with additional needs to look at.

"I would ask that our concerns about BusConnects be addressed within the next month or so. I would suggest inviting the NTA back here as a matter of urgency so members can raise our concerns face-to-face with BusConnects and provide direct feedback."



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN  
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

### SECTION 70 OF THE ROADS ACT 1993 NOTICE TO LANDOWNERS AND OCCUPIERS OF LAND REGARDING OBLIGATION TO CUT/TRIM ROADSIDE HEDGES/TREES

**Hedge cutting** – Landowners including householders and occupiers of lands are advised that all hedge rows along public roads / footpaths that require cutting or trimming back should be cut before the end of the current season, which is **28th February 2025** and all cuttings removed from the roads and verges. Adequate signage and traffic management should be in place during the trimming.

There is an onus on landowners to ensure that any trees and hedges on their property:

- Do not obstruct or interfere with the safe use of the public road.
- Do not obstruct or interfere with the maintenance of the public road.
- Do not pose a hazard to people using the public road.

**Roadside trees** should be inspected and necessary action taken to prevent any potential hazard to the public. Such inspections should be carried out by suitably qualified personnel.

**Japanese Knotweed** SHOULD NOT BE CUT. No ground disturbance should take place at these sites at any time of year. Please report any instances of Japanese Knotweed to [transadmin@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:transadmin@wicklowcoco.ie).

Liability for damage or injury resulting from such hazards will rest with the landowner/occupier.

Section 40 of the Wildlife Act 1976 prohibits the cutting, grubbing, burning or other destruction of vegetation growing on "any land not then cultivated" between 1st March and 31st August annually.

This is to protect bird life during the nesting season, to help prevent forest fires, and to protect vegetation and wildlife habitats during the months of growth and reproduction.

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



Catherine Kinsella, Sarah Sheppard and Emma Kinsella at the Tinahely GAA & LGFA Dinner Dance in the Amber Springs, Gorey.



# €63.84m to accelerate commercialisation of research



Pictured at the announcement in Research Ireland were (left-right): Prof. Sarah Jane Delany, TU Dublin, and Lead of the ARC Hub for ICT; James Lawless TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science; Celine Fitzgerald, Interim CEO, Research Ireland; and Prof. Vincent Kelly, Trinity College Dublin, and Lead of ARC Hub for Therapeutics. Picture Jason Clarke Photography.

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, James Lawless TD, has announced a multi-annual 'Accelerating Research to Commercialisation' (ARC) Hub investment programme to fast-track the commercial potential of scientific research across Ireland.

The new programme establishes two new Research Ireland ARC Hubs - the ARC Hub for Therapeutics and the ARC Hub for ICT. With funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Government of Ireland, the two hubs have been awarded a combined budget of €63.84 million.

Speaking at the announcement, Minister Lawless said: "The Research Ireland ARC Hubs for Therapeutics and ICT represent a new model for regional innovation and entrepreneurial training that will catalyse a step-change in the translation of cutting-edge, publicly-funded research towards impact at a regional level. The ARC Hubs will enhance and accelerate the commercialisation of research to create new products, processes and services."

Welcoming the announce-

ment, Research Ireland's Interim CEO, Celine Fitzgerald, commented: "The Research Ireland ARC Hub Programme is a game-changer in terms of driving regional development through commercialisation of research. The two ARC Hubs unveiled today - Therapeutics and ICT respectively - will create regional entrepreneurial ecosystems in two critically important sectors for the Irish economy. Accelerating the overall journey to impact will be achieved by enabling researchers with novel ideas to become future entrepreneurs, with the Hubs providing an integrated approach to research funding, entrepreneurial training and access to networks and supports."

The ARC Hubs are co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the Southern,

Eastern and Midland Regional Pro-gramme 2021-2027, one of two ERDF programmes in Ireland. The ERDF aims to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion across all European regions.

Maciej Berestecki, European Commission Spokesperson, commented: "The European Commission welcomes this strategic investment to be co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The ARC Hubs offer an integrated approach which will not only accelerate the commercialisation of research but also improve regional competitiveness. By embedding entrepreneurial approaches into the research and innovation ecosystem, groundbreaking ideas can be developed and lead to tangible economic and societal benefits for all regions across Ireland."

## Free conversational English classes helping local communities

Bray & North Wicklow Area Partnership (BNWAP) is offering free Fáilte Isteach Conversational English classes to support migrants and non-native English speakers in our community. These friendly, volunteer-led classes provide a welcoming environment where learners can improve their English skills, build confidence, and connect with others in a relaxed and informal setting.

The Fáilte Isteach programme is designed for people of all levels of English proficiency, from beginners to those looking to refine their conversational skills. Classes are held weekly at various locations across Bray and North Wicklow, ensuring accessibility for as many learners as possible.

"These classes are more than just language lessons; they are a gateway to inclusion, helping people to integrate into the local community, access services, and build meaningful relationships,"

said Lorna Lafferty of

BNWAP who runs the programme.

"We are immensely grateful to our dedicated volunteers who make this programme possible."

Fáilte Isteach is a national initiative developed by Third Age Ireland and has been successfully running across the country for many years. In Bray and North Wicklow, the programme continues to grow, welcoming new learners and volunteers alike.

