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Tuesday 6th May 2025 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

'SHAMEFUL AND DISGRACEFUL'

Kicking the can down the road and hoping victims will die off?

The Government, and in particular Wicklow's two Ministers for Health, have come in for severe criticism for their failure to introduce a compensation scheme for those harmed by vaccines. This has resulted in dozens of damaged patients having to embark on long and costly lawsuits or giving up altogether.

A 2020 report on the handling of medical negligence claims produced by an expert group chaired by Mr Justice Charles Meenan recommended the introduction of an ex-gratia scheme for people who suffered injury arising from vaccination pro-

grammes where the reaction was moderate or severe.

In 2021, Stephen Donnelly, the then Minister for Health, ruled out setting up a specific scheme for claims related to the Covid-19 jab but said work on the establish-

ment of a wider compensation scheme was under way.

Last summer, the Department of Health said scoping work had been carried out, and Coalition sources said the plan was a 'priority'.

In August 2024 a spokeswoman for the



Fear Gorta, who performed at their Live Band Bash in the Royal Hotel in Arklow. Pic: Michael Kelly.

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Department of Health said it was finalising the proposal for a vaccine solidarity / damage scheme.

"This proposal has been submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure for its consideration. We hope to be in a position to bring it to Government for consideration in the autumn."

In April 2025 the Department responded to a query on their progress saying "Department of Health officials have completed significant work to develop a model for a vaccine damage scheme and are working through related policy matters. The model will be considered by the Minister for Health, and if approved, will be brought to Cabinet for further consideration."

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has criticised the Government's decades-

long failure to introduce a National Vaccine Injury Compensation Scheme, first recommended in 2001. He condemned the inaction of successive Ministers for Health, including Wicklow TDs Simon Harris and Stephen Donnelly, who made it to Government to deliver the scheme but failed to follow through. Deputy Brady highlighted the urgency of establishing the scheme, particularly considering COVID-19 vaccine indemnities granted to manufacturers, leaving injured individuals without recourse. He is calling for the immediate introduction of a fair, transparent, and retrospective compensation scheme with no further delays.

Deputy Brady said "It is unacceptable and deeply shameful that, nearly a quarter of a century since it was first recommended, the

Irish State has still not introduced a National Vaccine Injury

Compensation Scheme. This represents a staggering failure of pol-

itical leadership, accountability, and basic

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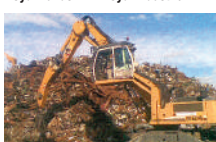
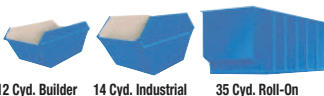
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Greystones ladies cricket

The Greystones Ladies Cricket team train on the grounds of Druids Glen every Monday. The team welcomes girls and women from ages 11 to adult. They have a Junior Girls and a Ladies team and would love for people to join them for some free taster sessions. They say "it's a chance for you to get outdoors, meet other people and have some fun learning a new sport. No experience or knowledge of cricket is necessary. Greystones Cricket Club has a number of teams for men, women and children. It's a great club for families and welcomes everyone, celebrating diversity, inclusion, all ages and abilities. Come see what it's all about at one of our open trainings. Find out more at www.greystonescricket.com.

Kilmacanogue History Society

Kilmacanogue History Society has rescheduled the Talk that had to be deferred last January. It will now take place on Monday 12th May at 8pm in Kilmacanogue Parish Hall. The Speaker is Garry Ahern talking about "The 'Southern Cross' Global Circumnavigation" - this flight took off from Portmarnock in 1930. It includes the role played by Irish Aviator Captain Paddy Saul (1895-1968), who would go on to found the Irish Air Traffic Control Service. As his final resting place he chose St. Patrick's Churchyard, Enniskerry Village. All welcome.

Community Info Meeting on Natural Water Quality Wicklow

Join the local authority waters programme (LAWPRO) in Parkview Hotel, Newtownmountkennedy on Thursday 8th May from 19.30 to 21.30. The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO), working on behalf of Ireland's 31 local authorities to protect and restore good water quality is holding a community information meeting on water quality and water related issues in Kilcoole, Newcastle, Newtownmountkennedy, Greystones and the surrounding areas.

These community information meetings are being held to increase awareness about water quality work in the area and to encourage as much engagement as possible with all stakeholders right across the community including key agencies, special interest groups, voluntary, public and private sectors. Come and join us, everyone is welcome. You can reserve a spot on [Eventbrite.ie](https://www.eventbrite.ie).

Lap Of The Gap Marathon & Glen To Glen Half

This year's Lap of the Gap Marathon and Glen to Glen Half-Marathon, Glendalough AC's annual club fundraiser and community celebration, will take place on Sat 24th May.

When to Expect Runners:

- Glendalough Area: Runners will be moving through from 6:30 - 8:15 AM.
- Laragh Village & Backroads to Sallygap/Lough Tay: After 8:15 AM, athletes head out via country roads toward Sallygap.

Cyclists: If you're out early, it's recommended following the Gap clockwise to avoid surprise encounters - especially on downhill segments. The field spreads out quickly once on Military Road, but caution is advised throughout.

Traffic & Safety Notes: No road closures are planned.

- Garda presence is expected in Laragh village.
- Road signs go up on Friday, with general info signs on main access points 10 days in advance.

Half-Marathon Route: Half-marathon runners will return from Glenmacnass directly back into Laragh village.

Want to help? Volunteers receive €15/hr donated to your club, charity, or group - or a full race entry for a future year. Questions or interest in helping? Email: info@lapofthegap.com. Phone: 083 198 2802

Shankill Classical Music Club

The next meeting is on Wednesday 14th May. Usual time - 7:45 to 10:00 pm, including a teabreak - and place - Shankill Day Centre, Lower Rd, Shankill (100 yds from the main street, car parking available). The music will be as always: a varied programme of classical music on CDs, covering many genres - orchestral, instrumental, vocal, opera etc. - in a friendly setting. Visitors and new and returning members are always welcome. You don't need to be an expert! There's no charge on the night. For further info phone or text John at 0872109175.

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Leo the Lion with his hard working Wicklow Lions/Darkness into Light team at the Registration Day in Wicklow on Saturday 26th April. Pictured are Sean Olohan, Jade Kennedy, Ann Chambers, Sinead Nolan (Pieta), Geraldine Mooney, Joe Kirwin. The walk/run takes place on Saturday May 10th at 4.15 am starting at the Brass Fox Wicklow Town. Huge support is needed for Pieta to help them stop suicide. Register now at pieta.ie.

Bray Dads Network invite all dads to climb Bray head with their children on May 10th

The Bray Dads Network, a social group set up by local dad Ciaran Hogan, are planning a mini hike for dads and children for Saturday 10th May, starting at 13:00 at the Boat house coffee dock.

The weather is predicted to be sunny and fair for the day, so light hiking gear is recommended. "We have about 110 dads in the group, so we could be any number, but more the merrier. Hopefully the kids can do all the walking themselves but there will be dads carrying children in slings, in their arms and on their shoulders, getting a bit of exercise together is a great bonding activity for dads and their children," said Ciaran.

The Bray Dads Network formed in October of last year and quickly grew in popularity. The Covid lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 have shown that dads do want to be more engaged with their children but are put off by work commitments and mother-dominated child groups.

The Bray dads network is one of the very few groups aimed specifically at dads in the area. They hold both activities with the children and dad-only events to socialise and support each other. They have a Facebook and Whatsapp group open to new dads.

"There's not much said for the issues that dads face, and yet study after study shows that present dads are the key factor in children growing up well adjusted with determination, good self esteem, and self discipline. For all the problems we face right now, we need more good

dads more than ever," continued Ciaran. The 'Fathers and Children From Infancy to Middle Childhood' study conducted in 2021 by ERSI stated that getting on well with their father is associated with more

positive child self-image in terms of freedom from anxiety, happiness/life satisfaction and behaviour. Father-child conflict has a negative relationship with child self-image for boys.

The Avon Longitudinal

Study of Parents and Children data, shows that greater paternal involvement was associated with higher school test scores at 4/5 and 6/7 years of age (Emmott and Mace, 2021). The Millennium Cohort Study

found a strong relationship between fathers' involvement and child cognitive outcomes.

"Also we're giving the moms an afternoon to themselves, so it's a win win for everybody," added Mr. Hogan.



Ryan Connell and Louis Harper with Shrek at the Avonmore Musical Society's Musical 'Shrek' in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow.

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Times

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Wicklow hit with 'unfair' rail fare hikes

Wicklow TDs and councillors have reacted strongly against the recently announcement of hikes in rail fares that disproportionately affect commuters in Co. Wicklow.

The fare hikes for a single ticket will be jacked up from €3.90 to €5.10. A return ticket will jump from €7.20 to €9.20. Commuters on DART and commuter rail services from Greystones will pay significantly more for the same journey, despite continued issues with overcrowding and inconsistent services.

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore, has called on the government to intervene, saying "While I welcome the simplification of fares and the reductions for some towns, this new fare structure has had an adverse impact on thousands of people in my constituency. It is deeply concerning to me that towns like Greystones and Kilcoole are facing significant fare increases."

"Rail fares for adults in Greystones have surged by 30%, which is completely counterproductive when you consider our climate goals. We are currently facing an urgent

need to reduce transport emissions and avoid substantial EU fines for failing to meet our climate targets," Deputy Whitmore continued.

"Until we get our transport emissions under control, there should be no increases in public transport fares."

Deputy Whitmore asked Tánaiste Simon Harris TD if he will direct Iarnród Éireann to reconsider these increases.

"In response to my question in the Dáil, Tánaiste Harris acknowledged that the issue of rail fare increases for towns like Greystones and Kilcoole need to be addressed," said Deputy Whitmore.

"He informed me that he was willing to engage with the National Transport Authority to review the situation, so I'll be following up with him on this to ensure that action is taken," Deputy Whitmore explained.

"Disincentivising public transport use will only

push people back into their cars, exacerbating our emissions problem. We must invest in climate action measures that encourage public transport use, not penalise it, and this fare hike does precisely the opposite," Deputy Whitmore noted.

"I have called on Government to urgently review the fare increases to ensure that commuters are not punished for doing the right thing. We need to support those who are making efforts to reduce their carbon footprint, not undermine them," Deputy Whitmore concluded.

Sinn Féin TD John Brady also criticised the recent changes to TFI fare zones, raising serious concerns about fare increases for large parts of Wicklow, and questioning whether commuters are seeing any real benefit. Speaking on the matter, Deputy Brady said: "While a small reduction in fares for areas of Wicklow such as Rathdrum is welcome, the

reality is that most people across Wicklow are being hit with significant fare hikes, particularly commuters in Greystones and the surrounding areas that are now placed in zone 2.

"TFI services, particularly bus services, have been plagued with issues for a considerable amount of time. I regularly hear from constituents about buses that do not show up, overcrowded services, and timetables that simply cannot be relied on. This has a major impact on those that depend on these services to commute daily and acts as a huge disincentive. To increase charges without a significant improvement in services is completely unacceptable.

"Rather than increasing fares, TFI and the government should be focusing on making public transport more affordable and more reliable. This would encourage greater use, reduce traffic congestion, and cut emissions. These significant fare hikes will

only push people back into their cars.

"If people are expected to pay more, they rightly expect a much higher standard of service. I will be raising this matter directly with TFI and the Fianna Fáil Minister for Transport Darragh O'Brien and seeking an urgent review on these changes. Wicklow commuters deserve better - not higher costs for the same old problems."

Fine Gael TD Edward Timmins said: "Commuters of north Wicklow in areas including Greystones and Kilcoole, along with Skerries, Balbriggan, Kilcock and Naas are subsidising the reduction in fares for other areas who are welcoming the fare reduction.

"Fares to Wicklow town in Zone 3 have also increased from €5.95 to €7. Passengers using a

Leap Card to travel from Greystones to Dublin have had an increase from €3.00 per journey to €3.90. This is a 30% increase per journey. Over the year, passengers travelling into Dublin five days per week must now pay an additional €468 per annum. This compares to a passenger from Bray who will only pay €2 per journey - almost half the price."

