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Tuesday 20th May 2025 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

'TERRIFYING, SCANDALOUS & JAW DROPPING'

The housing figures released last Friday by the government have been described as 'terrifying', 'scandalous', 'jaw dropping' and proof of a 'complete failure by the government'.

Sinn Féin TD John Brady described the dramatic collapse in housing commencements as a national scandal and further proof of the Government's failure to address the worsening housing crisis.

"The numbers speak for themselves," said Deputy Brady. "In Wicklow, just 24 homes were commenced in April 2025, compared to 658 in April 2024. That's a jaw-dropping collapse of over 96% in just twelve months. Over the course of the year so far, only 53 homes have been started in Wicklow, down from 1,164 by this time last year. That is a disgraceful

failure by any measure."

Nationally, housing commencements have plummeted to levels not seen since before the Government's much-vaunted Housing for All plan began. "This is a damning indictment of the Government's housing policy," Brady continued.

"Not only are they failing to deliver on their own extremely low targets, but they are also presiding over a complete collapse in the delivery of new homes. Meanwhile, the housing emergency continues to devastate lives and families."

According to Social Democrats TD Jennifer

Whitmore, "The latest house commencement data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) paints a picture of failed government policy in freefall. The figures released by the CSO today do not bode well for expected housing delivery in the coming years."

"Nationwide commencement of residential units are down a staggering 26,743 for the first four months of 2024 compared to the same period last year - a decrease of 81.75 per cent. Worryingly, between April 2024 and April 2025, commencements were down by



Cathaoirleach of Greystones Municipal District Cllr Tom Fortune with the award winners at the 2025 Greystones People of the Year Awards in Greystones Golf Club. See pages 12 & 13.

94.5 per cent.

"Dublin saw just 51 commencements for the first four months of this year, with places like Kildare (9), Meath (5) and Galway city (4) faring even worse."

"While commencement data is not directly indicative of how many homes will be built, it gives a clear picture of the pipeline of home construction for the coming years. The data we are seeing is truly terrifying and points to a complete collapse in house commencements."

"It again shows that this government's housing delivery plan is in tatters and exposes the spin at the heart of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael's pre-election fictional claims that 40,000 homes would be built in 2024."

"Instead of turning a corner on housing, it is

now clear that this government is driving us off a cliff with the same failed policies as its predecessor."

"Unfortunately, Wicklow is not immune to the collapse in housing commencements we're seeing nationwide, and that is not news to us. With commencements collapsing across the country, Wicklow faces the same bleak future: fewer homes, rising rents, and families left behind. This government's failure is not abstract - it's being felt on every street in our county. What will it take for this government to wake up and get to work?"

"Wicklow was identified in the National Planning Framework as a key county for population and housing growth, but these figures tell a different story."

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GARA Greystones 25 Anniversary Lunch and Dance

All welcome to come along and help Greystones Active Retirement Association celebrate 25 years of service to the community on Sunday, 1st June in the Parkview Hotel, from 1pm to 5pm. Family, friends and former Members are all welcome. The event will be a wonderful afternoon for everyone to come together. GARA Greystones has made a huge impact over the years on the quality of life for the over 55s. Weekly activities, outings, social occasions, coffee morning talks, education.

Tickets are €30 each, available on Thursday, 22 May 2025, Kilian House, 2 pm to 3 pm. This will be a ticket only event, no ticket purchase at the door. Details from garagreystonesplus@gmail.com or 087 2845 465.

Street Feast in People's Park

Dargle Area Residents' Association is inviting local residents to take part in Street Feast in the People's Park, Bray, this Saturday 24th May from 5-8pm. There promises to be lots of fun and games for adults and children alike on the day, plus delicious snacks and entertainment from local musicians and dancers, so why not come on down and meet the neighbours for some ceol agus craic. Bring some food for a picnic and chairs or a rug to sit on and you're all set. Street Feast is Ireland's nationwide day of street parties, community celebrations and neighbourhood lunches, which takes place on the same weekend every year. Street Feast invites neighbours across the country to come together for a shared meal, a chat, and a chance to turn strangers into friends.

Open Door Summer Exhibition

Open Door will host an exhibition of Art, Ceramics/Mosaics and Woodwork in the Centre on The Vevay Road in Bray, running from Monday 16th June to Friday 20th June, 11am - 1pm each day. This exhibition of Art, Crafts, Ceramics and Woodwork will showcase the various activities and celebrate the creative works of our members and is an opportunity for family, friends and supporters to visit the Centre and see the various activities. All are welcome. Visit www.opendoor.ie to find out more about the activities available for adults with physical disabilities. Contact Suzanne on 087 6250823 for further details.

FREE Suicide Alertness for everyone (safeTALK) Training

FREE training that is taking place on Tuesday 27th May 2025, 7-10.30pm in Wicklow GAA Centre of Excellence, Ballinakill, Rathdrum, Co Wicklow, A67HW86: Breaking Through organisation are co-ordinating Suicide Intervention & Prevention training on behalf of the HSE as part of Ireland's National Strategy to reduce suicide called Connecting for Life. This training is for over 18s only and not suitable for anyone bereaved by suicide within 12 months. More info and book at <https://breakingthrough.org/suicide-intervention-prevention-skills-training/>.



The ribbon being cut to open the Greystones Darkness Into Light walk, with Cllr Mark Barry (far left) and Niall Quigley from Sugarloaf Lions Club (far right).

Make a difference every day by joining Autism Initiatives Ireland

Supporting people to live life to the full

Autism Initiatives Ireland believe every person with autism has the right to a meaningful life, supported by compassionate, skilled people who understand their unique potential.

"We're not just offering jobs - we're offering the chance to make a real impact in the lives of those we support. Across our services, from supported living to community outreach and day programs, our teams are guided by empathy, respect, and a commitment

to person-centred care.

"Whether you're starting your career or looking to bring your experience to a purpose-driven organisation, you'll find a supportive environment where your voice matters.

"We are currently recruiting for a range of full-time and part-time positions across our services all of which are offering training, career development, and the opportunity to be part of something truly meaningful.

"If you're passionate about inclusion, dedicated to empowering others, and ready to help create brighter futures, we want to hear from you.

Bealtaine Festival bringing May Film Tour to Bray

Cinema Paradiso at the Mermaid Arts Centre, 26th May

For over 20 years access CINEMA has partnered with the Irish Film Institute to organise a May Film Tour. The screenings happen in May to coincide with the Bealtaine Festival where audiences over the age of 55 are actively encouraged to engage with the Arts in their local areas.

"Film is one of the most accessible art forms and each year titles are chosen that we hope will appeal to the target audience. The Film Tour has struggled a little in the post COVID landscape so this year the approach was changed a little, and we asked some of the cinema loving audiences from access CINEMA venues and the IFI's Wild Strawberries to help us program this year's Film Tour.

"A call out was arranged for volunteers to meet (in person and remotely) over a few months to work together to choose at least one of the titles, that would be available for this year's Tour.

"The group - comprising of volunteers from Droichead Art Centre, Dunamaisy Art Centre and Mermaid Art Centre, along with their Wild Strawberry counterparts - attended meetings and program-

ming workshops to work towards a title selection.

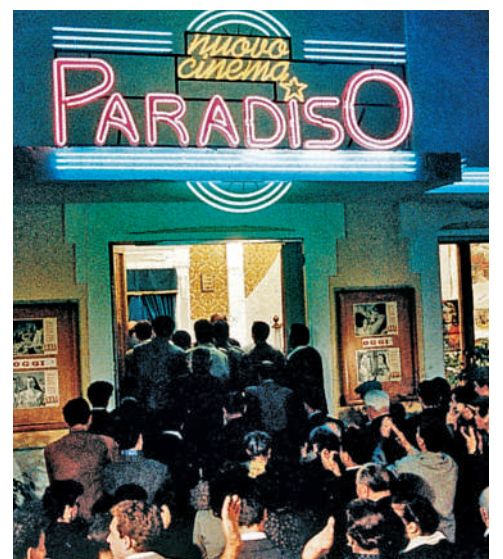
"Part of what informed the selection was this year being Bealtaine's 30th Birthday and it's continued theme of Lust for Life, based on Iggy Pop's iconic punk-era song celebrating life's dreams and ambitions.

"After much debate and discussion the title chosen for the Tour was Cinema Paradiso (Nuovo Cinema Paradiso), Giuseppe Tornatore's classic, loving homage to the cinema."

A winner of awards across the world, including: the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar; 5

BAFTA Awards including Best Actor, Original Screenplay and Score; the Grand Prize of the Jury at the Cannes Film Festival; and many more.

Cinema Paradiso tells the story of Salvatore, a successful film director, returning home for the funeral of Alfredo, his old friend who was the projectionist at the local cinema throughout his childhood. Soon, memories of his first love affair with the beautiful Elena and all the highs and lows that shaped his life come flooding back, as Salvatore reconnects with the community he left 30 years earlier.



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Brady demands reversal of Avon Hotel IPAS decision

Tourism sector faces crisis in West Wicklow

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has called on the Minister for Justice to immediately scrap any idea to use the Avon Hotel in Blessington as an IPAS centre.

Deputy Brady was informed by officials that due to a reduction in demand for accommodation for Ukrainians the Avon will cease to be offered for accommodation to Ukrainians seeking temporary protection. The hotel has been offered to be used to provide accommodation for international protection applicants under a lease agreement of up to two years and this is being examined by the Department.

"Any decision to use the Avon hotel in Blessington as IPAS centre when it ceases to be used for Ukrainians is deeply concerning and any decision must be reversed as a matter of urgency," said Deputy Brady.

"I have been informed that due to the reduced demand to provide accommodation to Ukrainians and that the owners have expressed an interest

in providing ongoing services to IPAS.

"The Avon is the only hotel in Blessington and is a vital piece of local tourism infrastructure, supporting jobs, local businesses, and the wider economy across West Wicklow. The natural beauty of Blessington, the lakes, the Greenway, Russborough House and the surrounding areas are key attractions for visitors. We need accommodation capacity to support and grow our local tourism offering - not diminish it further.

"The loss of The Avon to the tourism industry in 2023 has had a huge negative impact on the already fragile tourism sector in West Wicklow, which has also been hit by the loss of Germaine's Hotel in Baltinglass, now also being used to provide accommodation services.

"This is a double blow to the region, stripping it



John Brady TD.

of two key tourism facilities and further eroding the capacity to attract visitors, events, and investment. Only last month, the Minister for Justice Jim O'Callaghan gave a clear commitment that hotels currently housing Ukrainian refugees would return to tourism use once vacated. This decision now flies in the face of that commitment, leaving the government's word in tatters.

"This decision has been made without any consultation, local engagement, or consideration for the long-term economic damage it will cause. It is yet another example of a government completely out of touch with communities on the ground. As the newly elected Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, I intend to carry out a comprehensive examination of the profiteering that has emerged around the provision of IPAS accommodation, last year it cost over €1billion, this year it's expected to cost €1.2billion. There is commitment that the State would move away from the use of private accommodation, such as hotels like The Avon, for this purpose.

"This decision not only reverses the commitment from the Justice Minister last month to ensure these facilities revert to their original use, but also fur-



Edele and Ann Lawlor at the official launch of Avoca's Mill Tours. See more, page 19.

ther undermines the commitment made five years ago to move towards State-owned, purpose-built accommodation, rather than continuing to rely on expensive private contracts.

"The State spent over one billion euro last year on providing private accommodation for IPAS, an unsustainable and deeply concerning situation which must be scruti-

nised and addressed. Continuing down this path adds to the spiralling costs and does nothing to deliver a sustainable, long-term solution to the accommodation needs of those seeking international protection.

"I have raised my strong objections directly with the Department of Justice and written to the Minister to demand this decision be reversed

immediately. The lease agreement must be scrapped, and The Avon must be returned to its proper and much-needed role as a tourism facility serving Blessington and the wider region. I urge members of the public to contact Wicklow TD and Tánaiste Simon Harris and Fianna Fáil Minister for Justice Jim O'Callaghan demanding that any idea of entering a contract to

use the Avon for IPAS be immediately scrapped.

