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

SUGAR LOAF SHAMBLES

Wicklow County Council has been ordered by the Government Agency, TII, to design an active travel route across the slopes of the Little Sugar Loaf linking Kilmacanogue East with Bray's Southern Cross Road. This instruction by one Government body contradicts the decision of another Government Agency, the NTA, not to proceed with the project.



Cllr Joe Behan.

The Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, through her engineering staff, has now begun the process of preparing this project to go to An Bord Pleanála for planning approval.

Independent councillor, Joe Behan said "This news will shock local people and landowners who will

be affected by a project which is likely to result in Compulsory Purchase Orders on local landholdings, much of it in use for agricultural purposes.

"It will mean cutting an active travel route for cyclists and walkers and e-scooters etc across the lower slopes of the Little Sugar Loaf which will have



Kate Healy, Amy Jordan, Millie Byrne, Georgia Honan and Sadbh Agnew at the Annacurra Camogie Club Gala Awards evening in the Woodenbridge Hotel. Pic: Michael Kelly.

Beannachtaí
na Féile
Pádraig
oraibh
go léir

Cllr. Malachai

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serious environmental impacts. In fact, it was because of the detrimental environmental implications of the plan that the whole project was shelved a year ago.

"Local people have also been extremely concerned at the prospect of this route becoming a possible haven for drug dealing, anti-social behaviour of all kinds and worse still a dangerous area which will be impossible to police successfully, given the appalling lack of Gardaí in the Bray, Kilmacanogue area.

"However, it now appears that Transport Infrastructure Ireland, (TII) a body under the control of the Government, has decided to take over the process and has established itself as the main mover in this shambles and true to

form by going directly to An Bord Pleanála, they will be by-passing the elected representatives on Wicklow County Council who will have no say in the final decision.

"There is a far better way to link the two areas together with an active travel route and that is to construct a separated parallel route beside the N11 which would be more convenient to local people, would be less intrusive on the environment and would be far easier to police than a travel route through the wilderness of the slopes of the Sugar Loaf. This was supposed to be the preferred way forward.

"However, something has changed, and we are now faced with a shambolic situation, yet again, where a Government Agency is

calling the shots and is being allowed by Government to ignore

the rights of local citizens and their elected representatives to

make the decisions which affect their daily lives."



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Greystones Flower Club

The next meeting of Greystones Flower Club will be on Tuesday 25th March at 8pm in The Evangelical Church Hall, Hillside Road, Greystones. The demonstrator will be Brenda Joyce. Members and non-members most welcome. Membership fee is €35 (new members are very welcome). Entrance fee for non-members is €10 per evening. Tea / Coffee is available at the end of the evening.

Bray Cualann Historical Society

Brian White will recall 'A Historic Look at Bray Main Street' at 8pm on Thursday March 20th in the Royal Hotel, Main Street, Bray, Co. Wicklow. All are welcome - admission is €8 for non-members.

Glendalough District Development Association AGM

The Glendalough District Development Association Ltd is pleased to announce the upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM), which will take place on the 10th of April at 8:30pm. The meeting will be held at the Brockagh Resource Centre.

One of the key aspects of the AGM is the election of new Board Members. "We encourage new nominations and are particularly interested in individuals who are passionate about community development and have skills or experience that can contribute to the success of the association. If you or someone you know would like to be considered for a position on the Board, please submit your nomination in advance of the meeting."

The AGM is not only a time for formal proceedings but also an opportunity to engage with the wider community. Attending the AGM is an excellent way to stay informed about the activities and direction of the association. It provides a platform for transparency and accountability, allowing members of the Community to ask questions and seek clarifications on the association, actions and plans.

For any questions or additional information regarding the AGM, please feel free to reach out to Glendalough District Development Association at GDDAChair@gmail.com.

Mobile Library

A mobile comes to Laragh every second Thursday from 12.15 to 12.50pm and parks at the back of Lynhams Hotel. Free access to many online resources including ebooks, languages, magazines, downloadable audio books, newspapers and more. The next date is Thursday 20th March.



Members of the Wicklow Lions Club at the Lions Club Grand Quiz Final which took place in the Golf Club in Wicklow Town. There were 44 tables and a total of €16,500 was distributed on the night to 23 local charities who collected their cheques from Lions President Ethna Neiland. Eleven Quiz Nights were held in total.

'Grangegorman - The Transportation Story'

There will be a local history talk with Joan Kavanagh on 20th March at 7pm in Wicklow Town Library Branch.

The first all-female prison in the British Isles was opened in 1836 at Grangegorman in Dublin. A section of this prison was set aside to hold female convicts sentenced to transportation prior to being shipped to the penal colonies of Australia.

A project, under the auspices of Grangegorman Histories, is examining the lives of the women held there. Who were these women? What crimes did they commit? What sentences did they receive? And what of their families? These questions and more will be answered by Joan Kavanagh when she will give a talk entitled 'Grangegorman - the transportation story' on 20th March in Wicklow Town Library Branch at 7 pm. All are welcome. This event is free, however spaces are limited. To book call 0404 67025 or email Wicklowlocalstudies@wicklowcoco.ie

Upcoming BirdWatch Ireland Branch Events

Saturday March 29th at 11:00. Birding for Beginners: An outdoor workshop at Arklow Ponds for anyone, young or not-so-young, who wishes to get to grips with some basics of bird identification (until 13:00).

Meet at the car park at the end of Seaview Avenue at 11:00. Bad Weather Protocol: If a Met Eireann Orange or Red warning is in force at the location where and when a branch outing is due to take place then members should assume that the outing is cancelled.

Tuesday April 8th at 19:30. A talk by Brian O'Toole from Wild Acres Nature Reserve and Biodiversity Education Centre. Venue: Ashford Community & Heritage Centre (Eircode A67 DH34). For public transport options see, TFI Journey Planner. Admission is free, a voluntary contribution to cover the cost of room hire would be appreciated.

Gorey Family Eyecare: A Visionary Success Story

On March 15th, Gorey Family Eyecare celebrated its 4th anniversary, marking an impressive journey that has seen the business quickly become the "go-to place" for children's eyewear in the southeast. Located on McDermott Street in Gorey, this family-run practice has carved out a niche for itself in the competitive world of optometry, winning the hearts of local families and establishing a loyal following well beyond its small-town roots.

One of the cornerstones of Gorey Family Eyecare's rapid success is its specialisation in children's glasses. Owner and dispensing optician Michelle Stokes brings years of experience and a deep passion for helping children find eyewear that suits both their style and vision needs. From toddlers taking their first steps with glasses to teenagers seeking the latest trends, Gorey Family Eyecare has built a reputation for its personal touch and expert fitting.

The practice offers a wide selection of children's frames, carefully curated to combine comfort, durability, and style. This dedication to children's eyewear has earned the practice a reputation that stretches across the southeast, with families from as far as Dublin and Waterford regularly visiting to get their little ones fitted.

An essential part of Gorey Family Eyecare's rise to prominence has been its strong social media presence. Michelle has used engaging posts on Facebook and Instagram to build a community, reach new customers and showcase new collections.

While children's eyewear is at the heart of the business, Gorey Family Eyecare is not limited to just young customers. The practice offers a premium selection of eyewear for adults as well. Top-tier brands like Gucci, Prada, Michael Kors, Jimmy Choo, Tiffany, Ray-Ban, and



Nike are just some of the high-quality options available. Whether you're looking for a sophisticated pair of glasses for work or stylish sunglasses for a summer day, the team at Gorey Family Eyecare ensures that every customer, regardless of age, finds the perfect pair.

A key milestone in the practice's young but successful history came in 2024, when Gorey Family Eyecare was awarded Optician of the Year at the Wexford Customer Excellence Awards. Competing against six other well-established practices in the region, this accolade

was a testament to the high level of care and expertise that Michelle and her team provide. Winning this prestigious award in just their fourth year is no small feat and highlights the trust and respect the business has earned from both its customers and peers in the industry.

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Firefighters commended for heroic efforts

Neary calls for full-time Bray fire service

Cllr Ian Neary has praised the bravery and professionalism of the firefighters from Bray Fire Station, who responded to a major fire in an apartment complex on Lower Dargle Road in the early hours of Monday morning last week.



Cllr Ian Neary.

At approximately 5am, emergency services were alerted to the fire, which impacted 15 apartments. Thanks to the swift and courageous response of the local fire crew, all residents were safely evacuated. While nine people were taken to hospital, the fire was successfully contained and prevented from escalating into a major catastrophe.

Cllr Neary described the firefighters as "the stuff of

legend" noting that this is not the first time they have prevented disaster in the community. Just three months ago, the same crew tackled a major fire in Fassaroe, where a bungalow was completely destroyed but, thankfully, no lives were lost.

"These men and women put their lives on the line for us time and time again. Their dedication and professionalism saved lives today, and we owe them a

deep debt of gratitude," said Cllr Neary.

However, he also reiterated the urgent need for a full-time fire service in Bray, highlighting the risks posed by the town's continued growth.

"If this fire had started at 5 PM instead of 5am, I fear the outcome would have been much worse. We cannot keep ignoring the reality that Bray needs a full-time fire service to ensure the safety of our community."

Cllr Neary also extended his thanks to fire crews from Greystones and D'n Laoghaire, as well as An Garda Síochána, for their coordinated efforts in managing the emergency. Cllr Neary is currently engaging with fire fighters in the area again pledged his full support for the campaign for the introduction of a full time fire service for Bray.



Fire crews on the Lower Dargle Road last Monday.



Pupils and Principal Kathy van Eesbeck of St. Patrick's National School in Avoca take part in Lá Glas, a day of fun activities to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

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Zoryana Dancers at Tree Festival at Belmont Demesne.

Huge win for Rewilding as 4,000 trees find new homes at the Tree Festival

Bathing in glorious sunshine from early morning, the Tree Festival at Belmont Demesne blossomed into a spectacular celebration of the outdoors, nature, community and sustainability on Sunday, March 9th.

People gathered in their thousands to enjoy a day of nature trails, music, picnics, activities and simply wandering around in the sunshine chatting and sipping coffees.

The aim of this growing festival, celebrated during National Tree Week, is to distribute native trees to the public to support rewilding efforts. Rewilding is the process of restoring ecosystems by allowing nature and native species to reclaim land, creating habitats for wildlife and enhancing biodiversity. With recent news of the unlikelihood that Ireland will hit its climate targets in 2030 and the subsequent fines we could incur, local initiatives like this are more important than ever.

Now in its fourth year, the festival was pioneered by Jane Jackson of local climate action group 80Max in collaboration with Belmont Demesne, and this year was further strengthened by the support of Bray & North Wicklow Area Partnership (BNWAP). Coillte supplied the trees free of charge - a mixture of oak, alder, elder, beech, birch, silver birch, hawthorn, sweet chestnut and hazel. Advance orders were facilitated by 80Max, which ensured an incredible 4,000 native trees efficiently changed hands on the day. Experts from Green Friends were at there to offer advice on planting and soil types, ensuring each tree has the best start in its new home. These young saplings will now take root in gardens and green spaces across the county - with some oak saplings destined for a farm in Tipperary! - helping to restore habitats and support biodiversity in Ireland.