Deputy Timmins is calling on the NTA and Minister for Transport to put in place a cap on children's daily fares to acknowledge the unjust proportional charges on younger commuters who must take the train twice a day for five days a week during term time.

Greystones Independent councillor Stephen Stokes stated: "It feels like Greystones & Kilcoole commuters are being taken for a ride. These hike are unjustifiable and another blow to hardworking commuters."

"The fares are going the wrong way. They should be the same as going from Bray to Dublin. You could understand if the difference was perhaps 20 cent."

Cllr Stephen Stokes believes that people in Greystones are already under pressure with the cost of living crisis, rising rent and mortgage payments, and higher food prices. Cllr Stokes noted: "Now they're being asked to fork out even more just to get to work or college. It's deeply unfair and completely out of touch. The service is so bad sometimes that I think we should be paying people to travel."

Cllr Stokes pointed to the lack of significant improvements in service quality, frequency, or capacity to justify the price increases. "Where's the return for the extra money being paid? Trains are still packed at peak hours, and many

commuters are standing for most of their journey. It's not good enough."

He also criticised the lack of transparency and consultation around the fare changes: "There was no real engagement with the people who are most affected. Decisions like this should not be made behind closed doors. Commuters deserve a voice."

Cllr Stokes is calling on the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Irish Rail to reconsider the fare hikes and to prioritise investment in service improvements. He is also urging local TDs and councillors to stand together in opposition to the increases. He concluded: "I will be raising this at the next council meeting. I will continue to speak out until we see a fairer deal for commuters in Charlesland, Delgany, Greystones, Kilcoole, Killadreenan and Newcastle."



HeadRoom, who performed at the Live Band Bash for emerging bands in the Royal Hotel in Arklow.



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



Lár Bailte ar dTús
Town Centre First

BALTINGLASS HEALTH CHECK & NEW TOWN TEAM INFORMATION EVENT Wednesday 7th May 2025 5.00pm to 8.00pm The Hillfort Room, Baltinglass Library.



A Town Health Check consultation, supported by Queen's University Belfast, will be held on 7th May between 5.00pm and 8.00pm to assess the economic, social, and physical condition of the town centre. This consultation will identify the town's strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, focusing on aspects such as local businesses, infrastructure, public spaces, community facilities, and accessibility. The findings will inform future regeneration efforts and guide the Town Centre First initiative.

We encourage all members of the public and local businesses to attend at any time between 5pm and 8pm to share their views and experiences. Your input will help shape a town centre that is vibrant, attractive, and welcoming for work, living, and visiting. A Town Health Check Questionnaire is available via the attached QR code, and we look forward to your participation in both completing the questionnaire and attending the consultation.

Additionally, Wicklow County Council is establishing a Town Centre First Team in 2025, as part of the National Town Centre First policy. This team, supported by the Town Regeneration Officer (TRO), will be central to the delivery of a Town Centre First strategy and vision for Baltinglass. At the event, the TRO will present on the formation of the Town Team at 5pm, 6pm, and 7pm.

The Town Team will typically consist of representatives from local businesses, community groups, residents, tourism organisations, An Garda Síochána, charities, social enterprises, sports organisations, cultural groups, voluntary groups, chambers of commerce, retailers, developers, and educational institutions. They will play a vital role in implementing the Town Centre First strategy, ensuring the town's unique needs and characteristics are reflected in its development and revitalisation.

Your Town, Your Plan – Get Involved



Dr. Ryan Park Spring Clean removes 400kg of waste

A National Spring Clean event was hosted by Cllr Stephen Stokes on Saturday, April 26th in the Dr. Ryan Park, Greystones. An estimated 400kg of waste was removed.

Cllr Stokes praised the volunteers who took part, with over thirty people in attendance throughout the day. He stated: "We are grateful to everyone who took part in the event. The successful collection would not be possible without incredible community energy. There was a super turnout across a wide range of areas including Churchlands, Kenmare Heights, Kindlestown Park, Charlesland, Delgany and more."

Some of the items removed from the Dr. Ryan Park included a steel drum, a bicycle, clothes, mattress springs, a wooden pallet and gas tanks. In addition about 100 empty beer bottles were collected and recycled on the same day. Cllr Stephen Stokes noted that the idea to separate the glass bottles was a recommendation from a Greystones Tidy Towns member and that he was delighted to implement this new initiative. Cllr Stokes added: "It's great to be able to make a positive impact for the environment. Being able to recycle some of the items is something that we want to enhance further."

Cllr Stokes has repeated his calls for people not to illegally dump unwanted items into nature areas. He stated: "While it's great to have a super cleanup, it is a pity that it is

needed in the first place. We want our public outdoor spaces to be family friendly locations. It's challenging to do that when trash and dangerous items are abandoned. I implore people not to dump their waste."

The event was organised in partnership with a number of national and local organisations. Cllr Stephen Stokes has thanked An Taisce and the Greystones Municipal District Office for their logistical support. Both of these organisations supplied all of the bags, gloves and hi-vis jackets. The event was also heavily promoted by Greystones Tidy Towns who are a constant support to local cleanup groups. The Dr. Ryan Park National Spring Clean also teamed up with Sporting Greystones who have their playing fields adjacent to the park. Cllr Stokes expressed further thanks. He stated: "We are grateful to Peter Baxter and all of the Sporting Greystones Club. They rowed in behind us to give the event a big boost with several of their members in attendance. I would also like to specially thank Tawnia Kearns, who serves as our District Administrator in the Greystones Municipal District Office. She is incredibly helpful and

arranges the waste pickup after the clean-up. A big shout out to Greystones Tidy Towns also. Their support always helps to drive us forward."

Throughout the event, volunteers collected litter from paths, green areas and hedges ensuring that the Dr. Ryan Park remains a welcoming place for all. Cllr Stephen Stokes added: "The National Spring Clean is about more than just one day of action - it's about building pride in our local environment and encouraging everyone to take ownership of the beautiful spaces we are lucky to have. I want to thank each and every person who rolled up their sleeves and made a difference. This clean-up shows the power of community spirit."

Thanks to the hard work and commitment of our volunteers, the Dr. Ryan Park is looking better than ever. Removing over 400 kilograms of waste in just one morning is an outstanding achievement."

The next cleanup of the Dr. Ryan Park is expected to take place on Saturday, September 20th on World Cleanup Day. Anyone seeking additional information can contact stephenstokes101@gmail.com to find out more.



Cllr Stephen Stokes with National Spring Clean Volunteers at Dr. Ryan Park, Greystones.

ECO-UNESCO celebrates Earth Day by highlighting Wicklow finalists for Young Environmentalist Awards

Young climate activists from Greystones Community College are among the all-island finalists selected to go through to this year's ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards (YEA), taking place on 8th May in the Dublin Convention Centre.



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ECO-UNESCO has spotlighted the YEA 2025 finalists to coincide with Earth Day which takes place every year on 22nd April.

The group from Greystones Community College are among 102 finalists from across the island of Ireland to have succeeded at the semi-final 'ECO-Dens' stages of the YEAs in March and who will now go on to showcase their shortlisted eco-projects at the awards' finals this May.

Their 'What a Waste!' project focuses on raising awareness about waste management and encouraging better waste disposal practices and it has made it through to the Waste

Category of the awards. The project addresses the issue of incorrect waste sorting and aims to engage students in finding solutions. They created a website, designed lessons for first and second year students, held assemblies, and organised a fundraising day to raise awareness about the impact of waste at school, local, national, and global levels.

The young people from Co Wicklow will join over 1,000 young environmentalists from across Ireland for a day of celebration, inspiration, and climate action at the Young Environmentalist Awards.

ECO-UNESCO's Young Environmentalist Awards is an all-island programme that recognises the work of young people who are tackling key issues in relation to climate and biodiversity loss, taking environmental action in their school or community and coming up with creative solutions to solve environmental issues. Now in its 26th year, the YEA programme has reached people in every county of Ireland, with a total of over 65,000 young people participating and 6,000 projects entered down through the years.

Commenting on this year's YEA finalists, Elaine Nevin, National Director, ECO-UNESCO said: "The projects that have made it through to this year's Young Environmentalist Awards reflect the mission of Earth Day, the theme of which this year is 'Our Power, Our Planet', a call to action highlighting the transformative power of young people and their role in creating a more sustainable and equitable future."

Earth Day 2025 encourages individuals, communities, and governments to take action by adopting renewable energy solutions, advocating for supportive policies, and participating in local and global initiatives. Through their projects, young people have taken the lead in raising awareness of critical environmental issues, inspiring change in their communities, and championing more sustainable lifestyles.

"I would like to wish our finalists from Wicklow the best of luck for the awards, congratulate those who took part in our regional semi-final ECO-Dens, and thank all our funders who make this all possible every year. Each and every project that enters the awards deserves to be celebrated!"

Funding for water quality management groups

€87,600 in funding will go to Community Groups in Wicklow involved in water quality management. The funding was awarded by the Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) which works on behalf of Ireland's 31 local authorities to protect water quality in river catchments across the country.

The funding will be allocated to two community groups in Wicklow: East Wicklow Rivers Trust will receive €41,600; Wicklow Uplands Council will receive €46,000. This will contribute to a diverse range of projects which will help to conserve Wicklow's rivers and their catchments, raise awareness around water quality issues and enhance and support biodiversity.

The Tanaiste Simon Harris said: "I am delighted to see that LAWPRO has allocated this funding to

contribute to the vital work that our community groups in Wicklow do to keep our water quality at the highest standard."

"LAWPRO has a fantastic track record of ensuring that these organisations can achieve their goals, having allocated over €500,000 in 2024, and now over €850,000 in 2025 nationwide. This indicates real progress in the conservation of Ireland's vast and varied waterbodies and demonstrates this Government's commitment to protecting biodiversity and championing sustainability."

"It is also vitally important that our communities are supported at a local level to achieve the goals set out in Ireland's Water Action Plan, which aims to restore and protect Irish waterbodies, and I am confident that this funding will play a crucial role in doing that. I would like to thank LAWPRO Director of Services Anthony Coleman for his work on this, as well as the countless community groups across county Wicklow that keep our water quality at a high standard."

'SHAMEFUL AND DISGRACEFUL'

Continued from page 1

decency - a failure that spans multiple Governments and includes two successive Ministers for Health who are also elected TDs for my own constituency of Wicklow: Simon Harris and Stephen Donnelly.

"The recommendation to establish a vaccine injury compensation scheme was first made in 2001 by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children, who recognised the need to provide a fair and transparent process for individuals who suffered serious adverse effects as a result of vaccination. They called for the scheme to be set up as a matter of urgency - not as a long-term aspiration, but as an immediate priority. Yet, in the decades since, we have seen only dithering, broken promises, and outright neglect.

"In 2007, the Vaccine Damage Steering Group was set up within the Department of Health, supposedly to progress the Oireachtas Committee's recommendation. But this amounted to nothing more than a box-ticking exercise. No meaningful steps were taken. No legislation was introduced. No scheme was delivered. The issue was quietly kicked down the road and forgotten - until the COVID-19 pandemic brought it roaring back into public view.

"During the pandemic, the State moved at unprecedented speed to secure and distribute vaccines to the population. These vaccines were critical to saving lives and protecting public health. In doing so, however, the government entered into indemnity agreements with pharmaceutical companies - effectively shielding them from legal liability in the event of adverse effects. This meant that the burden of responsibility for any vaccine-related injuries now rested solely with the State. And yet, the State did nothing. No scheme was put in place to meet that responsibility.

"What makes this even more



Former Ministers for Health Simon Harris and Stephen Donnelly have been criticised for their failure to introduce a compensation scheme for those harmed by vaccines.

disgraceful is the fact that both Simon Harris and Stephen Donnelly, while serving as Ministers for Health, publicly acknowledged the importance of such a scheme and committed to its introduction. They made statements, gave reassurances, and spoke of action. But those words have amounted to nothing. These promises have not been kept, and the people of Wicklow - and indeed the people of Ireland - have been badly let down as a result.

"Simon Harris, during his tenure as Minister for Health, was made fully aware of the need for such a scheme yet failed to advance it in any meaningful way. Stephen Donnelly, his successor and also a Wicklow TD, continued this pattern of inaction, despite repeated opportunities to deliver. His tenure saw public statements about exploring the issue, about 'looking into' the matter - but the hard truth is that he failed to act. These are not minor oversights; these are serious failings by individuals in positions of power who knew what needed to be done and chose not to do it.