Classes are running at the following locations/days/times:

- Ukrainian Community Centre, Quinsborough Road, Bray, A98 NX24.

Monday and Thursday afternoons 2-4PM

- St. Peter's Parish Centre, Bray A98 YD81
- Wednesday evenings, 7-9pm

- County Wicklow Lawn Tennis Club, Bray, A98 KP57, Thursday mornings 09.30hrs-11.30am

Greystones Family Resource Centre (2nd Floor), Unit 2, Charlesland Centre, Greystones A63 AK52

Tuesday mornings, 9.30-11.30am

You must be living in Bray or North Wicklow to attend. Please register in advance. Anyone interested in joining the classes, or volunteering to

help deliver them, can visit [www.brayandnorth-wicklowareapartnership.ie](http://www.brayandnorth-wicklowareapartnership.ie) for more information or call Lorna on (01) 286 8266 to find out more or register.

This programme is resourced through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which is co-funded by the Irish Government, through the Department of Rural and Community Development, and the European Social Fund Plus under the Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training (EIST) Programme 2021-2027.



Failte Isteach's free conversational English classes.



Ollscoil  
Teicneolaíochta  
an Oirdheiscirt  
South East  
Technological  
University

# ÁIT DUIT FÉIN

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

[setu.ie](http://setu.ie)





# Innovative MMC skills pathway portfolio launched

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science James Lawless TD has launched the Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) Skills Pathway Portfolio at the National Construction Training Campus (NCTC) at Mount Lucas, Co Offaly.

The MMC Skills Pathway Portfolio includes accredited courses, flexible online learning options, and a pipeline of new qualifications. These courses will help ensure that Ireland's workforce has the skills needed to meet our future targets under Housing for All.

Speaking at Mount Lucas, Minister Lawless said: "I am delighted to launch the Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) Skills Pathway Portfolio here at the National Construction Training Campus in Mount Lucas. This initiative will play a vital role in equipping the construction workforce with the skills needed to drive innovation and meet Ireland's Housing for All, National Development Plan and Climate Action Plan targets.

"I wish to express my thanks to LOETB for showing leadership in innovative MMC training and

skills development, particularly through the National Construction Training Campus at Mount Lucas."

LOETB, through the NCTC at Mount Lucas, is leading MMC training and skills development in Ireland. Joe Cunningham, Chief Executive of LOETB, said: "We are delighted to welcome Minister James Lawless to the National Construction Training Campus as LOETB continues to set the pace for the transition to Modern Methods of Construction.

"The suite of programmes being launched today is further evidence of our commitment to leading the FET sector's green and digital construction agenda and I want to acknowledge the support of industry, public sector, and educational partners in their development. The programmes specifically respond to skills gaps in the sector and enhance our capacity to meet national climate action targets."

Increased adoption of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) is central to the Government's strategy for driving innovation and enhancing productivity in housing delivery.

The Department is collaborating with sectoral partners such as LOETB to develop the necessary skills to meet future residential construction and retrofitting targets. The widespread use of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) is expected to reduce the demand for workers in the construction sector.

An updated report on skills for residential construction and retrofitting, published in October 2024, estimates that with greater MMC adoption, the sector will need 10,000 fewer new entrants. In this case, Ireland will require around 69,000 new workers instead of 79,000 if traditional building methods continue to be used.



Kildare and Wicklow ETB School leaders Bosco Guinan, Deputy Principal Col-iste Chill Mhantain, Emma Fox Deputy Principal Baltinglass Scoil Chonglais, Joy Coleman Deputy Principal Piper's Hill College and Ken Scully Director of Schools at the ETBI Principals and Deputy Principals conference in the Slieve Russel Hotel, Cavan. During the two-day conference, delegates listened to keynotes delivered by broadcaster and mental health advocate Brent Pope, President of the GAA Jarlath Burns and a panel discussion on Senior Cycle Reform. Further information about the ETBI Principals and Deputy Principals Conference.

## Increased levels of research and innovation activity in Higher Education

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science James Lawless TD has welcomed the publication of the Higher Education Research and Development Survey 2022-23.

This key statistical report shows that expenditure on research and innovation activity in the higher education sector

increased by 15% in the two years since the last survey, reaching €854 million in 2022.

Minister Lawless said:

"I am delighted to announce today's results. It is a reflection of the invaluable work being done by the higher education research community.

It also underscores our shared ambition, as outlined in our national strategy for research and innovation, Impact 2030, to ensure that Ireland's collective investment in research and innovation

makes as big a difference to as many people as possible."

Researchers active in the sector stood at 25,360 in 2022, a 10.5% increase on 2020. The proportion of female researchers has steadily increased over

the last decade, with Ireland ranking 7th out of 31 OECD countries on this indicator. In 2022 direct competitive national funding of research and innovation activity undertaken in the higher education institutions accounted for over half of the total, while indirect funding such as core funding to the institutions, accounted for nearly one fifth.

Minister Lawless added: "I look forward to continuing to work with

all stakeholders to ensure that research and innovation lie at the heart of Ireland's response to the challenges that we collectively face."

The HERD Survey is a national statistical reporting requirement of the European Commission. It is carried out in accordance with the OECD Frascati Manual 2015 which is the internationally recognised methodology for collecting and reporting these statistics.