The day was packed with activities, from Birds of Prey demonstrations, a Pop-up Gaeltacht and archery lessons to art and puppet-making, pottery, storytelling as Gaelge, and an interactive biodiversity quiz. Wildlife journalist Justin Ivory led an educational and inspiring nature trail, while musician Ronan Ó Snodaigh enchanted festivalgoers with a poetic walking trail reciting his poem When Peace Broke Out In The Garden. A bustling craft market showcased local artisans, while a raffle and a live performance by The Hammonds kept spirits high. Many cars arrived stacked with bikes for the free bike trails and pump track while others took advantage of Belmont's location at the base of the Little Sugar Loaf to head off for a hike.

Encouraged by the promising forecast no doubt, attendance soared beyond expectations this year, with over 3,000 people making the most of the hottest day of 2025 so far and joining in to celebrate trees, sustainability, and hopefully the end of a long winter.

Roundwood national school wins Coillte photography competition for Tree Week

National Tree Week 2025 (9th - 16th March) brought a week-long programme of exciting events to Wicklow. Led by the National Tree Council of Ireland and supported by Coillte, this annual celebration highlights the vital role of Ireland's trees, forests, and woodlands in creating a greener, more sustainable future.

The week offered a fantastic opportunity for communities to connect with nature and learn more about the importance of trees. Planting Trees, Growing Together was the theme of this year's National Tree Week, encouraging people of all ages to learn more about the importance of trees and forests. Events in Wicklow included a free guided tour of the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh; a Guided Tree Walk of the Vale of Tara Nature Reserve; Forest Bathing at

Vale of Tara Nature Reserve.

Ahead of National Tree Week 2025, Coillte launched a nationwide photography competition for primary schools encouraging students and teachers to explore nature and capture their favourite trees and outdoor spaces. With entries received from across the country, showcasing the creativity of young nature enthusiasts, the winning schools will enjoy a class trip to Beyond the Trees Avondale, featuring the spectacular Treetop Walk and Viewing Tower at Coillte's Avondale Forest Park in Rathdrum.

This year's winners included Junior Infants at St. Laurence O'Toole's National School, Roundwood. This is Sadhbh Kelly's favourite tree because it's her mum and dad's wedding tree. It's an Irish oak, and she helped plant it at their wedding. The family thoughtfully gave each wedding guest a tree to take home and plant in their own gardens as a living memory of the special day. Sadhbh takes great care of her tree and hopes it will grow "really, really big."

Michael Healy-Rae T.D., Minister of State for Forestry, Farm Safety and Horticulture said, "I want to commend Coillte and the Tree Council of Ireland on this initiative. Planting trees and spending time in forests is so very beneficial for our health and well-



Winning photo from St. Laurence O'Toole's National School, Roundwood.



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being and fosters community spirit. I will shortly launch the Neighbourhood Scheme which also supports and enhances the amenity value of local woodlands."

Cormac Downey, President of the Tree Council of Ireland said, "National Tree Week is all about celebrating the benefits that trees and forests deliver for us. This year's theme, 'Planting Trees, Growing Together' is especially important, inviting communities across the nation to come together to appreciate the beauty and crucial importance of Ireland's trees."

Renewed calls for public purchase of Glen of the Downs lands

‘Community efforts highlight need for Government action’

Social Democrat TD Jennifer Whitmore met with residents of the Glen of the Downs lastweek to discuss the development of a biodiversity plan for the area and how to best enhance nature protection on these ecologically important lands.

"The commitment to nature shown by the community of the Glen of the Downs is incredible," said Deputy Whitmore. "At our meeting last night, I was inspired to hear that residents have formed a group dedicated to developing a comprehensive biodiversity plan for their lands, 'Neighbours for Nature'. This proves their huge interest in preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of Glen of the Downs. To have a group of like-minded neighbours to come together and form a common strategy will strengthen this effort immensely. "The community along Ballydonagh Lane is doing

incredible work, and many of them are already actively engaging in rewilding their land. In fact, one local has already planted 40,000 native trees on her land with the help of Reforest Nation and EcoSikh Ireland," Deputy Whitmore continued. "The Government must follow the leadership shown by these local landowners and step in and purchase the lands currently up for sale adjoining the Glen of the Downs to maximise the biodiversity potential of the area and ensure that this community's hard work is not in vain." Towards the end of 2024, nearly 80 hectares of land came

up for sale adjacent to the Glen of the Downs nature reserve, with 40 hectares being forest land. Deputy Whitmore started a petition to call on the Government to purchase this land to expand the Glen of the Downs. The petitioned garnered huge support, with over 5000 signatures. "This land purchase would potentially allow for a doubling of this magnificent nature reserve, which is an invaluable national treasure and well-known Wicklow landmark," Deputy Whitmore told the Irish Times in September 2024. Deputy Whitmore, at the time,

called for the Government to use the Climate and Nature Fund for this purchase. Since then, Deputy Whitmore has been working with local residents and Tanaiste Simon Harris to get this over the line, but progress has stalled. "I am calling on the Government to get things moving on the public purchase of the Glen of the Downs. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to greatly expand our ancient woodland and enhance the Glen of the Downs nature reserve, and the Government must stop dragging its feet," Deputy Whitmore concluded.



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

Brady calls on all stakeholders to work together to secure cinema for Bray



John Brady TD.

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has expressed disappointment at the news that the planned Stella cinema that was to be opened in Bray Central will not proceed. He has called on all stakeholders to work together to ensure that a cinema is delivered for Bray.

"I am deeply disappointed by the latest developments regarding the Bray Central cinema project. For nearly 30 years, the promise of a new cinema in Bray has been a long-awaited vision - one that has been repeatedly postponed, holding our town back from reaching its full potential.

"Last year, the Bray Central development, including the proposed Stella cinema site, went into receivership. Eclective Hospitality Group had taken over the project from the receiver's. However, the proposed Stella cinema plan has now been shelved by Eclective and handed

back to the receivers. This turn of events marks a further setback for Bray and underscores the need for a decisive and collaborative effort to bring this project to fruition. "While the opening of Penneys last year provided a glimmer of hope by increasing footfall on Main Street and boosting

local business, the absence of a cinema remains a critical gap. Without a local cinema, Bray's residents are forced to travel to areas like Dundrum, Dun Laoghaire, Tallaght, and elsewhere to access the cultural and entertainment experiences that are essential for a vibrant community. Given the size of Bray, the growth in surrounding areas, and the increase in population, it is imperative that our town provides a cinema to

meet these needs. "The cinema was intended to be a cornerstone of the Bray Central mixed-use development - a project that promised not only enhanced local entertainment but also substantial economic benefits. The prolonged delays and the recent decision to relinquish the cinema lease have only further delayed the realisation of Bray's potential. This is unacceptable for a community that has wait-

ed far too long for progress. "I call on all stakeholders, including the receivers, potential investors, and the local authority, to engage proactively and work together to ensure that a cinema is delivered to Bray Central, as was promised from the outset. This project is more than just an infrastructure investment - it is a vital component in revitalising our town centre, stimu-

lating local commerce, and enhancing the quality of life for all Bray residents. The people of Bray deserve better than a series of unmet promises. It is time for decisive action to turn these long-standing ambitions into reality. I urge all involved to prioritise this essential development so that our community can finally enjoy the full spectrum of amenities that Bray is capable of offering."

Wicklow GAA 2025

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MATCH PROGRAMME ADVERTISING: Club Football & Hurling Championship Final Program

MEDIA & DIGITAL PLATFORMS: Logo & Promotional Presence on Wicklow GAA Website & Social Media platforms with media announcement of sponsorship

WICKLOW EVENTS: Partner Event, Sponsors Day

Bronze Package €5,000

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MATCH PROGRAMME ADVERTISING: Club Football & Hurling Championship Final Program

MEDIA & DIGITAL PLATFORMS: Logo & Promotional Presence on Wicklow GAA Website & Social Media platforms with media announcement of sponsorship

WICKLOW EVENTS: Partner Event, Sponsors Day

'Unacceptable' waiting lists for CAMHS

Sinn Féin TD Fionntán Ó Súilleabháin has criticised CAHMS for the unacceptable waiting lists for County Wicklow and County Wexford.

Responding to Deputy Ó Súilleabháin's parliamentary question to confirm the number of children desperately awaiting vital services, the HSE's response caused deep frustration and disappointment in the service.

"There are currently 1,400 children in Wexford and Wicklow waiting to be seen by CAHMS. As a parent, and a primary teacher for 34 years, it is extremely disappointing to see this. CAHMS provide specialist mental

health services to those aged up to 18 years, who have reached the threshold for a diagnosis of moderate to severe mental health disorder; why are our children experiencing mental health difficulties not being prioritised for

critical care."

Deputy Ó Súilleabháin expressed his frustration: "It frustrates me beyond measure to see that some of these children are waiting up to 52 weeks for an appointment. Not only for the children - for their families too. Parents have come to me desperate for help and support, reach-

ing breaking point. No parent should face this level of stress and mismanagement to care for their child; no child should be made to feel forgotten.

"We need immediate reform, and I am hopeful that the HSE's regional plans will tackle this unacceptable waiting list

for those affected. We need to provide sustainable solutions so that no child or parent must suffer because of CAHMS staffing issues or inadequacies.

"The allocation for CAHMS in this region for 2025 is €3 million; it's time for action and care for our children."



Fionntán Ó Súilleabháin TD.

'Previous Government paid mere lip service to the enormous additional financial costs borne by disabled people'



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

It is shameful that disabled people continue to be at such a huge risk of living in poverty, according to Social Democrat TD Jennifer Whitmore.

"New research from the ESRI has painted a stark picture of the huge financial pressures faced by disabled people.

"Not only are they at a greatly increased risk of living in poverty, the cost of their disability can be as much as 93 per cent of their disposable income.

"A previous study, published in 2021, had estimated the additional cost of having a disability at between €9,482 and €11,734. However, the

ESRI has now put those figures at between €25,000 - €29,000.

"This study while shocking, should not be surprising. It has long been known that disabled people face huge additional, and unavoidable, costs by virtue of having a disability. This is the reason disabled people are at much greater risk of living in poverty.

"Despite this, successive governments have done almost nothing to

reduce these additional costs. For a start, state services - like therapies and accessible transport - are virtually non-existent.

"Ireland also ranks lowest in the EU for the number of disabled people in employment, with an employment rate of just 32.6 per cent - compared to an EU average of 51.3 per cent.

"The last government's response to this issue was to publish a green paper, which sought to medically assess disabled people's ability to work - a proposal which was rapidly withdrawn in the face of huge public protest.

"The previous government also paid mere lip service to the enormous

additional financial costs borne by disabled people, by providing a temporary one-off cost of disability payment - an insulting and tokenistic measure given disabilities are not temporary.

"We now have report after report telling us that disabled people face huge additional costs and are much more likely to be at risk of poverty. Yet, there has been inaction from government when it

comes to addressing this issue.

"Disabled people need a weekly cost-of-disability payment, to try to offset some of the enormous extra costs they face. They also need the State to ensure that essential services are both available and accessible.

"The question for this government is, how much longer are they going to wait to take meaningful action?"

'Statutory right to home care would allow older people in Wicklow to remain at home for longer'

Older people must be helped to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible, Tánaiste Simon Harris has said.

Fine Gael Leader and Tánaiste Simon Harris committed to introduce a new Statutory Home care scheme.

"This measure is being led by Fine Gael Minister Kieran O'Donnell who I appointed to bring a real focus, energy and determination to ensure older people are cared for at the highest level of Government.