"This isn't just a political embar-

assment - it's a human tragedy. Individuals and families who have suffered as a result of vaccine-related injuries have been left without recognition, without compensation, and without support. They have been forced to navigate complex and often hostile legal systems, all while dealing with the emotional, physical, and financial toll of their injuries.

"This is not how a fair and compassionate society should treat its citizens. The Government's continued failure to act sends a clear message: when it comes to the profits of pharmaceutical companies, they are prepared to offer full indemnity. But when it comes to the wellbeing of ordinary people who were vaccinated in good faith for the common good, they look the other way. That is not just unacceptable - it is morally indefensible.

"Sinn Féin has long supported the establishment of a National Vaccine Injury Compensation Scheme, and we are again calling on the government to act immediately to implement it. There must be no more reviews, no more delays, no more hollow reassur-

ances. This scheme must be established now - fairly, transparently, and retrospectively. It is a matter of justice, of accountability, and of basic human dignity.

"The Irish people did their duty during the pandemic. It is long past time for the State to do its duty in return. Those affected by vaccine injury deserve justice, they deserve support, and they deserve answers. This government must deliver 6 and deliver now."

Independent councillor Joe Behan asserted "The continuing deliberate delay by the FF/FG Government in establishing a No-Fault Compensation Scheme for victims of the Covid vaccine is nothing short of scandalous. While a majority of people who received the vaccine, on the strong advice of the NPHE overlord, have come through safely, there are a significant number of people of all ages who have suffered greatly from complications related to the various vaccines. These medical complications have been reported to range from Blindness, Anaphylaxis, Myocarditis to Pericarditis, Thrombosis and other long-term illnesses.

"I am personally aware of people of various ages who have suffered very serious life limiting effects of Covid vaccinations and they are being gradually forgotten about by the very people who strongly advised them to take these Covid vaccines, namely the Government and most of the Opposition parties in the Dáil at the time.

"Empty promises were made by successive Taoiseach and Government Ministers that a No-

Fault Compensation Scheme would be introduced to give these victims some financial and medical assistance to help them deal with the devastation to their lives resulting from following Government advice. However, 5 years later, we still have no Compensation Scheme. Why is that? Are they waiting for these people to die or become so ill that they can't fight the battle any longer?

"The entire basis of a successful vaccination scheme is that if medical complications arise, but the overall public good is served by taking vaccines, then it should be accepted that those who suffer long term complications should be compensated without having to go through the arduous and expensive process of suing the State.

"We can debate forever the rights and wrongs of the various Covid Vaccines, but we cannot ignore the suffering of those people who are left with long term medical damage because they followed the advice to take them. It is well past time for this matter to be resolved, and a No-Fault Covid Compensation Scheme put in place urgently. Of course, this is just another instance of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael resisting any accountability for their many mistakes during the Covid pandemic. These include the cruel practice of denying close relatives access to their loved ones as they passed away as well as the cruel isolation caused by some of the harshest lockdowns in the world. We absolutely need a Statutory Inquiry to ascertain why these decisions were made and why their possible

impacts were not properly scrutinised before they were imposed on us. It is very interesting that most of the alleged opposition parties such as Labour, Sinn Féin and the Social Democrats are silent on the need for such an Inquiry. Could it be that they cravenly went along with Government decisions at the time and completely failed in their duty to challenge the Government? If that is the case, they have a lot to answer for too.

"In the meantime, whether because of vaccine effects, Long Covid complications, delayed diagnoses for many medical conditions, prolonged mental health problems and serious education deficits from school closures, the people of Ireland have been served badly by those in power, and they certainly deserve better than this."

Social Democrat TD, Jennifer Whitmore also commented "This is just another example of Government repeatedly failing individuals who've been let down by the system - be it Mother and Baby home survivors, Thalidomide victims - Government creates this adversarial situation where the affected have to fight and fight and fight, and often-times this has huge impacts and suffering while the State sticks their head in the sand and ignores their commitments and responsibilities to them and its not good enough. Government promised to provide a compensation fund and have been discussing its introduction for the past 5 years. The Government is failing vulnerable people again by delaying this fund further."

The international medical viewpoint

In the international medical journal VACCINE (11th April 2025) they state "No-fault vaccine injury compensation schemes provide financial redress for adverse effects from vaccines without establishing fault. Due to the rapid vaccine development and distribution, these programs are crucial for vaccinees during the COVID-19 pandemic...No-fault compensation schemes (NFCS) for vaccine injuries ensure that individuals who suffer adverse effects from vaccines receive compensation without proving fault or negligence, based on the rationales that negligence is often absent in such cases, and that communities benefiting from vaccination programs accept the responsibility to compensate those harmed by them. These schemes are crucial during the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic due to rapid vaccine development and distribution, which has heightened public safety concerns. These schemes provide a streamlined process for compensation, covering medical expenses, lost income, and non-economic damages like pain

and suffering. This approach also fosters public trust in vaccination programs by addressing adverse outcomes transparently and fairly

"Globally, no-fault compensation schemes exhibit considerable variation with their funding sources. Some countries operate their schemes with general taxes or special levies. Some countries utilize an insurance-based model, with funding derived from vaccine manufacturers' insurance contributions. In contrast, other countries employ a social security model to cover all accidents including vaccine injury. During the ongoing pandemic, these compensation schemes have been adapted to address the unique challenges of novel vaccines, playing a crucial role in sustaining public trust and ensuring vaccine uptake.

"While COVID-19 vaccines have delivered significant global public health benefits, ensuring timely and equitable compensation for the few adverse reactions remains crucial from a justice standpoint."

NEW COURT SUMMER FESTIVAL

A FUN FILLED EVENT FOR ALL THE FAMILY TO RAISE FUNDS FOR DEVELOPING OUTDOOR SPACES AT NEW COURT SPECIAL SCHOOL

Sat 10th May
10am - 3pm
All welcome

10AM	FESTIVAL OPENING	Craft stalls, plant sale, farm shop, games and activities
10AM - 2:30PM	GAMES AND ACTIVITIES	Back field
10:30 & 12:30	MULTIBALL GAMES	PE Hall
11:30 & 1:30	DANCE, DANCE, DANCE	PE Hall
11AM	'THE HIVE' GRAND OPENING	Music from Vocal Ensemble Dynamics
1PM	TEDDY BEARS PICNIC & UKELELE GROUP	At 'The Hive'
2:30PM	RAFFLE	PE Hall
3PM	FESTIVAL CLOSING	See you next time

NEW COURT SPECIAL SCHOOL, NEWCOURT ROAD, A98DW68

Planning application for Ashford Sports Centre marks end of long campaign

A planning application has been submitted to Wicklow County Council for a new Sports and Recreation Centre on the site of the former Garda Station in Ashford. The proposed development will represent a major investment in local infrastructure and a long-overdue facility for a growing community.

The main part of the project will be the construction of a basketball court at the back of the building, which may be used for other indoor sports such as Padel and Badminton.

John Brady TD commended the Ashford Development Association for their tireless efforts in

advancing the project and described the plans as a 'transformational opportunity' for Ashford.

"This marks a really important and exciting step forward for the community in Ashford. I want to sincerely commend the Ashford Development Association for their outstanding work in bringing

forward detailed plans for what promises to be a fantastic Sports and Recreation Centre. This facility is badly needed in an area like Ashford, where the population has been growing steadily and the demand for modern community and recreational amenities continues to rise.

"The development will not only provide a high-quality sports and recreation hub for residents of all ages, but it will also finally bring an end to the long-standing dereliction of the former Garda Station - a building that has lain vacant and unused for over 20 years."

Brady also highlighted

that the submission of the planning application brings closure to a years-long campaign which he led, to have the site taken into public ownership and made available for community use.

"This moment is the culmination of a campaign I've been proud to lead over recent years - fighting to ensure that the former Garda Station was handed over for public use and placed into public ownership. That campaign was ultimately successful, with Wicklow County Council acquiring the property in 2022. Securing the site for public use was a major achievement, and today's progress shows what can be done when a community works together with purpose and vision.

The planned Ashford Sports and Recreation Centre will be a tremendous asset for the village, providing a central space for sports, wellbeing, and social activity. It will become a focal point for community life and marks a significant investment - expected to cost in the



Deputy Brady at the old Ashford Garda Station.



Tánaiste Simon Harris with Cllr Shane Langrell and members of the Ashford Development Association.

region of €3 million that will benefit generations to come.

"I believe we now all have a role to play in seeing this project through to completion. With the planning application about to be submitted, I urge Wicklow County Council to give it their full support. Once planning is granted, we must collectively work to ensure the necessary funding is secured to deliver the project. I remain fully committed to supporting this initiative at every stage. This development is not just about a building - it's about creating a strong, connected, and vibrant Ashford. We've come a long way, and now we

need to finish what we started."

Tánaiste Simon Harris said: "I am delighted to see progress finally being made with this project. The submission of the planning application marks a major step forward in bringing the Old Garda Station back to life, not just as a building, but as a meaningful space for the people of Ashford. The plans as detailed in the application include the construction of an indoor basketball court at the back of the station, as well as a refurbishment of the main body of the station which dates back to 1840 and has been derelict since 2003.

"The estimated cost of the renovation is €3

Million, and the planning application is being submitted by the Ashford Development Association. I would like to thank Noel Keyes and the Ashford Development Association for their efforts in getting this over the line, as well as Councillor Shane Langrell who has also been extremely vocal in his support for this project.

"While this is just the beginning of the process, I have no doubt that this project will deliver real and lasting benefits for the community. I look forward to watching it take shape and to seeing the positive impact it will have on the lives of people in Ashford."

Would you know what a Sunflower Lanyard means if you saw someone wearing one?

The newly formed Newtownmountkennedy Community Forum committee have run a successful awareness campaign in the town, which all members of the community could get behind.

In December 2024 they launched their campaign to make Newtownmountkennedy a Sunflower Lanyard aware town. The team have worked with local businesses, schools and community groups to raise awareness and they have distributed Sunflower Lanyards throughout the town so members of the community, who feel that they would benefit from wearing a lanyard, could have access to them, free of charge.

Sunflower lanyards are worn by people who have a disability that you might not be able to see. They are worn by people who want to let you know that they might need some extra help, time or assistance.

A hidden disability is a disability that may not be immediately obvious.

This could be, for example: sensory loss, including difficulty seeing or hearing; a physical disability that may not be obvious; autism; a learning disability; anxiety or any other mental health condition.

There is no qualifying list of

hidden disabilities. If a person has a hidden disability and feel that they would benefit from wearing a sunflower lanyard, they can in the knowledge that their local community that they live or work in, understands this and support them.

People with hidden disabilities can contribute enormously to their local community and if they feel they are supported by their community around them, this can have an immensely positive impact on their lives too.

When the Forum launched their campaign, they estimated that less than 10% of the community were aware of the existence of the Sunflower Lanyard, let alone what it stood for. Now a mere six months later, due to the work of the group and the buy-in from the businesses, community groups and the community in general, the Forum estimate that over 90% of the town understand what the Lanyard stands for now and would support its users.

We would like to thank the

local community and businesses for their support in their campaign. The Sunflower Lanyards are now available in several prominent locations spread across the town free of charge, should anyone feel they could benefit from wearing one. The list of locations are: The Post Office, Fishers, Red Eye Coffee, The Parkview Hotel, Adrian Dunne Pharmacy, The Pilates Studio, Dunnes Stores, The Primary Care Centre, Newtownmountkennedy Area Sports Development, Newtown Primary School, Woodstock Educate Together School, Cali Special class, Eugene's Food Store and the Wicklow Wolf Taproom.

The Newtownmountkennedy Community Forum committee ran their campaign in conjunction with the Community Section in Wicklow County Council and Triple A Wicklow. They would like to thank Marie Halvey from the Wicklow County Council and Ann-Marie Kelly from Triple A Wicklow for their support.



Members of the new Newtownmountkennedy Community Forum Sunflower Campaign Team.