In 2022, direct competitive national funding of research and innovation activity undertaken in the higher education institutions accounted for 51% of the total; while indirect funding such as core funding to the institutions, was 19%. 16.5% of total funding was awarded by European Union sources, demonstrating the quality and relevance of the work being undertaken by the higher education research community.

## 82% of primary school-aged children have unsupervised access to smart devices

*Calls for Government to introduce a mandatory online safety programme*

82% of young children (8-12 year olds) are allowed to use phones and other smart devices unsupervised in their bedrooms, according to new research published today by Ireland's online safety charity, CyberSafeKids. The findings - from a survey of over 2,000 primary school children - highlight a significant lack of parental engagement in monitoring online activities and a troubling lack of awareness of digital safety risks.

To mark Safer Internet Day, CyberSafeKids has launched its fourth 'Same Rules Apply' awareness campaign in order to empower parents with essential knowledge for safeguarding their children online.

A notable 28% of the children reported that they could go online whenever they wanted. This level of access for such young children raises concerns about the potential exposure to harmful content and excessive screen time, as half (50%) of the children surveyed acknowledged that they spend too much time online.

The survey reveals an alarming lack of parental oversight: only 35% of children said their parents or caregivers can see what they are doing online. The fact that the vast majority (82%) have unsupervised access to smart devices in their bedrooms increases their risk of being exposed to inappropriate sexual or violent content or contact from strangers. It also decreases the possibility of them telling a trusted adult if something goes wrong as they probably weren't supposed to be online at the time.

Of those children (32%) who've been bothered or upset by something they've experienced online in the last year, only half spoke to a parent or trusted adult, which suggests that many children may not

feel comfortable seeking help or discussing their online experiences. Worryingly 16% of young children have also seen something online that they wouldn't want their parents to know about in the last year.

The research indicates a gap in parental communication about online safety. Over a third (36%) of children stated they had not talked to their parents at all in the past year about how to stay safe online and 18% reported never having such conversations. This lack of parental guidance can leave children ill-equipped and highly vulnerable to potential risks online.

Alex Cooney, CEO of CyberSafeKids, said "We've long seen a trend in our survey data highlighting a disconnect between children and their parents about what children are doing online. We urgently need to provide better support to parents so they feel more confident about engaging with their children about their online activity, setting limits around use and access, using parental controls and even holding off on giving children devices or access to social media, if they feel their child is not ready. There is too much social pressure for children to be online and in many cases it's before they are ready. Our Same Rules Apply campaign seeks to support parents in approaching children's online lives with the same care and supervision that we apply to their

offline lives. It's not all on parents, however, Big Tech needs to be compelled to create safer online spaces for children too."

Dr. David Coleman, Clinical Psychologist, added "Put simply, we parents need to be more involved in our children's online lives. The fact that primary school-aged children affected by distressing content or interactions online are choosing not to discuss these experiences with a parent or trusted adult is concerning. Parents need to facilitate that open discussion with children about their online lives. If we allow children online, at this age, then they need to be supervised and should never have unrestricted access. Keeping children safe online is as important as keeping them safe offline."

CyberSafeKids is asking the newly formed Government for fundamental changes to keep children safer online, including the introduction of a mandatory online safety education programme in schools so that the conversation at home around risks and opportunities online is supported in schools and vice versa. It is also calling on the major platform owners and social media companies to engage more robustly in taking action to prevent the damage that is being done on their networks, and to prioritise the protection of children over maximising profitability.



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 that it proposes the temporary closure of the following public roads.

#### Road to be closed:

R750 Main Street, Wicklow Town, from the Junction at Station Road to Market Square.

#### Period of closure:

2.30. p.m. until 6:00.p.m. Monday 17th March 2025.

#### Alternative Routes:

From R750: left onto Port access road (R999) over the bridge turning left onto South Quay.

From Castle Street: Turn right onto Castle Street, left onto Quarantine Hill, right onto South Quay.

#### Reason for Closure:

This closure is to facilitate the St. Patrick's Day parade.

Any person wishing to object to the proposed road closure must lodge their objection in writing to **Transportation & Infrastructure Delivery, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow** or via email at [roadtrans@wicklowcoco.ie](mailto:roadtrans@wicklowcoco.ie) not later than **12.00 noon on Tuesday 24th February, 2025.**

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



# Wicklow-based climate action art project brings fun to sustainability

The PlanIt Play project is a collaboration between art and science with the aim of seeking some solutions around making toys more environmentally friendly while having fun. The PlanIt Play book launch took place Mermaid Arts Centre on February 15th.



PlanIt Play workshop in Arklow.



PlanIt Play workshop in Enniskerry.



PlanIt Play workshop in Baltinglass.

The project team are artists Siobhán Enright and Michael Durand, and environmental scientist Janet McKennedy. Together they hosted a series of educational and fun workshops through the Wicklow Library service to consider how we can move to a circular toy economy.

In total 20 workshops were held, in 10 Wicklow libraries, with approximately 300 participants. The participants were invited to come to a workshop to design and make their own superhero toy from old and broken toys, learn about the circular economy and co-create a Manifesto for Change. Janet McKennedy said “We talked about the circular economy and asked the participants to contribute their ideas to co-create a manifesto for change to the toy industry, while everyone was making their own toy, it was great fun and people had lots to say”.

