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Tuesday 10th June 2025 First Floor, The Boulevard, Quinsborough Road, Bray. A98 R6D7. Tel: 01 - 2869111 E-mail: wicklowed@localtimes.ie www.wicklowtimes.net

ANOTHER SCHOOL CRISIS

A deepening crisis in secondary school places across County Wicklow has drawn strong criticism from local politicians, parents, and campaigners, with dozens of students still without confirmed places for September 2025. Communities in Greystones, Newtownmountkennedy, Ashford and surrounding areas have been particularly affected, prompting growing calls for urgent action.

The issue, which has been described as a failure of long-term planning, has prompted calls for immediate intervention from the Department of Education, as well as fresh demands for the construction of a new secondary school to serve the fast-growing community of Newtownmountkennedy and its

neighbouring areas.

A campaign group working on the issue recently revealed a 32% increase in student numbers between the current sixth-year group at the four local secondary schools (440 students) and the current sixth-class group in the fourteen primary schools located in Greystones, Kilcoole,

Delgany, New-castle, Newtownmountkennedy, Roundwood and Kilmacanogue, which together form the schools' catchment area. This year, those primary schools have a combined total of 582 sixth-class pupils. For September 2025, the four local secondary schools have just 553 first-year places avail-



Lesley Kirwan with her supporters following her 10k walk in Arklow for Open Door.



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able, leaving at least 29 children without a school place, even before taking into account any duplicate applications or late arrivals.

Among them are parents in Newtown and Roundwood, where children face early starts, long commutes, and uncertainty about whether they'll attend the same school as their peers. Local teacher and parent Ciara Beatty described how the absence of a nearby secondary school limits opportunities for extracurricular involvement and contributes to growing traffic congestion. But for her, the impact goes beyond practical inconvenience. "A local school is more than just an educational facility," she said. "It serves as a vital hub that fosters lifelong friendships, strong civic

bonds, and a deeper sense of belonging."

Calls for action are growing. Tánaiste Simon Harris has written to Minister for Education Helen McEntee urging a review of the issue "as an urgent matter." He has expressed full support for the local campaign, saying: "Newtownmountkennedy is a growing and thriving community in County Wicklow and the need for a Secondary School is very clear to me as Tánaiste and local TD. Along with local councillor Shane Langrell and community activist Ciara Perks, I agree wholeheartedly of the need to provide proper Secondary Level Educational infrastructure for Newtown."

Harris acknowledged the efforts of the local campaign and said the Department

must respond to the needs of a growing population. "While we

have excellent schools in Greystones, North Wicklow is growing

fast," he said, "and we need to respond

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Lament for Palestine

A poem by Oisín Large. Calary, Wicklow

She stretches out her arms
not to harvest,
but to question the sky:
How many more stars must fall
before you call this night imassacré?

Her hands tremble
like a sparrow's wing
caught in the net of a sniper's scope.
Not from age.
But from the weight of names
she stitches into her shroud,
each syllable a child
who learned eternity
before apple.

Her cloak drags behind her,
a flag of shadows
bleached by phosphorous suns.
It no longer casts a shape,
only the absence
of a street, a hospital,
a cradle rocked
by a mother singing
ya tir, ya tir
to a bird that will not return.

She walks among the tents.
Again.
Again.
Again.
As if the earth rotates
only to grind bones
into this hourglass of dust.

Each soul she gathers
roots her deeper
in a soil that refuses
to swallow its dead.
The land is an open mouth
that cannot scream.

She speaks to a silence
older than God:

O Stone before Stone,
take me.
Let me sleep in the sea
not as salt, but as a letter
washed ashore in Jaffa:

We died thirsty.
Send oranges.

Or lay me under Galilee's pines
where roots clutch
the keys of the displaced
like unblossomed jasmine.

Let the doves forget my name.
Their wings are ash now,

their song a eulogy
for a boy counting rockets
instead of sheep.

Let the soil call another reaper.

Let me go.
I was not made to cradle
a whole nation's last breath
in my skeletal palms.
I was not made to be
the midwife of ghosts.

But the plain chains her.
The horizon is a wall.
Every child's phantom
wraps her ankles in barbed wire:

Stay.
Who will remember
the taste of za'atar
if you leave?
Who will recite
the pulse of the olive grove
when even its ashes
are stolen?

She remembers the trees,
how their branches wrote psalms
in the dialect of wind.
Now they stand as blackened minarets,
preaching desolation.

She tears her veil,
stuffs it with rubble,
builds a cairn for the unanswered:

Is this my exile?
To outlive the living?
To become a monument
of unclaimed shoes?

No answer.
Only the drone's hymn
and beneath it
the rustle of a UNRWA sack
nursing a body
too small for a coffin.

Only the sound
not of silence
but of a mother
digging with bare hands
through concrete and blood,
whispering to the ruin:

Take my name instead.
Take it.
And let him breathe.



Dagle Bridge Club presented Open Door with a generous donation of €1,000 as a result of their Christmas raffle. These funds are very much appreciated and will be put to use in the centre to support the various activities available to adults with physical disabilities. Find out how Open Door could help you or someone you know at www.opendoor.ie or call 01 2867123. Pictured from back back left are: Rudy Montejo, Justyna Oleksiewicz, Michael Mullen, Dermot Kane, Anne Mullen (presenting the cheque), Suzanne Cox, Kevin Moore and Peter Lawlor.