'An absurd waste'

Wicklow representatives for Sinn Féin and Aontú have strongly criticised the Government following its announcement of a new half a million euro role for 'Housing Czar'.

Wicklow-Wexford Sinn Féin TD Fionntán Ó Súilleabháin criticized the Government's plans, saying "Listening to Minister Browne discuss these plans, it is clear that the Government are not confident in their proposal of a new Housing Activation Office. They have yet to clarify who will be sitting in office, how much each salary will cost the state and most importantly how it will achieve its functions."

"So far, the Government have created a series of committees in an effort to tackle the current housing crisis. These include a Housing Delivery Group, A Housing Activation Industry Group and an Infrastructure Taskforce. The suggestion for a forth specific service makes me question whether these investments are warranted. I believe the people I represent in Wicklow and Wexford would much rather see new housing developments that are desperately awaited."

"It appears there are talks of Brendan McDonagh from the NTMA to be offered the new head of office role. His position comes with

a whopping €430,000 salary. It is a real slap in the face for people who are struggling to make ends meet in the midst of our cost-of-living crisis, some of which have been languishing on social housing lists across the country with little-to-no hope of being offered a permanent home any day soon due to the lack of delivery."

Referencing the lack of social housing delivery to date, Deputy Ó Súilleabháin referenced the stark figures in his locality: "In the past five years our local authorities have struggled to provide self-built units, with a total of 344 homes delivered in Co. Wexford and 564 for Co. Wicklow since 2020. We saw very little delivery some years, as low as 35 homes for the entire 12-month period. To think of what this new Housing Activation Office will cost the state rather than simply providing further investment into housing delivery is frightening. It's not an overly complicated solution, we need to build more houses and ensure they have adequate infrastructure. The Government's actions here are

questionable, proposing multiple new committees, offices and roles to tackle this crisis."

"We don't need a housing czar and a bizarre network of new committees within the civil service. We need a radical reset of housing policy - as set out in Sinn Féin's alternative housing plan, 'A Home of Your Own'."

Aontú Wicklow spoke out against what they demed "an absurd waste and latest plunder of taxpayer money that this Government is allowing itself".

Aontú advocate Ciarán Hogan said "The bike shed, the security hut, the posh wall, the hundreds of millions going on IPAS for 80% applicants to be rejected. The list of government waste, and mis-spending of public money is irredeemable incompetence, and now they and hiring another massively overpaid bureaucrat to do what they should have been doing all along."

"The recently announced Housing Tzar position will cost the taxpayer €430,000 per year. With the brief which should be covered by the current Minister for Housing, Local Govern-

ment and Heritage.

"There is no possible way this one person, receiving more remuneration than the President of United States of America can possibly fix the housing situation. We're better of spending that money to hire plumbers, electricians and construction workers. And further we have a housing situation because of government policy over the last few decades, why can we trust this government to solve the problem by throwing more money at it?"

Speaking on the matter Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín said "it's just a highly expensive 'mud-guard' for ministers terrified of being held responsible for the housing crisis."

Deputy Tóibín says the Government needs to stop making excuses and get to work.

"Really what we need is less bureaucracy, less middle managers and more actual construction workers. More people who are actually able to build houses on the ground. We need the government to cut VAT on housing to make it more affordable, to make it easier to draw down funding,

to get 160,000 empty homes back into use. We need the local authorities to get their 4,000 empty council houses back into use."

Mr Hogan concluded: "We talk about millions and billions wasted too regularly, people often groan it off but this has real affects on people's lives. This is the reason we can't get hospital services, school supports, infrastructure and pay our teachers, doctors, and police a living wage. This is why the government have to place more taxes and charges on everything."



Sean Hendley as Lord Farquaad in Avonmore Musical Sociaty's production of Shrek The Musical in St. Mary's Hall, Arklow.

'Government cuts will leave dozens of Council homes in Wicklow boarded up'

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has hit out at the Government for implementing 'deep and damaging' cuts to the funding needed to bring vacant and boarded-up council homes back into use, warning that the decision will compound the housing and homelessness crisis across the state and particularly in Wicklow.

Figures released to Deputy Brady via a Parliamentary Question reveal that the allocation to Wicklow County Council for 2025 under the Voids Programme is just €1.06 million - a drastic reduction from the €2,065,475 allocated in 2023.

Deputy Brady described the cut as 'shocking and shameful': "At a time when Ireland is facing an unprecedented housing emergency - with record levels of homelessness, rising rents, and thousands on housing waiting lists - this Government has chosen to slash in half the funding Wicklow needs to bring empty homes back into use. It's an insult to the people who are desperately crying out for a place to live."

The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) has identified 146 vacant social homes across Wicklow. Yet, due to lack of funding, only 65 of those will be returned to use in 2025 - meaning over 80 homes will be left empty, boarded up, and deteriorating.

Deputy Brady continued: "This is more than just a missed opportunity - it's a deliberate failure of policy. The Government is actively preventing these homes from being returned to use. And the ones who suffer the consequences are ordinary people -

families living in hotels, children growing up without stable housing, and young people stuck in overcrowded box rooms."

He also highlighted the inadequacy of the current funding model, which allocates just €11,000 per house to local authorities: "For some properties, that amount might be enough to carry out minor repairs. But for others - especially homes that have sat idle for years due to previous underfunding €11,000 doesn't even scratch the surface. These homes are then boarded up, left to deteriorate further, and in many cases become magnets for anti-social behaviour, illegal dumping, and community frustration. It's an avoidable, manufactured problem caused by short-sighted government policy."

Despite these challenges, Brady praised the dedicated work of Wicklow County Council and the municipal districts: "I want to commend the council for the targeted, determined approach they've taken to addressing the backlog of boarded-up houses across Wicklow. The reality is that the backlog built up because of historic underfunding, and it has taken a major coordinated effort by the council to begin turning that around. These cuts will only

make that job harder - and they risk undoing the progress that has already been made."

Brady warned that the broader impact on the housing crisis would be significant: "This government talks about tackling homelessness, but their actions tell a different story. What sense does it make to have people living in emergency accommodation at huge expense to the taxpayer, while publicly owned homes lie empty and unused? This decision flies in the face of logic, compassion, and urgency. It will deepen the housing crisis, prolong homelessness, and leave people in impossible situations."

He concluded: "The Void Return Scheme needs a complete overhaul. It should be open year-round, fully resourced, and responsive to the actual needs on the ground. What we need now is not another press release from the government - we need real, immediate action. We need a Minister who funds local authorities properly, who listens to them, and who gives them the tools to do their job. Cutting this funding in the middle of a housing crisis is not just a mistake - it's a betrayal of the people who need homes the most."

2025 Greystones Municipal District / Wicklow Times

People of the Year Awards



The Awards will be presented in the
Greystones Golf Club, Greystones
on Thursday 15th May, 2025 at 8pm



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Kcoughla@wicklowcoco.ie / greystonesmd@wicklowcoco.ie

Ticket Price €35

www.wicklow.ie

CATAGORIES ARE:

- Sportsperson of the Year
- Civic Award
- Special Person of the Year

- Cultural Person of the Year
- Commercial Award
- Young Entrepreneur of the Year



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Seven Wicklow primary schools make their mark in Our World Awards

Seven Wicklow primary schools have made their mark in the 2025 Our World Awards as Irish Aid proudly celebrates 20 years of the national awards programme. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's flagship programme with primary schools which, over its lifetime, has seen thousands of young people become inspired to engage with global issues and take action for a fairer, more sustainable world.

This year, Wicklow primary schools were encouraged to learn about the lives of children and their families in Mozambique, Somalia, and The Lao People's Democratic Republic, also known as Laos, focusing on how Ireland and 192 other countries are working together to create a better future for all through support for the 17 UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

The schools involved were: Kilcoole Primary School; Kiltegan NS; Lacken NS Blessington; Rathdrum Boys NS; Scoil Nicolais Naofa; St Mary's SNS Blessington; and St Patrick's NS, Curtlestown.

Minister of State for International Development and Diaspora, Neale Richmond TD expressed his delight at the number of schools taking part in this year's awards.

"This year saw an impressive rise in the number of entries for the Our World Awards. This response highlights the growing emphasis on Global Citizenship Education in our primary schools, which is very encouraging."

"The Our World Awards challenges children, as global citizens, to put the spotlight on world issues. It encourages pupils to learn about Ireland's international development programme, Irish Aid which aims to fight world hunger and poverty on behalf of all the people of Ireland."

"International development has a positive impact on the lives of people who are trying to



Pupils from St Patrick's NS, Curtlestown, with French Marigolds in paper pots.

survive hunger, poverty, inequality, climate crises, natural disasters, political instability and conflict. This is why the Our World Awards are so important, to increase awareness of global issues in schools and highlight how we all have a part to play in helping to make the world a better place, by sparking creativity and critical thinking and building empathy, awareness, and a sense of global responsibility."

County Wicklow was incredibly well represented in this year's Our World Awards from Irish Aid, with seven primary schools submitting strong, thoughtful, and

creative entries that truly reflected the spirit of global citizenship.

A wide variety of formats were used, from videos, podcasts and presentations to songs, artwork, and posters. The diversity of expression across the county was exceptional.

• At Kilcoole PS, 5th class pupils produced a professional-level podcast, showcasing their deep research and understanding of global citizenship themes.

• Lacken NS's 3rd class proudly displayed their research on Laos, learning about challenges facing children in other parts of the world.

• Rathdrum Boys NS

wowed with beautiful paintings created by talented 6th class pupils, offering a visual reflection of what they had learned.

• At Scoil Nicolais Naofa, 6th class pupils created a powerful video on equality, with each pupil contributing their thoughts and voice to a truly moving project.

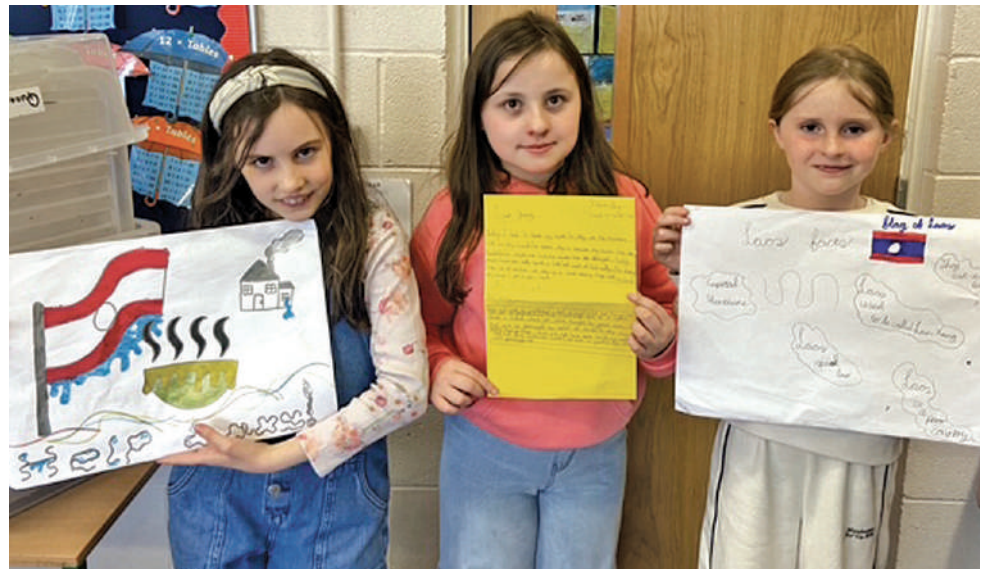
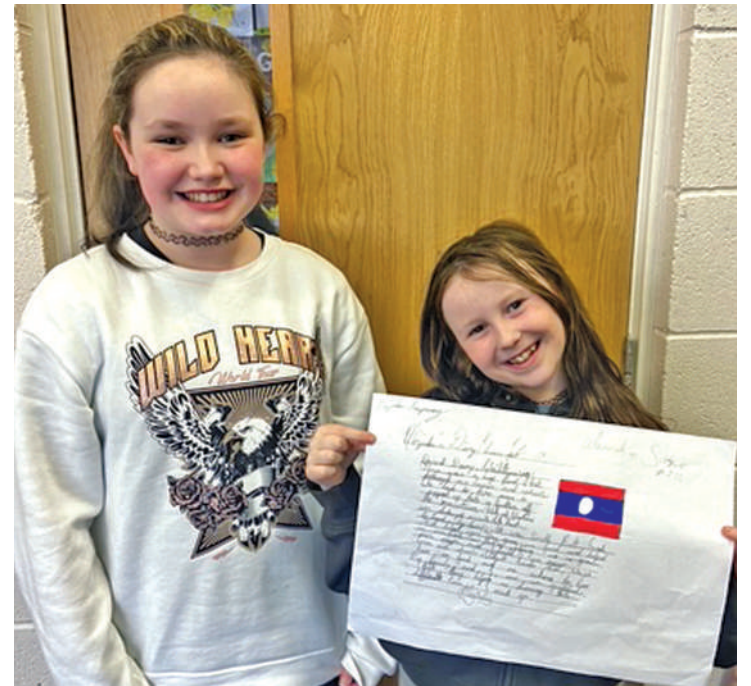
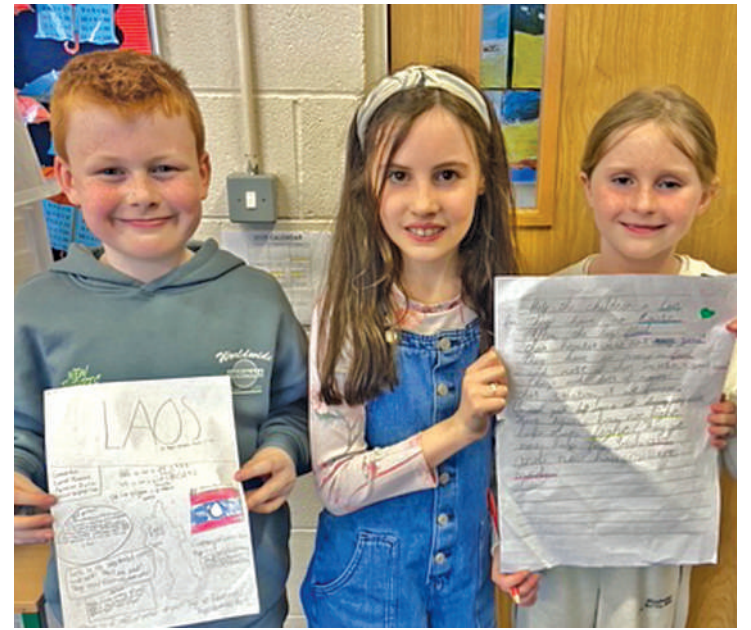
• St Patrick's NS, Curtlestown welcomed a guest speaker to talk about reusing and upcycling clothing, tying into their project on sustainability and the Global Goals.