"This measure would ensure that people can reside in their home for longer. In the General Election I campaigned for the introduction of a new Minister for Older People with a focus on the issues facing elderly people.

"Minister Kieran O'Donnell has set out his priorities for the role. A new vision is required to make Ireland one of the best countries in the world to support a long and fulfilled life.

"Life after retirement should be active, connected, respected, secure, and independent, just as it is before. We need to be bolder and more ambitious in how we achieve this. Under Fine Gael in



Tánaiste Simon Harris TD.

government, the Department of Health and the Department of Housing will work together for the first time ever to develop joint policy options for older persons.

"The first step is the statutory home care scheme. The importance of helping older people assist them to remain independent and live in their homes with dignity and independence for as long as possible cannot be underestimated. It is better for them, it is better

for the country, and it demonstrates that the contribution older people have made to communities nationwide is immense. This should be recognised and rewarded by the State.

"The Government believes that people should be helped to live as long as possible in their home and in their community. So central to the role of Government and the party I lead in the coming period is to establish care in the home on a statutory footing. What

does this mean?

"It means that as people get older and their care needs evolve, they will have the option and legal right to be cared for in their own home should they so wish. Right now while the Fair Deal scheme provides a legal right to residential care, there is no equivalent programme for home care.

"This commitment made before, but I intend to ensure we deliver on it. It is one of my Party's priorities in Government. The Programme for Government commits to designing a Statutory Home care scheme that will allow people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. As Tánaiste I will push forward these proposals for the establishment of home care on a statutory footing so that people who require long-term care at home have the option of receiving it. Achieving this commitment will require focused efforts across several different areas of Government who will all be working towards developing a statutory framework."

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condition, and ready for immediate occupancy.

Located in the heart of Bray, this office benefits from a high footfall area and excellent visibility for businesses. The nearby Bray DART Station provides easy access to Dublin City Centre. The annual rates for the unit are €1,221.71, with insurance costs of €786.26. This is an ideal space for businesses seeking a professional, secure, and well-positioned office.

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Councillors listen to concerns of SaveBray campaign

SaveBray was grateful earlier this month to have a full contingent of Bray Municipal councillors in attendance at a meeting organised by them to listen to the group's concerns, and to answer questions posed by the councillors regarding other points of view.

Speakers from SaveBray focused on proposed public and private development on the lowlands of the 'Sea Gardens' site (the former golf club lands) beside the River Dargle, claiming:

1. A proposed bridge at this point will disrupt swan flight paths and other wildlife, causing catastrophic harm; speaker, Graham Prole;

2. In particular, the narrow turn-around for buses at Seapoint Road - between the railway underpass at the Harbour Bar and access to

Seapoint Court - will endanger both pedestrians and cyclists: speaker, Lorraine niFhlannagain;

3. Damming a floodplain with either public or private development poses significant dangers to current and future residents: speaker: Noleen McManus.

Kevin McLoughlin from SaveBray provided five other reasons, unconnected with the above, why they believe this bridge is "the wrong design in the wrong place".

"It's crucial our councillors understand the

major risks to our communities as they make decisions for this land in the next Local Area Plan", said a spokesperson for the group, "and we are very grateful for their engagement."

Input from the councillors, following a PowerPoint presentation, was welcomed by representatives of the three community groups, who answered questions and pointed to possible alternatives.

"We believe in sustainable, smart, and safe solutions to both the need for housing and traffic management in Bray", said the spokesperson. "Building on the floodplain can be avoided in future, without losing any land to housing, by Ballymore

simply swapping a promised 2ha public park with their proposed development on the floodplain. Equally, there's potential to relocate the bridge for better traffic management. A comprehensive plan is needed to address traffic issues without risking lives."

They pleaded with councillors to assign appropriate Land Use zoning to the high risk Flood Zone A (next to the river) in the upcoming Local Area Plan, as per the mandatory Flood Risk Management Guidelines. While some councillors clearly supported SaveBray's stance,

all agreed that they were "better informed" after the meeting, and expressed a wish to continue this valuable dialogue.



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 PROPOSED MATERIAL AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAFT BLESSINGTON LOCAL AREA PLAN 2025-2031

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 20 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) that Wicklow County Council, being the planning authority for the area, proposes to amend the draft Local Area Plan (LAP) for Blessington. The proposed amendments would, if made, constitute a material alteration of the draft LAP which was published on 30 October 2024.

The 'Blessington LAP 2025-2031' will consist of a written statement indicating the objectives in detail as may be required by the planning authority for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, maps and appendices. This LAP will, when adopted, replace the existing Blessington Local Area Plan 2013-2019. The new LAP should be read in conjunction with the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022 - 2028.

The Proposed Amendments are accompanied by the following additional reports or Addendums to the reports published with the draft LAP:

- Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Determination
- Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Determination
- Addendum I to the SEA Environmental Report for the draft LAP - this is a Screening for SEA, which provides information on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the proposed amendments, pursuant to the European SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended).
- Addendum I to the AA Natura Impact Report for the draft LAP - this is a Screening for AA, considering likely significant effects on the integrity of European sites - pursuant to Article 6[3] of the European Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended);
- Addendum I to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, which provides a strategic flood risk assessment of the proposed amendments, carried out in accordance with 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (DoEHLG/OPW, 2009 - pursuant to Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)).

DISPLAY OF PROPOSED MATERIAL AMENDMENTS

The 'Draft Blessington LAP 2025-2031' and the Proposed Material Amendments to the LAP (and associated SEA, AA and SFRA addendums) will be available to view at the following locations, during their normal opening hours, from **Monday 24 March 2025 to Wednesday 23 April 2025 (5.00pm) inclusive:**

- Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow Town
- WCC Municipal District Office, Civic Offices, Blessington Business Park, Blessington
- Blessington Library
- Copies of the Draft LAP and the Proposed Material Amendments to the LAP will be available to download and view on the Council's website www.wicklow.ie through an online consultation portal. Scan the QR code on this notice to access the portal.

MAKING A SUBMISSION

Submissions or observations regarding **ONLY** the **Proposed Material Amendments** and the associated reports are hereby invited from the public and interested bodies between the dates **24 March 2025 and 23 April 2025**. Children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children, are entitled to make submissions or observations. Written submissions or observations made before midnight on **23 April 2025** will be taken into consideration before the making of the Local Area Plan.

Submissions may be made in one of the following ways:

1. Write to 'Blessington LAP', Administrative Officer, Planning Section, Wicklow County Council, Station Road, Wicklow Town.
2. Through the **online consultation portal** at www.wicklow.ie or scan the QR code on this notice.

NOTE

- YOU ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO MAKE YOUR SUBMISSION AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.
- All submissions are to be clearly marked with 'Blessington LAP'.
- All submissions should include your name, a map (where appropriate) and, where relevant, details of any organisation, community group or company etc., which you represent.
- Please make your submission by one medium only, i.e. hard copy or through the portal.
- All valid submissions will form a part of the statutory Chief Executive's report and will be available to view online.
- The planning process is an open and public one; therefore all submissions/observations are a matter of public record and will be available for public viewing. They may also be placed on the County Council's website and therefore should not include any personal information.
- LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Wicklow County Council is committed to Access For All. All of the above documents are available in alternative format on request. Please contact Wicklow County Council on 0404-20100 should you have any specific access requirements.



Timmins meets with Alliance of Bray Residents

TD commends group's policing submission and commits to working with its members

Following a recent meeting with the Alliance of Bray Residents (ABR), Fine Gael Deputy Edward Timmins has said he aims to amplify their local concerns in Dail Eireann on issues from policing to transport.

Speaking from Bray, following the successful meeting, Deputy Edward Timmins stated: "Firstly, I would like to commend the ABR on the work that they are doing to improve Bray and the surrounding area. I was particularly impressed with the detail in their submission to the Wexford Wicklow Divisional Policing Plan 2025. Having now met the group and listened to their concerns, I believe the themes included in this submission namely strengthening and connecting communities, tackling crime and preventative policing and the promotion and enforcement of road safety are key issues for the wider Bray area."

Deputy Edward Timmins continued: "I am committed to working with the ABR to assist them to achieve their aims on issues from transport to policing. I will do this by keeping in regular contact with the alliance and raising their issues on a national level in Dail Eireann - working alongside Tánaiste Simon Harris in conjunction with our local Fine Gael colleagues, Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy and Councillor Melanie Corrigan. Together we



Edward Timmins TD.

will ensure the people of Bray have the strongest and most effective representation both locally and nationally."

Speaking of his experience of working with local residents groups, Deputy Timmins remarked: "Having been a local councillor for 20 years, I am acutely aware of the challenges within our communities and the national solutions which are badly needed to ensure adequate resources are available. I am currently bringing practical solutions and new ideas to Dail Eireann that will assist residents across the county.

"Participating People:

Enabling Active Citizenship in the

Twenty-first century', a report by The Wheel (Ireland's national association for community and voluntary organisations) highlights the importance of involving communities in the decision making process. This is something I hope to achieve as a TD, and I have been busy meeting local groups countywide in recent weeks."

Deputy Edward Timmins continued: "Bray is a town steeped in tourism potential and the gateway to our county for many. As the weather improves, more and more visitors are coming here. It's important there is a visible Garda presence in the town, and proper traffic management in place.

"Additionally, it is my hope Bray will regain its Blue Flag status. There are several groups who have worked very hard in recent years to improve many areas locally including Bray Head, and other locations like the iconic Albert Walk. I am deeply committed to working with and empowering residents groups here in Bray and across Wicklow to make our county a better place to live for all."



Audrée Lafrenière and Jeff Pelletier on the top of the Little Sugarloaf. Photo Jeff Pelletier.

Three-day 'fast packing' along the Wicklow Way

Follow Canadian influencers as they document their stunning three-day adventure, which reaches thousands on YouTube.

In September 2024, Wicklow County Council invited YouTuber Jeff Pelletier and his partner Audrée Lafrenière to 'fast pack' the Wicklow Way over three days, covering more than 100km with approximately 3,500m of climbing. This trip was organised with the support of the Canadian Tourism Ireland office and Fáilte Ireland.

Starting from Tinahely, the first stage was 33km long, bringing Jeff and Audrée to Glenmalur Lodge for their first overnight stay. The second stage was the longest, at 45km, taking them to Glendalough, Lough Tay and onward to Enniskerry. They completed their adventure by linking back to the Sugarloaf Way, crossing over Bray Head to finish at Bray Promenade.

Jeff has created a thirty-minute video of their journey, which is now available to his nearly 130,000 YouTube followers. Blessed with good weather throughout the three days, the video showcases the stunning and diverse scenery along the Wicklow Way. Within four days, it had been watched over 39,000 times!

"It's been a tough but fantastic three days," says Jeff. "The variety of landscapes, the flora, and the many deer we encountered along the way made the journey extremely enjoyable. Combined with the warm Irish hospitality, it turned out to be an amazing experience for Audrée and me. We hope that this video will inspire trail runners from all over the world to explore this accessible route."

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Paul O'Brien, stated: "The Wicklow Way offers an incredible experience through some of Ireland's most scenic locations for anyone walking or running the route. With highlights like Glendalough, the Military

Road, Guinness Lake, and various heritage sites along the way, the Wicklow Way provides a fantastic journey through Wicklow and Ireland's rich history."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, commented: "Thanks to the support of Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, Jeff's video presents an amazing opportunity to reach and attract tens of thousands of outdoor enthusiasts to County Wicklow. Wicklow County Council is keen to pursue similar partnerships and opportunities like these to showcase the incredible destination of Wicklow to the world."