30 polar panels on roof of Pastoral Centre

The 2025 Wicklow Energy Awareness Day, sponsored by SSE Renewables, will take place in the Pastoral Centre, Wicklow (Eircode A67 FX65) on Saturday, 14th June from 11am to 4pm. The event has expanded to include the Sustainable Energy Communities of Greystones and Arklow who have completed a series of group solar and insulation programmes.

Over 30 Electric Vehicles from 17 of the largest brands in Ireland will be there. Some may be in a position to offer Test Drives on the day. Large numbers of exhibitors will be showing off the latest Solar Power, Heating and Insulation systems.

But it's not just about buyers and sellers. Energy Expert, Gavin Harte, will hold a number of half hour workshops on the Practical and Economic benefits of Sustainable Energy and how each individual person can get involved. For children (and parents) there will be fun science and eco games as well as Face Painters. The Smoothie Bike is back where you can test your energy levels to make your own smoothie drink.

shown on a screen in the foyer. People have commented on how comfortable the building is since the insulation was fitted.

The people of County Wicklow are playing their part in the effort to combat climate change. 1 in 5 cars purchased in 2023 in the county were totally electric and, in the first 4 months of 2025, EV sales were up 23% on the same period in 2024. 20% of houses in the county, that have a Building Energy Rating (BER), have a

BER of A and 1 in 3 houses meet the Government's target of a BER of B2 or higher. With congestion and major increases in traffic on our roads, the zero emissions from EVs help to control air quality around our schools, public areas, footpaths and shops.

4 draws will be held for prizes, each valued at €250, in a FREE draw for attendees. Admission to the event in the Pastoral Centre is also FREE.



CARA - Care and Repair

The CARA - Care and Repair service run by Bray & North Wicklow Area Partnership carries out small jobs for older, vulnerable people living in the Bray and North Wicklow areas. Typical jobs of this friendly and reliable service include: hedge and grass cutting; minor carpentry; small paint jobs; replacing light bulbs; installing smoke alarms and moving light furniture. Whilst there is no charge for the service, you are required to pay for materials required, and voluntary donations are gratefully accepted. All staff are Garda vetted. Call (01) 286 6080 and ask for the CARA service or email care-andrepair@bnwap.ie.

Coffee morning a huge success

The recent Team Stella Coffee Morning in aid of Prader-Willi Association of Ireland was a huge success. Organisers say "We're absolutely overwhelmed by the incredible turnout and even bigger generosity shown at our Team Stella Coffee Morning! The community spirit was truly heartwarming. A huge thank you to the local helpers, the Timmons and Leonard families, Essie for the wonderful music, the children who came along with such excitement and joy, and everyone who attended, donated or supported us in any way. Thanks to all of you, we've raised over €7,500 for the Prader-Willi Association of Ireland (PWSAI). A special shoutout to Bruno, our teddy mascot, and to the 40 plus businesses who donated prizes and financial support - your contributions truly made a difference!"

Scoil San Eoin Summer Fair

Scoil San Eoin in Redcross are hosting a family-friendly summer fair on Saturday, June 14th from 12-3pm at the school grounds. It's a fundraising event to support this small rural school, and the day will include stalls, games, food, a raffle, face painting, and a fun passport game for kids. All are welcome to attend.

Shankill Classical Music Club

The last meeting of the season is on Wednesday 11th June. 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). You don't need to be an expert! There's no charge on the night. For further info phone or text John at 087 210 9175.

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Burglary rates rise by 45% in Wicklow

Highest increase in the country

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) has released figures showing that the number of burglaries in the Wicklow Gardaí division has increased by 45% in the 12 months of 2024 compared to 2023 with 342 burglaries occurring. This is the highest increase in the country and it's an unsettling trend that all homeowners need to acknowledge and address their individual home security measures, to help combat the issue.

On a national level, 9,728 burglaries were recorded across Ireland in 2024, which is a 2% increase on the previous year, making it the third consecutive annual rise in recorded crime statistics. The latest data reveals that 13 of the 28 Garda divisions reported an increase in burglaries, underlining growing concern in both rural and urban areas regarding home security. The increases have been

widespread across the country, with no province experiencing specific rising trends. However, some Garda divisions endured a concerning high increase. The Limerick Garda division burglaries experienced the second highest increase at 25% (579 burglaries), Tipperary by 23% (356) and the combined Cavan and Monaghan division by 21% (279 burglaries). Homeowners in these

counties need to be even more cautious to ensure their homes are safeguarded 24/7.

The report did also reveal constructive outcomes with 15 Garda divisions citing a decrease in burglary rates. Which is a positive direction that needs to be replicated across more counties. The Mayo Garda division cited the highest reduction in burglaries at 33% (119 burglaries). The Cork West

Garda division also had a significant decrease at -28% (53 burglaries), Galway Garda division at -17% (343 burglaries) and Dublin North Central Garda division decreased its rates by -13% (538 burglaries).