• Kiltegan NS took inspiration from their learning about Mozambique and created a thoughtful and creative 'Bee Inspired' project, linking the role of bees to environmental themes and sustainability.

• St Mary's SNS brought their global citizenship learning to life through beautiful artwork and shared their heartfelt wish for a future of peace - a powerful message from the next generation.

From gender equality to environmental sustainability and global solidarity, the pupils across Wicklow demonstrated not only creativity, but a genuine commitment to learning about - and acting on - global issues.

Open to primary school pupils from 3rd to 6th class across the country, the Our World Awards encourages children to explore important global themes such as climate action, equality and international development, while reflecting on Ireland's role in creating positive change.



At Scoil Nicolais Naofa, 6th class pupils created a powerful video on equality, with each pupil contributing their thoughts and voice, a truly moving project.

Pictured above and below: Pupils from Lacken NS, Blessington.

'My brain just works in a unique way'

National Learning Network (NLN) has supported hundreds of neurodivergent individuals into employment or to progress to further education in the last five years.

National Learning Network, part of the Rehab Group, provides life-changing education and training. Each year, NLN empowers thousands of people with disabilities and mental health challenges across communities in Ireland to achieve qualifications, develop resilience skills, progress to further and higher education and get jobs.

NLN's impact extends far beyond individual success stories; it fosters higher earning capabilities, tax con-

tributions, and reduced reliance on social welfare, benefiting individuals and society. NLN specialises in catering to diverse needs, including those of neurodivergent individuals or those who struggle in conventional educational settings.

Since 2020 a total of 1,621 neurodivergent individuals have been supported into employment or to progress to further education by National Learning Network. These include placements in esteemed

companies such as Mr. Price, Dunnes Stores, the Square Taggart and many others.

One in ten adults in Ireland are neurodivergent, a term covering a range of conditions that include attention deficit disorders, autism, dyspraxia, and dyslexia.

Alexandra O'Leary, 23, from Co. Wicklow had always struggled in school and found maintaining relationships a challenge. "By sixth year I really wanted to drop out of school. I found it so difficult. I didn't feel understood, found it almost impossible to concentrate on subjects I didn't like and found friendships challenging, but my mum kept me going. I had not yet been diagnosed so I didn't get the kind of support I needed at that time," she said.

Following a BIFE course Alex's passion led her to open her own dog grooming business, Scruff to Fluff, in Wicklow town. Although it was popular, escalating costs and rents eventually forced her to close, a painful experience that deeply affected her mental health.

"I was devastated to let the business go, it was heartbreaking, and I really struggled. I was applying for jobs, going to interviews, but getting nowhere. It was a really tough time."

Alex also attended a mental health clinic and was diagnosed at the age of 21 with Autism and Borderline Personality Disorder.

"It was like everything finally made sense," she said. "I realised I was not just 'difficult' or 'different' - my brain just works in a unique way. Autism isn't one thing - it's a whole spectrum. People still don't really get that."

During this low point, Alex's mother - an instructor at NLN - encouraged her to try a Job Start course. NLN's model, which is flexible, inclusive, and person-centred is a lifeline for many people like Alex.

"I met the team at NLN and my instructor Collette and felt at ease straight away. They explained how they could support me to get a job. I thought, why not? I wasn't doing anything, and I didn't feel great."

Starting in February 2024, Alex threw herself into it, gaining qualifications in workplace health and safety, manual handling, and even completing a Barista course and an online Diploma in Feline Psychology. She also got real-world experience at The Cat's Pyjamas, a cat hotel in Wicklow.

But it wasn't just about skills - it was about encouragement and person-centred support. "At NLN, they genuinely care. If I said I wanted to study feline psychology, they didn't laugh - they cheered me on and found me an online course. They are just so understanding and listen to you and put you at the centre of everything."

Alex's instructors helped her land a dream internship with Seal Rescue Ireland, working with wild animals.

"They really listen to you. They put you at the centre of everything. They understand that what might seem like a small success to others can be huge for someone like me."

Last week, with the support of NLN, Alex was over the moon to start a full-time job as a store assistant at a pet store in Wicklow town. "Even when I got the job, the instructors at NLN were genuinely delighted for me - they're like your biggest cheerleaders," Alex said.

Dr Rita Day, Director of Learning at Rehab Group said "At NLN, we're committed to breaking down the barriers that neurodivergent individuals face on the path to employment and further education. Through accessible learning, tailored support, and inclusive opportunities students get an opportunity to realise their full potential."

NLN has training centres at Beechwood Close, Boghall Road, Bray and also at Briggs Lane, Arklow.

Free Men's Health and Wellbeing Programme in Greystones

Bray & North Wicklow Area Partnership's Social Prescribing team is launching a new Men's Health and Wellbeing Programme this June in Greystones, as part of the HSE Health and Wellbeing initiative 2025.

Taking place every Wednesday from 11am to 12.30pm, starting June 4th, this free programme is designed to support men in improving their physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Each week will feature guest speakers, practical advice, and taster sessions, covering topics such as:

- Physiotherapy and physical activity
- Healthy eating and nutrition
- Volunteering opportunities
- Lifelong learning
- Men's Sheds and community connections

Participants will also be introduced to a range of local services and supports, helping to build awareness of what's available in the community and how to get involved.

Running in celebration of Men's Health Week, the programme is inspired by this year's national theme: Shoulder to Shoulder: Connecting for Health. Places are limited and registration is essential.

To book your place, call (01) 286 8266 or email info@bnwap.ie

Men's Health and Wellbeing FREE 4 Week Programme



ADVICE, SKILLS & ACTIVITIES

From experienced professionals in your community



For men living in Greystones, Bray and surrounding north Wicklow areas
Places are limited so REGISTRATION is essential

Please call (01) 286 8266 or email info@bnwap.ie to book

Marking National Men's Health & Wellbeing week, with generous support from the HSE Health & Wellbeing fund, this programme is facilitated by Bray & North Wicklow Area Partnership's Social Prescribing Team



Want to boost your IT skills & confidence?

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Whale Theatre announces community-led not-for-profit group as new operator



Pictured are Ross McParland, Aideen Walton, Ailbhe Skay, Joanne O'Shea and Brian O' Regan.

The Whale Theatre has announced that a newly formed not-for-profit group, The Whale Theatre Company CLG, will assume operations of the beloved Greystones venue this autumn, ushering in a new era of community-led cultural programming.

This transition follows a months-long open call and rigorous selection process led by owner and founder, Ross McParland.

After receiving eight proposals, a panel of expert advisors unanimously selected the proposal submitted by the local Whale Working Group (WWG) - a collective of artists, creatives and community members - who will form the Whale Theatre Company CLG.

The transition will take place over the summer months, with the theatre expected to re-open in the autumn.

Speaking on the transition, Ross McParland said: "I am just thrilled to know that the Whale Theatre will continue to be a vital community and cultural asset for the town, and I know that it will be in very good hands. It has been a long but thoroughly exciting process, and I am delighted with this hugely positive outcome. I want to thank all my own team for their years of dedication, and I wish the new Whale Theatre Company CLG all the very best for the next few years as they put their own stamp on this very special theatre."

The Whale Working Group was established in response to McParland's November 2024 callout for a new operator. The group quickly gained strong community backing, ultimately submitting a robust and forward-looking proposal for the theatre's future. Plans are already underway for the Whale Theatre Company CLG to register as a charity.

Aideen Walton, spokesperson for the Whale Working Group, said: "As soon as we saw the open call from the Whale Theatre, we knew we had to act. So many of us have worked, created, or performed there over the years and the idea of losing it as a local asset was unthinkable. It's an enormous privilege to be entrusted with this responsibility, and we're fully committed to preserving and growing the legacy of the Whale for years to come."

The Whale Theatre has hosted over 1,200 events and welcomed more than 100,000 visitors since its opening in 2017. The final event under current management is a sold-out performance from the Hothouse Flowers on Saturday 17th May.

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Wicklow runner-up in European Heritage award

Thomas Emmet of Altidore Castle in Kilpedder has been awarded second place in the European Young Heritage Entrepreneur of the Year award 2025. He is the first ever Irish finalist for this award.

The European Young Heritage Entrepreneur of the Year award rewards the spirit of sustainable innovation and entrepreneurship amongst young owners and the next generation in historic houses across Europe. It is a European Historic Houses initiative and supported by Rothschild and Patrice Besse.

Thomas' project that he submitted to the award was the restoration of the pond at Altidore Castle in 2023. Altidore Castle was built in the 1730s and there are written records of the pond shortly after this date. The pond restoration project was aided by the Built Heritage Investment Scheme from Wicklow County Council. The project, lasting several weeks, consisted of digging out the pond, removing silt and clearing out years of debris that had built up.

Mr Emmet said "It's such an honour to be the runner up in this prestigious prize and to get recognition for the sustainability work we have done at Altidore. As someone taking over a historic house

and looking at the diversification of an estate towards more biodiversity and sustainable practices I am delighted to be a finalist. It was my first big project working with the county council and it's really amazing to see what a difference the project and the funding made. We also got advice from Historic Houses of Ireland who do such great work supporting privately built heritage. It took a year of planning and execution but heritage is not simply built heritage but the surroundings on an estate and any project maintaining heritage allows us to connect to the processes used in the past but also to bring forward those processes into the future. It's great for visitors when we're open to the public to see the pond back to its original glory. And of course we are delighted to see the huge increase in biodiversity in the pond from tadpoles to a few ducks and even a heron!"