Speaking about a workshop he attended Dave Eluk, Parent and Secondary School Teacher said “I attended the Plan It Play event in Tinahely Library over the summer with my 2 young daughters who thoroughly enjoyed it and were very appreciative of the idea of repurposing and fixing broken toys. It’s a fantas-

tic way for kids (and us intrigued parents) to learn and get involved in what’s possible with a bit of expert direction and a few tools many of us would already have about the house.”

While Artist and Educator, Ashling McNamara, who attended the workshop in the Greystones library, said, “This was a great experience for my children. They were both totally absorbed. It was a lovely activity to engage imaginative play and making skills as well as teaching children the importance of sustainability.”

The Wicklow Library service supported the project through facilitating the delivery of the workshop in Enniskerry, Bray, Ballywaltrim, Greystones, Wicklow, Arklow, Rathdrum, Tinahely, Baltinglass and Blessington. Bray Librarian Vita Coleman said “Bray Library was delighted to host Plan-It-Play workshops in 2024. The combination of thoughtful preparation and playful exploration resulted in a dynamic, creative and fun experience for all participants who came away with practical and accessible ways to step out of linear patterns of consumption and into the circular economy. This is especially relevant to the



PlanIt Play workshop in Greystones.

library service, and to Wicklow County Council, as we seek to promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals throughout our work.”

PlanIt Play have produced a publication which documents the project activities and acts as a step by step guide for to make new toys from old ones. Some of the wonderfully creative examples created by the workshop participants are presented throughout the book to pro-

vide inspiration for the reader to make their own toy.

The publication will be distributed throughout the Wicklow library service, and shows that being more sustainable in the way we live and the choices we make can be fun, and does not have to cost the earth in the true spirit of sustainability!

PlanIt Play is one of the 24 Creative Ireland Climate Action Spark funded projects piloting new ideas for public engage-

ment at a local and community level.

The book launch in Mermaid hosted a climate café with special guests including: Jiminy Toys founder and Associate Director in Sustainability Works Sharon Keilthy.

Dr Joanna Fortune, Psychotherapist, author and expert in creative play and Green Party Wicklow Cllr Erika Doyle. As well as a drawing session for the young people with author and illustrator Bex Sheridan.



PlanIt Play workshop in Tinahely.



PlanIt Play workshop in Wicklow Town.



# An Enemy Within: Wicklow author launches debut crime novel

There was a great turnout in Bridge Street Books recently for the launch of 'An Enemy Within' a crime novel by Ciarán Roche.

The novel tells the story of John Franklin who has been arrested for the murder of a child. His family, friends and neighbours are frozen in disbelief, especially his childhood friend Joan, god-

mother to one of his children, who quickly becomes embroiled in a frantic search for answers. Detective Sergeant Kevin Brady is seething with rage as he looks at the body of a young boy

lying in a grave in a wood. He knows who the boy is. Two families desperate for knowledge of their missing children have reached out to Detective Brady for help. Could this be the break-

through they hope for? Meanwhile, a group with no regard for the damage their depravity inflicts are going about their lives feeling superior and safe. Using a multi-layered story structure, 'An Enemy Within' shows how abuse causes trauma and long-term effects on the lives of victims, as well as devastating consequences for the wider community.

Ciarán lives in Newcastle and the book is primarily set in Wicklow Town and surrounding area.

This is Ciarán's first published book and the reviews have been very good.

Ciaran's novel has drawn praise from fellow Wicklow author Liz Mc Manus who said "In this compelling book, Ciarán Roche offers an insight into a dangerous reality. As a society we have only begun to understand the extent of the cause and effect of child abuse, and yet this book is about much more. It is a story, too, about a cast of characters who try to make life better for others in their community. Such courageous people bring this book to life as they face,unflinchingly, the enemy within."

Another reader said "Crime novels are not usually how I like to spend my reading time, but this one I started yesterday and I have finished it today. This book was such a gripping and powerful story."

'An Enemy Within' is available in the Bridge Street Books in Wicklow Town. It can also be ordered from [ciaranochebooks.com](http://ciaranochebooks.com).



Ciaran Roche with Ruth Guy and Damien Roche at the launch of Ciaran's novel *An Enemy Within* in Bridge Street Books.



Sinead O'Brien, Gwen O'Brien and David Maher at the launch of Ciaran Roche's novel *An Enemy Within* in Bridge Street Books.



Ciaran Roche, Patricia Dowling, Mary Mooney, Geraldine Doyle, Anne-Marie Walsh and Ruth Guy at the launch of Ciaran's novel *An Enemy Within* in Bridge Street Books.



Bianca Moore with Matthew and Louise Shearer at the opening of Sharon Smith's exhibition 'The V in Visibility Project' in Wicklow Town Library.

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# Gemma Hayes to play Bray's Mermaid Arts Centre

One of Ireland's most cherished singer-songwriters, Gemma Hayes, will play an intimate, acoustic show at Bray's Mermaid Arts Centre on Friday, 21st February as part of a series of nine shows across Ireland, taking place throughout February and March, presented by Turning Pirate. Tickets from €25 are on sale now via [gemmahayes.com](http://gemmahayes.com).

