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

FAILING THE MOST VULNERABLE

A HIQA report published last week found that Sunbeam House Services CLG was not doing enough to protect people living in their houses from abuse. In the report residents with intellectual disabilities said that they felt unsafe in their own homes.

The HIQA inspection found that Sunbeam Services failed to protect people who lived in their houses from aggressive behaviour from others they lived with. In eight houses, people who didn't get along were living together in the same home, and this led to incidents of aggression and harassment.

John Brady TD said "The findings in HIQA's report on Sunbeam House Services are

deeply alarming and once again highlight the urgent need for serious reform in adult safeguarding. Between January and August 2024, HIQA inspectors carried out 34 inspections across 28 residential centres for people with disabilities, the majority fell well short, with serious failings identified in 23 of the 34 inspections.

"The report exposes poor governance, restrictive practices, inadequate

safeguarding measures, staffing shortages, and a failure to provide proper behavioural support for residents. These are not minor shortcomings - they pose significant risks to the safety, well-being, and quality of life of the most vulnerable people in our society.

"HIQA's findings also reveal that, due to ongoing non-compliance, the Chief Inspector has had to propose the cancellation of six centres' regis-



Tánaiste Simon Harris with Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, BIFE chairperson Cllr. Tom Fortune, BIFE Deputy Principal Gabriel Allen, Catherine Greene, BIFE Principal Ray Tedders, BIFE Deputy Principal Louise Fortune, Ross Lee and Cllr. Melanie Corrigan at BIFE's Open Day last Friday. Pic: Michael Kelly.

Working for Bray



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trations since 2022, with two centres receiving formal cancellation notices and one now under HSE management.

"The government cannot continue to ignore the fact that underfunding, coupled with poor oversight and accountability, is failing people in care and leaving them at risk. This is yet another example of the State failing to protect people with disabilities, who are too often overlooked by those in power.

"I am calling on the government to immediately establish an independent Safeguarding Authority, introduce a comprehensive Adult Safeguarding Act, and ensure that safeguarding and social work teams have a legal right of entry to monitor compliance and enforce protections for residents. These reforms have been discussed for over a decade, yet they remain at the bottom of the Department

of Health's priorities. This inaction is completely unacceptable. The government can no longer stand idly by while those in care are put at risk. It must act now."

Derval McDonagh, CEO, Inclusion Ireland said "Where you remove choice and freedom about where you live, who you live with and how you live your life, you create the conditions for poor practice and in extreme circumstances abuse. Unfortunately, that's what we're seeing here - people with no choice about where they live or who they live with, asking for help and not receiving help. This is far below what we should expect in 2025 in Ireland. We see history repeating itself in this report, institutionalised practices and human rights denied. Unless we are willing to face this and reckon with this as a society, this pattern will continue. We

call for swift and immediate action. We call for supports for all the people affected including repre-

sentative advocacy support and counselling. We also want to see evidence that people will be able to

move out of any home where they do not feel safe and into a home of their own."

Cynthia Ní Mhurchú

Working for Wicklow in Brussels!



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Shankill Classical Music Club

The next meeting is on Wednesday 12th March. Usual time - 7:45 to 10:00 pm, including a teabreak, and place - Shankill Day Centre, Lower Rd, Shankill (100 yds from the main street, car parking available). The music will be as always: a varied programme of classical music on CDs, covering many genres - orchestral, instrumental, vocal, opera etc. - in a friendly setting. Visitors and new members are always welcome. You don't need to be an expert! There's no charge on the night. For further info phone or text John at 0872109175.

Bereavement support

Bethany offers a safe, compassionate space where you can share your grief among others who understand. Their trained listeners provide emotional, practical support which is confidential and free. They meet at 8pm on the last Tuesday of every month in the De La Salle Centre in Wicklow. Please call or text them at 086 8359148.

Rathmichael Historical Society

Thomas O'Connor will present 'Irish Colleges on the Continent' at 8 p.m. on Wednesday March 5th to the Rathmichael Historical Society in Rathmichael National School, Stonebridge Road, Shankill. All are welcome - admission is €5 for non-members.

Kilmacanogue History Society

Kilmacanogue History Society has a very interesting Talk on Monday 3rd March at 8p.m. in Kilmacanogue Parish Hall. The Speaker is Dr Bruce Misstear talking on the subject of "Holy Wells, Hydrogeology and Healing Reputations." In Ireland, mapping in the 19th century recorded around 3,000 holy wells, including about 100 in County Wicklow. Holy wells continue to play important roles in local histories and culture. Dr. Bruce Misstear is a Fellow Emeritus of Trinity College Dublin, a lecturer there for 30 years. Prior to academia, he worked on groundwater projects in Africa, Middle East and Asia as well as in the UK. He is the author of numerous publications, including his recent book 'Wells and Wellbeing: The Hydrogeology of Irish Holy Wells'.

Community grants

Community Foundation Ireland has announced a new grants opportunity for communities in north Wicklow. The energy company Neoen has established a solar farm at Millvale (west of Rathnew) and created a Community Benefit Fund to support local communities. Grants of up to €5,000 are available in an open grant round to charitable organisations operating within 10km of the solar farm.

To apply, please visit the Community Foundation Ireland website (www.communityfoundation.ie) and click on the 'Apply for Funding' option. The Fund will support a range of community-focused projects. Note that the deadline to apply is fast approaching: Friday 7th March. If you have any questions or would like to know more, email info@foundation.ie.



The Sullivan family pictured at the Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10km at Beyond the Trees, Avondale.

Supporting people with Multiple Sclerosis

*Fundraiser by Dicey's Mega Bingo.
Arklow Bay Hotel Friday, 25th April 2025
from 7:30pm*

MS Ireland East Wicklow Branch is a dedicated branch of MS Ireland committed to providing support and resources to individuals living with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and their families. The branch plays a vital role in raising awareness about MS and offering much-needed assistance to those affected by this condition.

The branch is thrilled to announce an upcoming fundraiser hosted by Dicey's Mega Bingo at the Arklow Bay Hotel on 25 April from 7.30 pm. This event aims to raise vital funds to continue supporting people with MS and their families. The evening promises to be a memorable occasion, with entertainment, bingo games and a huge raffle, as well as the opportunity to learn a bit more about the impact of MS and how the community

can come together to make a difference.

The Importance of Support

Multiple Sclerosis is a chronic illness that affects the central nervous system, leading to a wide range of physical and cognitive challenges. Living with MS can be incredibly demanding, both physically and emotionally. More than 1 in 500 people have MS in Ireland, so there's a good chance that you either know someone with MS or a member of their family.

The upcoming Dicey's Mega Bingo fundraiser at the Arklow Bay Hotel is an opportunity for the community to come together and show their support. By participating in this event, attendees will not only have a great night out but will also contribute to a cause that makes a significant difference in the lives of people with MS and their families.

"We invite everyone to join us on 25 April at the Arklow Bay Hotel to support the MS Ireland East Wicklow Branch and help raise the funds needed for the branch to continue to support people with MS. Together, we can make a positive impact and improve the lives of those living with Multiple Sclerosis!"

Kare Plan - a family-run business

Kare Plan have been in business since 2009 and are committed to providing top-quality care to all of their clients, ensuring that they receive the support they need with dignity and respect. Kare Plan is a family-run and family-owned business. "This is integral to everything we do," they say, "making our carers and clients feel like part of the family. Today, we employ over 350 care staff and have expanded our services across Dublin, Wicklow, Meath, Limerick, Wexford, and Tipperary."

In July of last year, The All-Ireland Business Foundation awarded Kare Plan the prestigious Business All-Star 2024 Accreditation. In December, they won the All Ireland Business Foundation Family Business Award.



The winning team in the Lions Quiz in Wicklow Golf Club last Thursday Theo Ryan, Robert Clarke, Tim Murphy, Brian Thornton. Lion Declan McNerney presented the prizes. This coming Thursday the Grand Final will take place once again in the Golf Club. The 20 charities supported by Wicklow Lions will be presented with their individual cheques from funds raised during the quiz season. Everyone is welcome for this special Quiz which is always one of the biggest events of the year in the county. Starting time is 8.30 but it is advisable for all Quizzers to come along early due to the expected large crowd.

WICKLOW
Times

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Rents hit record high

The latest Daft.ie report highlights that Wicklow has the highest rent prices of any county outside of major cities, underscoring the urgent need for government intervention. The report shows rents in Wicklow have risen by 4.9% over the past year, with the average rent now at €2,026 per month.

Following the publication of the report, Sinn Féin TD John Brady has slammed the Government for 'failing renters'.

Deputy Brady said: "Today's figures confirm what renters in Wicklow already know - rents continue to spiral out of control, making it harder and harder for people to afford a place to live. In the past year alone, rents in Wicklow have increased by 4.9%, pushing the average monthly rent to an eye-watering €2,026. These are record highs, and they are simply unaffordable for ordinary workers and families."

"The root of the problem is clear. Successive governments have failed to provide enough social and affordable homes, leaving too many people dependent on an overpriced private rental market that does not meet their needs. Instead of fixing this crisis, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have missed their housing

targets year after year, making the situation even worse."

"To make matters worse, Simon Harris is now warning that house prices will continue to rise in the coming years. This means even more people in Wicklow will be locked out of homeownership and forced to pay sky-high rents, struggling to make ends meet."

"The Government's latest response to this crisis is deeply worrying. Instead of tackling the housing shortage, they are considering allowing landlords to increase rents even further to attract institutional investors. This would be a disaster for renters in Wicklow, who are already paying the highest rents we have ever seen. People simply cannot afford to pay any more."

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has also expressed deep concern over the latest figures from Daft.ie revealing the

escalating rent prices: "It is alarming to see that Wicklow has the highest rent prices outside of Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick. This serves as yet another desperate call to the government to start prioritising housing and treating it like the crisis it has become," Deputy Whitmore stated.

"In Wicklow alone, there were over 4,000 people on the social housing waiting list last September. This report from Daft.ie shows us that the average rent in Wicklow is €2,026, representing an increase of 4.9% over the past 12 months. This is completely unacceptable, and we are calling, once again, for the government to act."

"The Social Democrats brought a motion on housing before the Dail last week, calling for urgent measures to address the housing and rental crises. We called for the closure of loopholes that allow invest-

ment funds to avoid tax; a 100% stamp duty rate on the bulk purchase of homes; and an increase in early-stage finance to approved housing bodies and local authorities to speed up the delivery of genuinely affordable homes to rent and buy; and the retention of Rent Pressure Zones until a better system to protect renters is in place" Deputy Whitmore explained.

Speaking in the Dail last week, Deputy Whitmore highlighted that there are currently, 15,199 people in Ireland living in homeless accommodation, including 4,658 children living in bed and breakfasts.

"These children are not just statistics; they are the faces of a growing crisis. In the last year alone, the number of children experiencing homelessness has increased by 12%. Child homelessness has been normalised by the government, but there is nothing normal about this situation."



Cllr Tom Fortune, Cathaoirleach of Greystones Municipal District, with Kathleen Kelleher, Grand Marshal in this year's Greystones St. Patrick's Day parade.