Philip Emmet, owner of Altidore Castle and Thomas' father said "I'm delighted, Altidore has

been an organic farm for over thirty years and we have always had an eye towards biodiversity and sustainability. We planted three native woodlands twenty years ago and the river that runs through Altidore is a blue dot river, the highest designation. It's important that the next generation are always looking towards a greener future. I'm really proud of Thomas and his hard work."

Deirdre Burns, Heritage Officer for Wicklow County Council said "The recent restoration of the pond at Altidore Castle has revived an important feature of this 18th century designed landscape, returning it to its original function and enriching local biodiversity and ecological harmony. This project is a testament to the ongoing commitment and careful stewardship of the Emmet family."

Altidore Castle is open to the public for house tours throughout May and will hold its first biodiversity walk on Saturday, May 24th.



Altidore Castle in Kilpedder.



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



WICKLOW COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028

PROPOSED VARIATION NO. 4

DRAFT GREYSTONES – DELGANY & KILCOOLE LOCAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 2025

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR AREA!!

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) that Wicklow County Council, being the planning authority for the area, proposes to **VARY** the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 in respect of the following:

REASON FOR PROPOSED VARIATION:

- To make a new local land-use plan (a **Local Planning Framework**) for the towns of 'Greystones-Delgany' and 'Kilcoole'. The **Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework** will, when adopted, replace the existing 'Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole Local Area Plan 2013 - 2019'. The new Local planning Framework should be read in conjunction with the County Wicklow Development Plan (CDP) 2022 – 2028.
- To integrate the **draft and final Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework into the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028** and to ensure consistency of the draft and final Greystones – Delgany and Kilcoole Local Planning Framework with the County Development Plan 2022-2028, it is proposed to vary the County Development Plan.

DISPLAY OF PROPOSED VARIATION

A copy of the Proposed Variation, together with

- An Environmental Report on the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the Proposed Variation – pursuant to the European Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended).
- Habitats (Appropriate) Assessment Stage 2 Report (Natura Impact Report) - pursuant to Article 6[3] of the European Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended); and
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment – pursuant to Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

will be available to view at the following locations, during their normal opening hours, from **Friday 09 May 2025 to Friday 20 June 2025** inclusive:

- Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Station Road, Wicklow Town
- Greystones Municipal District Office, Mill Road, Greystones
- Greystones Library
- Copies of the Proposed Variation will be available to download and view on the Council's website www.wicklow.ie through an **online consultation portal**. Scan the QR code on this notice to access the portal.

PUBLIC INFORMATION DAYS

Public information days in Greystones and Kilcoole will be held during the fortnight starting 26 May 2025. Further public notification shall be issued in this regard in due course. The plan team will be available at the public information days to answer any questions on the Proposed Variation / the Draft Local Planning Framework, the plan process and to help guide the public on how to make a submission.

MAKING A SUBMISSION

Submissions or observations regarding the Proposed Variation and the associated reports are hereby invited from the public and interested bodies. Children, or groups or associations representing the interests of children, are entitled to make submissions or observations. Written submissions or observations made before **midnight on 20 June 2025** will be taken into consideration before the making of the Proposed Variation.

Submissions may be made in one of the following ways:

- Write to 'Variation No.4, Administrative Officer, Planning Section, Wicklow County Council, Station Road, Wicklow Town.
- Through the **online consultation portal** at www.wicklow.ie or scan the QR code on this notice.

NOTE

- YOU ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO MAKE YOUR SUBMISSION AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.
- All submissions are to be clearly marked with '**Variation No.4**'.
- All submissions should include your name and a contact address, a map (where appropriate) and, where relevant, details of any organisation, community group or company etc., which you represent.
- Please make your submission by one medium only, i.e. hard copy or through the portal. **Emails will not be accepted.**
- All valid submissions will form a part of the statutory Chief Executive's report and will be available to view online.
- The planning process is an open and public one, therefore all submissions/observations are a matter of public record and will be available for public viewing, they may also be placed on the County Council's website and therefore should not include any personal information.
- LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

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



Screen tourism in Wicklow explored at networking event

On Tuesday, 29th April, Wicklow County Council welcomed over 100 participants to its second annual networking and workshop event at Tulfarris Resort in West Wicklow. The event was attended by representatives from various tourism sectors and key organisations within County Wicklow.



Santina Kennedy and Aoibheann Boyle.



Christopher Stacey and Sinead Byrne.

'Screen Wicklow' was the main theme for the day. Wicklow is one of the most sought-after filming locations, known for its stunning natural scenery, including lush mountains, dramatic coastlines, and ancient forests. Since the 1980s, it has welcomed numerous major film productions, serving as the backdrop for international blockbusters such as the recent Netflix series "Vikings" and the global phenomenon "Wednesday."

Part of the event featured an extensive presentation on Screen Tourism in Northern Ireland, delivered by Liz Steele, Tourism Manager with Tourism Northern Ireland. Her presentation focused on how Northern Ireland maximised tourism opportunities stemming from popular films shot in Belfast, including 'Game of Thrones' and 'Derry Girls'.

The event began with updates from Wicklow County Council, Failte Ireland and County Wicklow Partnership. After Liz's presentation, participants were invited to join a series of workshops centred around Screen Tourism and seasonal themes for Wicklow.

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Cllr. Paul O'Brien, delivered the opening address, remarked, "This event was a fantastic opportunity for the tourism trade



Goeff Butler, Neasa Clissmann, Gavin Fallon and Gareth Condell



Fred Verdier, Pat O'Suilleabhain, Sarah Fitzpatrick, Susan Nichols, Caroline Henry, Leonora Earls, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Paul O'Brien and Liz Steele.

in Wicklow to network, share ideas, experiences and plans for the 2025

season. With so many films shot in County Wicklow, the insights from Tourism Northern Ireland provided valuable ideas to help us develop our Screen Tourism potential."

Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council

Emer O'Gorman, stated, "We are delighted to have organised this event. Tourism is one of Wicklow's main economic drivers, and the Council is dedicated to maximising the county's tourism potential. We will take the feedback

and ideas from the workshops to help our tourism team plan future activities."

The morning event concluded with a complimentary tour of Russborough House and a visit to the newly opened West Wing.



Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Paul O'Brien, Leonora Earls and Cathaoirleach of the Baltinglass Municipal District Patsy Glenmon with Mary and Chris Mitchell of the Green Angel.



Wicklow hosts major Jason Statham film production

Wicklow Town was the backdrop for a major recent film production starring actor Jason Statham. The production, which is as yet untitled, was filmed at a number of locations around Wicklow, Dublin City and at Ashford studios, as well as at various locations around the U.K.

The film production was appreciative of the huge level of support and co-operation from the local community. Wicklow has a great tradition of involvement in filmmaking and Wicklow people are familiar with and very understanding of the requirements of the industry, with many locals employed within the screen sector.

In addition to providing hundreds of jobs and significant spending on goods and services in Wicklow, the film production made valuable contributions to many local community groups including Wicklow Tidy Towns, Wicklow RNLI and Wicklow Saint Patrick's Day Committee.

Two of the cannons overlooking Travelahawk Beach were found to be in poor condition and the film company arranged to have them examined and cleaned by a profes-

sional conservationist using laser cleaning technology. They will be repainted and returned to their original positions overlooking the beach and the work carried out will ensure their survival for many more years to come.

Construction of an elaborate film set, including a lighthouse and a boathouse, began in January at the Castle Field and Travelahawk Beach near the Black Castle in Wicklow Town. An independent Archaeologist and an Ecologist were engaged to ensure that the work would not negatively impact on heritage or biodiversity.

The production company will reinstate everything over the coming weeks and is employing a landscaping company to treat and re-seed the grass areas and to return the Castle Park and the beach to its

original condition.

Cllr. Paul O'Brien, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, said: "This film will become part of the film heritage of Wicklow, joining previous films shot in the town over the years such as Excalibur, The Guard, Vikings, The Blue Max and Taffin. Films such as this will continue to raise Wicklow's profile both nationally and internationally and draw tourists to the area."

Wicklow County Council Chief Executive Emer O'Gorman said: "The screen industry is an important source of employment in Wicklow and continues to attract investment into the County. The quality of the work by the experienced local crew and the beauty of Wicklow on screen are a great advertisement for our County on the international stage."



Two of the cannons overlooking Travelahawk Beach were found to be in poor condition and the film company arranged to have them examined and cleaned by a professional conservationist using laser cleaning technology.

Council hosts private screening for Wicklow Short Film Award winners

Two talented filmmakers from Wicklow recently had the opportunity to showcase their new films to family, friends, and invited guests at a private screening event hosted by Screen Wicklow and the Wicklow Arts Office at The Whale Theatre in Greystones.

The two short films presented were 'Dealing With It' directed by Santiago Rivas Pertile, and 'Sapphire' directed by Michael J. Whelan.

These projects received the 2024 Wicklow Short Film Award, each benefitting from €15,000 in funding from Screen Wicklow and the

Wicklow County Arts Office, with support from Creative Ireland. Both films have been submitted to several film festivals, and there are high

hopes for their success.

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Paul O'Brien stated, "The film sector in Wicklow is renowned, with great sectoral talent available in the county from crew to actors, writers, Foley artists and producers. Wicklow County Council has been a key strategic supporter of the sector through the provision, not only of this bursary but of the Clermont Screen Hub and through hosting of the National Talent Academy Crew Training Project."

Chief Executive Emer O'Gorman said, "I look forward to seeing the careers of the film makers and production parties prosper on the festival circuit."

Wicklow Screen Officer John Powderly said, "The purpose of the award is to support filmmakers from Wicklow in creating high-quality, original films in the county and these two



M.J. Whelan, John Powderly, Cllr. Tom Fortune, Santiago Rivas Pertile, Jenny Sherwin.

productions have certainly achieved that. It will act as an important stepping stone in the careers of these young filmmakers and will open the door to making even more ambitious projects

in the future."

Wicklow Arts Officer Jenny Sherwin commented, "Internal collaborations within Wicklow County Council such as this one provide added value and expertise to

recipients."

Following the success of the inaugural year in 2024, Screen Wicklow and Wicklow Arts Office are currently in the process of assessing the Wicklow Short Film

Award, offered through open competition for 2025.

The 2025 scheme is now closed for applications and the selection outcome will be announced in June 2025.



John Powderly, David McLoughlin, Jenny Sherwin, Cllr. Tom Fortune.

Citizens Information

South Leinster Citizens Information Service/ Co. Wicklow

Please ring to find out our opening hours or log onto www.citizensinformation.ie

Bray CIC, 2 The Boulevard, Quinsboro Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow. Tel: 0818 07 6780; Email: bray@citinfo.ie

Arklow CIC, 73 Lower Main Street, Arklow, Co. Wicklow. Tel: 0818 07 6750; Email arklow@citinfo.ie

Alternatively, you can call the Citizens Information Phone Service on **0818 07 4000**, Monday to Friday, 9am-8pm or visit our website:

www.citizensinformation.ie

Conversation with an Artist

A free monthly series hosted by The Greystones Arts Centre



Writer Lynne Reece Loftus.

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

The Greystones Arts Centre will:

- offer studio, workshop and exhibition space
- provide a venue for literary and music events
- benefit local businesses
- promote a positive sense of well-being while reinforcing our sense of community.

Meanwhile the group is hosting events in and around Greystones such as their first popular series 'Conversation with an Artist' at Greystones Library.

This is a FREE series of lively, monthly talks with local artists: writers, poets, sculptors, painters, photographers, illustra-

tors and more. You can hear their stories, ask questions and discover their inspirations. Places are limited so come early.

The next 'Conversation with an Artist' on Tuesday, May 6th, 4:00 - 5:00pm features Greystones painter Nessa McCormack and illustrator/writer Lynne Reece Loftus.

Nessa's work is a celebration of the act of painting. Gestural brush marks, colour exploration,

intricate details and complex patterns emerging from layered surfaces are key elements that drive her curiosity.



Painter Nessa McCormack.

Travel and the experience of being amongst ancient cultures strongly influence her creative endeavours. She responds to these rich and exciting environments with a felt sense of place rather than a depiction of a particular landscape.

Lynne is an illustrator, writer and art educator who uses humorous visuals, story-telling and multi-

media to deliver her cross-curricular education resources. She has worked extensively in Canada and Ireland and has exhibited and designed sensory murals in Australia.