"For too long, Blessington and West Wicklow have suffered from chronic underinvestment. The decision to remove the hotel from tourism use for another two years will have serious and lasting consequences for the local economy and jobs. It cannot be allowed to proceed."

Whitmore calls out continuous delays to electric-battery DART

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has expressed deep disappointment over the continuous delays to the deployment of the electric-battery DART service to Wicklow. Despite multiple promises and shifting deadlines, the project has most recently been pushed back to 2029.

"The new battery-electric DART was first promised in 2019 when then Minister Shane Ross stated his expectation that we would see them by 2023-2024. Since then, we have seen delay after delay - in 2021, a local government backbencher ambitiously stated that the carriages would be operational in Wicklow by 2025," Deputy Whitmore explained.

"A year later, Iarnród Eireann reiterated that statement, heralding that 95 electric and battery-electric rail cars would enter into service in 2025."

In 2022, former Minister Stephen Donnelly announced that the electric DART would be operational by 2026, then in February of this year the date was pushed back to 2028. We are now being told that it won't be until 2029 that Wicklow sees a battery-electric DART," Deputy Whitmore expanded.

"This continuous shifting of deadlines is com-



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

pletely unacceptable. Every time we ask, it gets moved out another year. This is more than a political issue - people are making huge life decisions based on these promises, promises that directly impact where they can live and work. Insufficient and inefficient public transport options are not just an inconvenience; they are a barrier to economic growth and quality of life," Deputy Whitmore

emphasised.

"Last month in the Dail, we were given firm timelines for the Drogheda DART, so why not for Wicklow? Drogheda is set to expect its battery-electric DART service from 2026, and yet Wicklow keeps being delayed and delayed without any firm commitment," Deputy Whitmore added.

"Iarnród Eireann recently informed me that a capacity study is being carried out for Wicklow, wherein the battery-electric DART fleet will be considered for use on this line. I welcome this study and look forward to its publication, but it is long overdue, and the fact that the electric DART is now a mere consideration for Wicklow is deeply concerning," Deputy Whitmore continued.

"Even once the study is done, it will take time for any changes to be implemented. In the meantime, I will continue to push for a bus service from Wicklow Town to Greystones. It is incredible that,

in 2025, there is no connecting service between these two commuter towns and Wicklow Town is only serviced by two peak morning trains. The government talks about providing infrastructure and public services, yet two large towns, in a county only an hour and a half away from Dublin, still have no connecting service," Deputy Whitmore noted.

"I will continue to advocate for better public transport connectivity for our county, and for interim local connections while we await the completion of the DART extension. It is crucial that we have reliable and efficient public transport options to support our communities and their growth. The continuous delays are unacceptable, and I will keep pushing for firm timelines and immediate action to ensure that Wicklow receives the public transport services it deserves and has been promised," Deputy Whitmore concluded.



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Closing Date: Saturday 31st May 2025

Role Overview:

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- Complying with all policies and procedures, including legislative and regulatory requirements

- Completing other duties as assigned

Qualifications and Skills Required:

- A relevant qualification (QFA, APA) or willingness to study for the same
- Previous experience in a Credit Union or financial organisation is beneficial
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office, particularly Word, Outlook, and Excel.
- A collaborative team player with a proactive, "can-do" attitude.
- Customer-focused, demonstrating a friendly, professional, and helpful approach.
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- A clean driver's license

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Organisations come together to mark the launch of Wicklow Energy Awareness Day 2025

Hosted by the Wicklow Sustainable Energy Community and sponsored for a second year by SSE Renewables, Wicklow Energy Awareness Day 2025 will take place on Saturday, 14th June at the Pastoral Centre, Wicklow Town. All are welcome and admission is free.

Sustainable Energy Communities from Wicklow, Arklow and Greystones joined representatives from Wicklow Co. Council's Climate Action team, Wicklow Tidy Towns, and patron, SSE Renewables, to launch the upcoming Wicklow Energy Awareness Day 2025.

Scheduled for Saturday, 14th June from 11 am - 4 pm at the Pastoral Centre, St Patrick's Road, Wicklow Town, Wicklow Energy Awareness Day promises to attract communities from across the county. As with previous years, admission is free to the public.

Sylvester J Burke from Wicklow Sustainable Energy Community said: 'We're delighted to host our third Wicklow Energy Awareness Day. Our volunteer committees from Wicklow town, Arklow and Greystones have come together with Wicklow County Council's Climate team, Wicklow Town Team, and event patrons SSE Renewables, to support communities in improving the energy efficiency of their homes and businesses. The community can visit the exhibition stands for helpful advice and information on energy efficiency grants, PV solar panel and heat pump installation, and tips for insulating homes. The event will showcase EV cars and include a range of exhibition stands. Children can enjoy Eco fun games and Gavin Harte from the SEAI Science Team will once again provide information through rolling half-hour workshops which step through the process of moving towards

better energy efficiency for home and businesses alike. We want to acknowledge our thanks to everyone involved and to our patron, SSE Renewables'.

Deirdre Keogh, SSE Renewables, said: 'SSE Renewables was delighted to be involved again this year. We'll be joining colleagues from our retail brand, SSE Airtricity, at the event. Our support for this initiative is an important reminder of the need to move locally, nationally and globally away from carbon-heavy energy sources derived from fossil fuels. The realisation of our Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 offshore project can support renewable energy ambitions delivered at scale for county and country alike. We're looking forward to a successful day and extend our particular thanks to Wicklow Sustainable Energy Community for hosting the event'.

For further information about Wicklow Energy Awareness Day, 14th June 2025, email wicklowsec-2020@gmail.com or follow Wicklow Sustainable Energy on Facebook. Energy Awareness Day 2025 is supported by Wicklow Tidy Towns, Wicklow Town Team, and Wicklow Co. Council.



Sustainable Energy Communities from Wicklow, Arklow and Greystones joined representatives from Wicklow County Council's Climate Action team, Wicklow Tidy Towns, and patron, SSE Renewables, to launch the upcoming Wicklow Energy Awareness Day 2025 scheduled for 14th June at the Pastoral Centre, Wicklow Town. Pictured are Pascal Burke, SSE Renewables Community Engagement Manager Deirdre Keogh, Mark Costello, Simon Whelan, Cllr Graham Richmond, Deaglan O'Meagher, Ashleigh Downey and Sylvester Burke.



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Taoiseach voices support for responsible data centre development as Echelon launches new facilities in Wicklow

The Taoiseach Micheál Martin described two large-scale data centre facilities being developed by Echelon Data Centres in Co Wicklow as "the model for future data centre development in Ireland".

Speaking in Arklow on 9th May at the official launch of Echelon Data Centres' DUB20 and DUB30 facilities, the Taoiseach said: "These two large-scale facilities demonstrate Echelon's commitment to responsible data centre development. They are located in a regional area where the grid isn't constrained, they will have the capacity to generate and dispatch power to the grid when needed, and they will facilitate the generation of renewable energy resources that will, in turn, help decarbonise Ireland's electricity system. They are the model for future data centre development in Ireland - and they will deliver jobs and economic benefits for Wicklow, and will encourage further foreign direct investment in Ireland."

Echelon will invest an estimated €3.5bn to develop the DUB20 & DUB30 sites, creating around 2,600 jobs during construction and 715 permanent positions at the two facilities once they are operational. However, an Economic Impact Assessment report prepared for Echelon by KPMG has calculated that the potential economic output of the DUB20 and DUB30 sites could be as much as €7.5bn during the construction phase, and €801m per year once both campuses

are operational.

The Economic Impact Assessment states that the potential economic output of the DUB20 and DUB30 sites could be as much as €7.5bn during the construction phase, and €801m per year once both campuses are operational.

The report found that every €1 Echelon invests in the DUB20 and DUB30 sites could yield a return of €1.60 due to additional economic activity through supply chains and employee spending across construction and operational phases.

It also found that for every 10 jobs created during construction, up to nine additional jobs will be supported elsewhere in the economy, while every 10 direct operational roles could sustain a further 16 jobs.

Echelon Chief Operations Officer, Graeme McWilliams said: "Echelon's sites in Wicklow will generate broad-based economic value with measurable impact across the Irish economy that goes far beyond our initial investment. They represent responsible data centre development which supports regional development and job creation in partnership with good grid citizenship."

"The energy demands of DUB20 and DUB30 will underpin invest-

ment in almost 1GW of wind-generated renewable energy, power that will help reinforce the national grid, increase Ireland's energy security, and support our transition from fossil fuels to clean, green energy sources."

Echelon's DUB20 campus is being developed on the site of the former Irish Fertilisers Industries plant at the Avoca River Business Park in Arklow. DUB30 is being developed some 5km away at Kish Business Park.

Last year, DUB20 became the first large-scale data centre in Ireland to receive a grid connection from EirGrid for more than four years. This reflects the fact that the site meets Commission for the Regulation of Utilities' (CRU) 2021 criteria for data centre connections.

The grid connection will allow Echelon to begin work on a 220kV substation at the site that will allow access to the grid for up to 800MW of wind energy generated off the coast of Wicklow in the future. Echelon is also investing in solar, battery energy storage systems, and renewable fuels to replace fossil fuel consumed by the data centre. Construction on DUB20 will commence this year, with construction on DUB30 to follow after.

Mitchell raises alarm over offshore wind farm impact

Former Wicklow County Councillor Derek Mitchell has submitted a detailed objection to the proposed Dublin Array offshore wind farm, warning of what he describes as a "very significant and adverse" visual impact on Greystones, Bray Head, and surrounding protected seascapes.

In a submission to An Bord Pleanála (ABP), Mitchell, who represented Greystones for over two decades until retiring in 2024, argues that the combined footprint of the Dublin Array and the adjacent Codling Wind Park would result in a near-continuous 33km stretch of turbines, some taller than Bray Head, positioned just 8 to 12.5 kilometres offshore.

He has called for a 10km gap between the two wind farms, instead of the currently proposed 1.5km, to reduce the scale of what he describes as an "outlier" visual impact. According to Mitchell, the turbines would span an arc of 115 degrees from Greystones, which could be reduced to 75 degrees with greater separation.

Mitchell says the turbines, standing up to 300 metres tall, would be "a quarter higher than Bray Head", completely dominating the sea horizon at Greystones and Bray.

"They plan to form almost the entire seascape at Greystones and Bray Head," he said. "The sea vis-



Derek Mitchell.

tas are a major part of the atmosphere of the area. This would allow the national objectives of getting the green energy we need while lessening the damage to the views from Dalkey to Greystones."

He also noted that ABP is cur-

rently reviewing applications for three other offshore wind farms-including Arklow Bank-and has asked developers to provide more information by January 2026, including further surveys on coastal and sand bank stability.

"They also want all five proposed wind farms to better consider cumulative impacts, especially visual issues," Mitchell added.

He previously criticised the project's Seascape and Visual Impact Assessment (SVIA), which he says overlooks many protected views and prospects outlined in local area plans and the Bray Head Special Amenities Area Order. Popular coastal walkways and public vantage points-including the Cliff Walk and the Greystones promenade-would be significantly affected, he argues.

In addition to visual concerns, Mitchell has taken aim at what he calls "consultation by the deaf," claiming suggestions made over several years-such as an interpretive centre, informational signage, and boat tours-were never acted



Jessie and Denise Pierce and Sean Kavanagh at the Darkness Into Light walk in Arklow.

upon by developers.

However, Dublin Array's developers defend the project, describing it as a key contributor to Ireland's Climate Action Plan targets. The project, a joint venture between RWE and Saorgus Energy, would generate up to 824 megawatts (MW) of renewable electricity-enough to power around 770,000 homes.

The developers state that the project will help reduce Ireland's reliance on fossil fuel imports, support long-term energy security, and deliver significant economic benefits during both construction and operation. They also plan to

deliver a €6.5 million per year Community Benefit Fund over 20 years, beginning from the construction phase.