As part of her tour Gemma Hayes will play shows at Mike The Pies (Kerry), Source Arts Centre (Tipperary), Mermaid Arts Centre (Wicklow), Ballymaloe Grainstore (Cork), Riverbank Arts (Kildare), Hawk's Well Theatre (Sligo), Dolan's (Limerick), Spirit Store (Louth) and Cleere's (Kilkenny).

The tour follows the release last September of Blind Faith, Gemma's first album in over 10 years ('The album of her career' - MOJO).

Blind Faith has been a hit with critics and stalwart

fans, as well as being a vehicle for Gemma to bring her music to a whole new audience.

Hayes' songs have always drawn their power from her lyrical intimacy and lucidity, juxtaposed with her penchant for experimenting with various sonic textures that embrace both the quiet and the loud.

These hallmarks are on riveting display throughout Blind Faith's nine compositions, produced by Hayes herself alongside Karl Odum, David Odum & Brian Casey.

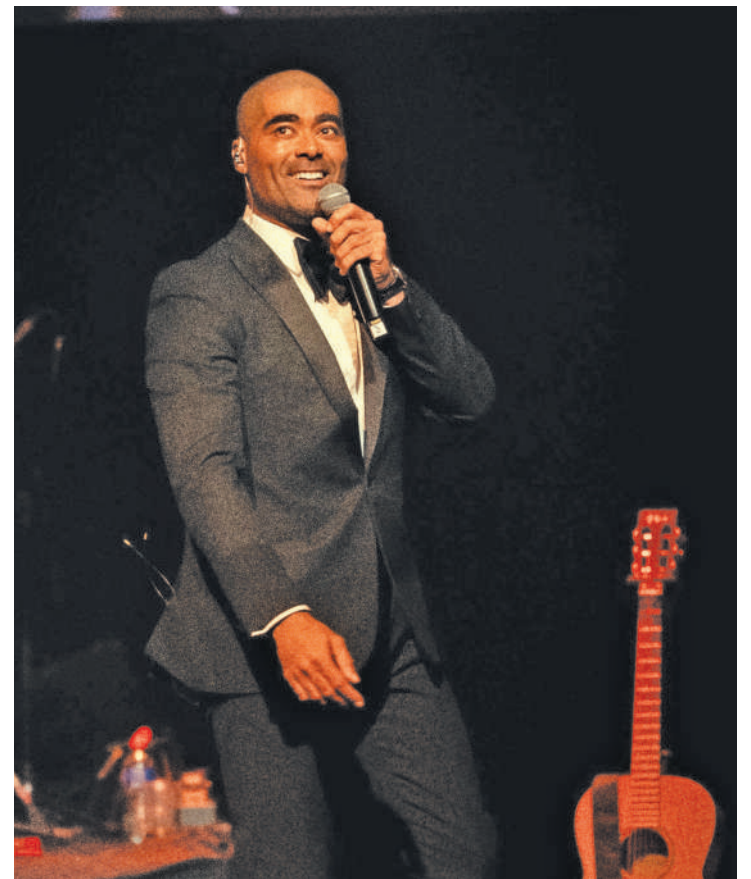


# A Century of Swing with Luke Thomas

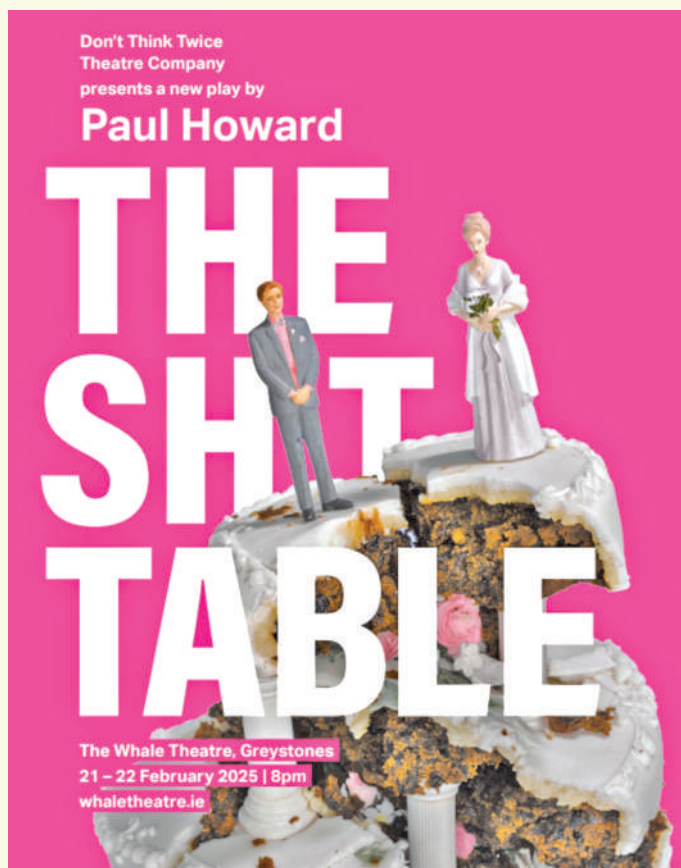
An iconic music time capsule and a celebration of 100 years of swing music from Ireland's King of Swing Luke Thomas

*Whale Theatre, March 21st & 22nd*

Join Ireland's King of Swing, Luke Thomas and The Swing Cats, for their KINGS OF SWING TOUR on March 21st and 22nd at the Whale Theatre in Greystones as part of their nationwide tour. This brand-new show celebrates 100 years of swing music with a musical timeline of classics from the 1920's to the modern day featuring Big Band songs like Sing Sing Sing, Puttin' on The Ritz, Just a Gigolo and Mack The Knife to crooning favourites like Mr. Bojangles, Fly Me To The Moon and Moon River all the way to the iconic swing anthem New York New York.