Watch the full video on Jeff Pelletier's YouTube channel.

Native Woodland Trust calls on Minister to protect Ireland's ancient woodlands 'before it's too late'

Ancient woodlands across Ireland are continuously being threatened by deforestation, degradation, overgrazing and non-native invasive species. Ancient woodlands have no legal protection in Ireland so there is nothing to stop their destruction. Minister O'Sullivan urgently needs to bring in statutory protection for all of these woodlands.



Native woodland makes up less than 2% of Ireland's total forest cover, which stands at just 11.6%. Of this 2%, ancient woodlands account for only a fraction - and most remain unprotected without adequate conservation management plans. Many of Ireland's ancient and long-established woodlands (ALEWs) were mapped by the National Parks and Wildlife Service for a 2010 report.

Fifteen years later and these woodlands still have not gained legal protection. According to a 2024 NPWS report, since 2000, permanent deforestation has occurred at 93 ALEWs, and this number is an underestimate as we still don't have our woodlands fully mapped. This report notes that "it is clear that a sizeable proportion of ALEW sites in Ireland are now dominated by planted conifers. Of the small proportion of ALEWs that are protected under the EU Habitats Directive, the majority have been reported to have an Unfavourable conservation status. The main pressures identified were the negative impacts of non-native invasive species and overgrazing".

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 states that old-growth forests must be strictly protected and highlights that "Primary and old-growth forests are the richest for forest ecosystems that remove carbon from the atmosphere, while storing sig-

nificant carbon stocks".

Ireland's Forest Strategy sets a target of 18% forest cover by 2050, yet we continue to lose irreplaceable woodlands. The Forest Strategy itself recognises the importance of protecting and restoring these vital ecosystems. This process must be fast-tracked before it's too late, says the Native Woodland Trust. "Funding such as through the Native Woodland Conservation Scheme is essential for landowners but would need to be provided on an ongoing basis," it says.

"The comprehensive mapping of Ireland's ancient and long-established woodlands is currently underway. However, there is no reason to wait for its completion before protecting the sites we already know exist. With each day that our ancient woodlands remain unprotected, they become increasingly vulnerable to further degradation.

"We call on our new government to take urgent action: introduce legislation to safeguard Ireland's ancient and long-established woodlands that have already been identified by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. These woodlands must be protected from deforestation, degradation, invasive species, and overgrazing before further damage is done. The time to act is now. Minister O'Sullivan - protect our ancient woodlands before they are lost forever.



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‘American Presidents Trail would highlight Ireland’s close relationship with the US’

A new road map of key locations that reflect the relationship between US presidents and Ireland will encourage more tourism, Fine Gael TD Edward Timmins has said.

Deputy Timmins, who recently called for an ‘American Presidents Trail’ in Ireland during a speech in Dail Eireann, has now announced the production of a US Presidents ‘Road Map’ which outlines some key locations of the trail from Antrim to Offaly and from Wexford to Mayo. Speaking ahead of St Patrick’s Day, as several Ministers visit the United States to encourage investment here, Deputy Timmins said, “I am

pleased to announce that I am currently in the process of developing a road map for the potential ‘American Presidents Trail’.

“I have pinpointed several key counties to consider along with a suggested route but ultimately this map would benefit all counties. The EPIC, Irish Emigration Museum website shows that 23 US Presidents boast Irish heritage. A future ‘Presidents Trail’ along with a cultural cen-

tre dedicated to the Irish contribution to the US from Presidents to politics would both enhance relations between the two countries and boost tourism.

“I am currently writing to key stakeholders who may wish to share their thoughts on my proposal, and I welcome ideas from all sectors. Already several groups interested in the project have also written to me in recent weeks since hearing about the proposal.

“US Presidents have long been proud of their connection with Ireland. President John F

Kennedy told his closest aides, that his trip to Ireland were the best four days of his entire life and President Obama told Irish people during his address in Dublin that ‘never has a nation so

small inspired so much in another’.

“Never has it been so important to highlight the close relationship we have with the United States, and I believe this trail would promote our

close ties. I strongly believe my proposal for an ‘American Presidents Trail’ could be a hugely positive North-South project. This could be a massive attraction for US visitors, especially those

with Irish links and could be comparable to the Wild Atlantic Way.

“It is my hope to share the map on my social media channels in the near future,” concluded Deputy Timmins.



Edward Timmins TD.

Music video filmed in Wicklow broadcast on NBC

Celtic Calling’s incredible displays of musicianship and vocal virtuosity are fast gaining them an international reputation as an act known for their breath-taking live performances. This is a quality that has been artfully captured with their music video and reimagined interpretation of The Parting Glass which was selected for the NBC TV broadcast of the New York City St Patrick’s Day parade - the biggest parade in the world - broadcasting to millions across America on NBC and internationally on Monday 17th March.

Celtic Calling have strong connections to Greystones. Their official music video for ‘The Parting Glass’ showcases the group’s trademark haunting harmonies and ethereal arrangements alongside eloquent guitar accompaniment.

The music video for ‘The Parting Glass’ was filmed in the heart of Co. Wicklow at the Glen of

the Downs wood.

This news follows Celtic Calling’s recent original single release ‘Island of Home’ which debuted at No.1 in the singer-songwriter charts on iTunes in Ireland. With a growing global following, Celtic Calling continues to push the appeal of Celtic music. With its rich vocal harmonies, ‘Island of Home’ was written by

founding member Victoria Johnston (Grammy short-listed singer-songwriter), while it was recorded and produced by First of Many Productions’ Chris Comhaill (the group’s guitarist) and Barry Sheehan.

The vocal trio’s three-part harmonies from Rachel, Victoria and Eilís, shine in ‘Island of Home’, combining the ethereal quality of their Celtic vocals with the catchy, dynamic style of pop. This song explores themes of belonging, nostalgia, and the emotional pull of home, capturing the beauty of places and memories.

Greystones District Councillor, Stephen Stokes has paid tribute to Celtic Calling for their wonderful performances, especially when they help to portray County Wicklow in such a positive light. Cllr Stokes stated: “I am delighted for Celtic Calling and their international exposure. They are creating musical and artistic masterpieces that will stand the test of time. I wish them every continued success in all of their endeavours.”

Celtic Calling’s performances to date include St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin, Dublin Convention Centre, the RDS, and the Irish Cultural Centre in London.



Celtic Calling.



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028

PROPOSED MATERIAL ALTERATIONS TO PROPOSED VARIATION NO. 3 TO THE WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 (RELATED TO THE BLESSINGTON LOCAL AREA PLAN 2025-2031)

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) that Wicklow County Council, being the planning authority for the area, proposes to alter Proposed Variation No. 3 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028. The proposed alterations would, if made, constitute a material alteration of the Proposed Variation which was published on 30 October 2024.

The purpose of the Proposed Variation is to ensure consistency between the draft and final Blessington LAP with the County Development Plan 2022 - 2028.

The Proposed Alterations to the Proposed Variation are accompanied by the following additional reports or Addendums to the reports published with the Proposed Variation

- Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Determination for Proposed Alterations;
- Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Determination for Proposed Alterations;
- Addendum I to the SEA Screening Report for the Proposed Variation – this is an SEA screening report, pursuant to the European SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended); and
- Addendum I to the AA Screening Report for the Proposed Variation – this is an AA screening report, pursuant to the European Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

DISPLAY OF PROPOSED MATERIAL ALTERATIONS

Proposed Variation No. 3 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the **Proposed Material Alterations** to the Proposed Variation (and associated reports) will be available to view at the following locations, during their normal opening hours, from **Monday 24 March 2025 to Wednesday 23 April 2025 (5.00pm) inclusive**:

- Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow Town
- WCC Municipal District Office, Civic Offices, Blessington Business Park, Blessington
- Blessington Library
- Copies of the Proposed Variation and Proposed Material Alterations are available to download and view on the Council’s website www.wicklow.ie through an online consultation portal. Scan the QR code on this notice to access the portal.

MAKING A SUBMISSION

Submissions or observations regarding **ONLY** the **Proposed Material Alterations** and the associated reports are hereby invited from the public and interested bodies between the dates **24 March 2025 and 23 April 2025**. Children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children, are entitled to make submissions or observations. Written submissions or observations made before midnight on **23 April 2025** will be taken into consideration before the making of the Variation.

Submissions may be made in one of the following ways:

1. Write to ‘Variation No. 3 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028’, Administrative Officer, Planning Section, Wicklow County Council, Station Road, Wicklow Town.
2. Through the online consultation portal at www.wicklow.ie or scan the QR code on this notice.

NOTE

- YOU ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO MAKE YOUR SUBMISSION AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.
- All submissions are to be clearly marked with ‘**Variation No. 3 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028**’.
- All submissions should include your name, a map (where appropriate) and, where relevant, details of any organisation, community group or company etc., which you represent.
- Please make your submission by one medium only, i.e. hard copy or through the portal.
- All valid submissions will form a part of the statutory Chief Executive’s report and will be available to view online.
- The planning process is an open and public one; therefore all submissions/observations are a matter of public record and will be available for public viewing. They may also be placed on the County Council’s website and therefore should not include any personal information.
- LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Wicklow County Council is committed to Access For All. All of the above documents are available in alternative format on request. Please contact Wicklow County Council on 0404-20100 should you have any specific access requirements.





John Burke.

Delgany resident picked for International padel tennis tournament

John Burke, originally from Sandymount, and now a resident of Delgany, has been selected to represent Ireland in the 4 Nations Padel Tennis International (Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales) in Leeds later this March. "I got selected to play in the 40's + age group, I thought that's not bad as I'll be 60 next year!" says John.

John, already a previous Irish tennis international took up Padel Tennis about a year and a half ago. "A friend of mine introduced Padel to me and I took to it right away. From the first time you play you get to have great fun and it's so, so

competitive. I love that. To be good at it you really need to be fit and the better you get the more of a mind game it becomes.

"I play two or three times a week in the new indoor courts facility in Greystones

Shoreline, just 5 minutes from my home. I can't believe I'll be 60 next year. I have been very active all my life playing sports since a very young age. Tennis, Soccer, Rugby, Basketball, Table Tennis, Running, Cycling, you name it I did it. More recently apart from Padel, I have been hiking and running across all the mountains and hiking trails around Wicklow. I have always been very fast and even today I do 100M sprints, I love the high intensity workout, it makes me feel like I am 20 again.

Unofficially I am doing the 100M sprint in under 12 seconds, I think the Irish record is 12.66 for 60's age group. I am planning on training during the summer and then have a go at breaking that record next year."

John, a father of two boys, owns his own Natural Health Company for the last 20 years, based in Delgany.

"I do strongly believe the key to being fully active and healthy in later life, is to start when your young and never stop. Do something every day. I

can still do everything I did when I was 20, (apart from drinking too much beer with friends!) I recommend staying active every day, even if you don't want to, do it, eat good whole food to feel good not because it tastes good.

"I try to grow as much food as I can in my garden - there's nothing better than eating food that you grow yourself. Don't smoke or drink (at least drink very little and only occasionally) and take high quality supplements - I can certainly recommend a few, just ask!"