Security experts and law enforcement agencies are prompting homeowners to remain vigilant and take proactive measures to protect their homes. Eoin Dunne, PhoneWatch

Managing Director commented, "This third consecutive yearly upward trend in burglary rates highlights the importance of prioritising home security. Prevention is key, simple steps can make a significant difference in deterring criminal activity. Each homeowner needs to take responsibility for protecting their home and in turn their communities. At Phonewatch we firmly believe, and have sound evidence which proves, monitored alarms significantly reduce your chances of being burgled'.

Tips for protecting your home this summer

As we begin to organise our summer holidays, it's the perfect time to review your home's security effectiveness and make necessary changes to safeguard your home and family. This is vital for when you're at home and even more so, when you're away from home, especially for lengthy time periods.

- 1. Lock All Doors and Windows:** Even when at home or in the garden, ensure all entry points are secured.
- 2. Install a Monitored Home Security System:** 24/7 monitored alarm systems act as powerful deterrents. Their interactive apps allow you to receive real time alerts, so you can check in on your home when you're away.
- 3. Light Up Your Home:** Give the appearance of occupancy even when you're away. Home security systems also have smart plugs, that can be put on timers or turned on instantly when needed.
- 4. Secure Entry Points:** Reinforce doors and install deadbolts or additional locks where needed.
- 5. Know your neighbour:** Build up a strong relationship with neighbours and ask them to keep an eye on your home while you're away. Do the same for them!
- 6. Keep Valuables Out of Sight:** Avoid leaving expensive items visible through windows.
- 7. Trim Hedges and Bushes and mow lawns:** Eliminate hiding places for potential intruders near doors and windows by keep hedges trimmed. Mowing your lawn before you go on holidays, portrays that it's freshly done, and you may not be away.
- 8. Be Cautious with Social Media:** Wait until you return from holidays to post any pictures on social media. If you do so while on holidays, you could be highlighting to potential intruders that you're away.

71 people skipped bail in Bray district court in 2024

Ireland South MEP Cynthia Ní Mhurchú has backed An Taoiseach Micheal Martin's commitment to further reform bail laws in Ireland and said she supports an overhaul of Ireland's bail system.

The MEP made her comments as figures were released to her by the courts service of Ireland showing that the Irish District court system alone collected almost €170,000 in forfeited bail money when 562 people who were before the district courts decided to

skip bail and not turn up in court in 2024.

Ní Mhurchú emphasised that these figures are for the district court alone and circuit and higher court figures were unavailable to her.

Dublin topped the poll of bail skippers. The Dublin district courts

held onto over €80,000 as 334 people skipped bail and didn't show up for the court dates in 2024. Cork city by comparisons only had 7 people skip bail in the district court in 2024.

71 people failed to turn up for district court appearances in Wicklow

in 2024 and the Bray district court office collected €18,690 in forfeited bail money. 10 people skipped bail in the Cavan district courts in 2024 meaning the court kept over €8,000 euro in bail money. Other district court offices with a relatively high number of people skipping bail in 2024 were Bray (71), Dundalk (32), Trim (26) and Monaghan (13).

Ní Mhurchú said that a cohort of defendants in court, most of them in Dublin, clearly feel like they are above the law.

According to Cynthia Ní Mhurchú: "This seems to be an acute issue in the Dublin district courts. Fianna Fail is committed to building a victim-centred criminal justice system and strengthening our bail laws to ensure that courts will refuse bail if

an accused is likely to commit another serious offence on bail. I am confident that Minister Jim O'Callaghan will bring the necessary reforms in this area."

The figures follow revelations in March of this year that criminals on bail were suspected of having carried out 40,348 crimes in 2024 across Ireland. Ní Mhurchú said it is time for a get tough approach

on those who are flaunting Ireland's bail laws.

Cynthia Ní Mhurchú pointed out that year on year over the past three years, the number of people skipping bail is falling and she welcomed that. For example, 717 people skipped bail in our district court system in 2022.

Any forfeited bail money goes back to the Irish exchequer



Cynthia Ní Mhurchú.

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Cllr Stephen Stokes on the new lawnmower.

New mean green mower for the Greystones District

Cllr Stephen Stokes has welcomed the arrival of a new electric Mean Green Mower to the Greystones Municipal District fleet, marking a significant step forward in Wicklow County Council's commitment to sustainable practices and climate conscious operations.

Three municipal districts across County Wicklow are set to receive a new green mower. Cllr Stokes stated: "I would like to commend Mark Costello & the Environment Section of Wicklow County Council for this wonderful investment. The EV Mean Green Mower is electric and will significantly reduce our carbon emissions."

Manufactured in the United States, the Mean Green Mower is a state of the art, zero-emission commercial mower powered

entirely by electricity. This cutting edge machine is quieter, cleaner, and more environmentally friendly than traditional petrol or diesel models, reducing both noise pollution and carbon emissions in public spaces.

Cllr Stokes added: "The mower is operator friendly. It is quieter by about 90% and vibrates a lot less than traditional diesel engine machines. Hopefully the noise reduction will benefit local residents too."