Luke Thomas.



**Whale Theatre, Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd February, 8pm (doors 7pm) Sold out but register at [www.whaletheatre.ie](http://www.whaletheatre.ie) or call the booking office on 01 2010550 for returns.**

Don't Think Twice Theatre Company presents a new comedy by Paul Howard. You are cordially invited to Jarlath & Gemma's big day! Check the seating plan carefully before you take your seat. What do you do with the people you have to invite to your wedding when you really don't want them there? Easy! Put them all at one table at the very back of the room. But what if putting those strangers together turns out to be the worst decision of your life? Please note: This performance will run for 90mins with no interval.

Audiences have been on their feet and venues sold out all over the country for this electrifying show commemorating the illustrious 100-year legacy of swing music. Luke Thomas has also captivated audiences as a headline act at The Guinness Cork Jazz Festival this year and at Electric Picnic and also on The Late Late Show, Ireland AM, The Today Show, The Six O'Clock Show and every major radio station in the country. With two #1 Albums, three TV Concert Specials and 8 personally requested performances for President Higgins, Luke Thomas and The Swing Cats bring that irresistible charisma and magnetic charm that defined the iconic legends of swing music. Tickets from €28 available from [www.theswingcats.ie](http://www.theswingcats.ie)

With a stage presence that exudes timeless sophistication, electric energy and effortlessly cool, Luke Thomas channels the suave charisma of Sinatra and the debonair charm of Dean Martin, captivating audiences with every note. With dynamic performances and undeniable star quality, Luke Thomas and the Swing Cats pay homage to the golden era of swing while infusing it with their own modern flair, creating a mesmerizing experience that leaves a lasting impression.

Witness the evolution of swing music through the decades, from the Big Band era of the 1930s to the vibrant sounds of the 1940s and beyond. Celebrate the enduring influence of swing music and get immersed in the rich tapestry of Swing history. Let the Kings of Swing Tour 2024 be your guide through a century of musical brilliance, a testament to the timeless allure of swing where every note strikes a chord in your heart and soul. Prepare to dance, sing, and swing the night away!

Tickets from €30 available from [www.theswingcats.ie](http://www.theswingcats.ie)





# Music at Mermaid: The Hammonds

*Saturday 22nd March 8pm . €22 Full Price / €20 Concession Price. Duration: 120 mins including interval*

**The Hammonds are a musical family from Bray, consisting of siblings Suzanne, Karen and Aoife, and their dad Ray.**

They grew up listening to everything from Planxty and Clannad to Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell and are influenced heavily from their dads singing and playing guitar since they can remember.

They are individual musicians in their own right, with numerous solo projects, collaborations and bands, including punk, trad, electronic and drum and bass influences but always come back to their roots to sing harmonies together to the songs they grew up listening to.

Expect a cosy evening focused on the siblings weaving their haunting harmonies through Leonard Cohen's varied songbook as well as Irish folk songs they grew up singing in the town they love so well.



*The Hammonds.*



*Martha and Jessica Cox at the opening of Sharon Smith's exhibition 'The in Visibility Project' in Wicklow Town Library.*

## Bealtaine Festival returns for 2025 with open call for participants

**Bealtaine Festival, Ireland's national celebration of arts and creativity as we age, is set to make its highly anticipated return this May, marking a milestone 30th anniversary. An Age & Opportunity initiative, the festival invites arts organisations of all kinds to take part by organising events that capture the evolving, playful, and dynamic spirit of Bealtaine.**

Bealtaine Festival is calling on organisations nationwide, big and small, to get involved by planning and registering events in their local areas in May 2025. From music and choral performances to visual arts, theatre, writing workshops, dance, literature,

circus, film screenings, storytelling, and more, the programme is open to a wide range of creative expressions. As Bealtaine celebrates three decades this year, event organisers are encouraged to reflect on past festivals or look ahead to the future of

Bealtaine and how it continues to inspire.

Celebrating 30 years, Bealtaine Festival is set to host a Big Birthday Tea Party on Sunday, 4th May. Local organisers are invited to join in the celebration by hosting their own tea parties with their communities

throughout the month of May, whether it's a family gathering, an indoor tea dance, or something completely unique.

Continuing the festival's three-year theme, 'Lust for Life', Age & Opportunity encourages event organisers to consider the theme's relevance

and the wide-ranging experiences of Bealtaine's audiences when planning their events.

This year, the festival will also take a moment to honour the many hundreds of events that have taken place in communities across Ireland since its inception in 1995. Event organisers are invited to share archive photos or videos showcasing the creativity and diversity of past Bealtaine events, which will be featured across the festival's social media channels in the lead-up to May.

Dr. Tara Byrne, Arts Programme Manager says: "More than ever, in 2025, I hope Bealtaine's 30th anniversary celebrations will be the catalyst to more of us over 50 finding community and expression through brilliant and challenging arts events."