"Immediate action is needed to address the housing crisis, action which prioritises housing policies that protect renters, increases the supply of affordable homes, and ensures that investor

funds contribute their fair share and are no longer favoured."

Also speaking on the matter, Aontú's Wicklow advocate Ciarán Hogan said "We are seeing the future for young Irish

men and women evaporate as they can't get on the property ladder, can't grow into their own homes, and have the hope for a prosperous life stolen from them. To anyone thinking of leaving

to Canada, Australia, or elsewhere in the world I hope you plan to come back for the next election, and put a stop to this system that couldn't give you a life in your own country."

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Newtown Tidy Towns expands community orchard

On Saturday 22nd February volunteers from Newtownmountkennedy Tidy Towns and local estates in the town came together to plant fruit trees as part of their 'Dispersed Community Orchard.'

The orchard was started last year when 80 fruit trees were planted across eight estates in the town and the local Newtown GAA club grounds. This year the voluntary group has added another 40 fruit trees to various housing estates and the local Woodstock Educate Together National School.

"Thank you so much to everyone who came out to help us plant these apple, pear and plum trees," said Danny Alvey, vice-chairperson of Newtownmountkennedy Tidy Towns. "We started this initiative last year as a great way to bring the whole community together to do something fun and beneficial to the local biodiversity. Thank you also to Wicklow Wolf Brewing Company and Wicklow County Council who provided the funding for the trees planted in the first year. This dispersed orchard is inspired by similar ones in Navan and Monaghan Town and the idea is to plant small pockets of fruit trees dispersed across all the estates and green areas in the town. These trees will produce flowers and fruit that will benefit pollinators and birds, but can also be collected by children in the community and will hopefully teach and inspire them about growing their own food. With that in mind, we were delighted to add trees at one of the local primary schools this year and members of our Tidy Towns attended to help the children plant them."

The location of the planted trees can be seen on a 'Wildflower Looped Walk' created by the group three years ago for the town. A digital version of this map is available on Google Maps, (see shorturl.at/vGPRY), and has already been viewed over 17,000 times by locals and visitors to the town alike.



Newtownmountkennedy Tidy Towns volunteers planting fruit trees in Rossmore Estate, Newtown.

Tree planting to kickstart renewal of Bray Head's par 3 area

Native tree and shrubs planting will take place in mid March as one of the first actions in a plan to renew the old Par 3 area at the bottom of Bray Head.

Green Party Cllr. and Chair of the Bray Head SAAO (Special Area Ameniry Order) Managment Committee Cllr. Erika Doyle hopes many of the families and local groups who have been involved in community tree planting at the location over the past few decades will help out on the day.

Cllr. Erika Doyle said, "The vision for this area is simple in keeping with the protected nature of the area, but will transform it for wider use by the community."

"One of the first steps is to remove and replace the existing Leylandii hedgerow with native trees and shrubs. This will vastly increase the biodiversity value and ecological connectivity of the area. Local groups like Biodiversity Bray and Bray Tidy Towns will be on hand to continue the planting work at the location they have become synonymous with over the years."

"As Chair of the Bray Head SAAO Management committee I'm delighted to see progress on the site aligning with objectives of the Ameniry Order legislation, which was drawn to protect Bray Head. Our committee has worked over the years to ensure that the management plan is adhered to, in order to protect Bray Head for generations to come, while also enhancing the area for public amenity."

"Future works on the par 3 will create a natural park, including trails and a meadow area, and will commence later this year. In the meantime if you would like to help out with planting on the day, feel free to contact me for details," concluded Cllr. Doyle.



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Cllr Erika Doyle, Chair of the Bray Head SAAO (Special Area Ameniry Order) Management Committee.

Rail improvements expected for Greystones, Kilcoole and Wicklow Town

Representatives from Iarnrod Eireann last week met with Wicklow County Council to discuss the progress of the DART+ Coastal South project and extending the Dart to Wicklow Town & Kilcoole. The meeting was hosted by the Transport, Infrastructure Delivery & Emergency Services, Strategic Policy Committee of Wicklow County Council and was chaired by Councillor Stephen Stokes. He stated: "We are grateful to Irish Rail for their participation. It was highly informative. The meeting was an excellent opportunity to discuss exciting future developments and current challenges faced by rail commuters in East Wicklow."

The Dart is now expected to be extended to Wicklow Town in 2028, with an hourly service. Speaking after the SPC meeting, Cllr Danny Alvey stated: "It is positive to see progress is being made on plans to bring the DART to Wicklow Town by means of battery electric trains. However, the current timeline of project completion by the end of 2028 is disappointing and I would like to see more urgency on this project from our new Government by way of a commitment to invest in more badly needed battery-operated train units. As part of these works there will be upgrades to the Wicklow Town train station including an extension to both platforms by about 40 metres, installation of Overhead Line Equipment (OHLE) on both platforms to enable charging of the trains and a new electricity substation in the station maintenance yard."

The DART+ Coastal Projects will seek to deliver an increased and improved electrified network, with additional passenger capacity. It is looking to enhance train services between Drogheda in the north to Greystones in the south. The area covered is 86 kilometres. North Wicklow will be covered by the DART+ Coastal South Project. Stage one will target improvements between Greystones and Bray by 2028. Stage two will cover Bray to Dublin City Centre. Cllr Stephen Stokes further stated: "Irish Rail is aiming to have Greystones Dart trains every twenty minutes. It's an ambitious target because they are trying to deliver a 21st century service on a single track established in the Victorian era. To do this the entire Dart network needs decisive improvement. These areas include crossings, junctions, platforms, signals and more. To deliver an

enhanced Greystones service everything needs to run like clockwork. As Greystones commuters know too well, if there is an issue or delay in Dublin it can have a negative knock on for Greystones services. Everything is interconnected."

Cllr. Stephen Stokes also noted that some clear plans are emerging for Greystones to Bray improvements. He added: "One area being considered is the pedestrian crossing north of Greystones Marina which needs to be automated. Currently this is the only uncontrolled crossing on the entire Dart line. This means that trains are required to slow right down for pedestrian safety. By upgrading this crossing it can boost efficiency. Furthermore, Irish Rail will seek to double the track in some strategic areas north of Greystones. This could be a game changer because it means

that trains would not have to wait at Greystones Railway Station. They could pass each other further north, thus saving precious time."

Cllr. Danny Alvey also referenced a decision taken by Wicklow Municipal District Councillors for transport improvements. Cllr. Alvey added: "Separately the Municipal District Councillors recently signed off on a plan to build a new bridge over the train station and create access through the port road. All of these works together are hoped to be completed by the last quarter of 2028 to facilitate a new hourly train service between Wicklow Town and Dublin City Centre. I would like to thank Iarnrod Eireann for coming to meet us on this and for listening to the demands of local Councillors and residents of Wicklow Town over many years for an improved rail service. We

will continue to liaise with them to ensure the project stays on track and is delivered by 2028."

Cllr. Stephen Stokes has also welcomed planned improvements for Kilcoole Railway Station. Cllr. Stokes noted: "Irish Rail will seek to extend the platform by 44 metres to allow full length trains. I also asked them about adding platform shelters. The Kilcoole platform is currently wide open to the elements. Irish Rail will examine this request."

Speaking about the work of the Transport Committee, Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council praised Cllr. Stephen Stokes for his leadership as chairperson, and commended all of the members for their dedication to improve rail services. He expressed enthusiasm about extending the Dart to Wicklow and the DART+ Coastal South.



Pictured at Wicklow's Transport SPC meeting were Cllr. Orla Finn (Greystones District), Jane Cregan, (Deputy Corporate Communications Manager of Irish Rail), Cllr. Stephen Stokes (Greystones District), Cllr. Danny Alvey (Wicklow District), Cllr. Shane Langrell (Wicklow District).

Cllr. O'Brien stated: "Our population is booming in Wicklow Town, Rathnew and across the Wicklow District. I will continue to support measures to improve commuter services. The DART+ Coastal South project represents a significant investment in our county's public transport infrastructure. It seeks to deliver a more reliable and efficient service for our residents, encouraging a shift towards sustainable travel."

The meeting also addressed environmental considerations, with discussions on how the project aligns with national climate action goals. By promoting the use of electrified rail services, the DART+ Coastal South

project supports Ireland's commitment to reducing carbon emissions and fostering sustainable development. The DART+ Coastal South is now expected to go to public consultation in the summer 2025. This will ensure that stakeholders, including residents and local businesses, have opportunities to provide feedback and stay informed about developments. Councillor Danny Alvey emphasised the importance of community engagement: "As we move forward, it's crucial that we involve local communities in the planning process. Their input will be invaluable in shaping a transport system that serves everyone's needs."

For more information about the DART+ Coastal

South project please visit the official website at www.dartplus.ie/en-ie/projects/dart-coastal-south. Cllr. Stephen Stokes concluded: "I would like to thank Cllr. Danny Alvey, Cllr. Shane Langrell, Cllr. Orla Finn, Cllr. Joe Behan, our external group representatives and Wicklow County Council officials for their valuable input into the meeting with Irish Rail."

"They bring excellent insight and expertise to the Transport, Infrastructure and Emergency Services Committee of Wicklow County Council. I am also thankful to Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council for his unwavering support and encouragement of our work to deliver public transport improvements."

Birds

Bray Seafront, March 14th to 18th

EUROSHOW

Funfair




Enjoy all the thrills and spills of the Bird's Euroshow Funfair as it returns to Bray Seafront on Friday 14th of March.

We will be open over the weekend (incl. St. Patrick's Day) from 11am to 10pm and from 2pm on the Friday & Tuesday.




Wicklow County Council wins at LAMA National Awards

The weekend before last, Wicklow County Council attended the LAMA All Ireland Community and Council Awards. We were shortlisted in seven categories, including the prestigious Council of the Year, which we won in 2024. The event took place in Cork City and was attended by representatives from local authorities across Ireland.

Wicklow County Council won the award for 'Most Inclusive Project' for our initiative titled, 'Wicklow Travelers Urban Outdoor Programme,' submitted by Aisling Hubbard from our Local Sports Partnership.

This project was recognised amidst competition from Fingal, Carlow, Leitrim and Roscommon. In January 2023, Wicklow Sports Partnership provided funding for Wicklow Travellers Group to provide an

Urban Outdoor Recreation project for members of the Travelling Community in Wicklow. The objectives of the project were to allow members of Wicklow Travellers Group to embrace the outdoors through edu-

cation, facilitation and support. The programme was centered around an 'Urban Triathlon,' which included delivering running and walking programmes, learn-to-cycle and mountain biking ses-

sions, and swimming lessons, including both coral leisure and sea swimming during the summer, all facilitated through the Wicklow Travellers Centre.

The swimming component was particularly successful, with teenagers and younger children learning to swim. Sessions were also organised for adult men, which led to a sea swimming series during the summer.

Swimming has traditionally presented an element of fear within the traveller community, so the involvement of kids, parents, and adults reflects a significant positive shift in attitudes towards water. This change promises to transform perceptions for future generations.

A significant highlight was conducting the first-ever Darkness into Light event specifically starting from the CEART at the Wicklow Travellers Centre. All in attendance agreed it was a very successful event, that will be repeated in the year to come.

The Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County



Cllr. Shane Langrell, Cllr. Paul O'Brien and Cllr. Avril Cronin.



Cllr. Shane Langrell, Pat Clark, Cllr. Paul O'Brien and Michael Nicholson.

Council, Paul O'Brien, commented on the achievement by saying, "It's fantastic to see County Wicklow receiving multiple nominations and being shortlisted in this prestigious awards competition, often referred to as the 'Oscars of Local Government'. Each of the shortlisted projects highlights the diverse contributions made by the local authority to the social and economic development of communities throughout County Wicklow."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, expressed her congratulations to everyone involved. "I am pleased to see these nominations acknowledging the hard work and achievements over the past year. Our efforts to engage with community leaders and

businesses have successfully delivered projects that have a significant social and economic impact, benefiting our county. I am delighted that the LAMA and the adjudicators have once again recognised the fantastic work being carried out here in County Wicklow."

This recognition for Wicklow County Council is particularly noteworthy as we have been shortlisted in seven categories.

The shortlist entries were:

- Best Green Sustainable (Monastery Grove, Enniskerry),
- Best Energy Smart Initiative (The Green, Kilcoole and Energy Retrofitting, Monastery Grove, Enniskerry),
- Most Inclusive Project (Wicklow Travelers Urban Outdoor Programme), Local Authority

Energy Decarbonisation Award (Bray Fire Station).

- Local Authority Energy Decarbonisation Award (Energy Retrofitting, Monastery Grove, Enniskerry)

- Local Authority Energy Decarbonisation of The Green, Kilcoole)

- Nominated for Council of the Year 2025

Now in its 19th year, the award scheme hosted by LAMA (Local Authority Members Association) and IPB Insurance recognises and celebrates communities and the country's 31 local authorities working together.

These awards recognise and illustrate the collaborative work between Wicklow County Council, the community and volunteers creating a better place to live and work in Wicklow.



(L to R) Damien Ryan Chairperson of LAMA, Cllr. Shane Langrell, Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Pat Clark, Cllr. Avril Cronin, Michael Nicholson, Sean Keane, Brian Wildes and Cllr. Justin Moylan LAMA.

NTA considering Brady's proposals to improve new BusConnects routes

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has welcomed a very productive meeting with the National Transport Authority (NTA), where he outlined key proposals to address concerns surrounding the rollout of Phase 6A of the BusConnects Network Redesign in North Wicklow.

Following the discussions, Deputy Brady said he is 'hopeful and optimistic' that the NTA will take on board some of the solutions he put forward to improve public transport services in the area.

Speaking after the meeting with the NTA Deputy Brady said: "A major concern raised was the lack of a direct bus connection to the Luas. With the withdrawal of Finnegan's bus services, the crucial link to

Sandyford Luas was lost, creating significant difficulties for commuters. To address this, I have put forward a proposal to extend the new L14 bus route, which currently runs from the Southern Cross in Bray to Raverty Villas in Palermo, further out to Cherrywood Luas, while ensuring that the frequency of the L14 service remains the same.

"Extending the L14 to Cherrywood would restore the essential con-

nection between bus services and the Luas, ensuring a more integrated and efficient public transport network.

"Importantly, this extension would not come at the cost of reduced frequency, meaning passengers will continue to benefit from the same level of service while gaining a crucial new transport link.

"In addition to improving connectivity, the proposed extension would

also resolve a serious safety issue with the current L14 route. At present, buses are terminating in a dangerous location at Raverty Villas in Palermo, right beside the busy junction at St. Peter's School. Under my proposal, the terminus would be moved to Cherrywood, allowing buses to drop off passengers before continuing on their route.

"This adjustment would eliminate the cur-

rent safety hazard in front of St. Peter's School and Raverty Villas, improving safety for local residents, parents, and schoolchildren while also enhancing transport links.

"The proposals align with the broader objectives of Phase 6A of the BusConnects Network Redesign, which aims to improve service reliability, accessibility, and connections between different transport modes in North Wicklow and



John Brady TD at the dangerously located bus terminus in Palermo.

South Dublin. The NTA is currently working on refining routes to ensure better interconnectivity and to address existing service gaps."

Deputy Brady confirmed that the NTA has responded positively to

the proposals and has committed to further exploring them.

"I welcome the engagement with the NTA and am hopeful that these necessary changes will be implemented. Not only would they improve safe-

ty in the Palermo area, but they would also re-establish a vital transport link that was lost, ensuring a more integrated and accessible public transport system for all without any reduction in service frequency."

Whitmore calls for return of expanded Xpress bus service



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

'The 84X was an excellent service - if it's not broken don't fix it'

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore, has called on the Minister for Transport and the National Transport Authority to expand the Wicklow Xpress bus services, to replicate the service that was provided under the 84X.

"The people of North Wicklow had a great service in the 84X. It was reliable, it was quick, and it was frequent. It was a service that was operating to a very high standard, and it was removed with the rollout of BusConnects Phase 6a. But, in my opinion, if a service is not broken, it should not be fixed.

"I met with the National Transport Authority, the body responsible for determining bus routes and issuing bus contracts, and I explained that the X1 and X2 are

taking 20-30 minutes longer than the 84X did. In addition, the daytime services were dropped as part of the transfer to BusConnects, and these need to be reinstated.

"During this meeting, I also raised the very poor start to the roll out of BusConnects, which was primarily down to a lack of preparedness by one operator, Go-Ahead. I was highly critical of their service and outlined the major difficulties caused to constituents as a

result. Go-Ahead simply were not ready to launch their new routes last month and this caused major issues for people relying on their services and hugely undermined the rollout of BusConnects.

"I will continue to press the Minister and the NTA to restore the 84X route. Reliable, quick, and efficient public transport is essential for our community. The 84X was a lifeline for many, and its reinstatement is crucial."

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Cllr. Paul O'Brien (Cathaoirleach of the Wicklow County Council), Erika Doyle (Leas Cathaoirleach of the Bray Municipal District) and Dermot O'Brien (Cathaoirleach of the Bray Municipal District). Photo by Mick Kelly.

Re-launch and expansion of e-bike sharing scheme

Wicklow County Council, in partnership with MOBY, have re-launched and expanded the county's public e-bike sharing scheme on 1st March 2025. This initiative offers residents and visitors a convenient, sustainable, and eco-friendly transportation option, reinforcing the council's commitment to greener mobility solutions.

The scheme initially launched with 100 shared e-bikes in Bray on 1st March. It will expand to Greystones, Arklow, and Wicklow Town at later dates, with further growth planned based on demand.

The dockless e-bike service will be available through the MOBY MOVE app, allowing users to locate, unlock, and ride the e-bikes easily.

The e-bikes can be rented from and must be returned to public bike stands or virtual mandatory parking locations indicated in the app. Once fully launched across the county, customers will be able to rent an e-bike in one town (e.g., Greystones) and park it in another (e.g., Bray) or even cycle to and park in County Dublin, where MOBY also operates a public e-bike scheme. This makes it a viable sustainable transport option for commuters, students, and tourists alike.

The service will be available 24/7, featuring a flexible pricing model that includes pay-per-use options. There will also be subscription-based passes available before the summer. To celebrate the launch, the Council and MOBY will offer free ride passes during March, encouraging people to experience the convenience of e-bikes first-hand.

Cllr Erika Doyle said "I'd like to thank Bolt bikes for the work they put in establishing the e-bike scheme in Bray. Thanks to the Bolt team and the engineering team in Bray the infrastructure exists for Moby to come on board from March. It's exciting to see they will e rolled out to Greystones, Arklow and Wicklow town shortly."

"I'm hopeful the handover in Bray will be seamless. E-bikes are a perfect option for short town centre journeys to avoid getting in your car. Between e-bikes and local link buses there are now options to travel around the town without having to take a car. I'm hopeful people who are in a position to use them will choose to do because that will result in a reduction in town centre traffic congestion. I wish Moby all the best, and as I did with Bolt, will be available to follow up constituents who have any queries."

A Step Towards a Greener Future

This initiative aligns with Wicklow County Council's Climate Action Plan by providing sustainable transport alternatives. The e-bikes

offer a zero-emission commuting and leisure option. MOBY's state-of-the-art e-bikes are designed for durability, comfort, and safety, equipped with features such as automatic gearing, anti-theft tracking and a long-lasting battery range of up to 70 km.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Paul O'Brien, welcomed the initiative, stating: "We are delighted to partner with MOBY to bring this innovative e-bike sharing scheme to County Wicklow. This service will enhance connectivity across our towns, reduce congestion, and support our ongoing efforts to promote sustainable transport solutions. We encourage everyone to take advantage of this environmentally friendly way to travel."

Thomas O'Connell, CEO and Founder of MOBY, highlighted the significance of the launch: "We are excited to expand into Bray, Greystones, Wicklow and Arklow and will seek to provide a smart mobility solution that is both accessible and sustainable. Our experience in operating similar schemes across Dublin and other cities ensures that we can deliver a high-quality service tailored to the needs of the community."



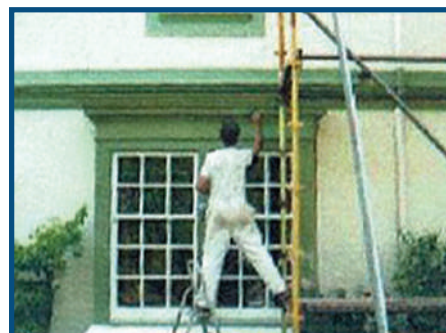
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International Women's Day 2025

Accelerate Action for Gender Equality

Saturday 8th March 2025

March 8th marks International Women's Day, an annual moment to recognise the achievements of women and reflect on the ongoing fight for gender equality. But beyond the celebrations and social media tributes, IWD is a call to action. This year's theme, 'Accelerate Action,' serves as a reminder that progress isn't moving fast enough. According to the World Economic Forum, full gender parity won't be reached until 2158 - five generations from now. That sobering reality highlights the urgency of making meaningful, lasting change.

The mission behind IWD varies from country to country, workplace to workplace, and individual to individual, but the goals remain the same: celebrating women's contributions across history, raising awareness of ongoing inequalities, and pushing for change. Whether it's closing the gender pay gap, increasing women's representation in leadership, or addressing gender-based violence, the conversation is as relevant as ever. This year, there's also

a major focus on supporting grassroots initiatives and women-focused charities to ensure that financial backing reaches the organisations making a real difference. While International Women's Day is an oppor-

tunity to recognise progress, it's also a time to acknowledge the work that still needs to be done. Despite legislative advancements and social movements, gender inequality remains an undeniable reality. Activists, businesses, and communities worldwide are being encouraged to step up their efforts, whether by advocating for policy changes, investing in programs that support women's leadership, or taking steps to ensure that

workplaces are genuinely inclusive.

Speaking about IWD, Green Party Councillor Erika Doyle said: "Often on days of recognition like International Women's Day we celebrate the achievements of the outliers, the success stories, those women who have excelled in their fields.

While these should be lauded, I think it's even more important to recognise all the women and girls in our communities who may have to work that bit harder just to achieve what we view as the norm.