RWE Project Director Vanessa O'Connell said the company has engaged extensively with the public: "We have had extensive consultations and communications with stakeholders and local communities in recent years. This has been with the aim of keeping people informed and to seek their views and inputs. RWE has a strong track record of working closely with communities in areas where we operate offshore wind projects, and that will also be the

case with Dublin Array."

The proposed operations and maintenance base for the project would be located at St. Michael's Pier in Dún Laoghaire, and is expected to generate between €450 million and €650 million in regional economic activity over the wind farm's lifetime.

Mitchell concludes that he supports the shift to green energy but believes the process must consider local impact.

"National targets must be achieved," he writes, "but not by overwhelming local communities and protected landscapes," he said.

Concerns raised over offshore wind viability as carbon tax hike hits consumers

Aontú representative for Wicklow, Ciarán Hogan, has expressed serious concerns about Ireland's renewable energy strategy, warning that escalating costs and poorly timed carbon tax increases could jeopardise major offshore wind projects and place further pressure on Irish households.

Speaking after the May 1st increase in carbon taxes on fuel and home heating, Hogan criticised the government's "poorly executed" push to decarbonise.

"Ireland isn't ready," he said. "We're being hit with higher fuel costs while being told to switch to renewables that might not even materialise."

Hogan pointed to recent cancellations of major offshore wind farms in the UK and Ireland as warning signs. In East Yorkshire, Danish energy giant Ørsted scrapped its 2.4GW Horns Rev 4 project, citing rising costs despite having a 15-year contract to supply power at a guaranteed price. In July 2023, Swedish developer Vattenfall halted work on a 1.4GW wind farm off the Norfolk coast for similar reasons.

Closer to home, the Sceirde Rocks wind farm off the Connemara coast was also cancelled. That project, set to generate 450MW and power much of West Galway, was shelved by Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta amid growing economic uncertainty.

"These projects were supposed to be game-changers," Hogan said. "But if global energy giants can't make the numbers work, how can we expect Irish projects to survive



Ciarán Hogan.

rising costs, inflation in the construction sector, and growing global instability?"

The Wicklow-based Codling Wind Park, one of Ireland's most ambitious offshore renewable projects, is among those under scrutiny. It aims to deliver 1,300MW of power from 75 turbines located 13 to 22 kilometres off the Wicklow coast, between Greystones and

Wicklow Town. Covering an area of 125kmsq, it is expected to play a central role in meeting Ireland's 2030 climate targets.

But Hogan warns that rising costs and international market risks could derail the project.

"If Codling were to be cancelled, it would be a major blow to Ireland's energy stability. We already pay some of the highest electricity prices in Europe, and further mismanagement could push those prices even higher," he said.

The Aontú representative also took aim at the government's climate strategy:

"The government is fixated on climate targets that don't reflect the reality on the ground. We're not anti-environment, we believe in sustainability and climate action. But we can't afford to go back to the stone age either. If we want to support electric vehicles, data centres, and a modern economy, we need a reliable and affordable power grid."

"This isn't about resisting change," he added. "It's about making sure we're prepared for it. We need to bring energy costs down, secure investment in infrastructure, and ensure that the transition to renewables doesn't leave people in the dark, literally."



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 VARIATION NO. 2

Notice is hereby given that Variation No. 2 (Wicklow Town – Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025) to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 was made by Wicklow County Council on 12 May 2025, pursuant to Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

VARIATION NO. 2

Integrating the land use zoning map and key development objectives from the Wicklow Town – Rathnew Local Area Plan (LAP) 2025, the LAP was prepared separately but alongside the proposed Variation, as well as other changes consequent into the County Development Plan.

This variation is accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment screening documentation prepared in accordance with the Planning & Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended). The variation is also accompanied by an Appropriate Assessment screening documentation pursuant to Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive.

In accordance with Section 13 (11) of the Act this variation shall have effect from 12 May 2025.

A copy of the made variation and associated documents, and the updated County Development Plan, will be available for viewing and downloading on the Council website www.wicklow.ie (scan the QR code here) and for inspection, at Wicklow County Council, County Buildings and all Municipal District Offices, during normal opening hours.



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.

Three Blue Flags for Wicklow beaches

On Friday 16th May, An Taisce announced the International Blue Flag and Green Coast Award recipients for 2025. The awards were presented by Mr. James Browne TD ñ Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage at the presentation ceremony held in the Ravenport Resort in Curracloe, County Wexford. In Co. Wicklow, Brittas Bay North & South beaches and Greystones South Beach have been awarded Blue Flag status.

A record-equaling 70 Beaches received the Green Coast Award for the 2025 Bathing Season, however none of these went to Wicklow beaches. The Green Coast Award recognises beaches for their clean environment, excellent water quality and natural beauty.

Speaking at the ceremony, Minister Browne, who presented the award flags said: "Given that the Blue Flag programme is an internationally recognised symbol of high standards in water quality, environmental management, environmental education and safety, I am honoured to present a record number of awards today - 99 Blue Flags and 70 Green Coast Awards.

"We've come a long way since the beginning of Ireland's Blue Flag awards in 1988, when 19 beaches and 2 marinas were recognised. This didn't happen by magic. Great credit must go to local authorities, An Taisce, coastal communities and particularly all those local volunteers who have worked tirelessly around the country to keep so many of our coastal areas,

beaches and marinas in pristine condition for us all to enjoy.

"Presenting these awards on a great day in Curracloe and - in the current good weather - anticipating the happy days ahead for so many families on this very beach over the summer, I am particularly proud that the beautiful beaches and marinas from around my own home county of Wexford are amongst those recognised today."

Ms. Cathy Baxter, Director of Education and Community Action at An Taisce said: "We were delighted to be back in the sunny Southeast once again, to present The Blue Flag and Green Coast Award Flags for the 2025 season. There are an unprecedented number of sites receiving awards this year. We would like to congratulate all the Local Authorities, marina operators and Clean Coasts groups responsible for managing the awarded beaches and marinas to the excellent standards required. I would also like to thank Wexford

County Council for hosting us here in Curracloe today."

The Blue Flag is one of the world's most recognised environmental awards. Originating in France in 1985 it was launched as an International programme as part of the European Year of the Environment in 1987. In 1988, the first year sites were awarded outside of France 19 beaches and 2 marinas received the Blue Flag in Ireland. 2025 is the 38th year that beaches and marinas have been awarded here in Ireland, with 99 beaches and marinas being awarded for the 2025 season (89 beaches, 10 marinas).

The programme aims to raise environmental awareness and promote sound environmental management of beaches, marinas and eco-tourism boats around the world. The 89 Irish beaches and 10 marinas that have achieved this accolade must adhere to specific criteria related to water quality, information provision, environmental education, safety and site management for the duration of the bathing season.



An Taisce announces 2025 Blue Flag and Green Coast Awards in recognition of Ireland's Best Beaches and Marinas. Farrah celebrates the award of 99 Blue Flags for the 2025 season. Photo by Naoise Culhane.

New podcast explores Wicklow's Military Road

Wicklow County Council has announced the release of a new four-part podcast series that explores the history of the Wicklow Mountains through the iconic Military Road. This road was originally constructed by British forces in the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion to quell the Wicklow rebels and bring the so-called 'bandit country' under control. Today, the Wicklow Military Road winds through one of the most remote and picturesque landscapes in Ireland.

Curated by Fin Dwyer from the popular Irish History Podcast, in collaboration with the Wicklow County Council

Heritage Office, each episode features engaging conversations with local residents, historians, and experts. These

discussions bring to life the road's storied past as well as the rich environmental and cultural heritage of the communities

it traverses. Contributors include historian Frank Treacy, who shares the story of a unique military cemetery hidden in

the mountains; Professor Graeme Warren, who offers insights into the early human history of the region and Robbie Carter, who recounts his experiences working deep underground in the lead mines at Glendasan.

Additionally, Carmel O'Toole, a historian and resident of Glenmalur, provides a personal perspective on the area's rich cultural heritage.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Cllr. Paul O'Brien, commented, "Whether you are a Wicklow resident or visitor, a history enthusiast, or simply curious about the Wicklow landscape, this podcast series will be of interest to you. I am pleased that this project is being released to coincide with the bicentennial of the death of Michael Dwyer in Australia in 1825, as he was one of the motivations behind the con-



Military Road. Photo by Deirdre Burns.

struction of this Military Road in the first place."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, welcomed the series, stating "Podcasts are a wonderful way to make the history and heritage of County Wicklow accessible to new and wider audiences. The Irish History Podcast attracts tens of thousands of listeners, providing an important platform for promoting County Wicklow."

The series, produced in association with

Wicklow County Council and the Heritage Council as part of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan, is available for free listening on the Irish History Podcast at <https://shows.acast.com/irishhistory/episodes/irelands-bandit-country-the-wicklow-military-road>. You can also subscribe to the podcast in your podcast app to ensure you receive each episode as it is released throughout the month of May.

Additionally, the Arklow Municipal District is coordinating a

two-day event in Glenmalur to mark the bicentennial of Michael Dwyer's death on August 23, 1825. These events, part of Heritage Week will include a one-day seminar on Saturday 23rd August and a bus tour of sites associated with Michael Dwyer on Sunday 24th August.

More information can be found at Michael Dwyer 200 Registration on Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/michael-dwyer-200-registration-1358221520-129?aff=oddtcreator>



Fin Dwyer with panel at Stories of the Military Road Heritage Week event.

Anger grows over DART disruptions

Public representatives from across the political spectrum have voiced strong criticism of Iarnród Éireann's decision to suspend DART and commuter services during multiple bank holiday weekends, citing the impact on local businesses, tourism, and community events in Wicklow and south Dublin.

The issue has come to a head again following the announcement that no train services will operate between Connolly Station and Dún Laoghaire over the upcoming June Bank Holiday Weekend, due to engineering works. It marks the fourth such closure in 2024, following similar disruptions in January, February, April, and May.

Sinn Féin TD John Brady said the ongoing pattern of closures "shows a complete disregard for the needs of the public" and called for an urgent review of how rail maintenance works are scheduled.

"While I accept that essential works are necessary, the timing of these suspensions is completely out of step with public needs," Deputy Brady said. "The closures have repeatedly coincided with major events like the Leinster Rugby match, the Women's Mini

Marathon, and the Bray Jazz Festival. Local businesses are suffering, tourists are turning away, and public confidence in our transport system is eroding."

Brady also criticised the quality and reliability of replacement bus services, saying they are poorly coordinated and often late, or don't show up at all.

"I've had constituents left stranded in the cold late at night because a replacement bus never arrived. It's not just inconvenient, it's unsafe," he said.

He confirmed he has written to both the Minister for Transport and the National Transport Authority, urging a full review of the planning and coordination of rail works.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council and Sinn Féin Councillor Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien echoed the concerns, noting the

economic toll on towns like Bray and Greystones.

"People tell me every day how these disruptions are impacting their businesses. Just yesterday, taxi drivers raised it with me. When visitor numbers drop due to poor access, it hits livelihoods," Cllr O'Brien said.

He has called for four specific actions from Iarnród Éireann, including:

- Greater transparency about planned works and the criteria behind their scheduling.
 - A formal role for local government in reviewing rail plans that impact their communities.
 - Targeted mitigation efforts, such as coordinated alternative transport and enhanced local promotion.
 - An economic impact assessment to measure losses in affected towns
- "Bray is more than just a stop on

the line-it's a vibrant coastal town with a unique offering. These decisions must not be made in isolation from the people and places they affect," he added.

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore, who is also the party's transport spokesperson, joined the calls for reform.

"Irish Rail's habit of suspending DART and commuter services over bank holidays needs urgent review. The May Bank Holiday caused major disruption for those attending events like the Bray Jazz Festival and the Leinster game. Now the June Bank Holiday will impact thousands attending the VHI Women's Mini Marathon," she said.

Deputy Whitmore acknowledged the need for essential engineering works but said they must be balanced with public convenience.

"This pattern of poor planning is



John Brady TD.



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

undermining local tourism, community events, and public confidence in our transport system. I'm calling on the Minister for Transport and Irish Rail to ensure future works are scheduled with greater foresight and coordination."