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

For more information about the Greystones Arts Centre initiative and to

contact the Committee, please email, greystone-sarts@gmail.com

The Greystones Arts Centre Committee are; Michelle Owen (Chair), Angelica K. Bender,

Frances Browner, Jack Clarke, Cllr. Orla Finn, Mary A. Kelly, Lynne Reece Loftus, Deirdre McKernan Crosby, Emma Jane Rushworth and David Whittredge.

Coming up at Mermaid...

Roundwood Series: Printing with Botanical Ink Workshop

Saturday 10th May, 11am - 3pm

Join us in Roundwood Parish Hall to celebrate Bealtaine with a mindful walk to gather flowers and observe Irish species of butterflies and pollinators led by Elida Maiques and Malu Colorin, before making inks from the flowers and creating butterfly prints. The first of a 4-part series to celebrate the seasons.

For more info and to book visit mermaidartscentre.ie or call 01 272 4030.



Ceol Ársa Cláirsí: Irish Harp Music of the 17th & 18th Centuries

Friday 9th May at 8pm. Tickets: €22/€20



Experience the haunting music of the Irish harpers - taken from original Irish and Scottish manuscripts dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. Performed on historical and contemporary instruments by some of Ireland's leading musicians in Irish and Early Music, hailed as "a glorious celebration of our national heritage by a group of outstanding musicians."

Tickets can be booked through mermaidartscentre.ie or 01 272 4030. Mermaid's new Apr - June brochure is out now, available online or to pick up at Mermaid Arts Centre.

Arklow Roots Music presents a triple bill concert

Arklow Roots Music presents a triple bill concert with headliners Eric Brace and Thomm Jutz from Nashville USA. on Thurs 15th May at the Bridge Hotel Arklow at 8.30 pm. Playing support will be Irish bluegrass legend Niall Toner, with Andrea Booth. Completing the triple bill will be Brendan O'Regan (Arklow). It's on a donations basis and reservations can be made through Eventbrite.



Eric Brace and Thomm Jutz from Nashville USA.

Both Eric Brace and Thomm Jutz have a long history in folk and country music, they have shared stages with Nanci Griffith, and both have had solo careers and sang in various groups. Eric's

latest album with Thomm Jutz, "Simple Motion" was No. 1 on the US Folk DJ charts in March of 2024. One review from Americana UK described "lovely melodies, splendid playing, insightful lyrics, great production, and wonderful harmonies. It is all there on this wonderful album."

Thomm won Songwriter of the Year at the 2021 IBMA bluegrass awards. His songs have been recorded by dozens of artists, and he teaches songwriting at Belmont University. Thomm's solo album 'To Live in Two Worlds' was nominated for a bluegrass Grammy award in 2020, and he was featured in an 'American Currents' exhibit in the Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum.

Eric's band Last Train Coming had been named 'Artist of the Year' in 2003 by the Washington Area Music Association.

Wicklow students win top prizes in national art competition



Rita Ruitong Chen (11) from Ravenswell Primary School, Bray.

Nine Wicklow students have won top prizes in this year's 71st Texaco Children's Art Competition.

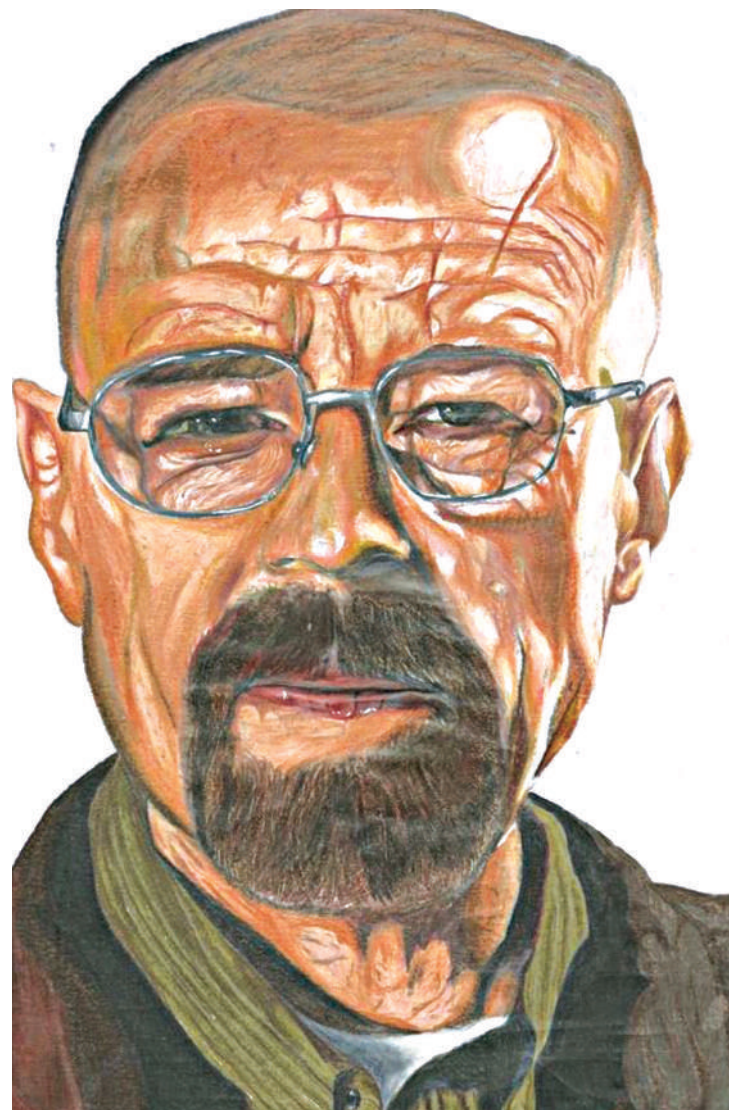
In the 16-18 years age category, Amelie McAndrew (age 17), a pupil at Temple Carrig School, Greystones, won third prize for her work entitled 'Beach Day'. Commenting on her artwork, Final Adjudicator - Irish visual artist, curator and educator n Pauline O'Connell, said: "Amelie utilises two perspectives (the subject looks up and we look down at her) along with impressive foreshortening, cold pink skin tones and expressive brushwork she captures the tenseness of the pose and arresting scream of the child."

In addition, eight Wicklow winners each won Special Merit Awards for artworks that Ms. O'Connell said 'displayed high levels of skill and creativity'.

They were Zack Waldron (17), a pupil at Arklow C.B.S.; Eala Ni hAaimhirgin (16) from Gaelcholaiste na Mara, Arklow; Oisín Briggs (13) from Greystones Community College; Rita Ruitong Chen (11) from Ravenswell Primary School, Bray; Iris

May Dunne (7) from Gaelscoil Chill Mhantain, Rathnew; Slomha Foley (6) from Scoil Chualann, Bray; Blake Balfe (13), from All Saints' National School, Carnew; and Caelum Hanway (15) from New Court School, Bray.

The Texaco Children's Art Competition is popularly regarded as the longest-running sponsorship in the history of arts sponsoring in Ireland, with an unbroken history that dates back to the very first Competition held in 1955. This year, as has been the case throughout its life, it has been a platform on which young artists from Wicklow and counties throughout Ireland have had their talents recognised and their creativity commended.



Oisín Briggs (13) from Greystones Community College.



Amelie McAndrew (age 17), a pupil at Temple Carrig School, Greystones, is a winner in this year's 71st Texaco Children's Art Competition. She is pictured with her prize-winning work entitled 'Beach Day'.



Blake Balfe (13), from All Saints' National School, Carnew.



Rosie Callaghan.
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Arklow pupils showcase commitment to biodiversity

St Michael & Peters Junior National School's 'Meet and Greet' with SSE Renewables ahead of World Earth Day 2025

Children from Ms Fox's second-class group at St Michael and Peters Junior National School, Arklow, showcased their commitment to biodiversity and sustainability at a recent meet and greet with SSE Renewables Community Engagement Manager, Deirdre Keogh, ahead of World Earth Day 2025, which took place on 22nd April.



Pupils from St Michael & Peter Junior National School, Arklow.

Having secured funding for a second time under the SSE Renewables Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund, teacher Anna Fox highlighted the learning opportunities and resources facilitated through the funding provided. Anna said: 'As a junior school, it's so important that the pupils learn in an age-appropriate way about how they can make a difference to our environment. This year, our school focused in on biodiversity learning and skills development. We used the funding to repurpose and install extra bird houses and purchased a new polytunnel where the pupils can grow flowers, plants, fruit and vegetables. We created creature-friendly spaces encouraging birds and insects into our play area. Armed with brightly coloured new learning equipment, the children can partake in regular 'mini beast' adventures helping them identify and learn about the role of insects, birds and pollinators in our world. We're very grateful to SSE Renewables for helping to make this possible and want to thank them for their support.'



SSE Renewables Community Engagement Manager Deirdre Keogh with pupils from Ms Fox's class, St Michael & Peter Junior National School, Arklow.

Deirdre Keogh, learning classroom responsibility of safe-guarding our planet for future generations. This year's Earth Day theme is "Our Power, Our Planet" and calls on the global community to unite around renewable energy aiming to triple clean electricity by 2030. Our Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 offshore project can play a critical role in meeting national renewables' targets for offshore wind whilst benefitting local communities through investment, jobs, skills' enhancement and future community funding. We wish Ms Fox, Ms Dempsey (Principal) and all the staff and students every success with the rollout of their biodiversity plan at the school."

Deirdre Keogh, Community Engagement Manager, with the SSE Renewables Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 project team, commented: 'It was such a positive morning spending time with Ms Fox's students in St Michael and Peter JNS. The children were full of pride and enthusiasm as they showed me around the outdoor learning classroom explaining how they each contributed to the enhancements and planting in the outdoor classroom. The school's application ticked the boxes aligning with our social value commitments on education and sustainability. With World Earth Day, we're reminded of the



Ahead of World Earth Day 2025, SSE Renewables Community Engagement Manager Deirdre Keogh and teacher Miss Fox gathered with St Michael & Peter Junior National School pupils. Funding for biodiversity learning resources was successfully achieved by the school under the Arklow Bank Wind Park 2 Sponsorship Fund.

Bray Sailing Club cruiser lift in

Bray Sailing Club's cruiser fleet held their annual start of season lift in on Saturday 25th April, with twenty five cruisers launched in just under four hours from two locations in the harbour. Conditions were ideal for the event, with light winds, flat water, and almost no rain.

Speaking after the conclusion of the lift in, Bray SC Cruiser Class Captain Harry Esmonde said "Today's lift in was a good example of how an experienced team working together can get through a difficult job very quickly. Being based in a tidal harbour means that we are always under pressure to complete the lifting before we run out of water, but a keen focus on safety ensures that we don't take any risks. I'd like to thank all the boat owners and

crew, safety boat drivers, crane and tractor operators, and other club members who volunteered for a 6am start to make sure that we had a successful lift."

There has been growing interest in sailing in Bray in recent years and Bray Sailing Club looks forward to welcoming more new members this season. The Club's cruiser racing programme begins next weekend and will continue until the end of September.



25 cruisers were launched in just under four hours from two locations in Bray harbour.



St. Crispin's Bridge Players win 1st & 2nd in National Novice Bridge Competition

St. Crispin's Bridge Club, Greystones recorded a historic 1:2 this weekend, when two pairs from their bridge club came 1st and 2nd in the Contract Bridge Association of Ireland (CBAI) J J Murphy National Novice Pairs Final, coming ahead of their peers from across the country.



Ruth Keogh & Mary Devine of St. Crispin's Bridge Club.

Ruth Keogh & Mary Devine won the trophy, while Helen Locke & Robyn Conway were 2nd in the competition. All four are members of St. Crispin's Bridge Club in Greystones Bridge Centre, while Ruth and Mary also play in the newly launched, Rathdown Bridge Club, also in Greystones Bridge Centre.

While they only took up the game of bridge in recent years, they benefitted from the emphasis both clubs place on encouraging & assisting beginners and players who have just finished learning this great card game.

St. Crispin's plays on Thursday evenings at 7.30, and has an "assisted bridge" section. This section caters for bridge newbies and those less confident with bridge bidding and play. If 'stuck', they can ask a facilitator for advice on what to do. After a short time, confidence grows and these players will move into the main competition section.