"When I think of strong females I think of single mums struggling to pay the bills, of carers who make huge sacrifices to mind the ones they love, of young girls who struggle with self acceptance in a rapidly changing world, of little girls born into poverty or prejudice. These are the women and girls we should be championing this week."

The day itself is marked in various ways, from public demonstrations and panel discussions to company initiatives and fundraising events. For some, it's about activism and advocacy, while for others, it's a chance to reaffirm commitments to gender equity in their own lives and workplaces. The official colors of IWD - purple, green, and white - each hold significance: purple for justice and dignity, green for hope, and white for unity and solidarity. These colors, first



adopted by the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903, remain a powerful symbol of the movement.

Although IWD is recognised globally, some countries have taken it further, designating it as an official holiday. Nations such as Afghanistan, Armenia, Belarus, Cuba, and Russia formally mark the day, with celebrations ranging from large-scale rallies to cultural and educational events.

But the real question remains: how do we move beyond one day of recognition and turn it into sustained action? The answer lies in collective effort. Businesses can commit to hiring and promoting more women, policymakers can implement laws that actively close gaps in equality, and individuals can call out biases when they see them. Simple acts-mentorship, speaking up in meetings, donating to women-focused initia-

tives - can all contribute to real, tangible progress.

The reality is that gender equality isn't just a women's issue - it's a societal one. The more we work together to break down barriers, the sooner we can create a world where gender parity is a reality, not a distant goal. So as March 8th approaches, the message is clear: it's time to accelerate action, ensuring that the future isn't just about promises but about real, measurable change.

International Women's Day
Women of Faith
Invitation to a Breakfast Gathering
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Please register your interest in attending.
<https://gkpastoralarea.ie/women-of-faith-series/>
Email queries : womenoffaith@gkpastoralarea.ie



Look around not up on International Women's Day says Green Party Councillor Erika Doyle.

FINE GAEL **International Women's Day** **#AccelerateAction**

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International Women's Day 2025

North Wicklow Women's Shed

The North Wicklow Women's Shed opened its doors in September 2023. Since then, the Women's Shed has gone from strength to strength. With nearly 90 members the shed provides a safe space where women can reconnect with themselves and the wider community.

The Shed is a place for women to come together for fun, friendship and to learn new skills. It aims to give women a sense of empowerment through peer education and friendship, and to improve mental health and well-being through social interaction. It also services as an important forum for career networking and an information hub or various community and government supports.

Meeting twice a week, the Shed caters for a range of activities from arts, crafts, mental health and topical speakers. The Shed members often take day trips and to date have visited the

Irish National Stud and Aras An Uachtarain, both of which were very interesting and enjoyable and proved to be a great success with everyone.

Whether you are on your own or with a friend, all are welcome to join us for coffee and a chat, as we embrace our values of empowerment, inclusivity, friendship, respect and fun. As one member stated "I decided to join The North Wicklow Women's Shed and I am so glad that I did. It's an opportunity to meet on a weekly basis with like minded women who enjoy the interaction, chat and craic over a cup of tea or coffee. Also, you make new

friends. The North Wicklow Womens Shed was founded and is organised by a group of committed women who want to ensure it's continued success. Long may it last".

Cllr. Orla Finn, Chairperson stated that "On International Women's Day our Women's Shed members will be coming together to celebrate women's advancement and achievements and raising awareness about gender equality and women's rights. As women, we have come a long way over the last 100 years or so, but our journey is not finished and there is still much progress to be made".



North Wicklow Women's Shed Committee members: Cllr Orla Finn, Laura Costello, Irene Milner, Mary Doherty, Patricia Howe, Rhona Radford, Susan Buckley and Teresa Mulvaney.

A century of progress: The history of IWD



For over a century, International Women's Day (IWD) has been a rallying call for gender equality, uniting movements across the globe in the pursuit of women's rights. What began as a series of small, localized protests has evolved into a worldwide movement, recognized by governments, organisations, and activists alike.

The roots of IWD can be traced back to the 19th century, when early feminists laid the groundwork for gender equality. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, advocating for women's education and social parity. The early suffragettes and feminists who followed, including figures like Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, pushed for women's rights to vote, work, and participate equally in society.

The first major action resembling IWD occurred in 1857, when female textile workers in New York City staged a strike on March 8th, demanding better wages and working conditions. The fight for labor rights and suffrage continued into the early 20th century, with protests and activism gaining momentum worldwide.

The formal inception

of IWD can be credited to Clara Zetkin, a German socialist and women's rights activist. In 1910, at the Second International Socialist Women's Conference, she proposed the idea of an annual day dedicated to women's rights. The proposal was unanimously adopted, and in 1911, IWD was officially observed for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland, with over a million participants rallying for gender equality.

Russia's adoption of IWD in 1913 further cemented its role in social change. In 1917, during the Russian Revolution, women striking for "bread and peace" played a pivotal role in the eventual overthrow of the Tsarist regime. In recognition of their contributions, March 8th was officially declared a public holiday in Soviet Russia, marking one of the earliest government recognitions of IWD.

As the 20th century progressed, IWD continued to spread. China first celebrated IWD in 1922, and Australia followed in 1928. Throughout the mid-century, more countries, including Vietnam, Cuba, and Angola, recognized the significance of IWD and declared it an official holiday.

The feminist move-

ments of the 1960s and 70s played a crucial role in revitalizing IWD, par-

ticularly in the West. The United Nations officially recognised International Women's Day in 1975, marking it as part of International Women's Year. Two years later, the UN invited member states to declare March

8th as a global day for women's rights and peace.

With the rise of digital activism and corporate sponsorship, IWD has taken on a new global dimension and today, International Women's

Day continues to evolve as a truly global movement. Each year, diverse groups contribute in their own way - whether through protests, social media campaigns, policy changes, or cultural events.

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Arklow Maritime Museum launches upgraded website supported by SSE Renewables

Arklow Maritime Heritage CLG / Arklow Maritime Museum launches upgraded website supported by SSE Renewables under the Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund

Arklow Maritime Museum Committee, staff and volunteers met in February to mark the official launch of its upgraded website accessible via www.arklowheritage.ie. The new website is live to the public and retains much of the local historical heritage information yet provides a number of new features to improve user navigation and the experience.

Eamon Bermingham (Chairperson, Arklow Maritime Heritage CLG) acknowledged the Committee's thanks to SSE Renewables which supported the site upgrade through funding provided under the Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund. He praised the support of colleagues on the Committee and Museum staff, paying particular tribute to Niall Power, who managed the upgrade process on the Museum's behalf. He said: "The website upgrade was an important project for the Museum and even more so for bringing information to the wider public in a more user-friendly way. We were very restricted with the previous site in terms of making additions / changes to the site. The introduction of a new content management system has brought an agility and improved level of control to the site, enabling us to focus content and run capsule features that are of specific interest to the public. Our new landing page and menu facility is easy

to navigate and adapts well with other devices including mobile devices without the risk of information loss. Allied to this, the website is compliant with the EU Accessibility Act - which was an important consideration for future proofing".

Jim Rees (Committee Member) commented: "The new website is clear and easier to navigate - offering a simplified and improved user experience. The site now facilitates online bookings which has a triple benefit - firstly to the Museum in terms of planning activities and engagements; secondly to the public in terms of being able to book in advance through an agile website; and thirdly, to local and wider County tourism - raising awareness about the Museum and the many artefacts and anecdotes that can provide so much enjoyment on a visit. Our schools' programme is an important part of sharing local knowledge and supporting the curriculum. Through our new and

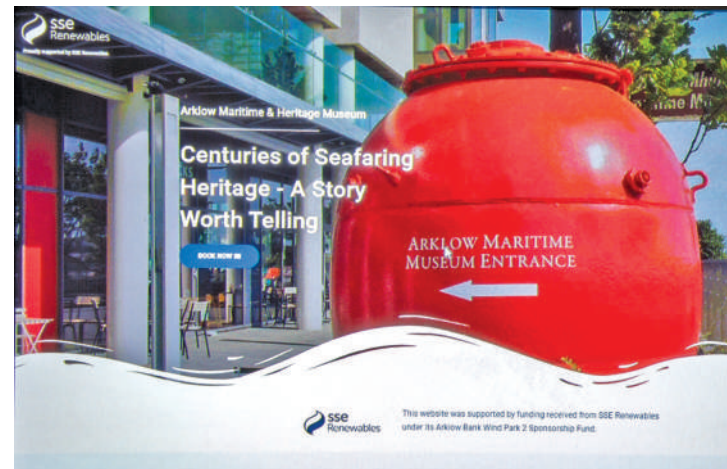
refreshed website, we hope to widen our reach to additional visiting schools from across the country who can see, first-hand, the breath of artefacts held in the Museum dating back many centuries. SSE Renewables has sponsored initiatives previously and we sincerely appreciate their continued support and confidence in our work. We're delighted with the finished version of the website and appreciate their help in advancing this initiative so quickly."

Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager, SSE Renewables said: "The application by Arklow Maritime Heritage CLG to remodel its website fulfilled several of the criteria for application under our Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund - in terms of projects that are engaged in enjoying or preserving the marine environment and its local heritage; promoting social sustainability; fostering youth development and learning - to name a few. The Museum houses a huge range of interesting

artefacts which trace local maritime history but also reflects social change down through the ages. Supporting this project can only help in encouraging locals, tourists, school-goers and researchers alike

to visit, experience and learn from the staff at Arklow Maritime Museum."

For information about Arklow Maritime Museum visit www.arklowheritage.ie



SSE Renewables Community Engagement Manager Deirdre Keogh pictured with James Kavanagh, Jim Rees, Eamon Bermingham, Niall Power, Peter Kinch and Alan Heaney of the Arklow Maritime Heritage CLG at the launch of the new and improved Arklow Maritime Museum website.



Allison Ryder of the Wicklow Hospice with members of the Kilcoole Athletics Club at the Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10km at Beyond the Trees, Avondale.

€23m in Shared Island Development Tourism funding

Funding of up to €23m has been made available for three Shared Island Tourism Destination projects.

Carlingford Lough: A network of trailheads, trails and water access points will be delivered across the region; increasing connectivity between tourism assets and complemented by delivery of a Destination Experience Strategy to promote the region. The investment will harness the benefits of the Narrow Water Bridge as a lynchpin for sustainable tourism and recreation activity around the whole Carlingford Lough area.

Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark: The trail network will be developed to link existing trails North and South of the border; enhancing and further linking the regional tourism offering at Cuilcagh and the wider cross-border UNESCO Global Geopark. Trail development will provide connectivity between the Marble Arch Caves, Cuilcagh Boardwalk and on to Cavan Burren Park and include interpretation, wayfinding and infrastructure, includ-

ing a community-based interpretative centre at Glangevlin village.

Sliabh Beagh: Extensive connected walking, cycling, equestrian cross-border trails around Sliabh Beagh Mountain will be developed along the border, with the inclusion of trailheads and gateways. Trail development will also include interpretation, wayfinding and other facility development.