With another high-profile weekend of disruption ahead, pressure is mounting for Irish Rail and the Department of Transport to rethink their approach before further damage is done to local economies and public trust.

Aontú leader joins protest as Bray residents oppose Herbert Road closure

Aontú leader and Meath West TD Peadar Tóibín joined local residents in Bray last week for the March to Save Herbert Road, a demonstration organised by Aontú's Wicklow representative Ciaran Hogan in response to plans to close access from Herbert Road to the N11.



Deputy Tóibín and Ciaran Hogan with protesters outside Tánaiste Simon Harris's office on Quinnsborough Road.

The protest reflects widespread and growing opposition among Bray residents, who fear the closure would cause major traffic disruption and negatively affect daily life. Despite unanimous opposition from both local and county councillors, campaigners say the plan appears to be moving forward without addressing their concerns.

Tóibín posed for a photo outside Tánaiste Simon Harris's office on Quinnsborough Road before addressing protesters outside the Bray Municipal District offices, where councillors were gathering for a meeting.

"There is no democratic oversight at all," said Deputy Tóibín. "We now have a system where those elected by the people have no say over major infrastructure changes. I have no doubt that some of these decisions were made during

the Green Party's time in government, and yet their policies are still being implemented despite being strongly rejected in the last election."

He also criticised the Tánaiste for what he described as inaction. "To claim he can do nothing about this is simply untrue. It's a dereliction of duty. The people of Bray will hold him accountable. People often don't realise the power they have, but public protest works."

Local Aontú represen-

tative and protest organiser Ciarán Hogan described the day as a success and underlined the depth of public frustration: "This plan has no public support. Residents are overwhelmingly against it. We've spoken to hundreds of people and the message is clear, Bray does not want this closure. On the day of the march, we were counting car horns of support in the hundreds. We had great weather, great energy, and we'll keep organising until this decision is completely

reversed. Bray cannot afford more mismanagement."

The march began at Deepark Motors near the Enniskerry Bridge, following the length of Herbert Road to Quinnsborough Road and then up Main Street to the council chamber above McDonald's. Protesters stayed on footpaths to avoid traffic disruption, while carrying banners and signs, some of which were brought into the council meeting.

"We entered the meeting quietly and sat in the

gallery without causing disruption," said Hogan. "But our signs made it clear, we are watching, and we expect our councillors to fight this on our behalf."

The Aontú-led demonstration is one of several local efforts opposing the closure. A separate group, "Stop the Closure of Herbert Road," has also been active in recent weeks, holding protests and distributing the now-familiar red and orange lawn signs seen throughout the town.



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 WICKLOW TOWN – RATHNEW LOCAL AREA PLAN 2025

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 20 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) that Wicklow County Council being the Planning Authority for the area has made a Local Area Plan for the settlement of 'Wicklow Town - Rathnew' at the Council meeting on the **12 May 2025**.

The Local Area Plan in accordance with Section 20 will come into effect on **23 JUNE 2025** and consists 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.

The adopted plan is accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report, prepared in accordance with the Planning & Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended), an Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report carried out in accordance with 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management: Guidelines for Planning Authorities'. Notice is also given, under Article 14I of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended), that a Strategic Environmental Assessment Statement, summarising, inter alia, how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan, has been prepared and is available alongside the Plan. An Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement, summarising the AA process and its findings, is also available alongside the adopted Plan.

A copy of the adopted Local Area Plan and associated documents will be available, throughout the lifetime of the Plan, for viewing and downloading on the Council website www.wicklow.ie (scan the QR code here) and for online inspection, at Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, all Municipal District Offices, and all libraries during normal opening hours.



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.



On Saturday 3rd May in the AUL complex this under 11's Ardmore Rovers soccer team won their final 3-2 in the Dublin District Schoolboys & School girls League (division 10 & 11) against Ballyowen Celtic to take home the Mick Sheridan cup. Their coaches are Eddie Delaney and Darren Neiland.

Parents urged to 'park & walk' as part of Bray schools' safe travel campaign

Three Bray schools have launched a 'travel to school' safety and awareness campaign in an effort to reduce traffic congestion and increase safety outside their schools along the busy Vevay hill.

Spearheaded by the parents' associations, the campaign by St Patrick's Loreto primary school, Gaelscoil Ui Cheadaigh and St Cronan's Boys National School is supported by the school principals and staff, community Gardaí, local residents and the school traffic warden. They say they are hoping to achieve 'awareness, enforcement and improvement'.

The campaign aims to foster better practices for parents, increase enforcement action by gardai in the vicinity and lobby the council to make public realm and road safety improvements.

Following a series of meetings held by the parents' associations, parents identified the main issues as being the inadequate provision of cycling infrastructure, unsafe crossing points, 'just a minute' parking outside the schools and footpaths in a state of disrepair.

They are now advocating a co-ordinated effort, with parents, schools, Gardaí and the local council all playing a role to address the relevant issues.

The Parents' Associations of the three schools are asking parents to play their part. PA Chairs Roisin Ni Chearbhaill and Laura Gill said, "We know how busy people's lives are and we all feel under pressure on busy school mornings. This isn't about blame or pointing the finger, it's about keeping our children safe in a very busy, challenging environment during drop off and pick up time. We are pleading with parents to 'park and walk' if they must take their cars, rather than attempting to park near the schools, particularly in the nearby housing estates. We would also like to encourage car sharing, or for parents to consider walking buses. These actions fit with the Green Schools ethos and encourage a more sociable start to the day for our children."

"The response to news of this this campaign among the parents has been huge. Almost everybody has a near miss story from the school run. We are asking parents to look at how they travel to

school and see if they can make any changes. We encourage parents to have a conversation with their children about the benefits of active travel and playing their part to support their school community. With around 1500 pupils in just these three schools small changes can stack up and make a visible difference to the morning run."

Councillor Erika Doyle is a member of the St Patrick's parent's association and has been working with the schools to liaise with the council. She said many of the issues relate to the physical environment around the school and the mismatch between infrastructure and usage.

"There are nine schools from one end of Bray to the other, via the main street. These three schools in particular are bunched together with the added complication of St Cronan's sharing access with a housing estate. I have instigated discussions with the town engineers around improvements we can make including the entrance to St Cronan's and the area



Cllr Erika Doyle with school principals Anne Marie McGovern (St Patrick's), Eoghan Breathnach (St Cronan's) Manus Breathnach (Gaelscoil Ui Cheadaigh), Parent's Association committee chairs Roisin Ni Chearbhaill and Laura Gill, parents associate members, Green Schools and student council members, lollipop lady Kate and pupils from the three schools.

outside St Patricks. On a broader level we desperately need segregated safe cycle lanes from the Main Street to the Vevay. The volume of children using this road during school drop off and pick up time is huge and if it were safer, many more would cycle. We are also looking at the historical connectivity between the schools. Renewing this would give many families the option of getting to school without having to anywhere near the Main street. It is not always possible for

people to walk or cycle and everybody has pressures and time constraints etc but we are asking that those who can, please do, particularly during the finer weather. Every car off the road makes a difference to local traffic congestion, safety and air quality. Ultimately we all want the same thing, safer, less congested roads, and we can all play our part."

The Principals of the schools Anne Marie McGovern (St. Patricks), Eoghan Breathnach (St.

Cronan's) and Manus Breathnach (Gaelscoil Ui Cheadaigh), jointly stated their support for the campaign. They said, "Our priority is ensuring the safety of every child in our care. The area outside our school should be a safe space, however the risk to pedestrians, especially children, continues as there are limited facilities to travel safely to school. This is compounded by illegal parking. We are committed to working together with our Parents' Associations, all parents,

an Garda Síochána, local authorities, and the wider community to establish safer crossing points and improve signage in front of our schools, as well as accelerating the delivery of walking, cycling, and wheeling infrastructure on key access routes to schools.

"St. Patrick's, St. Cronan's and Gaelscoil Ui Cheadaigh are committed to meaningful action by educating children about road awareness and expanding cycle and scooter parking on school

grounds, reminding our school community to park responsibly and adhere to traffic laws. Given the central location of our schools, making our school surroundings safer benefits everyone."

The campaign was launched outside the school last week and large banners urging caution have been erected along the road. The schools say this will be an ongoing piece of work with small events and awareness pieces continuing into the next school year.

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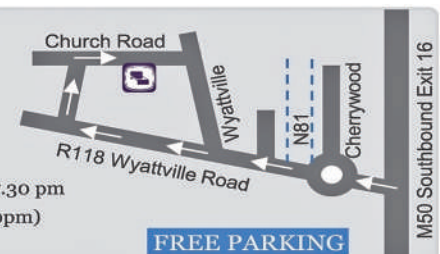
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New legislation to tackle nitrous oxide misuse

Sinn Féin TD John Brady, has welcomed the introduction of important legislation brought forward by his party colleagues, Deputies Mark Ward and Sean Crowe, aimed at tackling the growing and deeply concerning misuse of nitrous oxide - more commonly known as 'laughing gas'.

This legislation comes at a crucial time, as communities across the country - including Wicklow, are witnessing the devastating consequences of nitrous oxide misuse, particularly among young people. The bill proposes to restrict the sale, possession and supply of nitrous oxide for recreational use, while ensuring it remains accessible for legitimate purposes.

Speaking on the matter, Deputy Brady said: "I fully support this legislation brought forward by my colleagues Mark Ward and Sean Crowe. As someone who has seen first-hand the impact of nitrous oxide in our communities, I believe this is a necessary and urgent step to protect our young people and ensure their safety. This gas is far from harmless and should be taken seriously. The casual use of nitrous oxide, often seen as a 'harmless high', has led to serious health consequences - including brain damage, nerve

damage and even death.

"In Wicklow, I've spoken to concerned parents, youth workers and teachers who are alarmed by the growing presence of these large canisters littered in parks and playgrounds. People from right across the county have been expressing similar concerns, and this is by no means a localised issue. I have received reports of children as young as 12 inhaling the gas. While we used to find small, single-use canisters, these have now been replaced by large canisters containing super doses.

"This is a frightening development and unscrupulous dealers are making large profits from the sale of nitrous oxide at the expense of our young people's health. I have raised this issue many times previously, but it now demands urgent action. Young people are being targeted and exploited by those who profit from selling these substances, with a canister being sold on the street and online

for €40 each. Those who profit from this have no regard for the health and wellbeing of the young people affected, or the long-term harm being caused."

The proposed legislation will amend existing drug laws to restrict the recreational use of nitrous oxide, giving Gardai greater powers to intervene, while ensuring those with legitimate causes will not be affected.

Deputy Brady concluded: "This legislation is about safeguarding our young people, empowering our communities, and taking a firm stand against those who knowingly endanger lives for profit. Sinn Féin is committed to delivering a health-led and compassionate approach to drug use - but we are also clear: harmful substances like nitrous oxide, when abused, must be addressed head-on. This is about protected lives, and I commend my colleagues for bringing this legislation forward."



Deputy John Brady and Cllr Dermot 'Daisy' O'Brien with Nitrous Oxide cylinders at Ballywaltrim Playground.

Bray Men's Shed welcomed to Leinster House

'Importance of men's sheds for community well-being cannot be overstated'



Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore, met with members of Bray Men's Shed in Leinster House recently, emphasising the crucial role these organisations play in fostering community spirit and support.

Having historically supported Bray Men's Sheds, Deputy Whitmore highlighted the thriving Bray Men's Shed as a shining example of the importance of this asset for Bray.

"It was wonderful to see the members of Bray Men's Shed today. Their dedication to creating a supportive environment for men in the community is truly commendable," Deputy Whitmore stated.

"Men's Sheds provide a vital space for social interaction, skill development, and mental well-being. The work done by Bray Men's Shed is a shining example of how these organisations can positively impact the lives of their members and the broader community," Deputy Whitmore added.

"The importance of this particular Men's Shed cannot be overstated. It serves as a hub for connection, learning, and mutual support, helping to combat isolation and promote a sense of belonging among its members," Deputy Whitmore continued.