The Mean Green Mower is designed for performance

and durability, suitable for maintaining parks, greenways, and other community areas across the District. It also supports Wicklow County Council's broader strategy to transition to low-carbon technologies in public services. Cllr Stokes further noted: "This is a welcome development for Charlesland, Delgany, Greystones, Kilcoole, Killadreenan & Newcastle. The adoption of electrical equipment like the Mean Green Mower reflects our dedication to greener public services and

environmental leadership. Residents want action on cleaner technology, and this is a practical example of how we can deliver that locally."

Cllr Stephen Stokes believes that by investing in sustainable machinery, we're not just improving how we maintain our green spaces - we're also sending a clear message that Greystones is serious about environmental responsibility and innovation. The new mower is now fully operational and will be deployed across the District in the coming weeks.

Leave No Trace Ireland Launches 'Love This Place' 2025 Campaign

On 27th May, Leave No Trace Ireland launched its annual "Love This Place" campaign, calling on the public to come together to protect Ireland's rich natural landscapes, so we can all enjoy them responsibly as we head into the summer season. Now in its fifth year, the national awareness campaign is supported by partners including the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, the Office of Public Works, Coillte, Sport Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Wicklow Co Council, Galway Co Council, Clare Co Council & Cork City Council - all dedicated to promoting responsible outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship.

With more people than ever seeking connection with nature - through hiking, swimming, dog-walking and exploring - this year's "Love This Place" campaign reinforces the simple message: "If you love this place, leave no trace."

The Need for Protection Ireland's great out-

doors has seen a sharp rise in popularity in recent years, with over 98% of residents valuing time spent in nature. However, increased footfall has also brought challenges: trail erosion, littering, dog fouling, wildlife disturbance, and an increase in wildfires - 96% of which are linked

to human activity.

"Our message is clear," said Maura Kiely, CEO of Leave No Trace Ireland, "We all have a part to play in preserving the places and wildlife we love. This campaign invites everyone enjoying the outdoors this summer, from seasoned hikers to dog owners, to take simple, mindful steps to protect our natural landscapes."

Throughout the summer, "Love This Place" will roll out:

- A digital storytelling campaign featuring voices from across Ireland: farmers, walkers, dog owners, and community groups.

On-the-ground events and clean-up days coordinated with local authorities and environmental groups.

- Education initiatives and social media toolkits for influencers, schools, and tourism partners.

The "Love This Place" 2025 campaign shares three tangible actions for the public to:

- Be responsible with your dog - Keep dogs on a lead, especially around farm animals and wild-

life, and always clean up after them.

- Protect Wildlife and wild places - Bring all litter home, don't feed wild animals, and watch wildlife from a safe distance.

- Stay on the path - Stick to marked trails to avoid damaging habitats or disturbing animals, both seen and unseen.

"Our land is not just scenic - it's living," added Kiely. "It feeds us, shelters biodiversity, and con-

nects our communities. Respecting it is not about restriction, but about care and responsibility. We're so grateful to the public and our partners for supporting 'Love This Place' - we ask everyone to take action and join the movement because protecting the places we love means we can continue to enjoy them in the future."

Speaking about the launch Dara Calleary TD, Minister for Social Protection and Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht said "Ireland's natural heritage is one of our greatest assets - environmentally, culturally,

and economically. The Love This Place campaign reminds us that with this privilege comes responsibility.

By embracing the principles of Leave No Trace, we protect our landscapes and support efforts to tackle our declining biodiversity. Even small actions matter, helping us to work in greater harmony and building the resilience of nature across the country. I am proud to support this campaign and encourage everyone to play their part."

To learn more or get involved, visit: www.leave-notraceireland.org/love-this-place

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Clean Coasts Observers and Explore Your Shore workshops launch for World Ocean Day 2025

On World Ocean Day, June 8th, Clean Coasts launched the 2025 Clean Coasts Observers Workshops in partnership with Explore Your Shore!

An Taisce stated "For us, and for our community groups nationwide, every day is World Ocean Day and protecting our marine life and environment requires year-round dedication, care, and collective action. This is why we've once again teamed up with the National Biodiversity Centre's Explore Your Shore! project to empower volunteers to become citizen scientists and encourage local marine guardianship. These nationwide workshops promote our vital connection to our coastal ecosystems and biodiversity and encourage members of the public to engage in citizen science actions to care for our coasts."

"Partnering with Clean Coasts through the Observer initiative helps mobilise the strength of the Clean Coasts network, and the enthusiasm of local Clean Coasts groups for all things marine, to improve our knowledge of Ireland's Coastal Biodiversity through Citizen Science," explains Dave Wall, Citizen Science Officer, National Biodiversity Data Centre. "A better understanding of marine biodiversity helps foster stewardship of our seas and coastline, improve local skills in marine species identification, and contributes to the monitoring of marine habitats in Ireland."

Running from June to November, training events will take place in coastal towns and villages around Ireland, including Wicklow, in collaboration with local communities and project partners.

To receive a Clean Coasts Observers badge and completion pack, participants must:

1. Be a registered Clean Coasts Observer
2. Complete the Explore Your Shore! free online workshop
3. Attend at least one in-person Clean Coasts Observers Explore Your Shore Workshop.