Minister Burke said: "I welcome the announcement of this significant funding, which will boost the all-island economy and benefit communities north and south of the border. These projects have the potential to deliver sustained economic, social and environmental benefits across counties in both jurisdictions. Communities on either side of the border Ireland continue to collaborate in creating a place that they are proud to share with others, delivering a warm welcome and the promise of a memorable holiday."

Timmins backs Irish tech sector and Wicklow's SMEs

Wicklow TD meets IBEC Group 'Technology Ireland'

As part of his wider campaign to help SMEs in Wicklow and Ireland, Deputy Edward Timmins has met with the country's largest and most influential business organisation representing the tech sector.

Speaking from Buswells Hotel Dublin following the positive meeting with the Heads of the Technology Ireland Executive Team, Wicklow Fine Gael TD Edward Timmins highlighted his support for the Irish tech sector and SMEs in Wicklow: "As an experienced business person and chartered accountant who has now been elected as a TD, I understand the difficulties that small businesses in Wicklow face and also the challenges of the broader Irish tech sector.

"I was delighted to meet with the Executive Team of IBEC's Technology Ireland to discuss how our Government can help small businesses - for example, in the area of fair access of tenders where small Irish companies are often currently excluded.

"Additionally, ISME's Q3 24

Business Trends showed 9 out of 14 indicators yielding declining results for example economic uncertainty is high as current sales dropped 3% from Q1. I am hopeful we can reverse some of these indicators."

Regarding priorities for the tech sector, Wicklow Fine Gael TD Edward Timmins pointed out: "I fully support the priorities of Technology Ireland as outlined in their Policy Priorities Roadmap for 2025 - 'Unlocking the Future' including regularly stability and coherence, strategic growth and business development, global leadership through robust digital policy and open digital trade, digital entrepreneurship, development, creation and management, new emerging and transformative technologies and of course future-proofing the tech sector by priori-

tising and funding digital literacy and skills. I will endeavour to work tirelessly to ensure the implementation of these key pillars.

Concluding Deputy Edward Timmins reiterated: "Both I and Fine Gael fully support the Irish tech sector and small businesses. We will continue to advocate for small businesses both in Wicklow and across Ireland. According to figures from the CSO in 2022, SMEs account for more than 99% per cent of all businesses in this country.

"As a TD, I look forward to further engaging with the tech sector and most importantly small businesses in the Wicklow constituency on how government can further support them with the challenges they often encounter.

"As a TD with with internation-



Pictured with Brendan Kiely CEO and Co-Founder of ThinScale Technology and Una Fitzpatrick, Director Technology Ireland at the 'Lunch and Learn' event in Buswells Hotel.

al business experience, and as someone who had helped SMEs establish and expand, I will champion the needs of small business owners so enterprises in this country and country can truly flourish."

Technology Ireland is the largest and most influential business organisation representing Ireland's tech sector. Membership is made up of the leading Irish-owned and FDI players in the Irish technology

sector and their network is structured around a series of core working groups, member forums and networking events, all of which are the primary enablers of their strategy.

Hoteliers cite rising business costs as biggest challenge for 2025

Increasing business costs, lower occupancy levels and growing global economic and political uncertainty are among the pressing concerns facing hoteliers as they gathered last week for the Irish Hotels Federation's (IHF) 87th Annual Conference taking place this year in the Gleneagle Hotel & INEC in Killarney.

Recent industry research carried out by the IHF shows a drop in business levels within the sector. In 2024, the average national hotel room occupancy stood at 74% for the year as a whole, down 2% on the previous year when an occupancy rate of 76% was achieved. With most regions seeing a drop in occupancy levels, a significant disparity continues to exist across the regions, ranging from 70% occupancy in the border region to 81% in Dublin.

Business sentiment among hoteliers for the year ahead is down for a second year running with 37% of hoteliers reporting a positive outlook for trading conditions over the next 12 months. This contrasts with 47% who reported a positive outlook this time last year and 74% the previous year.

This is reflected in forward bookings, which are pacing behind 2024. Compared to the same time last year, hoteliers are reporting a further drop of 2% in business levels on the books for 2025, equivalent to

€100m in bookings. While results indicate that the domestic market and North America are holding up so far, hoteliers are reporting a net drop in bookings from Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Rest of Europe.

Commenting on the outlook for the sector, IHF President Michael Magnier highlighted the exceptional increases in operating costs over the last three years, which have eroded profitability, particularly for smaller hotels with less than 100 rooms that are more reliant on food and beverage sales.

While hoteliers continue to rank rising costs as the most serious challenge facing their business, the wider economic environment in which hotels operate is also a growing concern. Some 94% of hoteliers say they are worried about the global economy and the potential impact of political uncertainty in key markets. Closer to home, some 78% of hoteliers say they are concerned about the outlook for the

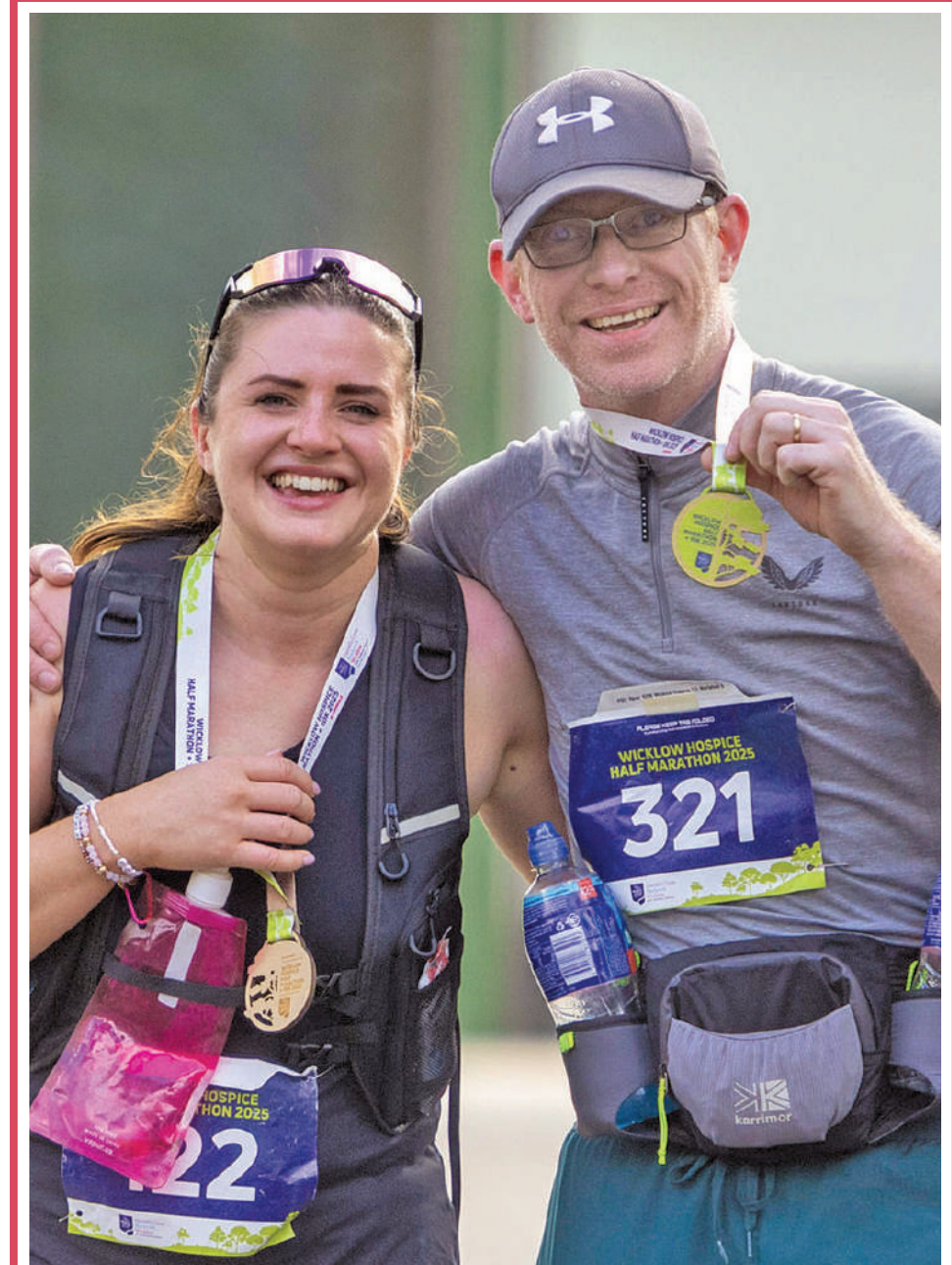
Irish economy over the next twelve months with consumer finances remaining under considerable pressure and international developments posing risks to the Irish economy.

Mr Magnier states: "Last year was very difficult for many businesses within our sector due to what can only be described as relentless increases in the cost of doing business. This has been a persistent challenge for hotels and the wider hospitality industry since 2022 with no let-up in sight. The situation has been compounded by the decision to increase the rate of hospitality VAT, which has hit food service businesses particularly hard. It is therefore very welcome that the Government has committed to revisiting the VAT issue as part of the budgetary process.

"The Government, in partnership with the industry, has a pivotal role to play in creating a more positive business environment for enterprises throughout our sector," said Mr Magnier.

"There is a lot more that the Government can do to assist businesses in labour intensive industries such as our own. The strong focus on tourism within the Programme for Government is of course very welcome and a vital first step to putting Irish tourism and hospitality on a firmer footing.

"Having recently met with Minister Peter Burke to discuss the priorities for the development of our sector, we are more optimistic about the immediate and longer-term prospects for our industry. In particular, we believe that the recent repositioning of tourism within the reconfigured Department of Enterprise will facilitate a more joined-up and coherent approach to best support businesses within our sector. It will also help ensure a greater focus on creating the optimum conditions for business viability with our wider tourism industry - a vital part of the economy supporting some 270,000 livelihoods."



Claire Coyne and Anthony Lennon at the Wicklow Hospice Half Marathon and 10km at Beyond the Trees, Avondale.

Bray Sea Swim raises €6,000 for charities

Bray Lions Club recently presented €6,000 to the beneficiaries of the 2025 New Year's Day Sea Swim at a ceremony in The Martello, which hosted this year's event.

Five local causes benefitted from the event, including two Special Schools- Marino Community School and Newcourt as well as Bray Womens Refuge, WH Five Loaves and Bray Lions Christmas Dinners project.

Bray Lions this year took over the Christmas Dinners project from the Knights of St. Columbanus. It involves the dis-

tribution on Christmas Day of dinners and 'treats' to the homes of 150 people in need. The preparation, packing and distribution of the dinners was undertaken by Bray Lions members and supporting volunteers. The Club has set up a special fund to guarantee that the project continues and is holding an Opera Gala in The Mermaid Arts Centre on 19th March in aid of this fund.

The Charity Swim has been part of the New Year tradition in Bray since 1984 when it was established with the dual purposes of having some fun and raising funds for local charities. The annual event has to date realised more than €406,000 for a long list of worthy local causes.

This year the swim was hosted by The Martello, whose owners provided changing facilities for

the swimmers and post-swim hospitality. John Duggan also hosted the presentation at The Martello.