"Thank you to Bray Men's Shed for their ongoing efforts and for the opportunity to discuss their work. It was a pleasure to connect with such a dedicated group of individuals."

€18,000 of additional funding to upgrade Greystones Playground

Greystones has been awarded €18,442 in funding under the 2025 Play and Recreation Capital Grant Scheme.

Speaking last week, Tánaiste Simon Harris said: "This is great news for families in Greystones. As a father of two young children I know all too well the importance of playground facilities right across our county.

"I am continuing to work with the Council to get more playgrounds but it is all the more important we continue to invest in the playgrounds we have already.

"We need to upgrade our playgrounds and keep them safe for our children. The upgrade of the playground in Greystones will provide children with a more accessible, inclusive, and enjoyable space to play.

"As a community, we understand the vital role that

high-quality recreational facilities play in children's development, social inclusion, and family life. The funding will support the enhancement of playground facilities in Greystones, with a focus on accessibility and inclusive play equipment. This is part of a national scheme in which 28 projects were funded, prioritising the needs of all children, including those with disabilities or additional needs."

Tánaiste Simon Harris concluded: "I want to commend Wicklow County Council for their commitment to improving community infrastructure and for successfully securing this funding. Projects like these are essential in ensuring our public spaces are welcoming and beneficial to every child."

The scheme, which requires a 25% match in funding from local authorities, encourages councils to consult with children and young people to help shape the future of local play spaces.



Conor Molloy and Mary Dalton at the Darkness Into Light walk in Arklow.

Forty years of singing



Bray Choral Society Summer Concert 2024 in Holy Redeemer Church, Bray.

This year is Bray Choral Society's 40th year of singing!! The Society was founded in 1986 as a community choir & has welcomed people from all walks of life over the years. The choir currently has almost 100 members, mainly from Bray & surrounding areas, & has performed a wide range of works by both classical & modern composers. The Society is fortunate to still have three actively participating original founding members: Frank Kelly (musical director), Ann Murdiffe & Philippa Bridge.

Ann shares her memoir here:

I had reached the stage that young parents often arrive at, when they want to reconnect with themselves as adults. Having seen an advertisement for a choir in the Bray people under the Adult Education banner, I went to St. Killian's Community School to meet a Mr. Frank Kelly. This young enthusiastic music teacher wanted to set up a community choir & put on a performance of Handel's Messiah in December 1987. I had sung in choirs since I was 7 years old, so I thought this would be a nice night out where I could meet new people & sing some serious music.

I went along and met Frank & about 25 other people. We did a little singing, Frank spoke about the aims of the choir & Bray Choral Society came into being. After that first rehearsal I went every Tuesday night & I absolutely loved it. Soon, family & friends discovered that I was unavailable on Tuesday nights for anything outside of choir practice!

On a couple of occasions we sang after mass in Holy Redeemer & also in Christ Church Bray to advertise ourselves & look for new members. We practised Messiah every Tuesday until we were note perfect! Eventually the big night came & 33 members sang Handel's Messiah in St. Fergal's Church, Bray, in December 1987. After that we went from strength to strength. We sang in the NCH in 1992 - a marvellous achievement for such a young choir - & have been back there on many occasions.

We entered competitions & won quite a few. We travelled to Cork, Sligo, New Ross, Salzburg, Vienna, Brussels, to name but a few. It was very enjoyable & we had great fun.

The joy of singing together, learning new repertoire & performing for audiences is a rewarding aspect of choir membership. Although we sing a lot of classical choral music, we still enjoy a good knees up & sing song when we go out - so it's not all hard work. Over the years we have become one big family & although people have come & gone, we do keep in contact with one another. I have developed close bonds through shared experiences, rehearsals & performances & have made a lot of very true friends - I am indebted to them for their friendships.

The common denominator in all of this is our Musical Director, Frank Kelly, who is still our guiding light. His forward thinking & musical direction has always been the driving force. BCS has served the people of Bray as a source of cultural heritage, preserving musical traditions & passing them on to new generations, & underscores the significance of these long term commitments to music & the community.

To celebrate BCS's special year, we will be presenting 2 Gala Concerts this May: Sat 24th May in St. Andrew's Church, Westland Row, Dublin at 8 pm and Sun 25th May in Holy Redeemer Church, Main Street, Bray at 7.30 pm.



Choir rehearsal night - the early 1990's.



Ready to sing in Christ Church, Bray - c. 1990.



Frank Kelly conducting Bray Choral Society.

Celebrating its 40th season, Bray Choral Society presents

The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace

by Karl Jenkins. Musical Director Frank Kelly

The Creation Song of the Choir of Light
by Howard Goodall, commissioned by Bray Choral Society
plus popular movements from other choral favourites

**Sunday
May
25th
7:30pm**

Holy Redeemer Church
Main Street, Bray

Tickets: €25
on Eventbrite or from choir members

The Degani Sinfonia led by Alan Smale, with
The Con Tempo Quartet
Soloists: Jade Phoenix, Meté O'Reilly,
Anna-Helena MacLachlan
and Ben Russell

Greystones People of the Year Awards 2025

The annual Greystones People of the Year Awards celebrate the outstanding contributions, achievements and community spirit of groups and individuals from across the Greystones Municipal District, including Greystones, Kilcoole, Delgany and Newcastle. The 2025 awards took place last week on Thursday 15th May in Greystones Golf Club, bringing together people from around the district to honour those who have gone above and beyond, whether through volunteering, leadership, sporting excellence or quiet dedication to the local community. Now in its 33rd year of sponsorship with The Wicklow Times, the awards continue to highlight the very best of what makes the Greystones Municipal District community strong, generous and vibrant.

Sports Award - Dylan Holmes

18-year-old Dylan Holmes has been named a joint recipient of the 2025 Sports Award following his incredible victory at the West of Ireland Championship-one of the country's most prestigious amateur golf competitions.

Representing Greystones Golf Club, Dylan made headlines earlier this spring when he claimed the title at Co. Sligo Golf Club in Rosses Point, becoming the youngest winner since Rory McIlroy in 2006.

The win was made even more impressive by the conditions. Battling driving rain and fierce winds, Holmes showed composure and maturity beyond his years. He overcame local favourite Barry Anderson in

the semi-final, then surged into a commanding lead in the final against the seasoned Colm Campbell. Holmes closed out the match 2&1, securing a landmark win on what happened to be his father Karl's 51st birthday.

Dylan's golfing journey is only beginning, but his talent and determination have already placed him among Ireland's most promising young players. Speaking after the tournament, Holmes called it "some of the best golf I've ever played" and expressed his pride in representing both Greystones and Ireland on such a stage.

His win has drawn comparisons to another well-known golfing son of Greystones-Paul Dunne, who made national headlines almost a decade ago

for his own breakout performances. Dylan's victory adds to the growing legacy of elite golf in the town.

Award organisers praised Dylan's skill, poise under pressure, and grounded attitude: "This is not just a sporting win for Dylan - it's a moment of pride for all of Greystones."

Sports Award - Laurie Ahern

Laurie Ahern of Éire Óg Greystones has been named a joint recipient of the 2025 Sports Award, recognising her exceptional achievements in Ladies Gaelic Football and her long-standing service to sport in the town.

A talented and fiercely committed footballer, Laurie has been a central figure in the game for near-

ly two decades. She played with Éire Óg Greystones for almost 20 years and represented Wicklow Ladies at inter-county level for 16 seasons between 2006 and 2022.

She is the only player from Greystones to hold two All-Ireland Junior Championship medals, earned in 2011 and 2021. In both campaigns, her performances were vital-including a crucial assist in the 2011 final at Croke Park.

Laurie's leadership has also shone at club level. In 2012, she captained the Éire Óg Greystones ladies football team to the Wicklow Senior Championship final-the first and only time any Éire Óg team has reached a senior final in any discipline. She later led the team to a Junior Championship title in 2017.

Even after stepping back from the county panel, Laurie continued to mentor and inspire younger players, playing a key role in bringing the Wicklow Junior Championship back to Greystones in 2024.

Described as "majestic" and "blessed with blistering pace," Laurie has been a dominant force at centre-forward throughout her career. Off the field, she is known for her generosity, kindness, and constant encouragement of her teammates.

Civic Award - Pat Hempenstall

Newcastle's own Pat Hempenstall has been presented with the 2025 Civic Award, in recognition of his outstanding commitment to the village he has called home for all of his 88 years.

For over six decades, Pat has worked tirelessly to improve and maintain his beloved community-quietly, consistently, and always with good cheer. Known to many as the heart and soul of the local Tidy Towns effort, Pat is one of those rare individuals whose presence can be felt in every corner of the village.

A founding member of the Newcastle Community Centre, Pat has been a key figure in its development and ongoing maintenance. He was also deeply involved in establishing the Newtown/Newcastle Men's Shed, and continues to play a role in community upkeep to this day.

Every morning, Pat makes his daily trip to collect the newspaper, litter picker in hand-proof that

civic pride isn't just a phrase to him, it's a way of life. Whether it's planting, tidying, or supporting local improvements, he shows up week after week, year after year.

He was recently elected once again to the Tidy Towns committee and is known for his warm, friendly presence on the village bench-where he always has a kind word for anyone passing by. He's also a great advocate for accessibility and regularly raises issues that affect people with disabilities in the area.

Special Award - Lorraine Whelan

Lorraine Whelan has been honoured with the Special Award in recognition of her extraordinary resilience, sporting achievement, and unwavering determination in the face of life-changing adversity.

A veteran of the Special Olympics World Winter Games, Lorraine has proudly represented Ireland in alpine skiing for more than two decades, earning multiple medals and embodying the spirit of the Games at every turn. Her first appearance was in Alaska 24 years ago-and in early 2025, she returned to compete once again, this time in Italy, marking her fifth appearance on the global stage.

But Lorraine's path has not been easy. In 2018, her life changed dramatically when she was struck by a car while crossing the road near her workplace in Dublin. Her injuries were severe, and for a time, it was uncertain whether she would survive-let alone ski again.

But Lorraine had other ideas. After multiple operations and months of rehabilitation, she gradually regained strength, relearned how to walk, and eventually returned to the slopes using specially designed ski boots. Less than a year after her injury, she was back training in Kilternan.

Earlier this year, she once again wore the Irish colours, competing with pride in Sestriere, Italy. She described the 2025 Games as the toughest she's ever faced, but also the most meaningful. Her performance-and her comeback-captured hearts far beyond the ski resort.

In addition to alpine skiing, Lorraine is also an accomplished swimmer and continues to compete at home, preparing for the upcoming Special Olympics Ireland Regional Games.



Tánaiste Simon Haaris giving welcoming address at the 2025 Greystones People of the Year Awards.



Lorraine Whelan receiving the Special Award from Wicklow County Council Cathaoirleach Paul O'Brien.



Seamus Ahern accepting the Sports Award on behalf of his daughter Laurie Ahern, from Cllr Stephen Stokes.



Cllr Mark Barry presenting the Sports Award to Dylan Holmes.



Pat Hempenstall accepting the Civic Award from Cllr Louise Fenelon Gaskin.



Kathleen Kelleher being presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award by Greystones Municipal District Cathaoirleach Tom Fortune.

**Commercial Award -
Lynda Ryan**

Lynda Ryan has been awarded the 2025 Commercial Award in recognition of her leadership of the Kilcoole Community Thrift Shop-a not-for-profit, volunteer-run enterprise that has given back over €338,000 to local causes since its founding.

Open five days a week

and run almost entirely by volunteers, the shop has become a cornerstone of community life in Kilcoole. It offers affordable, recycled goods in a welcoming, social setting-and directs its proceeds toward local groups such as Kilcoole Tidy Towns, Wicklow Dementia Support, youth and senior groups, Pieta House, the RNLI, and many more.

The shop began in a

small room on Penny Lane, but due to strong local support and a growing demand, it relocated to a larger premises on Kilcoole's Main Street. It now hosts regular events, including a popular half-price sale on the first Tuesday of each month, and maintains an active Facebook presence to ensure accessibility for those unable to visit in person.