Codling sponsors women's rugby at Wicklow Rugby Club

Ireland's largest Phase One1 offshore wind project, Codling Wind Park, is supporting women's rugby in Wicklow. The project has donated €5,000 to Wicklow Rugby Club to develop a drainage system at the women's rugby grounds.

In the club's red and black colours, Ann Morrissey, President and Eimear Douglas, Senior Captain of Wicklow Rugby club, were both delighted to receive funding so that the women's teams can play on solid ground. The rugby grounds, along with many sporting fixtures across Ireland, have experienced water logging and 'call offs' due to persistent rainfall. The funding from Codling will go some way to help change that.

Duncan Duke, Chair and James Keating, Manager Senior Women's section were there to witness the

cheque handover by Codling's Community Liaison Officer, Deirdre Joyce, and will be putting the funds to good use by upgrading pitch drainage at the club.

In recent years Codling has supported organisations and projects across the community aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals2.

For further information on Codling, Climate Action and the projects forthcoming €200m Community Benefit Fund and its support for local community activities see www.codlingwindpark.ie



Deirdre Joyce (Community Liaison Officer, Codling Wind Park), making a cheque presentation to Ann Morrissey - WRFC President, Eimear Douglas, Senior Women's Captain and Duncan Duke, WRFC Chairperson, at Wicklow Rugby Club.

National award for St. Laurence O'Toole's school

St. Laurence O'Toole's Roundwood was nominated in the Annual Cumann na mBunscol Chill Mhantáin County Publication category and came away with the 2nd place prize. A book was put together by St. Laurence O'Toole's chronicling 35 years of Cumann na mBunscol participation in the school and many of the staff members attended on the night.

Over 250 teachers from all parts of Ireland gathered in the Hodson Bay Hotel on Friday March 7th for the 2025 Cumann na mBunscol Awards, sponsored by Cornmarket Group Financial Services.

"The Awards recognise excellence in the promotion of Gaelic Games in primary schools," according to Joe Lyons who is National Chairperson of Cumann na mBunscol. "They afford recognition for the work of teachers, on and off the playing fields. The Awards cover a myriad of activities from Public Relations to Promotion of Gaelic Games and Culture and also the activities of individual schools, large and small."

Former Roscommon footballer Dr. Cathal Cregg was guest speaker on the night. Cathal works as Provincial

Coaching & Games Manager at Connacht GAA and has many happy memories of playing in Cumann na mBunscol competitions in his childhood with Frenchpark NS.

Eimear Conroy of Cornmarket Group Financial Services joined Chairperson Joe Lyons on stage to present the Awards to the successful entrants. John Boyle, General Secretary of INTO is a former Chairman of Cumann na mBunscol in Dublin. John was also among the guests as was Brian Carroll, Chairman of Roscommon County Board GAA.

"We've been committed sponsors of the Cumann na mBunscol National Awards since 2009" said Ivan Ahern, Managing Director at Cornmarket. "These annual awards

recognise the teachers and schools who passionately promote Gaelic games in their schools. Cumann na mBunscol does immense work on the ground, promoting Gaelic games in primary schools. We recognise the influence of Irish sport in the lives of children. Coming from a GAA background myself, I feel strongly about the importance of promoting Gaelic games - not only to keep Irish tradition alive amongst children, but for its huge health and social benefits. Cornmarket got involved in the awards to help honour the dedicated teachers, and Cumann na mBunscol representatives, for their tireless efforts over the year. These awards recognise the individuals who nurture young Irish children, instilling the true heart of Gaelic games."



Mary Kate Maher and Fia O'Toole at the Annacurra Camogie Club Gala Awards evening in the Woodenbridge Hotel.

NEW WICKLOW CHAMBER PRESIDENT

Anna Thornton elected as President of Wicklow Town & District Chamber of Commerce

Local Wicklow businesswoman Anna Thornton has been elected as 2025 President of Wicklow Town and District Chamber of Commerce during the Chambers AGM on Tuesday 11th March.

Addressing the Chamber's Annual General Meeting, Anna Thornton congratulated the incumbent president Stephen Delaney on his very successful tenure as Chamber President over

the past two years and said that it has been an absolute pleasure and honor to serve as Vice President to him during this time.

"Being at the helm of any business organization throughout such uncertain times is not without its challenges - to say the least - but Stephen's tenure has been hallmarked by a firm commitment to local commerce and I extend my sincere thanks to him on behalf of myself and fellow Chamber members," said Anna.

She also said that they were looking forward to working alongside the newly elected Board who volunteer their time and effort and all share the same vision for business growth and foster a healthy community environment.

Founder of DNG Thornton Properties, Anna has been a member of the Chamber of Commerce since 2021, and in that time has served on numerous Chamber committees and initiatives.

Since joining, Anna has learnt the importance of a vibrant and committed chamber, to ensure economic growth and support of our local businesses.

"There are constant challenges facing small businesses, no matter what product or service they offer, but working together through the



Anna Thornton receiving the Wicklow Chamber President's Chain from outgoing President Stephen Delaney.

chamber, we can be stronger as a whole and meet both current and future needs to support a thriving future," says Anna.

"As we look ahead to 2025, the chamber remains committed to championing local businesses, advocating for key issues and creating new opportunities and collabo-

rations. We are working on a calendar of events to inspire, educate and foster better relationships between our members.

"Our first event will be a **Brainstorming Session on March 20th at 6pm in Wicklow Enterprise Park**. Open to all this event will provide an opportunity to network with other chamber mem-

bers and engage in the planning of both business and social events for the upcoming year. Its important to me as Chamber President that we collaborate with our members to ensure we provide informative, beneficial events and well as opportunities for members to meet and engage with like minded individuals."

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Blessington to host Youth Biodiversity Conference

Blessington Community College is proud to host the county's inaugural Youth Biodiversity Conference, organised by the school's Student Environmental Council.

Students from first to fifth year have been actively engaged with a range of environmental topics, and this conference aims to further these efforts by involving even more students. Wicklow County Council is supporting the event, which will take place on **Wednesday, 2nd April, from 10:30am to 1:30pm.**

Invitations have been extended to three additional secondary schools - Colaiste Bhríde from Carnew, Scoil Chonglais from Baltinglass and St. Kevin's Community College from Dunlavin - to encourage broader partici-

pation in biodiversity initiatives across the county. Various political representatives, community groups, and policymakers have also been invited to join the event.

The primary objective of the Youth Biodiversity Conference is to amplify the voices of young people, empowering them to speak out about the ongoing biodiversity crisis and inspire further action. The organising committee has carefully selected key topics to ignite passion and foster a lasting commitment to sustainability among attendees. As part of the process the stu-

dents of Blessington Community College will have a number of Biodiversity workshops on various biodiversity topics, where students from the committee can present their own findings with conference participants.

Education plays a critical role in addressing the biodiversity loss affecting our county, and related topics such as climate change are now integrated into Ireland's educational system, including the Leaving Certificate curriculum. Climate and biodiversity literacy has evolved from a peripheral concern to a cen-

tral focus, shaping public opinions, policy decisions, and behaviours related to environmental protection.

This conference seeks to raise awareness among younger generations about the far-reaching impacts of biodiversity loss on socioeconomic development, environmental sustainability, and climate change. It will also highlight actionable solutions to mitigate these effects. Additionally, the conference provides an annual platform for youth to engage with policymakers at local and national levels, fostering meaningful dialogue on biodiversity conservation and related issues.

The conference will include discussions with young people on various topics with presentations from key speakers including:

- Anja Murray, an ecologist, broadcaster and author.
- Eanna Ni Lamhna, Irish biologist, environmental consultant, radio and television presenter.
- Dr. James Carolan, senior lecturer and associate professor at Maynooth University, he is also the leader of the Biodiversity on the campus.
- Declan Murphy, nature writer who has published two books, *A life in the trees*, and *spirit of the river*. Declan has worked with BirdWatch Ireland.



Liam Murphy, Hannah McDonald, Erika Mooney and Jack Wilson.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr. Paul O'Brien, commended Blessingtons principal, Kieran Burke and the Assistant Principal, Tanya Twyford-Troy for agreeing to hosting the event.

"In a world where environmental challenges seem to grow by the day, initiatives like this give us hope

for the future. It is inspiring to see young minds coming together to learn, share, and take action on one of the most pressing issues of our time—the preservation of biodiversity. By hosting this conference, you are not just raising awareness; you are empowering the next generation of environmental stewards, leaders, and

innovators."

School Principal, Kieran Burke said that "Blessington Community College is delighted to host the county's first Youth Biodiversity Conference. Our planet is facing unprecedented challenges, from habitat loss to climate change, and it is up to us to help develop the next generation of leaders,

innovators, and activists - to find solutions that ensure a sustainable future for all living things. This conference is a unique opportunity for us to learn, collaborate, and share ideas that can inspire real change. Together, we can help create a world where biodiversity thrives for generations to come."



Hana Bux, Mehret Flynn and Jessica Molloy.



Liam Murphy, Erika Mooney, Jessica Molloy, Hana Bux, Zoe Harman, Elvina O'Reilly, Mehret Flynn, Donal Farrell, Alison Lanigan, Adam Geoghegan, Anna Nugent, Hannah McDonald and Jack Wilson.



(L to R) Mark Costello Wicklow County Council, Liam Murphy, Erika Mooney, Jessica Molloy, Hana Bux, Grainne Healion Assistant Principal, Zoe Harman, Elvina O'Reilly, Mehret Flynn, Donal Farrell, Alison Lanigan, Adam Geoghegan, Anna Nugent, Hannah McDonald, Tanya Twyford-Troy Assistant Principal and Jack Wilson. Photo by Mick Kelly.

Primary school students empowered to conserve electricity

Primary school students from Scoil Treasa Naomha, Kiltegan, learned how they can take action in saving electricity during a recent An Taisce Green-Schools regional energy workshop, in partnership with EirGrid, operator and developer of the electricity grid.

They joined students and teachers from Rushall National School, near Borris-in-Ossory, Co Laois, at the recent workshop in the Woodford Dolman Hotel, Carlow.

The event, which is one in a series being held throughout the country, brought together schools working on the Energy Theme, to develop their awareness around energy conservation and how to effectively manage this important resource in our schools and homes.

The event saw students and teachers engage in

activities, artwork and experiments, which allowed them to learn more about where electricity comes from and how they can take steps to reduce energy consumption.

EirGrid Graduate, Eimear Travers, spoke to students at the recent workshop about EirGrid's role in leading the secure transition of our electricity grid to low carbon renewable energy.

"It was fantastic to engage with students and teachers here today about energy in all its forms, and to outline how EirGrid is playing its part in climate

action, by working to decarbonise the electricity grid," Eimear from EirGrid said.

"It's clear from the response from students that younger generations are enthusiastic about leading the charge to make a positive impact in their communities, and events like these present an incredible opportunity, empowering young people to reduce energy consumption and be part of the conversation."

Rob Nelson, Green-Schools Energy Theme Co-ordinator, said: "It's workshops like these, bringing schools together, that show-



Students from Scoil Treasa Naomha attending the workshop.

case the bright minds that will help secure our energy future. These energised, young change makers have learned how to lead the way in their schools, homes and communities."

"We are thankful that EirGrid's sponsorship allows events like these to happen, to help engage and empower young people to reduce energy consumption and spark the conversation," he added.