How to get involved in Bealtaine 2025:

- Organisations are encouraged to incorporate the 2025 festival theme 'Lust for Life'. Once the event is ready for promotion, it can be registered on the Bealtaine website.



- Dawn Chorus ñ organise a Dawn or Dusk chorus with your local choir.
- Tea Party - organise a Bealtaine Birthday Tea Party.
- Have images of past Bealtaine events to share? Get in touch at [arts@ageandopportunity.ie](mailto:arts@ageandopportunity.ie)?
- Attend Bealtaine events locally or at the

Festival HQ.

Bealtaine Festival is an initiative by Age & Opportunity, funded by The Arts Council and the HSE. Bealtaine is a pioneering national arts festival that fosters creativity among older people across Ireland through intergenerational collaboration, showcasing older artists, and promoting

skills and experiences that can lead to a rich, creative life.

Registration is open from February right through the month of May. Queries regarding the online registration process or the festival in general, can be sent to the Age & Opportunity Arts Administrator on [arts@ageandopportunity.ie](mailto:arts@ageandopportunity.ie).





# Roundwood Community to launch Biodiversity Action Plan this week

The Roundwood Community Biodiversity Action Plan will be officially launched in Roundwood Parish Hall on Friday 21st of February at 7pm. The plan promotes and celebrates the biodiversity within the village and its hinterland and provides a plan of action by which biodiversity can be enhanced.



Following a successful application to the Community Foundation Ireland by Roundwood Tidy Towns Biodiversity Group, a subcommittee of the Roundwood & District Community Council, local ecologist Faith Wilson was commissioned by the Group to prepare a biodiversity action plan for Roundwood Village. Several landowners also volunteered to have their lands surveyed and actions for these and part of the Vartry Reservoir, (with the permission of Uisce Eireann) are also included in the study.

The focus of this 165 page Biodiversity Action Plan is far and wide. It takes account of the habitats and biodiversity in the environs of Roundwood Village bringing an awareness of the riches to the community. It proposes measures that anyone can take to enhance the local environment where they live and to get Roundwood buzzing. There is a strong emphasis on community involvement with the intention that the community will take ownership of the plan and responsibility for its implementation. The plan a series of practical and simple biodiversity actions that can be undertaken by residents in their gardens, on local sports grounds, at Roundwood Graveyard and in public areas in the village. The plan also encourages participation in Citizen Science initiatives, the development of local Pollinator Plans, actions for specific species such as Swifts, and possibly most importantly, amending the way we view areas of long



grass, dandelions and brambles!

The inclusion of farmland in the plan highlights the important and valuable role that the farming community have in supporting biodiversity on their land. Local farmers have actively engaged in various environmental schemes over the years including REPS, GLAS and most recently the ACRES scheme. Indeed many farmers have eagerly signed up to the 'Water of Life Project' to protect water quality in the Avonmore catchment area. The actions relating to farmland within the plan provide a blue print for other landowners and farmers to follow.

Biodiversity occurs throughout the village and its hinterland; as do the opportunities for enhancing it. The Community Biodiversity Action Plan (CBAP) for Roundwood promotes and celebrates the biodiversity within the area and provides a fantastic plan by which it can be enhanced. A special mention must be given to the Vartry Reservoir which is formally listed for designation and is the largest and most important area of biodiversity on the doorstep of the village. A suite of biodiversity actions have been developed for this area in collaboration with Uisce Eireann.

The plan will be officially launched by Wicklow Co Council Biodiversity Officer, Hannah O'Kelly with presentations by Plan Ecologist, Faith Wilson and Deputy Project Manager ACRES Leinster, Brian Dunne followed by refreshments. Anyone from the Roundwood area or with an interest in nature or biodiversity is most welcome to attend the launch in Roundwood Parish Hall on Friday 21st of February at 7pm.

# Wicklow growers among winners at Tirlán Quality Grain Awards

Wicklow growers, Tom and Geraldine Short and family were among the winners at this year's Tirlán Quality Grain Awards. They were chosen from among hundreds of quality Irish grain growers to take an award this year. They won the Premium Spring Barley category award.

Tom and Geraldine have four children and operate a 900 acre tillage and dairy enterprise at Kilmullen near Newtownmountkennedy. Tom is farming in partnership with Dean Kelly. Tom grows winter wheat, winter barley, spring malting and feed barley, winter oats, oil seed rape, spring beans and cover crops. He places a strong focus on crop rotation with Winter wheat the primary crop.

Tom is an active representative in the local Tirlán Rep structure and is a member of the Tirlán Council and of the recently-formed Tirlán Grain Advisory Group. His winning crop of Premium Spring Barley averaged a specific weight of 69.4 kph at a moisture of 20.2% across 325 tonnes with screenings of 1.2% and protein of 9.9%. The Short's Tirlán agronomist is Fintan Treacy.

Ailish Byrne, Chief Agribusiness Officer at Tirlán, said: "It is wonderful to see the commitment of our growers to excellence and delivering high quality grains for the marketplace. The growers recognised here today are reflective of hundreds of Tirlán growers continuously striving to nurture their lands to deliver the best crops for consumers to enjoy."