Lynda has been at the heart of it all for over 14 years, ensuring the shop remains focused on giving back, fostering community, and supporting those in need. She is known for her practical leadership, warm spirit, and the deeply held belief that community-led efforts can have lasting, tangible impact.

As they say in the shop "We love working for free and giving money back-it's a win-win, helping the community to help themselves." The award recognises Lynda's commitment to that ethos, and her role in creating one of Kilcoole's most valued community spaces.

**Cultural Award -
Ross McParland**

Ross McParland has been awarded the Cultural Award in recognition of his transformative contribution to the arts and civic life of Greystones over the past decade.

As the founder of the Whale Theatre, Ross turned a once-unfinished site into one of Wicklow's most cherished cultural venues. Since opening its doors in 2017, the theatre has hosted more than 1,200 events and welcomed over 100,000 visitors. Under his leadership, it has become a home for music, theatre, comedy, film, and community connection.

But Ross's impact extends far beyond the theatre's walls. His quiet generosity has supported numerous charities and community groups behind the scenes, and his vision has shaped public spaces too. Most notably, he spearheaded the Greystones Train Station makeover project - a creative, community-driven initiative that includes public art, landscaping, seating, and improved accessibility, celebrating the story and spirit of the town.

In a timely development, Ross recently announced his retirement from the Whale Theatre. A public call was issued for a new custodian, and following a rigorous selection process, a new not-for-profit group-The Whale Theatre Company CLG-will take over operations in autumn 2025. Ross has expressed his delight at seeing the venue pass into community hands and remain a hub for the arts and culture in Greystones.

Organisers of the awards praised Ross for his vision, leadership, and lasting legacy. His contribution has helped shape not just buildings or events, but a stronger sense of identity and creativity in the town.

**Special Recognition
Award - Joey & Betty
Hunt**

Joey and Betty Hunt have received the Special



Joey and Betty Hunt accepting the Special Recognition Award from Greystones Municipal District Cathaoirleach Tom Fortune.

Recognition Award in honour of their extraordinary dedication to the village of Kilcoole, where they have been leading figures in community life for over 35 years.

Known affectionately as "Mr and Mrs Tidy Towns," the couple are synonymous with Kilcoole's ongoing Tidy Towns efforts-showing up year-round to help maintain and enhance their village. Whether planting flowers, organising clean-ups, or supporting new initiatives, Joey and Betty have become part of the rhythm of daily life in Kilcoole.

Their commitment extends well beyond day-to-day maintenance. They are key to local fundraising efforts and have long been vocal supporters of innovation and progress within the community. Their work is carried out with a sense of care and pride that locals often say mirrors how one might tend to their own home.

Their dedication is widely admired across generations, and they continue to inspire others through their consistent presence and kind-hearted leadership.

This year also marks another remarkable milestone for the couple, as they recently celebrated 60 years of marriage-adding a personal note of joy and admiration to the award presentation.

In presenting the award, organisers noted: "Joey and Betty Hunt represent the very best of what it means to serve your community-not just with your time, but with your heart."

**Youth Recognition Award -
Craig Holmes**

At just 23 years of age, Craig Holmes has been awarded the Youth Recognition Award for his outstanding contributions to the village of Newcastle and his strong example of community leadership.

Craig is the owner and operator of Craig Holmes Garden Services, a horticultural and landscaping business he runs alongside a remarkable range of voluntary commitments. He is a dedicated member of Newcastle Tidy Towns, shows up regularly for clean-up and planting efforts, and plays a key role in maintaining the Newcastle Community Centre, where he also serves on the management committee.

Craig is also at the heart of many local fundraising initiatives-organising karaoke nights, country and western evenings, and free Halloween discos for local children. He gives freely of his time and energy to help make community events happen and is known for quietly getting things done behind the scenes.

Most Saturday mornings, you'll also find him sharing his skills as a qualified tennis coach, helping to guide and support local children with great care and encouragement.

Described as someone who "doesn't wait to be asked," Craig's reliability, generosity, and community spirit have made a lasting impression on those

around him. Award organisers called him "a remarkable young leader" and praised his ability to "balance work and service with humility and joy."

**Lifetime Achievement
Award- Kathleen Kelleher**

Greystones local Kathleen Kelleher has been awarded the 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of more than five decades of dedicated service to the town and its community life.

Originally from Boston, Kathleen moved to Greystones in 1973 and has since become a central figure in the town's civic and voluntary work. Her involvement spans a remarkable range of areas-from public representation to education, heritage, local events and support services.

Kathleen served on Greystones Town Council for 15 years, including a term as Mayor, and represented the town for five years on Wicklow County Council. She chaired the Town Council's Community Affairs Committee for over a decade and contributed to various policy committees covering tourism, housing, planning and more.

A consistent advocate for community connection, she played a leading role in strengthening Greystones' twinning relationship with Holyhead and remains a driving force in promoting civic pride and heritage. For many years she has quietly compiled and circulated the Greystones weekly calendar of events-helping keep residents informed and connected.

Her dedication to education is reflected in her service on the boards of several local schools, while her 25 years of involvement with Greystones Cancer Support highlights her commitment to local wellbeing.

Kathleen was honoured earlier this year as Grand Marshal of the 2025 St. Patrick's Day Parade, a fitting recognition of her decades of service. Today, she remains active in the Greystones Active Retirement Association, continuing to give her time and energy to the town she has long helped shape.

Speaking on behalf of the judging panel, organisers praised Kathleen's "wisdom, integrity and quiet leadership" and noted that her impact on the community is "woven into the very fabric of Greystones."



Greystones District Manager Marc Devereux presenting the Youth Recognition Award to Craig Holmes.



Lynda Ryan from Kilcoole Thrift Shop being presented with the Commercial Award by Ian Colgan from event sponsor Wicklow Times.



Cllr Orla Finn presenting the Cultural Award to Ross McParland.

St. Catherine's Special School will celebrate 50 golden years

St Catherine's Special School has been in operation in Co. Wicklow since 1975 providing an invaluable service to those that need it. To celebrate our 50th anniversary we will be holding a garden party with music and dance, laughter and plenty of reminiscing from past and current staff and students. This will take place on the grounds of St. Catherine's Special School, Kilmullen Lane building on Friday the 23rd of May between 10am and 2 pm.

"We would like to extend an invitation to all our present and past students, their parents and families and also to any staff who helped make St. Catherine's the special place it is. We hope you can join us for what promises to be a fantastic celebration of all the work that has made the last 50 years so incredible for everyone involved in St. Catherine's Special School."

History of St. Catherine's

Before 1972 there was no education or training for special needs children in County Wicklow apart from a few children who attended a school for moderates in Glenageary.

A golden dream of what might be possible was put forward by concerned people and parents at a first meeting in the Royal Hotel, Arklow on a cold March night in 1964. Fired by an unyielding determination to bring about a brighter, happier

and more rewarding future for disadvantaged children and adults, they inspired others to form similar branches in Wicklow Town, Rathdrum and Greystones and later in Bray and Newcastle.

In 1970, the County Wicklow Association was formed, with an initial threefold aim:

1. To set up a Special School for students with a moderate intellectual disability.
2. A Special Care Unit for students with a more severe intellectual disability and the medically fragile.
3. Training and sheltered work shops for the adults.

Move It at Shoreline APR24

It was a daunting task for a group of people without land, buildings or finance and without official recognition from any state body, but where there is a vision and a will

for the betterment of our fellow human beings, a way was found to make that dream a reality.

The first to open the door of opportunity and welcome was the Eastern Health board, who offered limited premises in the Nurses Home at Newcastle Hospital. At the time, they little realised what a "Cuckoo" they had taken in! In June 1972, preparations were made to open a School for students with a moderate intellectual disability in their premises.

Shape Up Exhibition at Wicklow Library OCT23

The Mother General of the Holy Faith Sisters was asked and kindly agreed to release Sister Annette to take charge of the School. So in September 1972 the School opened with 12 pupils. Several adults and other children also arrived on the first day, but had to be turned away, until such time as

facilities were provided for them.

The school was called "St. Catherine's", as it is adjacent to St. Catherine's Well which is opposite Gregory's Garage. The catchment area for the children stretched from Arklow to Bray and to the mountains in the West of the county and provided great transport difficulties. One estate car did the round trip twice daily between Newcastle, Arklow, Avoca, Greennane, Rathdrum, Glenealy, Rathnew and Wicklow. A minibus collected the children around Bray and Greystones.

For the first three years the School remained unrecognised by the Department of Education, leaving the Association responsible for payment of all staff and running expenses. It was a difficult time, but the local Branches and many friends never failed to raise the necessary funds to meet all expenses. The big breakthrough came in

September 1975, when the Department of Education gave full recognition to the School, thus ensuring payment to teachers and running costs.

Two years earlier, in 1973, a Special Care Unit, to cater for children with more severe intellectual disabilities, had been opened with Mrs Margaret Dillon in charge. There were now 34 children in the School and 14 in the Care Unit.

More accommodation was required for the growing numbers and the decision was made to move the School to the first floor in refurbished classrooms. It was always the intention to provide a new purpose-built School and as members increased to over 40 children and four teachers, this became a necessity. This new Special School, with all modern facilities and on a new site, was completed in 1983 and officially opened by President Dr Patrick Hillery.

The next big step for the association was to build a new modern Special Care Unit, with Hall and Therapy Pool, adjoining the existing Unit. After much planning and fund-raising, this lovely new building was completed in 1991 and officially opened by President Mary Robinson.

In 2016 St. Catherine's Special School became a stand-alone school, fund-

ed solely by the Department of Education. The school has gone from strength to strength since then. It now educates 89 students with moderate, severe and profound intellectual disabilities.

As the school marks this remarkable achievement, a new dawn beckons for St Catherine's Special School. A new, purpose built state of the art school will be built in Kilcoole in

the very near future. The new school will meet the current needs of our students and aims to meet the growing demand for special school placements within county Wicklow.

It will provide adequate space and will be appropriate to the needs of our students into the next 50 years. We are all extremely excited to welcome this new era for our incredible school.



St. Catherine's Special School.

Kilcoole Primary school pupils honoured as UN SDG Reading Goals Ambassadors

A total of 67 sixth-class pupils from Kilcoole Primary School have been named Reading Goals Ambassadors following their participation in the Greystones Library UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Book Club. The students were recognised at a special awards ceremony held at the school on Friday, 2nd May.

The Reading Goals Book Club, launched in February 2021 by Greystones Library, features a curated collection of fiction, non-fiction, graphic novels, and short stories - all thematically linked to the United Nations SDGs. This marks the first time the program has been implemented in a

school setting.

Each pupil has pledged to continue their efforts toward achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are part of the UN's global agenda for a more equitable and sustainable future by 2030.

Cllr Tom Fortune, Cathaoirleach of Greystones Municipal District,

praised the initiative, stating: "This is a remarkable achievement for Greystones Library, Kilcoole Primary School, and the wonderful students who have connected with the Goals in such a creative and meaningful way. The journey toward achieving the Goals by 2030 has just received a significant

boost. This marks another milestone for Kilcoole's youth, following the Community Climate Action's hosting of the inaugural Youth Climate Conference two years ago,

and now with the primary school proudly introducing 67 new Reading Ambassadors."

Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, com-

mented: "This milestone stands as a testament to the power of collaboration, literacy and youth engagement in global citizenship. Through their reading and reflection, the

students have developed a deep awareness of the SDGs and have pledged to continue striving toward their achievement by 2030."

Margaret Birchall, County Librarian, highlighted the strategic importance of the initiative: "This collaboration between Wicklow Libraries and primary schools supports our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, as outlined in our National Library Strategy, The Library is the Place 2022. Through their

extensive reading, the children of Kilcoole have not only deepened their understanding of each Goal but have also formed a lifelong partnership for the Goals - especially Goal #17 - with Wicklow Libraries."

The Reading Goals UN SDG Book Club continues at Greystones Library, and new members from 4th class and up are always welcome. Kilcoole Primary School will carry the program forward, and other schools are invited to participate in this growing initiative.