Green-Schools officially relaunched its energy theme for primary and secondary schools recently, thanks to its new partnership with EirGrid. During the 2023-24 school year,

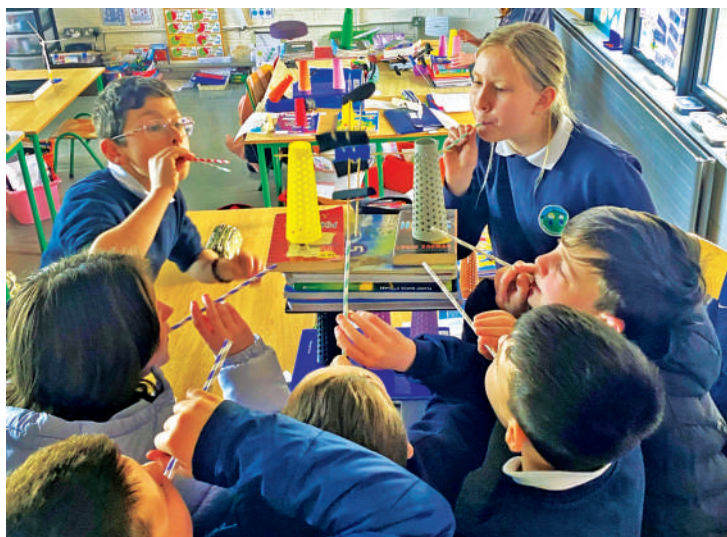
schools saved a combined 18 million kWh of electricity, enough to make 58 million cups of tea, due to their participation in the Green-Schools programme, proving that interest in

energy is strong among Ireland's school children.

To date, over 3,000 schools have been awarded the energy flag since the beginning of the Green-Schools programme in 1997.

EirGrid marks Engineers Week 2025 with visits to Wicklow schools

Students in Wicklow were recently given an insight into the renewable energy sector after meeting with engineers from EirGrid, the operator and developer of Ireland's electricity grid, to mark STEPS Engineer's Week.



Students at St Peter's Primary School, Bray.

The visits took place in four schools across the county, during which EirGrid engineers and graduates spoke with students about the innovative work of engineers, in a bid to inspire the students' interest in STEM and future studies in the field. Students from St Mary's College, Arklow; St Peter's Primary School, Bray; St Laurence O'Toole National School, Roundwood and Saint Coen's National School Rathnew engaged in interactive experiments, created their own mini-wind turbines, and learned more about renewable energy generation and EirGrid's role in decarbonising the energy system.

STEPS Engineer's Week, run by Engineers Ireland, aims to promote engineering education, celebrate innovation, and encourage the future engineering workforce. EirGrid Engineer and former graduate, Aine Doyle, also spoke to students about the different opportunities and prospects available to those pursuing a career in engineering.

"At EirGrid, we recognise the value of introducing young people to engineering at an early stage. Not only is it an incredibly rewarding career, attracting new talent to the sector is crucial in our work to meet the Government's climate ambitions for 80% of our electricity to come from renewable sources."

EirGrid currently employs engineers from a wide range of engineering disciplines on a range of projects throughout Ireland. These engineers are playing a vital role in strengthening the electricity grid across Ireland and integrating more renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, onto the energy system. Aine con-

tinued: "It's fantastic to see such enthusiasm from the young people here today. Hopefully interactions like these will encourage a life-long interest in engineering for some students, as we always need more talented people to tackle the challenges and opportunities of creating a cleaner energy system."



Liz Dillon, EirGrid; Elizabeth O'Dea, St Mary's; Stephen Quinn, EirGrid; Aine Doyle, EirGrid, at St Mary's College, Arklow.



Students at St Mary's College, Arklow.

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SING IN WICKLOW AWARD SCHEME 2025

The Wicklow County Arts Office has officially opened the application process for the 2025 'Sing in Wicklow Awards Scheme' which offers successful applicants up to €1,500. The goal of the 'Sing in Wicklow Award' is to support choirs across the county in participating in workshops and competitions, fostering inter-choir collaborations, and facilitating performances, peer learning, networking and member recruitment.

Singing plays a crucial role in building self-confidence, promoting self-esteem, and engaging emotions. It is an innate ability that can improve dramatically with a little guidance and practice, regardless of one's tone. Group singing has numerous well-documented benefits for physical, mental, social, and emotional health and well-being. It allows individuals of all ages and abilities to come together and create something special.

In 2018, with support from Creative Ireland, the Wicklow County Arts Office explored ways to develop choral music in the county. After a comprehensive consultation process with Strategic Consultant Katherine Zeserson and input from 18 choirs of various ages and genres, the Choral Activation Strategy was published in 2019. Key priorities of this strategy include establishing a county-wide choral network and advancing the skills of choral music practitioners and singers.

The application period for the 'Sing in Wicklow' award scheme opens on Monday, 10th March and closes at 4pm on Monday, 7th April 2025. For guidelines and the application process, please visit the Arts page <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Arts/Funding-Support-Opportunities>.

Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, expressed his support, stating, "I encourage all Wicklow choirs and singing enthusiasts to get involved in this wonderful initiative."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow

County Council, added, "I am grateful for the continued support of Creative Ireland, which has enabled the Wicklow County Arts Office to promote and support choral music in the county."

To learn more, get involved, or register a local choir, visit the 'Sing in Wicklow' website at <https://singinwicklow.ie/>



Serendipity Chorus.



Bray Community Choir.

Coming up at Mermaid...

**My Favourite Cake
(Keyke Mahboobe Man)**
Monday 24th March 8pm
€10 Full Price / €8 Concession

70-year-old Mahin has lived as a widow in Tehran for over 30 years. She fondly remembers life in Iran before the Islamic Revolution, but now she cannot even visit her Europe-based daughter, because she is considered too old to be granted a visa by authorities.

A moving reflection on old age, loneliness and finding unexpected love. Both humorous and poignant at turns, it is sure to charm and touch audiences.

Tickets can be booked through mermaidarts-centre.ie or 01 272 4030.

Bird

Monday 31st March 8pm
€10 Full Price / €8 Concession

12-year-old Bailey lives in a dilapidated apartment with her caring but immature father Bug. When Bug abruptly announces he's marrying his girlfriend, a furious Bailey runs away and spends the night outdoors.

The latest film from acclaimed filmmaker Andrea Arnold (Fish Tank, American Honey) elegantly combines social and magical realism in this unusual and heartfelt film. Bird is beautifully shot and features exceptional performances from Barry Keoghan, Franz Rogowski and newcomer Nykiya Adams.

Tickets can be booked through mermaidarts-centre.ie or 01 272 4030.

East Coast Dance Arts Festival 2025: a celebration of dance & film

April 12th - 20th, 2025. Various Venues in Dublin & Wicklow

East Coast Dance Arts (formerly Wicklow ScreenDance Laboratory) is thrilled to announce its highly anticipated 2025 festival, taking place from April 12th to 20th. This year's programme is set to bring together international choreographers, emerging dance artists, filmmakers, and audiences to celebrate the vibrant intersection of dance and film. With live performances, film screenings, artist talks, and workshops, ECDA 2025 promises to be an unforgettable experience.

**Festival Kickoff Event -
April 12th, Inchicore
College, Dublin**

The festival will launch with a special Kickoff Event on April 12th from 6:00 - 7:30 PM at Inchicore College of Further Education, Dublin. This free, non-ticketed event will introduce audiences to key festival highlights, featuring:

- Live Performances from selected artists
- An introduction to special guest Christine Dakin, Former Artistic Director and Principal Dancer with Martha Graham Dance Company
- A film screening
- Guest speakers, including festival founder Adrienne Brown

This event sets the stage for an incredible week of performances, screenings, and workshops that celebrate the evolution of dance and film.

Festival Highlights

**ECDA: Move - Dance
Intensive (April 12th - 20th)**

Led by internationally

renowned instructors Rafael Molina and Penny Diamantopoulou, this eight-day intensive will offer participants the chance to explore the Martha Graham technique, improvisation, and choreography, culminating in a live performance at Mermaid Arts Centre, Bray.

**ECDA: Live - Live Dance
Performance (April 20th,
Mermaid Arts Centre)**

A curated programme of live dance performances from both Irish and international artists, including Guillaume Lemoine, Laura Rivet, Maria Borrowman, Amy Cummins, and Alex Karcakova. The evening will also feature choreographic works from the Dance Intensive and a special collaboration with Christine Dakin.

**ECDA: Film Screenings -
Online & In-Person
Events**

A stunning selection of ScreenDance films will be screened online and at various venues, with discus-

sions led by guest panelists, including Eoghan O'Reilly and Colin Carters.

**ECDA: Artists Salon
(April 18th, Courthouse
Arts Centre, Tinahely)**

An evening of film, dance, and discussion, bringing together artists and audiences in an intimate setting.

**ECDA: Forum &
Workshops**

Panel discussions, masterclasses, and networking events will provide unique opportunities to engage with international artists, filmmakers, and dance educators.

Join the Celebration

With a commitment to innovation, community, and artistic excellence, ECDA 2025 invites dancers, choreographers, filmmakers, and audiences to be part of this extraordinary festival.

Tickets & Info:
www.screendance.ie



Presentation from Martha Rafael Molina (FR) & Penny Diamantopoulou (GR) Graham Dance Intensive.

Schemes for small scale local festivals and summer schools

Minister for Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport has announced a series of grant schemes which assists the Department in achieving its strategic objective of increasing access to the arts and National Collection.

The Small-Scale Local Festivals and Summer Schools Schemes is designed to assist local cultural events which may not be eligible under funding criteria for larger scale events such as those supported by Fáilte Ireland, the Arts Council and similar bodies.

Closing date for applications is April 4th, 2025. Funding will be allocated following a competitive applications process, with a maximum grant of €5,000 available.

The Co-operation with Northern Ireland Scheme

is designed to support cultural projects with significant cross-border elements. Small self-contained projects funded under the scheme seek to enhance, celebrate or commemorate the artistic, cultural, musical, film or heritage of the Island of Ireland on a North/South basis, with a maximum grant of €15,000 available.

The Mobility of Collections Scheme is to support greater regional and local access to material held in the National Collections. The scheme

is designed to fund the transport, cost of insurance, and exhibiting costs for pieces from the National Collections to appropriate institutions around the country.

Projects funded under the Regional Museum Exhibitions Scheme seek capital funds to enhance the cultural offering of museums, to encourage greater access to museums and to promote the use of museums as tourism resources in their locality or region with a maximum grant of €15,000 available.

Minister O'Donovan said: "I am very happy to announce the opening of these four schemes today, which are integral to the promotion of our Culture and arts and add hugely to our lives and to our community. The schemes make a very important contribution to the development and promotion of Ireland's cultural tourism offering, to the benefit of both the domestic and foreign tourist, they provide a platform for cultural exchanges, they help preserve and promote our cultural her-



Annabelle Hart, Marion O'Toole and Caroline Young at the launch of the South Wicklow Drama Festival in Jim Byrne's, Carnew.

'Popular scenes' of Glendalough in new exhibition in Mermaid



Robert Carter, pictured with Judy, worked in the mines 1953 to 1957.

Through her oil paintings and drawings, Carroll Deeley explores the juxtaposition of the historical, religious, and industrial heritage of the Glendalough and Glendasan valleys, painting what she terms 'popular scenes', where the evidence of the area's mining past coexists with our preconception of Wild Wicklow.