Liane Costello, Clean Coasts Biodiversity Officer, explores the shore with local community during an event for Dublin Climate Action Week, hosted by Fingal County Council. Image by Kevin McFeely, Coalesce Photography

1 in every 3 empty council homes boarded up for longer than 12 months in Wicklow

Sinn Féin TD John Brady has launched a scathing attack on the Government for its failure to properly resource local authorities, resulting in the disgraceful abandonment of public homes in the midst of the most severe housing crisis in the history of the State.

Deputy Brady's remarks follow the release of shocking FOI data to Sinn Féin by Wicklow County Council, which reveal that a staggering 108 Council homes currently lie boarded up across the county - 1 in every 3 of which has been left empty for over a year.

Speaking on the scandal, Deputy Brady said: "There is absolutely nothing more offensive - nothing more galling - for the thousands of families living through this housing emergency than to walk past a good home left to rot.

Across the state there are at least 2,656 vacant council homes right now, and over 750 of these are lying unused, boarded up, for over a year. These are not derelict shells. These are houses that should be filled with life - families around kitchen tables, children growing up with stability and dignity. Instead, those children are growing up in cramped hotel rooms, robbed of their childhoods. That is not just

shameful, it is immoral.

"I am beyond fed up with this Government's pathetic excuses. Every time they're asked why homes are lying empty, they blame someone else. The truth is this: these homes are empty because of deliberate underfunding, bureaucratic madness, and a total absence of urgency or care from Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil. Wicklow County Council is making significant progress in re-letting works when the resources are there, but their hands are tied. The funding they receive from the government to carry these works out is quite frankly an insult. It is asking them to complete an enormous job on a shoestring budget.

"This is not just a Wicklow issue - it is happening in communities across the country. In every town and village, you will find boarded-up houses that attract dumping, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. They scar neighbourhoods, demoralise residents, and sym-

bolise this Government's ongoing betrayal of working people.

"Wicklow County Council is being hamstrung. It is being asked to do an impossible job with crumbs. Six of the homes currently boarded up have been empty for over five years. That is a scandal. The Government claims to fund re-letting works, but the figures tell the real story - just €874 per vacant home in the county is being allocated. That's a slap in the face, given that the average cost of returning a home to use in 2022 was over €21,000.

"Let's be very clear - these empty homes are not an accident. They are the direct result of government policy. They are what happens when you treat housing as a commodity and not a human right. If Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael cared about ordinary people, about young couples trying to build a life, or children being raised in hotels, then no public home would be

left vacant for years.

"It is appalling that in Wicklow today, grown adults are crammed into their parents' box rooms while the house next door lies boarded up. It is disgraceful that young people are forced to emigrate, not because they want to see the world, but because they have no hope of affording a home in the community they grew up in. And it is heart-breaking that children are walking home from school today, not to a front door of their own, but to a shared hotel room.

"Under a Sinn Féin Government, this would end. We would not tolerate long-term vacancy. We would cut through the red tape, we would invest properly in our local authorities, and we would restore these homes to the people. Every single boarded-up home would be treated like the emergency it is. We will not rest until these homes are back in use and families are given the dignity of a place to call home."



Lesley Kirwan with Suzanne Cox of Open Door and Pat Byrne, pictured after Lesley's 10k walk in Arklow in aid of Open Door.

ANOTHER SCHOOL CRISIS

Continued from page 1

accordingly to the needs of families living in Newtownmountkennedy and the surrounding areas."

Meanwhile, analysis compiled by the campaign group and presented in a parliamentary question revealed the scale of the shortfall. Cllr Danny Alvey, a member of the group, warned that even with planned expansions at Greystones Community College and Coláiste Chraobh Abhann in Kilcoole, demand will still outpace supply. "If the current trajectory of growth continues these schools will be full before they are even open and, with all the house building in Greystones, Newtown and Roundwood, we know that is going to happen," he said. "If the Department don't see sense and start planning for a new school in Newtown immediately I know I will join all the other parents in this area who have to needlessly worry about secondary school places when it just shouldn't be like this in a developed country."

That sense of avoidable anxiety

is echoed by children themselves. Martina Keating, a member of the campaign group who works with a local youth organisation, collected comments from pupils preparing to enter sixth class this September. "I am worried all my friends get into CCA and I have to go somewhere else," said one. "What if I miss the bus? My mam doesn't drive," said another. "I'm really scared I won't get a place."

The Department's response so far has not reassured campaigners. Jennifer Whitmore TD, who submitted the parliamentary question on behalf of the group, said the figures show exactly what families have been warning about. "It is unacceptable that, in 2025, families are left in limbo without a guaranteed secondary school place for their children," she said. "A new school in Newtownmountkennedy is not just a logical step, it's a necessary one."

Green Party Cllr Lourda Scott has also criticised the Department for what she called "reactive crisis management." She described hearing from over half a dozen parents

in recent weeks who are "worried sick," and said the issue was raised with the Department more than a year ago. "This is not a sustainable way to manage education in one of Ireland's fastest-growing areas," she said, pointing to years of warnings and little tangible progress.