Cathaoirleach of Greystones Municipal District, Cllr. Tom Fortune, Mark Costello (Climate Change Co-ordinator Wicklow County Council) and Librarian Catherine Costello with teachers and students from Kilcoole National School.

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Ribbon cut on sensory garden for New Court Special School

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore, commended New Court Special School at the official opening of The Hive Sensory Garden on Saturday 10th May. The event marked a significant milestone for the school community, showing the strength and power of community spirit.

"I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the entire school community - the staff, parents, students, and supporters. Each of you played a crucial role in bringing this remarkable project to life. This garden is a symbol of the strength of this community," Deputy Whitmore stated.

Deputy Whitmore praised the commitment of the school's staff for making New Court School a better place.

She said "Special recognition is also owed to Dave Heffernan and Wayne Hayden for their extraordinary efforts. Their dedication and

hard work, often in very challenging weather conditions, transformed a simple compost pile into a tranquil and vibrant sanctuary. This garden will serve generations of students, providing a space of calm and connection where children with complex learning needs can find comfort, stimulation, and joy in nature, and a lot of that is directly thanks to these two," Deputy Whitmore continued.

"Inclusion and accessibility are so crucial in education, and The Hive Sensory Garden is a shining example of what can be achieved when a community believes

deeply in what their children deserve. This event has made me feel immensely positive for the future of this school and I hope to see the creation of more spaces and opportunities for the students here," Deputy Whitmore noted.

"Thank you to New Court Special School for inviting me to open this special new sensory garden. It was a lovely morning filled with positivity and hope, and an invaluable opportunity for me to connect with the students, staff, and community of New Court Special School," Deputy Whitmore concluded.



The new sensory garden at New Court Special School.



Pictured at Newcourt Special School's Summer Festival Fundraiser were Catherine Kirwan and her grandson Michael Kirwan.



Pictured is Louise Egan Principal of Newcourt Special School Bray and Jennifer Whitmore (TD) at the opening of school's new sensory garden "The Hive" and the launch of their Summer Festival fundraiser.

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Making music again with Trio Accord at the Wicklow Teaching Residency

"I am so grateful for this chance to reconnect with learning to play an instrument and I never imagined it would be so much fun!"

In Rathnew, 15 residents from the Wicklow area recently graduated from the Wicklow Teaching Residency. The group of emerging musicians were led by the Trio Accord, Dermot Dunne (piano accordion/piano), Aoife Dowdall (violin) and Claire O'Donnell (harp).

The residency, a partnership between Wicklow County Arts Office and Music Network, invited residents of County Wicklow aged 55 and over to reconnect with an instrument they used to play but may not have picked up in some time. It provided participants with free tuition from professional musicians and access to instruments for the duration of the programme.

Since November the participants have been

receiving tuition on piano accordion, violin, harp and piano and have been having fun exploring all kinds of music together.

Participant Maurice Hickey says "If anyone is considering enrolling for this programme and is worried that they may be out of their depth my advice would be just jump right in. The whole atmosphere was very encouraging and enabling, a great learning environment, and a lot of fun.

Participant Marina Bilak says "The project turned out to be a gem - one of the best, most heart warming and confidence (plus back muscle) building projects I've been involved in. I enjoyed it from start to finish, both the individual and the group sessions. There was so much to learn and I loved the musical magic we all co-created in our final ensemble session. It was great to be infected with so much fresh enthusi-

asm. I'm fired up to keep going, no matter what I think my musical limitations are."

At their graduation the participants spoke about how much they had enjoyed the classes while gradually growing more confident as the weeks progressed. The residency has ignited new friendships among the participants too and the group are already making plans to get together and practice now that project has ended.

The Wicklow Teaching Residency is presented by Wicklow County Council Arts Office and Music Network. This initiative is funded by Creative Ireland. With thanks to Clermont House, Rathnew for facilitating the music classes each week.

Music Network is Ireland's national music touring and development organisation, founded by the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon in 1986.

"For almost 40 years we have been making high quality live music accessible to communities throughout Ireland and helping musicians to develop fulfilling careers. Our vision is that of a culture which increasingly values live

music in our everyday lives, embracing it as an essential part of a healthy, vibrant society. We deliver a broad range of programmes including a National Touring Programme, Musician Residencies both here and abroad, learning and participation projects, The Music Capital Funding Scheme, commissioning, training programmes and other professional development supports for musicians."



Making music again - County Wicklow residents aged 55 and over have been reconnecting with the instruments they use to play with Trio Accord as part of the Wicklow Teaching Residency, a partnership with Wicklow County Arts Office and Music Network. Photos by Dan Butler.

Landmark new body of work focuses on Ireland's offshore islands

Open at Kilcock Art Gallery until 7th June, 'Ar an Imeall - On The Edge' is a landmark solo exhibition by Kildare based artist Pamela de Bri which explores the in-depth story of Ireland's offshore islands encapsulating their history, culture and their overall essence.

The breadth of work captured over six years includes 58 paintings (oil on board) with 30 paintings to be exhibited at launch and an accompanying book publication in the Autumn.

'Ar an Imeall - On The Edge' shows Ireland's distinctive outline of offshore islands as seen from the mainland. The artwork attempts to capture the soul and spirit of each island from the artist's own sense of the place. It's about language, culture, the stories and the way people lived. This exhibition is unique in that it is the first time that anyone has depicted our offshore islands in painting with supporting stories.

Pamela de Bri explained: "This is a celebration of our islands. Their stories explore gloriously rich history, anchored in six years of comprehensive research but delivered with a sense of respect and appreciation."

The volume of work features offshore islands from the very tip of Northern Ireland - Rathlin Island - to islands scattered around the Ireland's south, east and west coasts. The artist has captured over 58 offshore

islands, some inhabited and some not. From Achill Island in Mayo, Inishturk west Mayo, Ireland's Eye off Dublin, Straw Island off the coast of Galway, Tearaght off the Blaske's to Scariff and Deenish in Co. Kerry to one of the smallest - Mew Island in County Down which houses Mew Island Lighthouse.

"The earliest inhabitants of Ireland lived on the shores and adjoining islands and this body of work reflects that history

which also informs our present day. This collection invites the viewer to contemplate our world, what is lost and what can be lost," Pamela said.

"I've had an enduring love of islands from childhood, that inspired me to research them further and to visually respond to them. My work explores shifts and changes in rural Ireland. I record how images from the past through Ireland's landscapes embody cultural

memory and characterise the future. I want this work to have relevance to the society from which it evolves."

Pamela continued: "The islands were little worlds of their own unique communities. However, emigration, basic access, as well as services like education and health can prove very challenging and then you have the weather, which often renders them inaccessible. To understand each story

behind the islands I visited a large selection and read about each one, getting a glimpse into a different world. These islands have suffered famine, storms and emigration. This project aims to ensure that these islands will never be forgotten."

Visit Kilcock Art Gallery, School Street, 11am - 4.00pm Tuesday - Saturday or view the collection online at www.kilcockartgallery.ie and pameladebri.com



Wexford Saltees, 358x610mm, by Pamela de Bri.

Music Network's season closes with jazz saxophonist Emma Rawicz

Courthouse Arts Centre, Tinahely, Saturday 7th June, 8pm

This June, Music Network is delighted to present stellar jazz saxophonist Emma Rawicz performing with her exceptional quartet featuring Elliot Galvin (piano), Kevin Glasgow (bass) and Asaf Sirkis (drums). Rawicz is a multi-award winning young bandleader and composer who is making waves on the UK music scene and beyond.



At just nineteen, Emma independently released her critically acclaimed debut album Incantation, and singlehandedly managed an extensive UK release tour that featured headline performances at renowned venues such as Ronnie Scott's and the Jazz Cafe. Her latest album, Chroma, released on the ACT label, was selected as The Guardian's Album of the Month and has earned her further international recognition.

Since then, her international career has flourished and she has played in over sixteen countries, touring extensively in Germany and Scandinavia. She was recently selected as a BBC New Generation Artist, is the winner of a Parliamentary Jazz Award and a former finalist at the Jazz FM Awards and BBC Young Jazz Musician Competition. The Royal Academy of Music recently awarded her the Musicians' Company Silver Medal for excellence and for her contribution to the institution, an award not previously given to a jazz student.

Described as 'a force to be reckoned with' by Jazzwise, Emma's musical endeavours are broad, with artistic projects ranging from a duo with internationally renowned pianist Gwilym Simcock to her regular touring quartet made up of stars of the UK jazz scene. In 2023 she was the Cambridge Jazz Festival's Artist in Residence, culminating in a triumphant concert where she led the Cambridge University Jazz Orchestra in an all-original programme of her own music, and showcasing a brand new commission for the ensemble. She also featured as a soloist with the BBC Concert Orchestra at Queen Elizabeth Hall in the 2022 London Jazz Festival and with the German SWR Radio Big Band at a sold-out Berlin Philharmonie in February 2024.

The future promises to be exciting for Emma as she heads into the studio to record new music with previously unrecorded ensembles this year.



Zoe Ledwidge and Eabha Isherwood at the St. Joseph's National School Newtown Talent Show in the Parkview Hotel.

Dominican College Wicklow present a summer 'twosical'

Two shows, two days - 50+ junior and senior students from The Dominican college Musical Module and Flare Musical Theatre will take to the stage on Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th of May for their High School Musical and Matilda, Musical twosical!

The Dominican College fourth year take to the stage alongside Flare Musical theatre juniors to bring a weekend of talent and entertainment to your doorstep. Join in the fun and book your tickets now: <https://www.gr8events.ie/twosicalfmt>

Saturday evening, be mesmerised by Wicklow talented youths as the juniors take to the stage for their production of Matilda, followed by the fabulous Dominican College students in High School Musical.

Special discount for students - Sunday Matinee show of Matilda - only €5 for primary school students! Bring a gang and sing a long to your favourite Matilda tunes! (Book through FlareMusicalTheatre@gmail.com)

Sunday evening show - High School Musical - the Dominican students last show on stage! <https://www.gr8events.ie/twosicalfmt>



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Wicklow celebrates National Biodiversity Week

Wicklow County Council is participating in National Biodiversity Week 2025, a nationwide celebration that encourages communities to engage with the natural world and recognise the value of biodiversity in their daily lives. The events kicked off on 16th May and continue until 25th May and feature a dynamic series of activities across the county, aimed at fostering connections with nature and highlighting Wicklow's rich ecological heritage.

Coordinated by the Irish Environmental Network (IEN), National Biodiversity Week aims to inspire people across Ireland to learn more about biodiversity and how they can contribute to its protection.

Wicklow County Council said it is proud to once again present a locally tailored line-up of activities that promote curiosity, connection and care for nature.

"Protecting Wicklow's natural heritage isn't just about conservation; it's about community, health, and the future of our children," said Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council.

"National Biodiversity Week is an opportunity for everyone to reconnect with the landscapes that make this county so special and to learn how even small actions can have a big impact. I encourage everyone to get involved. We're excited to welcome both residents and visitors to join us in celebrating the landscapes, species and people that make Wicklow wild and special."

A County-Wide Celebration - Indoors and Outdoors

Highlights of the 2025 program include a 24-hour BioBlitz to launch the week at Kilmacurragh National Botanic Gardens, where experts and volunteers will collaborate to record as many species as possible.

Nature enthusiasts can participate in a Dawn Chorus at Brittas Bay, while a Walk & Talk on Rhododendron Control in the Wicklow Uplands will explore the challenges of managing invasive species. Additionally, a range of hands-on workshops will provide practical tools for building stronger connections with the natural world.

For further event listings and details, visit: <https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/News-Events/national-biodiversity-week-events>

This year, Wicklow County Council is expanding the celebration through its Library Service, offering an engaging program

of biodiversity-themed events in local libraries across the county. These talks and workshops aim to make knowledge and inspiration accessible to all, bringing biodiversity into the heart of our communities.