Rathdown Bridge Club just started last September, aimed at beginners and improvers. In addition to giving assisted bidding, the club sends out analysis to players on 3 of the games played each week. This gives advice on how the cards should have been bid and played and is welcomed by its members.

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SETU Spring Open Day 2025 at the Carlow Campus

Prospective students will have the opportunity to experience state-of-the-art educational facilities and explore the areas of study on offer at SETU's Spring Open Day on Saturday, 10th May, from 10am to 2pm.



With the CAO Change of Mind facility open, students have the chance to learn more about the different courses, modules and employment opportunities available at SETU before finalising their CAO applications. Prospective students can hear directly from SETU lecturers, course leaders and student support staff, on areas like accommodation, sports, scholarships, course content and admissions.

answer any potential questions surrounding key areas of university life. Student support staff will be on hand to answer questions on the CAO, how to apply, and much more.

Lecturing staff from each of SETU's career-focused courses will be available to answer questions and share insights into the different programmes.

Here to help

Talks, tours, and more

Attendees will have the chance to join a tour of the campus and experience SETU's top-class facilities firsthand. With representation from SETU's sports clubs and societies, prospective students can gain insight into life as a university student and the exciting world ahead of them.

Scheduled talks will be held throughout the day, each aimed at helping

Alison Moore, the Schools Liaison Officer at SETU in Carlow, said, "We are delighted to welcome students and their families to our Spring Open Day during this very important time. We understand that choosing where to study is a big decision and our aim is to help make that decision easier. We want to give students first-hand experience of the great opportunities on offer at SETU."

There will be talks, tours, and demonstrations throughout the day, so come along with your friends and family, and ask any questions you may have. We are here to help."

Among the exciting opportunities available at the University, SETU and Engineering the South East are launching the new Autom8 Scholarship. The scholarship is delivered in partnership with top manufacturing and automation companies in the south east and aims to increase the skillset and talent base within the area of automation.

The scholarship is open to all applicants who have applied to the CAO for September 2025 entry into SETU's Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Automation Engineering (SE700) and Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Robotics and Automated systems (SE710).



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.

Email CV to:

Charlevillerecruitment123@gmail.com
or post to: **Senior Admin, Charleville, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow, A98V293.**

SCFE Art and Fashion Exhibition

6pm Tuesday 6th May
Lexicon Library Dun Laoghaire

Sallynoggin College of Further Education (SCFE) are pleased to announce the launch of the annual Art and Fashion Exhibition 2025. The exhibition will be launched by An Cathaoirleach, Cllr Jim O'Leary at 6pm on Tuesday 6th May.

Art Craft and Design: Portfolio Preparation (QQI Level 5)

Many of these students progressed to SCFE after completing the Leaving Certificate and have spent their year in SCFE immersing themselves in their art, developing new skills and techniques and preparing their portfolio for entry to art colleges such as IADT and NCAD.

Advanced Art and Design (QQI Level 6)

Some of these students have progressed from the Level 5 course, there are also many mature students on this course who returned to education to re-ignite their interest and talent for making art and working in the creative industries.

Fashion Buying Styling and Visual Merchandising (QQI Level 5)
Fashion Industry Studies (QQI Level 6)

Students from these two courses are focused on developing a career within the Fashion industry in the areas of Fashion Styling, Buying and in retail as Visual Merchandisers. An emphasis on sustainability is a key feature of the work completed. Their work at the exhibition is detailed in the video display.

6 Hour Painting Competition

Students from both Art courses took part in the 6 hour painting competition in the Lexicon Library in March. For this event students had to paint or draw a scene from a space in the Library over the course of two days. The completed paintings were displayed in the library and the public were invited to vote for their favourite. The winners of the painting competition will be announced at the Exhibition launch.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I Robert Downes seek planning permission for a conversion and change of use of an existing garage/storage outbuilding to a new stand-alone One Bed Apartment Unit (Circa 63 msq), minor alterations to front & rear elevations, new vehicular parking, connection to services and all associated site and development works at Newpark Road, Wicklow Town, Co Wicklow.

The planning application may be inspected or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application.

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

I hereby give notice of the submission of significant further information to Wicklow County Council in relation to planning application ref no: 25/60023 for Ger O'Brien and Katie Byrnes who are applying for permission at Cronalea, Shillelagh, Co. Wicklow. Y14 YR72

Significant further information 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 observation 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.

PLANNING

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, Philip Doyle and Brenda Ni Chathalain, intend to apply for retention permission for existing development at Calary View, Glasnamullen, Kilmacanogue, Co Wicklow, Eircode A98AH31. The development consists of retention of an existing 1970's large low freestanding workshop building and access driveway, located to the rear of the property. The application also seeks retention of an existing two storey extension to the East (rear) side of the house, comprising of an attic-level office/bedroom over a ground floor kitchen and playroom. The application further seeks retention of a small single story conservatory extension to the South-East corner of the house, as well as retention of a front porch extension, retention of existing solar panels, and retention of two small sheds.

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

I, Catherine Allan, seek planning permission for the following development: Demolition of existing extension and conservatory to the rear of the house. Construction of a pitched single story extension to the rear of the existing house. Construction of a porch to the front of the house with disabled access. Subdivision of the existing ground floor living room into a living space and bedroom suitable for disabled use. Conversion of upstairs small rear bedroom to toilet and shower room. General refurbishment and replacement of existing utilities in the main body of the house and insulation of the house via a mix of internal and external insulation and construction of a single story shed to the rear of the existing property at 27, O'Byrne Road, Bray, Co Wicklow, A98 K6D8. 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, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without condition, or may refuse to grant permission.

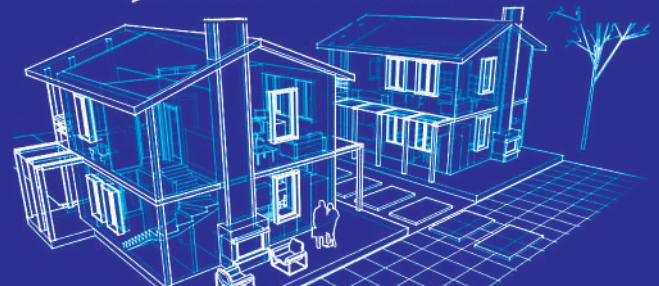
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

We, BNRG Seabank Limited, intend to apply for permission for development at this site within the townland of Ballymoney, Arklow, County Wicklow. The development consists of permission for a period of 10 years for a proposed solar farm and BESS (battery energy storage system) development which will consist of the construction of PV panels mounted on metal frames, inverters, battery storage infrastructure (BESS units, and MV Stations), new access tracks, underground cabling, perimeter fencing with CCTV cameras and access gates, a temporary construction compound, a substation and all ancillary grid infrastructure and associated works. It is proposed to use the consented Ballymoney Solar Farm access point (PI Ref: 19/627 and ABP Ref: 305289-19). The solar farm and BESS would be operational for 40 years. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be submitted with this application. The planning application and natura impact statement (NIS) 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. The planning application and natura impact statement may be viewed online at www.wicklow.ie, under planning online enquiries. A submission or observation in relation to the application may be made in writing to the planning authority on payment of the prescribed fee, €20, within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application, and such submissions or observations will be considered by the planning authority in making a decision on the application. The planning authority may grant permission subject to or without condition, or may refuse to grant permission.

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East Coast LA's & An Garda Síochána come together to launch multi-agency motor bike bampaign

On Friday 2nd May, East Coast LA's, South Dublin County Council along with An Garda Síochána, in collaboration with Wicklow County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and Dublin City Council last week launched their 'Think Twice, Think Bike' campaign.

This high-profile multi-agency initiative includes Radio & Social media campaigns aimed at motor cyclists, highlighting the dangers facing them when out on our roads, particularly as summer approaches, more motorcyclists will be taking to the roads.

According to the RSA, 105 motorcyclists were fatally injured, and 921 motorcyclists were seriously injured between 2019 and 2023, representing 14% of fatalities and 13% of serious injuries.

The campaign coincided with the May Bank Holiday weekend and ran throughout the weekend period. The campaign focuses on highlighting 'Safe Ways' to protect you as a motorcyclist and encourages safer road use, highlighting to drivers that motorcyclists are vulnerable road users.

To promote safer behaviour and taking responsibility the campaign will include the following tips:

- Before you head out on the roads, get someone to ride with you, effectively

shadowing you to ensure you have not got rusty, as your motorbike may have been parked up since last summer.

- Let them assess /check your lines and give constructive feedback
- Are you driving safely, or are there some areas you can improve
- Check you are familiar with your bike
- Check your bike is in good road worthy condition
- Are you a danger to yourself or to others?
- Are you familiar with any changes that may have occurred in relation to the 'Rules of the Road' since you last took your Motorcycle out on the road?

Road Safety Officer at South Dublin County Council Orlaith Maguire said 'the campaign is aimed at creating awareness of motorcyclists on our roads, the safe use of motorcycles, targeting both motor bike riders and car drivers alike. Research shows that almost 51% of fatalities occur on a weekend day (Saturday /

Sunday) It only takes a split second to change someone's life forever, and as a driver you have to ask yourself could you live with the consequence of your actions? So far this year there have been 10 motor cyclist fatalities on Irish roads. We all share the road, so let's all come together and together we can do this'.

'Think Twice, Think Bike'. Further information can be found by emailing info@sdblincoco.ie

Superintendent Thomas Murphy, Garda National Roads Policing Bureau said 'An Garda Síochána are delighted to work alongside and support South Dublin County Council and the other East Coast Local Authorities in the launch of this very important multi-agency road safety campaign designed towards promoting the safe and enjoyable use of motorcycles on our roads, whilst at the same time advising other road users to remember that there will be an increased number of motorcyclists on our roads over the summer period



Mayor of SDCC Cllr. Baby Pereppadan with Orlaith Maguire (Road Safety Officer SDCC), Zewar Zyada - Road Safety Officer Dublin City Council, Garda Superintendent Tom Murphy, Gerry Flaherty - Road Safety Engineer Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Council, Linda Healy - Road Safety Officer Wicklow Council, members of the Gardai Road Policing Unit, Driving instructor Andy Maslan and student Lorcan Hickey at the launch of the Think Safe, Think Bike motorcycle safety awareness campaign - Photo by Ben Ryan.

and to take additional extra care when turning at junctions or entering onto a roadway. We are urging all drivers over this Bank Holiday weekend and summer period to slow down and be aware of your surroundings at all times'. An Garda Síochána fully participate with delivering BikeSafe programme at various locations throughout the country. This road safety initiative includes video pre-learning, a motorcycle safety/skills theory, classroom based workshop and an observed

ride led by Advanced Garda Motorcyclists and is free of charge, T&C apply.

Wicklow County Council's Road Safety Officer Linda Healy said 'The Bank Holiday weekend is a great occasion to be out enjoying our wonderful countryside and take part in activities. As this can lead to an increase in traffic on our roads, it is important that we work together to share and make our roads a safer place. Research shows that there is an increase in road traffic collision over bank hol-

idays, but these can be avoided if we all make responsible choices when using the roads. We are appealing to all road users to take extra care on our roads this weekend'

Road Safety Engineer at Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Gerry Flaherty said, 'behind every fatal casualty in a collision will be a family who are expecting them to come home. This campaign is about encouraging motorcyclists to take care when on the road with the aim of reducing the high

number of collisions involving motorcyclists. Although a motorcyclist may not be at fault, their vulnerability invariably means that they can suffer more serious injuries in a collision'.

Zewar Zyada Dublin City Council Road Safety Engineer said 'this multi-agency campaign shows the strength of collaboration across East Coast Local Authorities and An Garda Síochána in promoting safer roads. By working together and raising awareness, we can reduce

risk and support safer choices for all road users'.

Mayor Baby Pereppadan of South Dublin County Council expressed his delight at the launch of South Dublin's multi-agency Motor Cyclist Campaign "Think Twice - Think Bike" noting that with summer fast approaching there will be a lot more motorcyclists out and about on our roads. He urges both motorcyclists and car drivers alike to look out for each other as we all share the road together.

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• In Blessington we are parked in the square, near the Lemon Tree (which is now closed)

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