Says Bray Lions President Karl O'Broin: "We are honoured to continue to organise this traditional event in Bray and we sincerely thank the swimmers who took part, people who contributed to our collection, our many volunteers and our sponsor."



International Peace Poster competition winner Cezar Fortuna with dad Sergiu at the Bray Lions Club presentation of cheques from raised from the New Year's Swim.



Bray Lions Club President Karl O Broin, Vice President Irene Milner and Frank Corr, with New Year's swim fundraising cheque recipients Anne-Marie of Bray Women's refuge, Oonagh Kenny of Marino Special School, Laura O'Neill of New Court Special School and Tommy Gordon of WH Five Loaves.

The Ireland Funds provided over €26m of community support in 2024



Dogs for the Disabled, one of the numerous projects supported by The Ireland Funds in 2024.

In 2024, The Ireland Funds made over 1,250 grants to over 330 organisations across the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and around the world, with a total donation amount of over €26 million. This marks one of the largest years of grant-making since the foundation of The Ireland Funds 49 years ago in 1976.

The funding is distributed across not-for-profit organisations aligned to the four pillars of The Ireland Funds which are: education; community development; peace and reconciliation; and arts and culture. The Ireland Funds is supported solely by funding from private philanthropic donations.

One programme, The Heart of the Community Fund, involved the disbursement of almost €1 million (\$1 million) in grants to 93 organisations in 29 counties. The recipients delivered in areas including enhancing equality of outcomes in education, building community resilience, increasing environmental sustainability, enabling mental health programmes, pro-

viding trauma therapy, and much more. Organisations to benefit included Cancer Fund for Children; Good Shepherd Cork; The Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's University; and Sailing into Wellness.

441 students received life-changing support from The Ireland Funds across two of its educational programmes. In the No Mind Left Behind scholarship programme, 379 students from 81 schools in 21 counties are being awarded scholarships in 29 third-level institutions across the island of Ireland and the UK. This includes 137 undergraduates, who each receive €4000 for each year of their degree course.

The George Moore Scholars programme, with scholarships awarded

totalling €3.3 million, is supporting 74 students from 19 counties to pursue Master's degrees at 33 universities in Europe, the UK, Canada and the US.

At the end of the year in December, The Ireland Funds awarded €500,000 to twenty organisations, - €25,000 each - providing essential services to children experiencing poverty, marginalisation, and difficult circumstances. Including Barnardos; Cope Galway; Dillon Quirke Foundation; Foodcloud; Home-Start North Down; and Laura Lynn.

Speaking on the 2024 impact, Caitriona Fottrell, President & CEO of The Ireland Funds said: "We are delighted with the progress made in 2024 which enabled us to reach

more organisations and individuals and helped us support the education of young people more so than ever before. This work would not be possible without our outstanding community of donors, who ensured that The Ireland Funds delivered real lasting impact to communities across the island and around the world.

"We will be unstinting in our mission to make meaningful contribution to those organisations whose great work makes lives better. Indeed, we take inspiration from those organisations, the people behind them and the work they undertake, every day.

"We have no doubt our donors are equally encouraged by the great work they witness in the communities they support."

Record €352,717 investment in Wicklow sport for 2025

County Wicklow is set to benefit from significant €352,717 investment in local sports initiatives. This is a significant boost for local sports initiatives and community projects in the region. The Government will invest €31.3 million in the sport sector for 2025.

The €31.3 million represents the highest-ever level of core investment in Irish sport, marking an increase of €1.6 million over 2024 and a €13.5 million rise over the life-cycle of the National Sports Policy 2018-2027.

Tánaiste Simon Harris said: "This is a landmark investment for County Wicklow, and I am thrilled to see such a significant allocation to support our Local Sports Partnership.

It will make a real difference in helping to create more opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to get involved in sport and physical activity.

"Fostering active communities and encouraging a healthy generation of

citizens, remains a key priority for me and for Fine Gael in government. This funding allocation is a testament to my commitment in Government to supporting local sports and ensuring that everyone in our community, regardless of background, has access to sport. I look forward to continuing my work with Sports Minister Patrick O'Donovan to deliver even more opportunities for County Wicklow.

"The 2025 Core investment reflects the Government's commitment to National Governing Bodies for Sport and Local Sports Partnerships. Their integral role in Irish sport is vital, and this investment is aligned with the delivery

of the National Sports Policy and the National Physical Activity Plan."

Investment Breakdown

The €31.3 million investment will see €18.3 million allocated to National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to support the development of sports at the national level, with special attention given to the first-ever National Swimming Strategy and the appointment of a Disability in Sport Lead. Additionally, a new dedicated events investment policy will be introduced in 2026 to support the hosting of smaller-scale international sporting events.

Almost €12 million

will go towards the 29 Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) across Ireland, including a significant increase in funding for Women in Sport programs. These initiatives focus on empowering women in disadvantaged communities, older women, teenage girls, and individuals with disabilities or from ethnic minority backgrounds.

A New Approach for the Future

The Minister also highlighted the introduction of a multi-annual approach to core funding from 2026. This approach will allow for enhanced operational efficiency and planning capability, enabling sports organiza-



Tánaiste Simon Harris at the refurbished Shoreline running track in Greystones.

tions to make strategic funding decisions every three years.

Sport Ireland is the national authority responsible for the development

of sport in Ireland. It oversees participation in sport, high-performance sport, anti-doping, coaching, and the development of the Sport Ireland Campus.

In line with government policy, 50% of state funding (excluding Women in Sport funding) will be withheld until national sports organiza-

tions achieve and maintain 40% gender representation on their boards. Currently, 48% of board members across these organizations are women.

Harris hails infrastructure investment in Wicklow

Simon Harris, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Defence and TD for Wicklow, has hailed major Infrastructural Investment in Wicklow with €57,493 in Grants for Water Quality Projects and €1.2 Million for Vacant Property Refurbishment allocated in 2024

The Tánaiste said that investing in infrastructure was a top priority for him in the General Election and he intends to keep a close focus and drive on investing in communities right across Wicklow.

The need for investment in the County is of paramount importance with a growing population, the Tánaiste added, these initiatives mark an

important step forward in tackling key local issues.

Tánaiste Simon Harris said: "Great news for people in Wicklow as investment in infrastructure needs and refurbishment grants continues to soar in the County. €57,493.60 in grants has been awarded to two significant water quality projects in County Wicklow. This funding is part of a

nationwide investment of over €1 million nationally under the Community Water Development Fund Open Call 2025. This investment is reflective of the government's commitment to protecting our environment, enhancing local infrastructure, and ensuring clean water for future generations, an issue that so many people locally care for.

The awarded projects in Wicklow include:

- **East Wicklow Rivers Trust CLG:** €49,593.60 for the design, consent, and costings for the removal of a barrier to fish migration on the Aughrim River.
- **Laragh / Glendalough Tidy Towns Association:** €7,900 for the removal of Invasive Alien Species from the Glenmacnass River near Laragh Bridge / Old Mill.

"The announcement comes alongside news that Wicklow County Council received over €1.2 million in 2024 for vacant property refurbishment grants. This initiative is revitalising communities and helping to tackle housing shortages in the county with 23 completed projects so far. A total of 118 projects have been approved under the vacant property refurbishment and I look forward to seeing more funding given under this scheme to complete the remaining approved projects in 2025.

"I made a promise to the people of Wicklow that I would invest in their future, and today's announcements show that I am delivering on those commitments. Local communities in Wicklow need funding. I will continue to play my part as a representative of the people of Wicklow to invest in infrastructure and housing so I can deliver on the commitments I made to the people of Wicklow and the

people of Ireland.

"As the population of County Wicklow grows it is now more important than ever

that we invest in local communities through housing schemes and infrastructural schemes. People in Wicklow will

soon reap the benefits of these grants, and I for one will continue to work night and day to deliver on my commit-

ments to the people of Wicklow and produce the positive results for towns and villages across the County."



Tánaiste Simon Harris TD.

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Work by Sharon Smith in her exhibition 'The In Visibility Project' in Wicklow Town Library.

Wicklow designer to showcase at Ireland's biggest fashion show

ARC Cancer Support Centres Mark 10 Years of the ARC Fashion Show

ARC Cancer Support Centres (ARC) are delighted to celebrate its 10th annual ARC Fashion Show by showcasing the exceptional talent of Ireland's top designers. Supported by Davy, the Show will be officially opened by renowned author and breast cancer survivor Cathy Kelly.

Taking place on Thursday, 27th March 2025, at the RDS Concert Hall, this event will feature the incredible Wicklow-based designer Silvia Ortega who is known for her stunning and sustainable pieces that are created using natural fabrics, showcasing the region's outstanding craftsmanship and innovation in fashion.

This electrifying evening will showcase the unparalleled creativity of 26 Irish designers, seven milliners, and five accessories' designers. With an 800-strong audience, the show's emotional highlight will be the inspiring 'ARC Angels' segment, where cancer survivors join professional models on the catwalk to unveil bespoke creations under the captivating theme 'In My Wildest Dreams'. This is a particularly poignant moment for family and friends in attendance, eagerly awaiting their ARC Angels' catwalk debuts. Artist and designer Caroline Duffy will provide a spectacular finale to celebrate the occasion.

"We are delighted to partner with Davy to bring guests a spectacular 10th edition of our famous ARC Fashion Show for 2025! A night of entertainment and fun, in the very best of style awaits, all in aid of our clients and their loved ones who continue to rely on our free support services," said Deirdre Grant, CEO, ARC Cancer Support Centres.

Announcing the sponsorship, Chief People Officer at Davy, Orla Graham, said: "At Davy we are committed to supporting our people and our clients at the moments that matter. Working alongside charities like ARC brings vital outside perspectives to how we think and operate. So, we are pleased to come on board and support the Fashion Show. This is a night of fashion, courage, and unforgettable moments not to be missed!"

Tickets cost E65 (plus booking fees) and can be purchased via eventmaster.ie. All proceeds support ARC's free services for those affected by cancer.



Silk evening gown by Silvia Ortega.

Social Fabric Podcast - Wellness Overwhelm



Whale Theatre, Thursday 6th March, 8pm (doors 7pm) Tickets €20/€18 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

Health advice is everywhere-on our feeds, on our screens, in conversations, and in the workplace. But what happens when the pursuit of wellness starts to feel overwhelming?

In this live podcast, Andrea Splendori will be joined by Clare McKenna, Newstalk presenter, TedX Speaker and Integrative Health Coach and Allison Keating, Psychologist, Broadcast and Author, to delve into the concept of Wellness Overwhelm, where well-meaning health messages can spiral into something unhealthy.

Join us as we discuss how the pressure to "be healthy" can sometimes push us in the opposite direction. Explore ways to reshape the wellness conversation to support genuine well-being without added weight. It's time to find a healthier way to talk about health.

The Songs and Stories of Joni Mitchell

Whale Theatre, Saturday 8th March, 8pm (doors 7pm) Tickets €25 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

Shadows and Light have been captivating audiences with their intimate show about music, life and loves of the iconic Joni Mitchell.