Library Biodiversity Events Across Wicklow

Greystones Library - Tuesday 20th May at 7pm: David Lawlor - Oysters in Greystones Harbour; Thursday 22nd May at 6:30pm: Alex Dobbs & Aleksandra - Bees & Gardening for Biodiversity

Bray Library - Monday 19th May at 11am: Declan Murphy - Biodiversity and Climate Change

Ballywaltrim Library - Wednesday 21st May at 6:30pm: Declan Murphy - Biodiversity and Climate Change

Arklow Library - Wednesday 21st May at 2pm: Unwind with Plants - Create a Bird Feeder



Back Row: (L to R) Damien Byrne, Ruairi O'Hanlon, Aoife O'Rourke, Mark Costello, Wesley Atkinson, Brian Dunne, Justin Ivory, Brian Burk; Front Row: (L to R) Lorna Kelly, Ann Fitzpatrick, Hannah O'Kelly, Faith Wilson, Hans Visser.

Blessington Library - Friday 24th May at 2pm: Gardening for Biodiversity with Pat Hunt

Enniskerry Library - Wed 21st May at 6:30pm: Conor O'Brien - The Birds of County Wicklow

Tinahely Library - Saturdays 17th and 24th

May at 12pm: Seed Swap and Sow

These events offer relaxed and engaging opportunities for people of all ages to explore biodiversity topics within their own communities.

"These events provide valuable opportunities for learning, connection, and

community action," said Emer O'Gorman, Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council.

"Biodiversity is essential to our health, well-being, and resilience and everyone has a role to play in its protection."

Whether you are a sea-

soned ecologist or simply curious about the wildlife around you, there is something for everyone during National Biodiversity Week 2025.

Nationwide event listings can also be found at: <https://biodiversityweek.ie/events-calendar/>

Dacia unveil first C-SUV in Wicklow

Dacia have made incredible progress in Ireland since they unveiled their first Duster in the Glen View Hotel in 2012. In the first four months on 2025 they have sold 2,242 new cars in Ireland - and hold an impressive 3.05% market share. This is fractionally behind Ford and fractionally ahead of Mercedes.

This is despite being absent from the C SUV segment - the biggest sector across Europe where one in four cars

falls into that category. In Ireland it is the biggest sector - with one in three cars being C-SUV. Dacia have again

opted for a lovely Wicklow hotel to unveil their vitally important first C-SUV. This time the magnificent Druids Glen Hotel played host to motoring journalists from all over Ireland and the adjacent M11 and routes to Newcastle, Newtownmountkennedy and Roundwood gave the journalists a feel for this gamechanger.

With four trim levels and three engine options the sticker price runs for €29,990 to €39,690. The full hybrid engine is the route the majority of buyers are likely to go for - powered by a 1.8 engine

and driven by an automatic transmission.

All the Bigster versions are equipped to a high standard compared to its competitors - with the sliding, panoramic glass roof being an option that may with opt for. Instead of trying to squeeze seven seats in, Dacia have opted for a comfortable, roomy and flexible five-seater configuration.

Being a bigger vehicle - but still weighing only 1300kg - it has a decent towing capability. Dacia are part of Renault and thus have access to very low cost finance from the

giant Renault Bank.

"Bigster is tailored to the specific requirements of a steadily growing market. With consumers facing spiralling costs, Bigster offers buyers of larger family friendly cars the robust, well-equipped, great value for money that they have been longing for. Potential used car customers should also take note - here is a brand-new SUV for less than €30,000 with a three-year warranty. A no brainer!" according to Seamus Morgan, Managing Director of Cedar Motors.



Dacia Bigster at Druid's Glen

PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

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

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, Richard and Berna O'Hanrahan, intend to apply for planning permission for retention of development at Raheen House, Meath Road, Bray, Co Wicklow A98 WV78. The development to be retained consists of the front boundary wall and entrance gateway. The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Significant Information / Revised Plans.

We, hereby give notice of the submission of significant further information to Wicklow County Council in relation to planning application ref no: 24/60713 for Cormac Byrne & Caoimhe Nolan, who are applying for permission at Munny Lower, Tullow, Co. Wicklow for Planning Permission for the construction of a part two storey, part single storey dwelling, new entrance, appropriate waste water treatment system, bored well, single storey garage and all ancillary site works and landscaping. Significant further information / revised plans have been furnished to the planning authority in respect of the proposed development and are available for inspection or purchase at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council during its public opening hours. A submission or observations in relation to the further information or revised plans may be made in writing to the planning authority within the period of 2 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the revised notices. A submission or observation must be accompanied by the prescribed fee except in the case of a person or body who has already made a submission or observation.

RECRUITMENT

GROUNDSMAN /GARDENER

Charleville Estate
Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow.

JOB DESCRIPTION:

- Gardener/Groundsman
- Full-time, Monday to Friday.

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Garden machinery experience
- Ride on mower experience
- Chainsaw experience not essential
- Spraying course desirable but not essential
- Must have full driving licence.
- 2 / 3 years' experience in similar role preferable.
- Chain saw desirable but not essential.

DUTIES:

- Grass cutting
- Hedge cutting
- Tree planting
- General garden maintenance

SALARY:

- Salary by negotiation.

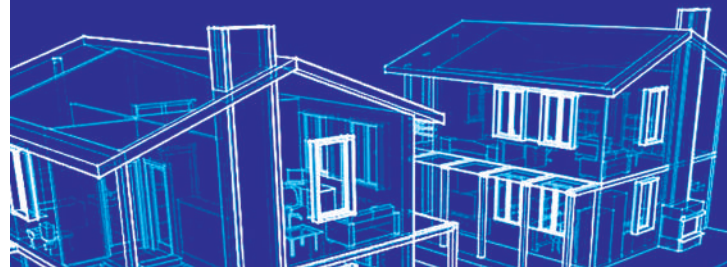
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Morning at the Mill

Key figures and industry partners from Ireland's tourism sector enjoyed the official launch of Avoca's Mill Tours on Tuesday 13th of May.



Caroline Henry, Fred Verdier and Sharon Byrne at the official launch of Avoca's Mill Tours.

The event took place at Avoca's iconic 302-year-old Mill, in the picturesque setting of Avoca Village.

The Morning at the Mill, provided tourism operators with an inspirational view into the recently revamped visitor experience. Avoca showcased the multi-layered charm of its flagship tourist destination - now enhanced by multilingual audio tours, entertaining & fun guides, and a range of new and exclusive brands across food & retail.

Guests arrived to a delicious spread of Avoca gourmet breakfast bites before being welcomed by Brian Handley, Avoca's recently appointed Managing Director.

In his address Brian highlighted the depth of heritage and creative talent available in Wicklow, and emphasised the importance of working together to promote a wide variety of high-quality visitor and retail experiences.

Attendees enjoyed the new style of the much-



Kellie Jordan and Lucy Daly at the official launch of Avoca's Mill Tours.

loved Mill Experience for the 2025 summer season. It was also an opportunity for them to see firsthand the intricate craftsmanship that has been the hallmark of Avoca's success for generations. To this day the Avoca Mill has 4th generation weavers and a commitment to keeping the craft alive with their upcoming collections.

Speaking at the event, Brian Handley said:

"Avoca Mill is more than just a place of work; it's where our story begins. We're thrilled to welcome our industry partners to experience the unique blend of tradition and innovation that defines our brand. We look forward to building strong relationships with our

tourism industry partners right across the country."

Avoca's highly entertaining and informative tours run seven days a week and are bookable in-store or online, suitable for all ages.

To learn more and book tickets visit: www.avoca.com/en/our-mill

SIPTU members in Arklow Servier plant call for collective bargaining

SIPTU members employed in the Servier (Ireland) Industries Ltd plant in Arklow have called on the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Peter Burke, to legislate for the right to collective bargaining for workers in Ireland, highlighting their long running battle for union recognition.

SIPTU Industrial Organiser, Martin Mannion, said: "The SIPTU Servier (Ireland) Committee, made a submission, earlier this week, to the public consultation process on Ireland's action plan to promote collective bargaining. The EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages calls on the governments of EU Member States to draw up an action plan to increase collective bargaining coverage in their

economies if it is currently under 80%, in Ireland it is estimated to be under 35%.

"Collective bargaining, which is the process whereby workers negotiate with their employer as a group, has been fought for by our members employed in Servier for many years. Our members secured a Labour Court Recommendation in March 2020 which stated, "On the basis of the uncontested

submission from the Union, the Court recommends that the Employer engage with the Union for collective bargaining purposes in respect of the Union's members in the Company."

He added: "In failing to implement this recommendation, we believe that Servier (Ireland) are being disrespectful to the State's industrial relations bodies and their staff."

SIPTU Manufacturing Divisional Organiser, Neil McGowan, said: "In their submission our members have called on the Government to heed the instruction of the EU Commission and draw up an action plan which includes realistic measures to increase the level of collective bargaining in Ireland, in line with the spirit of the EU Directive of Adequate Minimum Wages. This is also what Peter

Burke committed to when he signed the Respect at Work pledge in the run up to the 2024 General Election."

He added: "In order to achieve this aim SIPTU is calling for new legislation which

will provide workers with a right to engage in collective bargaining at enterprise level, a statutory requirement for good faith engagement on all sides and ban the use of union busting tactics by employers."

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. M.D.

Gospel: John 3:16-18

Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world; instead, through him the world is to be saved. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned. He who does not believe is already condemned because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God.

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New Tertiary Bachelors' Degrees available in Wicklow for 2025/2026 academic year

The following Tertiary Bachelors' Degrees are available in Wicklow for the first time this September:
Entry is **not** based on points, and there are no tuition fees for the first one to two years.

• Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Immersive Media Production

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• Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Business and Psychology

Commencing in Bray Institute of Further Education with a seamless transition to IADT (Dun Laoghaire Campus).

ART

- KA** Art Portfolio Preparation
- KB** Art, Craft & Design
- KC** Fine Art Practice
- KE** Creative Craft

DESIGN

- DA** Graphic Design
- DD** Architecture Design & Technology
- DN** Jewellery Making & Woodcraft
- DI** Furniture Design & Carpentry/Joinery
- DC** Fashion & Textiles
- DJ** Furniture Design & Cabinet Making (Advanced)

MUSIC

- MI** DJ Techniques & Music Production
- MJ** Music Production
- MK** Music Performance
- MF** Sound Engineering

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- NA** Computer Software Development with AI
- NB** Computer Science
- NC** Computer Networks and Cyber Security
- ND** Comptia A+

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- ED** Soccer Coaching & Sports Management
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- OB** SNA & Disability Studies (Level 6)
- HD** Early Learning & Care / Childcare
- HE** Social Studies & Community Care

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- FF** Hairdressing - Junior Stylist
- FG** Hairdressing - Senior Stylist
- FH** Barbering
- FD** Nail Technician & Salon Administration

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- HK** Science - Pre-University
- HZ** Food Science with Dietetics - Pre-University
- JF** Pharmacy Retail Assistant
- JJ** Pharmacy Technician
- HU** Applied Ecology and Biodiversity Studies
- DK** Horticulture & Garden Design
- HV** Engineering Pre-University

BUSINESS

- JA** Business Management & Administration
- JC** Business Management - Advanced Certificate
- JD** Accounting Technician
- LD** Business Tourism Advanced Certificate
- SD** Legal Administration Pre-University Law
- SF** Medical Administration (Mornings Only)
- SE** IT & Office Administration (Mornings Only)
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- EE** Security & Pre-Garda
- JP** B.Bus (Hons) Business & Psychology

HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

- LA** Tourism, Reception & Event Management
- LH** Restaurant & Bar Management
- LC** Culinary Arts
- LE** Culinary Arts Advanced
- LG** Pastry, Baking & Barista
- LI** Hospitality & Business Management (Level 6)

ADULT LEAVING CERT

- RB** Adult Leaving Certificate

HEALTH

- HB** Nursing and Midwifery Studies - Pre-University
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- HP** Occupational Therapy Assistant
- JK** Emergency Care Studies (Pre-paramedic, Fire & Ambulance)
- HL** Psychology in the Community (Advanced)

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