Cllr Shane Langrell, who recently brought Tánaiste Harris to visit the proposed site, called the lack of a school a "systemic failure to acknowledge and support the needs of our growing community." He said: "Every child deserves access to education within their hometown... this response is totally unacceptable."

The Department of Education has stated it is committed to ensuring every child has a place and cited over €177 million invested in Wicklow schools since 2020. It pointed to data-sharing arrangements and ongoing engagement with local schools to monitor demand. But for many families, that promise rings hollow. With September just a few months away and no new plan on the table, pressure is building.

Whitmore raises Wicklow's disastrous school transport system in the Dail

Calls for Immediate Action from the Department of Education

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore has raised the ongoing annual issues in the school bus transport system in Wicklow in the Dail, warning the Minister for Education to put measures in place now to ensure a workable school bus system is available to Wicklow students for the start of the next academic year.



Jennifer Whitmore TD.

"This is a completely unacceptable situation. Every year, families in Wicklow are left scrambling to secure school transport for their children, and every year, the Department and Bus Éireann fail to plan adequately," Deputy Whitmore said.

"Each year, in August and September, we experience the same problem in Wicklow with insufficient school bus drivers and insufficient school buses. This situation sometimes goes on for months before children have a bus to get to school. This repeats every year - there are never enough buses, never enough drivers, and no forward planning. It's just not good enough," Deputy Whitmore explained.

"I welcome that there has been a review of the school transport scheme and I also welcome the plans to reduce the distances within the school bus scheme, but the most fundamental thing that Bus Éireann needs to do is to provide for the

system as it currently is and they are failing to do that in Wicklow," Deputy Whitmore continued.

"There is also a barrier to the school bus scheme which states that students must attend their nearest school in order to avail of the scheme, but for many students in Wicklow this isn't a privilege that they have. We have a crisis of school places in Wicklow, and many children end up only being accepted to their second, third, or fourth closest school, and then they're faced with the disaster of not being able to secure transport to school, it's ridiculous," Deputy Whitmore stated.

"I have asked the Minister for Education to put measures in place now so that we can be sure that, come August-September, there will be a school bus system that works and that provides for Wicklow students. In the meantime, I will continue to monitor this situation and to push for action," Deputy Whitmore concluded.



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neamhphléasctha agus armlón
contúirteach eile
Is ionann **BRATACHA DEARGA**
agus **BEO-LÁMHACH**
Bí ag faire do na comharthaí foláirimh
AGUS BÍ AR d'AIRDEALL!

Sod turned on Chapel Road Pedestrian and Cycle Improvement Scheme

On Tuesday, 3rd June Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Paul O'Brien and Cathaoirleach of Greystones Municipal District Tom Fortune marked the commencement of works for the Chapel Road (Delgany) Pedestrian and Cycle Infrastructure Improvement Scheme.

This project is an important and long-awaited step forward in delivering safer, more sustainable travel options for the community of Delgany and its surrounding areas. The scope of the project is both ambitious and essential which will see key sections of roadway being upgraded, Chapel Road - from the Convent Road Roundabout to Blacklion Manor Road - improving not only the footpaths and introducing new cycle track facilities but also widening and realigning the road to enhance safety and access for all road users. This will link in seamlessly with existing cycle and pedestrian facilities previously completed on Chapel Road, ensuring a continuous, accessible route for all.

Importantly, the scheme also includes the construction of two permanent bus stops, further supporting sustainable, integrated travel options for the area.

This project aligns strongly with planning policy objectives - to enhance mobility, sustainability, and safety not just in Delgany and Greystones, but across all of County Wicklow.

Cllr Paul O'Brien, Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, said "This is a proud moment for Wicklow County Council and for everyone who has contributed to the development of this project. The scheme is being brought to life by

the Roads Project Office within our Transportation and Infrastructure Delivery Directorate - a team committed to improving travel and connectivity in our county. This journey didn't happen overnight. The project received Part 8 Planning approval in January 2020, and the necessary land was secured through a Compulsory Purchase Order approved by An Bord Pleanála in February 2022. Construction has now begun and we look forward to its completion in the second quarter of 2026.

"I'd like to acknowledge the significant funding commitment which has made this project possible. It is 100% funded by Wicklow County Council through development contributions, a testament to our commitment to reinvesting in the communities that make Wicklow such a vibrant and connected place to live."

Wicklow County Council Chief Executive Emer O'Gorman mentioned that "at its core, the scheme addresses the current gaps in pedestrian and cycle safety, particularly for our youngest road users - children walking or cycling to school. By delivering a safer and more coherent route, we are supporting healthier lifestyles, reducing traffic congestion and providing a more pleasant environment for all.

"I would like to thank DBFL Consulting Eng-

ineers, for designing and managing the construction of this scheme, as well as our appointed contractor, Coffey Group, whose team is currently hard at

work on site and to the communities who have supported and advocated for this work - thank you to everyone who helped make it possible. Thank you to everyone who helped make this project possible. It's an exciting day for the community and a significant step forward for active travel in Wicklow. We look forward to seeing the positive impact this project will have on the everyday lives of our residents and visitors alike."