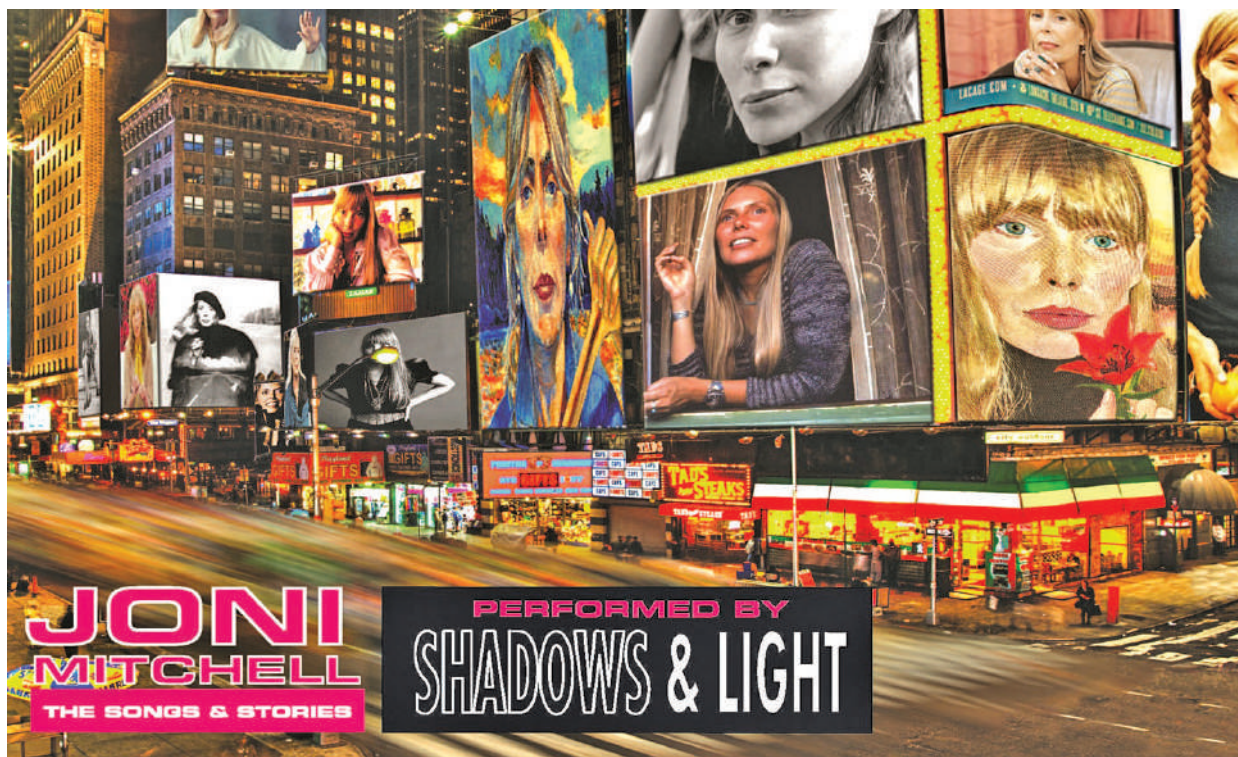
Their stunning interpretations of her music are performed by vocalist Maura Vambeck, Dave Mulligan on guitar, Dave McCune on percussion and Paul Enright on keyboard.

The show features songs from all across Joni's huge repertoire, including classics from the landmark Blue album, along with numbers like Hejira, Secret Place, Chinese Cafe, and many more from Joni's rock and jazz-influenced phases.

Shadows and Light's hypnotic performance of the lyrics and music of Joni is truly special, bringing you Joan Anderson, the poet, artist and mother. If you like Joni, you will love this.

"An unquestionable highlight of this year's Out to Lunch was the performance of Joni Mitchell's material by Dublin based Shadows and Light. A sold out Black Box was held enthralled for over two hours by Joni Mitchell's wonderful songs and the audience rose to their feet at the end in appreciation." - Sean Kelly, Director of the Out to Lunch Festival, Belfast.

"If you are a Joni Mitchell fan, you will love Shadows and Light, but if you don't know much about Mitchell, you will soon be a fan due to this band's passionate and informative take on her music combined with great musicianship and vocals to die for!" - Damien Murray - Belfast Telegraph



Conversation with an Artist

A Free Monthly Series hosted by The Greystones Arts Centre

The Greystones Arts Centre initiative is an exciting project founded by a group of local, diverse artists, writers and musicians, acutely aware of the lack of a dedicated, creative centre in the area. Their goal is to establish a multifunctional venue that provides a cultural hub for all ages in this fast-growing community.



Sculptor Emma Jane Rushworth.

The Greystones Arts Centre will:

- Offer studio, workshop and exhibition space
- Provide a venue for literary and music events
- Benefit local businesses
- Promote a positive sense of well-being while reinforcing our sense of community

Meanwhile the group is hosting events in and around Greystones such as their first popular series 'Conversation with an Artist' which launched to full houses in January and February at Greystones Library.

This is a FREE series of lively, monthly talks with local artists: writers, poets, sculptors, painters, photographers, illustrators and more. You can hear their stories, ask questions and discover their inspirations. Places are limited so come early.

The next 'Conversation with an Artist' on Tuesday, 4th March, 4:00 - 5:00pm features Greystones sculptor Emma Jane Rushworth and visual artist Michelle Owen.

Emma Jane has been creating Wildlife Sculptures for the past decade. Each piece is unique and often designed for a specific location. Her love for animals and wildlife is clear in the devotion to her work.

Michelle creates atmospheric pieces which are an expression and meditation on landscape. Using oil on linen and watercolour on Japanese Washi paper, she conveys the transience and impermanence of place.

So, whether you're an artist or an arts lover, you can help to make the dream a reality.

For more information about the Greystones Arts Centre initiative and to contact the Committee, please email, greystonesarts@gmail.com

The Greystones Arts Centre Committee are: Michelle Owen (Chair), Angelica K. Bender, Frances Browner, Jack Clarke, Cllr. Orla Finn, Mary A. Kelly, Lynne Reece Loftus, Deirdre McKernan Crosby, Emma Jane Rushworth and David Whittredge.



Visual artist Michelle Owen.

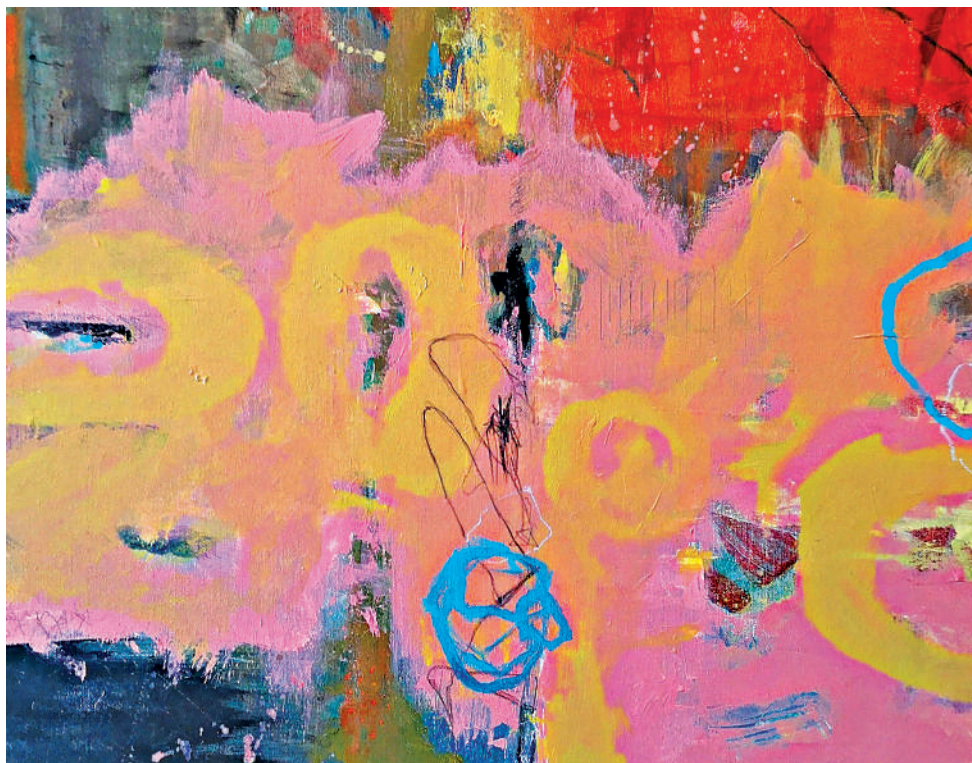
Used Walls: An exhibition by Lenore Collins

Signal Arts Centre, Monday 3rd March to Sunday 16th March

Lenore Collins is an American graphic designer, painter and photographer living in Ireland for the last 26 years. She graduated from RISD (Rhode Island School of Design) in the US in 1985 with a bachelors degree in Graphic Design.

Colour and its various relationships are her main focus and she started out as a realist painter but now concentrates on abstract painting. It gives her a certain satisfaction in that it melds her graphic design and painter sensibilities while challenging her in every piece.

She has had solo shows, been in many group shows and has had 5 solo shows. Her paintings hang in many homes in the area, offices in town and in the US. Lenore received a commission from the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Council to do a painting and 22 art prints of it for the Tidy Towns Awards. She is a member of VAI (Visual Artists Ireland), The Dublin Painting and Sketching Club, ArtNetIrl and The Dublin Art Society.



The Devil's Spine Band

Mermaid Arts Centre, Thursday 6th March at 8pm. Tickets: €21/19

Trevor is well known on the Irish scene as a constant innovator; he was part of the hugely successful legendary 80s avant-pop outfit Auto Da Fé. The group recorded three albums and toured extensively during the 1980s.

Knight is also a composer, collaborator, theatre director and sound designer. Having received many accolades for his own works, he is also renowned for having rubbed musical shoulders with many household

names: Paul Brady, Midge Ure OBE, Philip Lynott, Honor Heffernan, Mary Coughlan, Roger Doyle and Donovan.

Trevor Knight was elected to Aosd'na, Ireland's state-sponsored academy of creative artists, in 2007. Jan 30th 2024 saw Knight launch a highly anticipated double album "Golden Arrows of the Moon" with his fascinating ongoing project, 'The Devil's Spine Band'. It leans heavily into the genre of 'Dark Cabaret' (previously explored with 'The Whistling Girl' with Honor Heffernan).

Travel on a unique, uplifting, musical journey with some of Ireland's finest musicians. Much of the music was co-written with Ireland's finest living blues guitarist Ed Deane (Skid Row, Frankie Miller Band, Dana Gillespie) who has featured in all incarnations of the Devil's Spine Band.

The Devil's Spine Band takes its lead from Oscar Wilde's 1882 trip to Leadville Colorado, exploring all things 'Cowboy' and 'Wilde-West' in an Americana explosion heavily tinged with Knight's unique innovative flair. The Music features settings of a number of Wilde's poems together with

original lyrics - It's edgy stuff; improvisational, ambient Americana rock.