Judy Carroll Deeley's exhibition continues her exploration of post-extractive landscapes and the legacy of industrial activity on the land.

Through her oil paintings and drawings, Carroll Deeley explores the juxtaposition of the historical, religious, and industrial heritage of the Glendalough and Glendasan valleys, painting what she terms 'popular scenes', where the evi-

dence of the area's mining past coexists with our preconception of Wild Wicklow.

A life-long visitor to the area, Deeley explains, "I feel as if I've had a long relationship with Glendalough and Glendasan right back to childhood. This relationship was characterised by viewing Glendalough through a veil of spirituality and mysticism. For years in primary school, we were told stories about St. Kevin, how blessed he was and how, as a hermit he lived in a cave above the upper lake before founding a monastery on the site in the sixth century and gathering a community of monks about him. Here a fruitful religious community thrived for hundreds of years."

Yet this is not the history these paintings reflect." As an artist I wanted to respond to Glendalough and Glendasan Valleys as an historic mining site", says Deeley. This approach continues the artist's interest in post-extractive landscapes, an interest that has taken her as far afield as Ukraine and South Africa, researching the effects of mining on the land.

The exhibition is open until Saturday 10th May.



Judy Carroll Deeley, Anne Mullee (Mermaid's Gallery Programme Curator) & Dr Angela Griffith (TCD Department of History of Art & Architecture) who launched the exhibition.

Bray Lions Club Charity Opera Gala

Mermaid Arts Centre, Wednesday
19th March, 8pm. €5

An evening of popular operatic favourites performed by four stars of the Irish and European opera scene. Come along for a complementary Prosecco Reception at 7pm, followed by a concert of delightful music at 8pm.

Proceeds will enable Bray Lions to continue supplying Christmas Dinners to 150 local people in need. Soprano Jade Phoenix from Greystones is currently based in Milan, Bray native Ross Scanlon is enjoying a stellar international career while Hannah O'Brien and Rory Dunne have performed at the Wexford opera and on European stages.

Tickets can be booked through mermaidartscentre.ie or 01 272 4030.




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Carmen - screening at Whale Theatre

Thursday 20th March, 8pm (doors 7pm) Tickets €17.50 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

Don José, a serviceman, falls under the spell of Carmen, a gypsy woman he has let escape when he was supposed to arrest her. After several months together, Carmen tires of her jealous lover and falls in love with the toreador Escamillo. Whereas Don José's mother gets ill, Micaëla is unable to make him go back to their village. Don José is desperate to win back Carmen.

Presentation By adapting Prosper Mérimée's novella Carmen, Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy wrote one of the most famous librettos in the history of opera. Calixto Bieito's production is positioned in a relatively abstract spatiotemporal environment. In a setting marked by the emptiness of barren landscapes, the characters' appetite for life and their destructive passions unveil at breakneck speed.

Opera in 4 acts, sung in French. Recorded at the

Paris Opera / Opéra Bastille.

Music by Georges Bizet / **Opera Production** by Calixto Bieito / **Musical Direction** Sir Mark Elder / **Cast** Roberto Alagna (Don José), Elina Garanca (Carmen), Ildar Abdrazakov (Escamillo), Maria Agresta (Micaëla), Paris Opera's Orchester and Chorus / **Director** François-René Martin, **Production** Paris Opera, Camera Lucida / **Place of Production** Country of origin Paris Opera Bastille/France.



KINGS OF SWING TOUR 2025

Whale Theatre, Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd March, 8pm (doors 7pm) Tickets €32/€30 and available at www.whaletheatre.ie or call the booking office on 01 2010550.

Join Ireland's King Of Swing Luke Thomas and his band The Swing Cats for their KINGS OF SWING TOUR spring 2025. After a triumphant 2024 including steller sets at Electric Picnic and Headline slot at Cork Jazz Festival Luke and his band are back with a brand new show celebrating 100 years of SWING MUSIC from the 1920's to the modern day!!

Featuring all your favourite SWING and Big Band songs like Sing Sing Sing, Puttin On The Ritz, Mack The Knife to Crooning classics like Mr. Bojangles, Fly Me To The Moon, New York plus many more performed by THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS-Luke Thomas & The Swing Cats!!

An absolute must for all SWING music fans. As seen on The Late Late Show, Ireland Am, The Today Show, The Six O'Clock Show and every major radio station in the country... With two #1 Albums, 3 Tv Concert Specials, 8 personally requested performances for President Higgins and countless sellout tours you can't afford to miss this show. Catch Ireland's King Of Swing and his band when they come to town next spring!!

Special guest EMILJA PLAYS PIANO



Plans announced for shared island cultural cooperation fund

The Minister for Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport, Patrick O'Donovan, has welcomed the Joint Statement by the Taoiseach and British Prime Minister on 6th March setting out an ambitious programme of co-operation between Ireland and the UK through to 2030.

The programme includes an agreement to establish a strategic partnership to deepen and amplify co-operation between leading cultural institutions and support wider public engagement with the contemporary culture and heritage of both Ireland and the United Kingdom. This will comprise a range of measures over 2025-2030 to support collaborations in programming, professional exchange, research and policy, and an annual joint meeting of leading cultural institutions.

On 25th February, the Government confirmed an overall Shared Island Fund allocation of up to €20m to support the development and delivery of a series of new Arts and Cultural Heritage programmes over 2025-2030 to deepen cultural cooperation, exchange and understanding.

Minister O'Donovan is announcing that under the Arts and Cultural Heritage package, a new Shared Island Cultural Cooperation Fund, which will be administered through the Department of Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport, will be established to support new collaborative cross-border performance, production, and cultural exhibitions, including through:

- Enhanced cooperation between the National Cultural Institutions and partners;
- Supports for touring and productions; and
- Screen sector capacity and Cultural digitisation projects.

Programmes will be further developed by Departments in cooperation with Executive and UK Government counterparts.

Minister O'Donovan said: "I warmly welcome the new UK-Ireland 2030 Joint Statement which confirms the intention of the Irish and British Governments to establish an ambitious programme of cultural cooperation and look forward to taking this forward, with British counterparts. I welcome also the Government's decision on 25 February to confirm an overall Shared Island Fund allocation of up to €20m to support the development and delivery of a series of new Arts and Cultural Heritage programmes over 2025-2030 to deepen cultural cooperation, exchange and understanding.

"Arts and Culture are among the most powerful ways in which we encounter and understand each other across different communities and places, and these new programmes will help foster deeper

cultural exchange and understanding across Ireland, Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

"My Department will further develop each programme with UK and Northern Ireland counterparts, bringing forward new funding supports to connect and engage audiences and the cultural and creative sectors in new ways, including through exhibitions, co-creation projects, artistic exchanges and touring. Today, I am delighted to announce that under a new Shared Island Cultural Cooperation Fund, my Department will support cross-border performance, production, and cultural exhibitions. I hope that this new Fund will support and encourage ambitious and innovative programmes and to strengthen cultural, artistic and creative connections in the years to come."

Blaze: an exhibition by Diane Magee

Signal Arts Centre, Tuesday 18th March to Sunday 31st March

Diane Magee's previous body of work, Winterage, had the seasonal movement of animals at its heart. This show, Blaze, has shifted the focus to unseasonal movement, and its unnatural, almost supernatural impact on a freshly-imagined plane.

In Blaze, the Burren cows of earlier have bolted, and that weatherbeaten landscape has gone with them. Natural cycles, and the known world, are painted over with the flames of climate breakdown.

The theme of the work isn't in your face. At a first take, it doesn't even feel that sinister - there are familiar landscapes with their comforting greys and greens. Squint and the coloured pieces might seem almost uplifting, like the Japanese woodblock print feel of Flotsam. Except, everything here is ablaze.

The obvious panic in The Highline and Blaze catches and spreads across the series when viewed together. The stag in Moorland isn't standing proud on a foggy rock - that murk is smoke, the ferns are molten wildfire. Throughout the paintings clouds are conflagration, rock is ash, and the animals have broken the glass. Deer, dogs and birds, lots of birds, are the lost characters. Escaping talons poke through smoke, dogs are screaming whatever the dog is for fire. Each plays a canary in this coalmine.

For such dark thoughts there is so much colour. The paintings were well underway before the LA fires in January but that event, and its newborn urban wastelands, have scorched their way into some of the work.

Blaze is still tethered to Diane's previous work, with similar structures and brushstrokes, but she has now moved full-time inside her own head. Trapped wildlife and harrowed pets have replaced roaming livestock in a landscape suddenly more imagined than remembered, but unfortunately all too familiar.



Success for Wicklow photographers at Press Photographer of the Year Awards

Photographers Nick Bradshaw and Andres Poveda who live in Co. Wicklow, enjoyed success at the AIB Press Photographer of the Year Award 2025, which took place in Dublin on Friday, 28th February.

Nick picked up two awards on the night, 1st prize in the Politics Category for his image 'Resignation' and 3rd prize in Daily Life & People category for his image 'Sunday morning ceremony'. Andres from Delgany, won 2nd place in PR at the awards.

World renowned sports photographer James Crombie (Inpho Photography) won the coveted AIB Press Photographer of the Year trophy for the third time at a ceremony.

Best known for his global sensation featuring a murmuration of starlings in 2022, the Westmeath photographer's entry again featured wildlife leading to an action-packed winning portfolio. However, it was his sensitively planned image for Pieta's Darkness Into Light campaign that features on the award catalogue cover that confirms Crombie's skill and adaptability.

The annual awards, now in their 47th year, recognise press photographers from

around Ireland with a collection of 110 images that tell the story of 2024 in pictures. Hosted by broadcaster Miriam O'Callaghan and organised by Press Photographers Ireland CLG, the glittering ceremony was held at the UCD O'Reilly Hall where Minister Jack Chambers was on hand to present the overall winning trophy to Crombie.

Rahugh native James Crombie won praise for both his artistic and technical skills, with the judges

commenting: "We judges had a difficult task comparing a shortlist of three fine portfolios of work which were very different in their scope. We ultimately decided on this superb set of images by a photographer who clearly mainly covers sport but does so with great technical and artistic skill. We were all extremely impressed with the way the photographer nailed the best possible image from so many different situations inside and outside

the field of play. This photographer is our unanimous choice as photographer of the year".

The judging panel was again led by former picture editor of The Irish Times, Frank Miller alongside this year's two judges Kate Horgan, photographer & one of the curators of the PPI Life Under Covid Collection and Shaun Botterill of Getty Images. Journalist Philip Bromwell and former RTE cameraman Michael Lee led the judging of the Multimedia category.

Speaking at the awards, David Branigan, President, Press Photographers Ireland CLG, said: "Once again, James Crombie has demonstrated outstanding creative and technical skills that makes him a worthy winner of the AIB Press Photographer of the Year Award," commented David Branigan, President of Press Photographers Ireland. "As the age of Gen AI and online fakery gathers pace, the images by our members that will now tour Ireland are a tonic for truth in our time - well worth viewing".

Awards were presented across 11 distinct categories - News, Daily Life & People, Sports Action, Sports Feature, Portrait,



Daily Life - 3rd place winning photo by Nick Bradshaw.

Nature & the Environment, Politics, Arts & Entertainment, Reportage, Multimedia and the newly

launched Public Relations category in addition to the AIB Sustainability Award and two new stand-alone

special awards, Irish Country Life and Best Use of Technology.