Simon Coffey (Director of Coffey Construction), Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council Cllr Paul O'Brien, Emer O'Gorman (CE of Wicklow County Council), Cathaoirleach of the Greystones Municipal District Cllr Tom Fortune, Joe Lane (Director of Services, Wicklow County Council) and Kevin Sturgeon (Director of DBFL Consulting Engineers Ltd).



All attendees at the sod turning ceremony.

Stokes seeks completion of Church Road works

Cllr Stephen Stokes is seeking the completion of the Church Road works in Greystones. Although the northern half of the road was resurfaced in October 2024, the verges remain unfinished.

Cllr Stokes tabled a motion about the matter at the May 2025 meeting of the Greystones Municipal District. The motion called for the urgent completion of the Church Road works, with a specific focus on the verges and kerbs. A review of the issue is now expected to take place, with a view to going out to tender to complete the work.

After the meeting, Cllr Stokes stated: "The people of Greystones welcomed the much needed resurfacing of Church Road last October, but six months later, we are still waiting for the rest of the job to be finished. The incomplete verges are not only a visual blight, they also pose a potential safety risk, particularly for pedestrians. It must be remembered that hundreds of school children use these

footpaths on a daily basis."

As the main street, Church Road is a key artery in Greystones, linking the town centre with local schools, businesses, and residential areas. The unfinished verges have led to concerns about water drainage, pedestrian safety, and the general appearance of the area from local residents.

Cllr Stokes believes that road projects should always be completed in a timely manner. He is calling on Wicklow County Council and relevant contractors to urgently complete the long delayed works on Church Road in Greystones.

Cllr Stokes added: "The road re-surfacing was completed to a high standard. However we need to ensure public infrastructure projects are delivered in

full and without unnecessary delays. Local residents deserve an efficient and effective service."

Residents have also contacted Cllr Stephen Stokes to express concern about the loss of parking and high kerbs. He is urging Wicklow County Council to provide a clear timeline for when the remaining works will be completed and to prioritise the final restoration and landscaping of the verges.

Cllr Stokes concluded: "We need decisive action to see these works through to completion and to a satisfactory standard. I will also continue to campaign for infrastructure projects across Charlesland, Delgany, Greystones, Kilcoole, Killadreenan and Newcastle."



Cllr Stokes on Church Road.

Brady asks Tánaiste and Minister for Transport to meet Herbert Road delegation

Sinn Féin TD for John Brady, has confirmed that he has written to the Tánaiste, Simon Harris, requesting that he facilitate a meeting between the Minister for Transport Darragh O'Brien, the four Wicklow TDs and a delegation of local residents regarding the closure of the Herbert Road in Bray.

This follows an exchange in the Dáil where the Minister of State Sean Canney refused to answer whether he would meet with a delegation on the matter, when asked by Deputy Brady.

Deputy Brady said: "The closure of the Herbert Road will have a hugely negative impact on local residents and businesses. It is completely unacceptable that their voices were not heard during the National Transport Authority's consultation process. This is an important measure in the democratic process and seems to have been a 'tick-the-box' exercise. This road is one of four vital arteries into the town, and any closure will create chaos for the local community."

Deputy Brady highlighted the parallels with the previously proposed N11 upgrade, which was then scrapped by then Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan, despite having reached the same phase of planning.

"The N11 upgrade was halted for ideological reasons by Minister Ryan during the last government's term. This shows that the Minister has the authority to halt the closure of the Herbert Road. We cannot allow decisions of this scale to be made without meaningful engagement with the people who will be most affected."

Deputy Brady is calling for a delegation of local residents and businesses to be given the opportunity to meet directly with the Minister for Transport and outline their concerns.

"I have written to Tanaiste Simon Harris and asked him to use his position to ensure that the voices of the people of Bray are heard at the highest level. Simon Harris has said publicly that he is opposed to the closure of the road - and it is imperative he now acts on these words. I sincerely hope that Minister Darragh O'Brien and the other Wicklow TDs will engage constructively with the local community on this important issue."



John Brady TD protesting with residents about the closure of the Herbert Road.



Miriam and Paul Mahon with the Wicklow Rugby Club president Ann Morrissey at the Wicklow Rugby Club dinner dance in the Arklow Bay Hotel.



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

PUBLIC CONSULTATION – PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF FORMER GARDA STATION ASHFORD AS A COMMUNITY CENTRE/SPORTS AND RECREATION HUB

It is proposed to develop the former Garda Station in Ashford as a Community Centre/Sports and Recreation Hub for the community.

A planning application has been submitted by Ashford Development Association CLG – Planning Register Reference No. 2560316.

The public, stakeholders and interested parties are invited to view the planning application online or at the planning counter of Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow Town from Monday to Friday – 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.

This non-statutory consultation provides an opportunity for feedback and observations to be submitted regarding the proposed development, which may inform the further development of the project in the next phases.

Submissions will be accepted via Wicklow County Council's Online Consultation Hub. Submissions can be emailed to ccsadmin@wicklowcoco.ie (please reference "Former Garda Station Ashford" in the subject line or posted to Ms. Máire Halvey, T/Senior Executive Officer, Community Services, Social Development (Housing & Community), County Buildings, Whitegates, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow, A67 FW96 with "Former Garda Station Ashford" marked on the front of the envelope.