The band: Honor Heffernan (Vocals), Ed Deane (Guitar), Garvan Gallagher (Bass), Dominic Mullan (Drums) and Trevor Knight (Keyboards & vocals).



HYUNDAI INSTER - A VERY INTERESTING OPTION

The original dream of the electric car concept was that because its engine was so simple - the standard electric motor - it could be made and sold at a rock bottom price.

by Martin McCarthy

Electric cars have appeared on and off for over a hundred years - but for reasons around batteries and recharging - they have not got to serious scale until this latest generation of auto designers got seriously stuck in.

Up until 2020, the high cost of anything from €40,000 to €80,000 for family SUVs - was a main factor putting Irish buyers off the green option.

But what about a high quality, light, small car pitched at less than €20,000 with five-year warranty and low cost finance options?

Hyundai's new Instar is compact but with a high roofline it feels spacious enough inside - especially if the adults stick to the front seats.

The base model is pegged at €18,995 but the top of the line Elegance model at €21,995 is worth considering as it has all the IT bells and whistles including very clever folding and sliding rear seats.

The styling inside and out is of the 'uber cool' variety. On a practical level the battery is capable of propelling the car to 100kph in 10.6 seconds and doing 320km per charge. It has a very modern recharging capability so it can fully recharge in under an hour.

Hyundai Ireland have ordered 650 examples initially - but they are flying out the door. Interestingly in the UK the Instar is over £20,000 - so there is no chance of Hyundai Ireland managing to retain the current price beyond June time.

Instar will be a serious option as a second car for many families who might enjoy their first electric experience and the delight of owning a brand new state of the art car.



€57,493 in grants awarded for water quality projects

The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), working on behalf of Ireland's 31 local authorities to protect and restore good water quality, is awarding €57,493.60 to projects in Wicklow. Overall, €1,047,265.26 has been awarded across 54 projects in 24 counties under the 'Community Water Development Fund Open Call 2025'.

Under the fund local communities and groups were invited to apply for financial assistance to support the delivery of projects and initiatives to enhance local water bodies and benefit water quality and biodiversity.

In Wicklow the following projects were awarded funding:

- East Wicklow Rivers Trust CLG- Design, consent and costings for the removal of a barrier to fish migration on the Aughrim River (€49,593.60).
- Laragh / Glendalough Tidy Towns Association- Invasive Alien Species removal from the Glenmacnass River in the vicinity of Laragh Bridge / Old Mill (€7,900).

Since 2018, on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage,

LAWPRO has made over €3.7m available through this funding scheme to communities, assisting in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive through Ireland's Water Action Plan. The funding provided annually has also increased significantly during this period, from €185,800 in 2018 to over €1 million in 2025.

Types of projects approved for funding under this year's open call include:

- River conservation, restoration and rehabilitation initiatives.
- Nature-based solutions projects.
- Preparation of reports: feasibility studies, habitat management plans, ecological surveys, and hydromorphology studies.

Minister of State with responsibility for Nature,

Heritage and Biodiversity, Christopher O'Sullivan TD welcomed this announcement: "This funding, of over €1 million, is an investment in the protection and restoration of good water quality nationwide. The Community Water Development Fund provides vital support to the tremendous efforts of local communities and voluntary groups around the country who work hard to raise awareness of their local rivers, lakes, streams and biodiversity."

"Each and every project supported plays a part in achieving our collective goal to improve water quality under the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation."

Commenting on the 2025 fund, Director of Services for LAWPRO, Anthony Coleman said:

"I'm delighted to announce over €1m in grants under the Community Water Development Fund 2025, our largest fund to date supporting local community driven projects in Wicklow and nationwide that will go towards improving water bodies. LAWPRO was set up to coordinate and support efforts to achieve good water quality and these types of projects are at the heart of what we do. Community engagement is fundamental in dealing with local issues and the fund empowers groups to take action to benefit their local water bodies and the surrounding environment. Providing financial support to community groups to develop and grow is an important step in achieving water quality."

As well as the Community Water Development Fund, LAWPRO also supports community groups and organisations through its Catchment Support Fund and Small Grants and Events Scheme. Launched in 2024, the Catchment Support Fund awarded €500,000 last year towards the core running costs of non-governmental organisations working in the area of water quality.

Whereas the Small Grants and Events Scheme allows community groups to apply for funding to cover small scale initiatives and events related to water quality.

Full details of grants awarded and for more information on the work of LAWPRO visit: www.lawpro.ie

PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Planning permission is sought by Tim and Emma Lennon for Construction of a new single-storey infill extension to the front, a storey-and-a-half extension to the rear, internal renovations, and all associated site works at Brookhaven, Lodge Lane, Lacken, Blessington, Co. Wicklow, W91 H673. 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

Robert Warchol seeks planning permission for: Conversion of Existing Attic Space including introduction of roof lights to front and rear roof slopes along with frosted window in gable wall to existing dwelling at 132 Barleyfield, Wicklow Hills, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow A63 HY33. 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

Franco Tamani / Leslie O'Hanlon are seeking retention permission and planning permission for development as follows: (A) Retention permission for existing single-storey rear and side extensions, as constructed, with a total area of circa 74msq (B) Permission for the demolition of the existing front porch and the construction of a new single-storey front studio/bedroom extension of 16.5m² (C) Permission to relocate the vehicular entrance gate with modification to the side yard wall and enclosure, all together with associated site and development works at The Mews, Ballinalea, Ashford, Co. Wicklow. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and 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

Clodagh Ryan and Damien Clarke intend to apply for full planning permission for a development at 16 Saint Peter's Road Bray, County Wicklow. A98EY99 The development will consist, of a single storey extension to the side and a two storey extension to the rear, with ancillary works, at 16 St Peter's Road, Bray, A98EY99. The proposed extension will incorporate kitchen, living and dining areas, with utility area on the Ground Floor and with 2 new bedrooms, an en-suite and an extension to the existing bathroom on the First Floor. 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, 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.



WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, Mr. & Mrs. David & Denise Hannon seek Permission for a proposed two-storey extension to the side elevation, porch to the front elevation and all associated site works at 3 Glenthorn Close, Bray, Co. Wicklow. A98 F384. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

ATTENTION

Architects, Planners & Builders

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Failte Ireland announces 2025 plans for Ireland's Ancient East

Over 600 tourism industry operators, providers, and employers from across Ireland's Ancient East tuned into a special online briefing from Failte Ireland last Thursday which outlined the plans and priorities for the region in 2025.

A robust programme of initiatives is at the heart of these plans, designed to support tourism businesses across Ireland's Ancient East in driving revenue and maintaining competitiveness, ensuring the continued growth and sustainability of its tourism industry.

Key priorities in 2025 will focus on delivering a strong pipeline of tourism product to attract visitors to the region, motivating them to stay longer and explore further and also delivering a robust range of practical supports to help tourism businesses tackle some of the immediate challenges and opportunities facing the sector.

Key initiatives announced include 'Destination Development'. Recognising the unique opportunities and challenges across Ireland's Ancient East, Failte Ireland's 2025 plans focus on motivating visits, increasing reasons to stay, and working collaboratively to promote the region. Failte Ireland is currently collaborating with over 300

experience providers throughout the region to help attract more visitors, maximise operational efficiencies and deliver memorable experiences for visitors. Failte Ireland also has projects underway in each destination across Ireland's Ancient East aimed at encouraging greater visitor dispersal and increasing the length of stay by improving infrastructure and enabling tourism businesses to coalesce around a clear visitor proposition. Examples of these initiatives include the Cooley Orientation Plan, the reimagined Boyne Valley Drive and the Cork Harbour Tourism Plan.

In 2025 Failte Ireland will continue the implementation of 10 Destination & Experience Plans (DEDPs) in Ireland's Ancient East which engage 1,200 businesses. Led by Failte Ireland, these plans outline actions agreed upon by local tourism industry and community stakeholders to ensure each destination reaches its full tourism potential.

Speaking about the sustainable development plan for Ireland's Ancient East, Director of Regional Development Paul Keeley said: "Our Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) embody best practice in sustainable tourism development, bringing together local communities, local authorities, Failte Ireland, government agencies, NGOs, and the tourism industry to work together as a coordinated collective. Each DEDP is co-created and jointly managed with all key stakeholders. These plans are crucial in ensuring that tourism not only provides economic benefits but also delivers common good in terms of social and environmental benefits to host communities across the region. Great places to visit should also be great places to live."

The content of each plan is tailored to the destination's maturity, encompassing network development, new visitor experiences, transport solutions, public realm



Hook Lighthouse, Hook Head, Coastline, Co Wexford

projects, and accommodation plans. Through these efforts, we aim to create a thriving and sustainable tourism sector that benefits everyone involved."

Under the 'Product Development' aspect of the plan, Hook Head and Irish National Heritage Park, Co. Wexford

Development Plans include a Viking Village concept at the Irish National Heritage Park and a new immersive experience at Hook Lighthouse, with full plans and designs expected later this year.

Glendalough & Wicklow Mountains National Park Masterplan, Co. Wicklow Progress

continues on the Glendalough Masterplan, with a new governance model ensuring alignment among all agencies. Work has begun on a new trail linking Laragh to Glendalough and the Upper Lake, and a conservation management plan for the monastic city is underway.

Wicklow promoted for business events to top German travel agents

Eleven German travel agents - all specialists in business travel and members of a travel agency network called Lufthansa City Center - have been visiting Wicklow and Ireland, as guests of Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland.

The travel agents have been following a bespoke itinerary showcasing our superb offering for the MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences

and events) sector. In Wicklow, they visited Powerscourt Hotel, explored Powerscourt Estate and enjoyed a sheepdog and falconry demonstra-

tion. They also did some Irish whiskey tasting at Powerscourt Distillery and visited Druids Glen Hotel & Golf Resort.

David Boyce, Tourism

Ireland's Head of Business Events and Luxury, said: "Tourism Ireland was delighted to invite this group of top travel agents from Lufthansa City Center

to visit Wicklow. Our aim is to showcase Ireland as a leading destination for Business Events and to inspire these travel professionals to recommend Ireland for future meetings and incentive travel, in 2025 and beyond.

"Business travel is high value and often midweek and off season by its nature, thereby aligning with Tourism Ireland's strategy to grow overseas tourism revenue outside of the peak summer season. Our message is that Ireland offers a winning combination of world-class infrastructure, unique and luxu-

rious accommodation, state-of-the-art venues, spectacular landscapes, the warmest of welcomes and fantastic hospitality, making it an ideal destination for corporate meetings, incentive travel and events of all sizes."

'Meet in Ireland' is the official MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and events) brand for the island of Ireland, comprising Tourism Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland, who work in partnership to promote the island of Ireland as a leading Business Events destination.



German travel agents at Powerscourt Estate, with Julianne Cassidy, Failte Ireland (fourth left) and Orla Kraft, Tourism Ireland (right).

CLASSIFIEDS

Gospel Mark 16: 15-18

Then he told them, 'Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; the one who refuses to believe will be condemned. Signs like these will accompany those who have believed: in my name, they will cast out demons and speak new languages; they will pick up snakes and if they drink anything poisonous they will be unharmed, they will lay their hands on the sick and they will be healed.'

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