Pictured is PPAI President Dave Branigan with Andres Poveda presented by Dr. Martina Byrne, CEO, Public Relations Institute of Ireland. Pic: ©INPHO/Arthur Carron.



PPAI President Dave Branigan, photographer Nick Bradshaw and Catherine Whelan, Corporate Affairs, Failte Ireland. Pic: ©INPHO/Arthur Carron.

Budding Wicklow author comes runner up in Irish Book Awards Junior Short Story Competition

The team at Specsavers Arklow have announced nine-year-old Liliana Jeawon from Tinahely as a runner up of the national Specsavers Irish Book Awards short story competition.



Liliana Jeawon from Tinahely.

The Wicklow native entered the competition with her enchanting story and has been awarded the runner up prize, a collection of popular Irish children's books, including Paddy Donnelly's The Golden Hare and Oliver Jeffers' Where to Hide a Star.

The short story competition celebrates Specsavers' sponsorship of the Junior and Senior Irish Children's Book of the Year categories at the recent An Post Irish Book Awards 2024.

This year's short story prompt was 'The carnival had come to town, a buzz of colour and noise. But there was one stall, tucked away in the corner, that was different. It was completely silent, and the sign above it read 'See Your Dreams - One Euro Only'. I knew what to do...', and Liliana's creative story, titled 'The Mystery Stall', impressed the judges, who felt he had a bright future as a budding author.

Liliana's prize included a copy of each of the shortlisted books from the Irish Books Awards children's category. The hamper featured some of Ireland's bestselling titles including 'Evil Duck and the Feather of Fortune', 'Beanie the Bansheenie', and 'The Great Discovery'.

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Excitement mounting ahead of Codling Wind Park Wicklow Half Marathon & 10K

Up to 3,500 runners, joggers, and walkers set to take part for second year in a row

Excitement is mounting in the run up to the Codling Wind Park Wicklow Half Marathon & 10k which will take place on Sunday the 23rd of March.

Race organisers say the event is close to being sold out for the second year in a row with close to 3,500 runners, joggers and walk-

ers set to take part.

The event, which will start on the quays of Wicklow Harbour, travels along a scenic route with stunning coastal

views before finishing up in the unique courtyard of Wicklow's historic gaol.

"We're absolutely thrilled to be back for

this iconic event once again", said Sliabh Wells, Managing Director of The Bear Group. "The Codling Wind Park Wicklow Half Marathon & 10K has become a staple in the running calendar, attracting huge numbers year after year. With its stunning coastal views and fantastic atmosphere, it's an event not to be missed. We

welcome runners of all levels to take part and encourage anyone interested to register soon, as places are limited."

Codling Wind Park Project Director Scott Sutherland said the company was delighted to support the event again this year.

"This is a very important community event and always receives huge support from the people of Wicklow. Our partnership with it

underlines our support and commitment to sustainability, community, and the promotion of an active and healthy lifestyle.

"As well as exercising it's a great way for people to socialise and have some fun while enjoying everything Wicklow has to offer. We're also delighted that 25 runners from 'Team Codling', which is representing the project, and the community are taking part.

Many of these are members of clubs like St Patrick's GAA club and Inbhear Dee Athletics Club, which Codling have been supporting for several years. We wish them and all participants the very best for a great day out."

For further information and to register for the event go to eventmaster.ie.

Codling Wind Park is a proposed offshore wind farm in the Irish Sea, approximately 13-22 kilometres off the County Wicklow coast, between Greystones and Wicklow Town. The project is a 50:50 joint

venture between EDF Renewables and Fred. Olsen Seawind. With an expected capacity of up to 1,300 megawatts (MW), Codling Wind Park has the potential to supply over one million Irish homes with low carbon, locally produced, low-cost electricity, and to save almost 2 million tonnes of carbon emissions every year. The project submitted its planning application in September 2024.

RECRUITMENT



BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA
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KILDARE AND WICKLOW
EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

Tá Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Chill Dara agus Chill Mhantáin ag lorg iarratas ó dhaoine leis na cáilíochtaí cuí don phost mar:

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An dáta deiridh le hiarratais chomhlánaithe ar líne a fháil:
12 meán lae Dé Luain, 7 Aibreán 2025.

An Dr. Deirdre Nic Aoidh,
Príomhfheidhmeannach.

Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board
invites applications from suitably qualified persons for:

POST PRIMARY TEACHING POSTS – ALL SUBJECTS

which may arise from 1st September 2025
in its 23 Post Primary Schools across
Counties Kildare and Wicklow.

All details are available at www.etbvacancies.ie
and on the KWETB website:
[https://kildarewicklow.etb.ie/
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Closing date for receipt of completed online applications:
12 noon on Monday, 7th April 2025.

Dr. Deirdre Keyes,
Chief Executive.



Sophia Lifely and Lily Henry at the Annacurra Camogie Club Gala Awards evening in the Woodenbridge Hotel.

PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Permission is sought for an increase in the permitted occupancy from 148 childcare places to 214, and for the change of use of two rooms within the existing childcare facility from community use, to use as a childcare facility. The rooms are located at ground and first floors at the southern end of the existing building. Further proposed additional places in the two rooms will be 72, bringing the total occupancy proposed to be increased to 286 childcare places, at any one time in the building. Works to include the provision of 2 no. additional Sheffield type covered bicycle stands. All at the existing purpose built childcare/ creche facility at Little Harvard, Charlesland, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, A62 A6N6. For: James Hargrave. 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, Whitegates, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96, 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 (€20.00) within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, Packaging Laundry Ltd., intend to apply for permission for development at a site, N11 South Point Business Park, Charvey Lane, Rathnew, Wicklow. The proposed development comprises amendments to the permission granted by Wicklow County Council under Planning Ref. 21558, comprising: The amalgamation of 2 no. approved blocks (comprising units 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34) to facilitate the provision of a single Industrial Unit (c. 2,285 sq.m) for use as a packaging laundry facility. The provision of an enclosed external yard, including a water tank and plant. The provision of Solar Panels at roof level. Minor amendments to the approved road layout. And, all associated site and drainage works to facilitate the development on a site of c.0.4Ha. The application relates to development, which comprises an activity requiring a waste licence from the Environmental Protection Agency (under the Waste Management Act 1996, as amended). 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, Whitegates, Wicklow Town, A67 FW96, 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 (€20.00) within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date the application is received by the planning authority.

FULL-TIME CARETAKER

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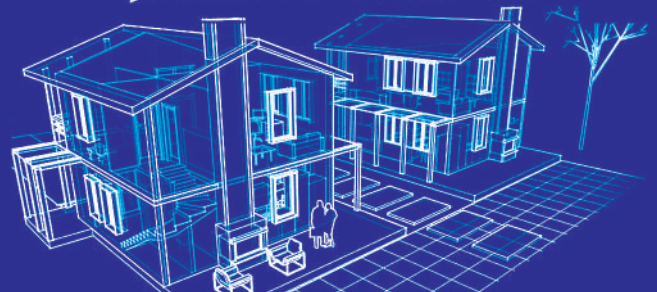
- Keyholder, opening/ general security related duties
- Maintenance and repair of furniture and fittings
- Planning larger maintenance projects with the Principal
- Upkeep of school and renewal of paintwork
- General cleaning of school, cleaning of windows, disposal of rubbish, tidying, etc.
- Maintenance of outdoor spaces
- Health and safety responsibilities
- Strict compliance with school's Child Safeguarding Policy
- Other related duties

Please send your application to: applications@stbgns.ie

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KELLY

Skip into Spring for LauraLynn

LauraLynn, Ireland's Children's Hospice is delighted to share its exciting spring challenge. The challenge invites people in Wicklow to do 100 skips a day every day in April to help raise vital funds for children with life limiting illnesses and their families.

In this exciting, sponsored challenge participants commit to getting out their skipping rope every day for the month of April and skipping 100 times. Those who sign up to the challenge will receive a free skipping rope, as well as their own sponsorship

page. Funds raised from the 100 Skips a Day challenge will help LauraLynn provide essential care and support to children with life-limiting conditions and their families from all over the country.

LauraLynn Fundraising Executive Ciara Donnelly

shares why this challenge is so important: "Funds raised from the '100 Skips a Day' challenge help us to provide life changing care and support to children with life-limiting conditions and their families all around Ireland. We are asking people to raise

funds through sponsorship and take some time out of their day to do their 100 skips a day in April."

Skipping is ideal for all fitness levels and improves cardiovascular health, burns calories, enhances coordination, and strengthens muscles. Participants can take part anywhere they like, either alone or in a group.

Participants can share their experiences and photos on social media using the hashtag #Team-LauraLynn and join the dedicated Facebook group to connect with others taking part in the challenge. For more information or to register go to www.lauralynn.ie/100-skips-a-day-in-April or contact Ciara on challenges@lauralynn.ie.



Laci-Jane, Jade and Danielle Shannon at the Annacurra Camogie Gala Awards evening in the Woodenbridge Hotel.

Local businesses among finalists for Business & Finance ESG Awards 2025

Several of Ireland's leading organisations have been named as finalists in the 2025 Business & Finance ESG Awards, in association with Grant Thornton, recognising outstanding efforts in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices. The winners will be revealed at a special luncheon awards ceremony at 12:00 PM on 10th April 2025 in the Round Room at The Mansion House, Dublin.

Coolte Newtown from Newtownmountkennedy have been shortlisted in the Biodiversity Leadership in Business Award category; CoolPlanet from Enniskerry have been shortlisted in the Net Zero Carbon Award category and Wildacres from Scratenagh have been shortlisted in the Biodiversity Leadership in Business Award category, showcasing the region's leadership in sustainability and responsible business.

The Business & Finance ESG Awards celebrate companies that are driving real

change through innovative policies, technology solutions, and sustainable business practices. This year saw a record number of entries, with Biodiversity Leadership in Business and Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Initiative emerging as the most competitive categories.

The prestigious ESG Leader Award will be presented to Mary Robinson, recognising her tireless dedication to sustainability, climate justice, and social equity on both a national and global scale.

Tracey Carney, Managing Director, Business & Finance, said: "The calibre of entries for the 2025 Business & Finance ESG Awards reflects the remarkable strides taken by organisations across Ireland in integrating sustainability at the core of their business strategies. We are seeing a significant shift towards collective responsibility, where entire teams are driving change and delivering measurable ESG impact. The finalists announced today demonstrate how ESG principles are shaping the future of responsible business."

Amanda Ward, Partner and Co-Head of Consulting at Grant Thornton reflected that "This year's finalists exemplify the transformative power of embedding ESG into business strategy - not simply as an obligation,

but as a pathway to innovation, growth, and resilience. At Grant Thornton, we understand that meaningful ESG initiatives require bold vision combined with practical solutions. We are proud to recognise the finalists who are setting new standards for sustainable business practices, inspiring organisations across Ireland to drive measurable change and secure a prosperous, sustainable future for all."

The ESG Awards, part of the Business & Finance Awards Programme, honour organisations and individuals making a tangible impact in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives. Established in 1964, Business & Finance has long been a leader in recognising business excellence across Ireland and beyond.

CLASSIFIEDS

THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

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Niamh Tiernan Focus on joints and mobility with a gentle Yoga practice
Deirdre Creasey Welcome Spring with grounding on the land
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