Tom and Geraldine Short of SK Agri from NewtownmountKennedy, won the Premium Spring Barley category award at the Tirlán Quality Grain Awards. They are pictured with Tirlán Chairperson John Murphy, Tirlán Chief Agribusiness Officer Ailish Byrne and Tirlán agronomist, Fintan Treacy.

## PLANNING

**WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

I, Eva Lynch, intend to apply for outline planning permission for development at Preban, Tinahely, Co. Wicklow, Y14 F627. The proposed development will consist of: (1). A change of use from an existing single-storey ancillary workshop (c.55sqm) to a single-storey dwelling, with ancillary site works. (2). A single-storey extension (c.40sqm) to the east elevation. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

**WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

We Potters Point Ltd seeks Permission for erection of 108.80m2 side extension to existing 261.12m2 shed, along with all associated site development works at Potters Point, Brittas Bay, Wicklow A67 RV06. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

**WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

Arc Design seeks full planning permission on behalf of Werner Schmidt for the development at Rockfalls House, Kindlestown Upper, Delgany, Co. Wicklow, A63 RP04 which consists of:

(A) Sub-division of the site and the construction of a new detached single storey split level four-bedroom dwelling along with all associated site development and landscaping works.

(B) Provision for connection into existing foul drain for the new house.

(C) Provision for surface water attenuate storage manholes with discharge via soakaways for new house.

(D) Provision for two new vehicular entrances for proposed and existing dwellings with entrance piers and gates.

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, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without conditions, or may refuse to grant permission.

## ATTENTION

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# Don't move... Update, Renovate, Decorate

Next week, *Wicklow Times* will be featuring an article on reasons not to consider moving house in this 'bubble market' but rather consider Renovating and Updating, even Extending. You can get a fresh new look to your home by improving it and it's a lot cheaper than moving.

You will save on auctioneers' fees, solicitors' fees, survey fees and moving costs. The money you save can go into getting the exact new bathroom or kitchen you always wanted; landscaping the garden; painting the house inside and out; getting a new state of the art heating system, tiling, wooden floors etc etc.

And you don't have to move out of the area where all your family's friends are.

Indeed you could build on that extra room (or 2) you always wanted or even if the garden is big enough build a new house!

And all the services are already there.

## Why Move? Extend, Update and Renovate

If you are an architect, engineer, planner, builder, window & door

manufacturer, kitchen and bathroom designer and manufacturer, timber flooring, tiler or retailer of tiles, carpet, or blinds, a heating contractor, interior designer or garden designer this is the place to promote your service.

In addition to your advertisement we would be glad to run some editorial /images for you.

Please call or email to book your place on this feature - (01) 2869111.



Aidan Nolan and Anna Hedderman at the Tinahely GAA & LGFA Dinner Dance in the Amber Springs, Gorey.

# New Opel Grandland - Re-entering the big time

Wicklow resident and champion motorcyclist Reg Armstrong was the first to bring Opel cars to the attention of the Irish motoring public in the early 1960s.

By Martin McCarthy

From then until his death in 1979 he assembled the expanding range in Ringsend and the firm was established in the minds of the Irish public as fine German engineered practical family cars.

In later years, with the legendary Arnold O'Byrne, himself of Ringsend origin, at the helm, Opel climbed to the top of the Irish mar-

ket in the 1990s, thanks in no small way to his clever sponsorship of the Irish soccer team.

Since then, Opel AG has faced challenges and ownership of the brand and its flagship factory in Russelsheim, southern Germany has moved from US General Motors to the giant European conglomerate of Stellantis - which

also includes the vast bulk of the Italian and French motor industry.

This new arrangement is modernizing the Opel offering and at the top of the line now is the new Grandland - benefitting from the latest technology and economies of scale.

This new big SUV - priced from €43,995 for the petrol hybrid automatic



- is attracting thousands of new customers to the brand across Europe and seems headed for success in Ireland.

The styling has some interesting features - such

superb drivability coupled with lots of interior space, flexibly arranged.

On rural roads - now sensibly limited to 60KPH - the Grandland displaces the flexibility to still travel quickly over hill and dale.

Grandland also comes as a BEV (Battery Electric) for just under the €40K mark, thanks to SSEI grants and tax supports. In Wicklow the well-respected John Linnane Motors in Rathnew are our local dealer.

## Gospel Luke 9: 22-25

Jesus said to his disciples: 'The Son of Man is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death, and to be raised up on the third day.'

Then to all he said: 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, that man will save it. What gain, then, is it for a man to have won the whole world and to have lost or ruined his very self?'

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Venue: Wicklow Golf Club & Gormanstown Driving Range.  
Open to members and non-members  
Beginners & experienced Juniors.  
**CALLAWAY CUSTOM FIT DAY** on Monday 3rd of March,  
with some slots still available.  
Venue: Gormanstown Driving Range.  
Call Louise on 087 7510 727 for more information.  
**Tel: 087 751 0727** /thelouisedarcygolfschool

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• In Blessington we are parked in the square, near the Lemon Tree (which is now closed)  
Starting Wednesday, we are in Newtownmountkennedy from 9am until 1.30pm. Parking somewhere on the main street - come find us!

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**DC** Fashion & Textiles  
**DJ** Furniture Design & Cabinet Making (Advanced)

## MUSIC

**MI** DJ Techniques & Music Production  
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