The deadline for receipt of submissions is 5.00 p.m. on Friday 20th June 2025.

€725,000 for seven Wicklow community projects

Funding of almost €725,000 has been announced for Wicklow under the Community Recognition Fund. The major investment in the county will benefit projects in Greystones, Bray, Newtownmountkennedy, Wicklow Town, Rathdrum and Blessington.

The successful projects announced by the Tánaiste are:

- Greystones Town Team: Sustainable infrastructure to enhance Greystones community events capacity - €136,570
- Newcastle Playground, Greystones: Upgrade works - €160,000
- Newtownmountkennedy Community Centre: Construction of modern toilet block and convert existing toilets off main hall into storage rooms - €60,000
- Rathdrum Development Association: Walkway upgrade at Parnell Memorial Park - €43,700
- Wicklow Town Team Sustainable Energy Community Group: Window upgrade at De La Salle Pastoral Centre

- €121,242

- Blessington & District Forum Trails Ltd: Resurfacing works at Blessington Greenway - €150,680
 - Purple House Cancer Support, Bray: Kitchen redevelopment - €52,800
- The support for Wicklow is part of a multi-million investment under the Community Recognition Fund.

This scheme is about rewarding communities that have welcomed in people from Ukraine and other countries.

Announcing the funding for County Wicklow, Simon Harris said: "I'm delighted to see these seven fantastic projects receive such significant investment under the Government's

Community Recognition Fund. I want to congratulate all of the successful applicants, who have worked so hard on their applications - and today they are reaping the rewards.

"I'm delighted to see that almost €300,000 will go to Greystones; Funding for community events in the village and to also develop the Newcastle playground. I would also like to congratulate the team at Purple House for securing their funding of €52,800.

"I have visited Purple House on a number of occasions, and I know the value of the work they do for the people of Wicklow. I also want to congratulate the Blessington and District Forum Trails team, for securing such a significant investment of €150,680. The Blessington Greenway is such an important outdoor and tourism asset for West Wicklow and this funding

will do so much in terms of delivering improvements.

"It's great to see the Wicklow Town Team also secure significant funding for the pastoral centre at the De La Salle. Well down as well to the communities in Newtownmountkennedy and Rathdrum for their hard work in securing funding."

The Tánaiste added: "This funding under the Community Recognition Fund is about doing two things. Firstly, it's to reward communities that have opened their arms and showed such generosity in welcoming in people from abroad.

"Secondly, it's about making our local towns and villages more vibrant and more attractive places to live, work, visit and raise a family. I look forward to visiting these projects very soon and I want to congratulate everyone involved."



Tánaiste Simon Harris.

Wicklow designs shine at 2025 Bloom Festival

Wicklow was proudly represented at this year's Bord Bia Bloom Festival, with several local entrants taking home awards across garden design and botanical art categories.

In the prestigious Alpadore secured a "Manor Farm - 250 Years Show Gardens section, Silver medal in the Small Taste and Tradition." Tünde Perry from Garden category for Meanwhile, Robert

Moore of Kilmacanogue was awarded Silver-Gilt in the Large Garden category for "The Grass Advantage," showcasing the county's flair for landscape excellence.

Over in the Postcard Gardens, a creative effort from St Mary's and St Gerard's National School in Enniskerry, titled "Connection," earned a Highly Commended recognition, an impressive achievement for the young garden enthusiasts.

Wicklow talent also stood out in the Botanical and Floral Art category. Lynn Stringer from Kilcoole took home two medals: a Bronze for "Golden Oats, Stipa gigantea," and a Silver-Gilt for "In the Stone Wall," a delicate portrayal of native wall flora. Joining her on the podium was Patricia Morrison from Bray, who earned a Bronze for her water-colour piece, "Cornus kousa...chinensis...October."



Over in the Postcard Gardens, a creative effort from St Mary's and St Gerard's National School in Enniskerry, titled "Connection," earned a Highly Commended recognition. Kerrie Gardiner, Bord Bia Bloom Showgarden and Horticultural Content Manager is pictured with Fiona Byrne, Tirlan Countrylife marketing manager, presenting the Highly Commended award to Grainne Doyle from St. Mary's and St Gerard's National School.



Tünde Perry from Alpadore secured a Silver medal in the Small Garden category for "Manor Farm - 250 Years Taste and Tradition."

Bray dads soak up the fun at People's Park waterfight



The Bray Dads Network brought a splash of fun to People's Park over the bank holiday weekend with a lively waterfight that left everyone drenched and delighted. Around two dozen dads and their children took part in the event, organised by local dad Ciarán Hogan, transforming the park into a joyful battleground of water guns, buckets, and rolled-up socks.

Held under sunny skies, the event was full of laughter, bonding, and playful chaos. Families gathered in great spirits, with children and parents alike diving into the action. By the end, everyone was thoroughly soaked and grinning from ear to ear.

Ciarán Hogan, the group's founder and organiser, said the day was a huge success.

"It was a fantastic day for dads and kids to connect, have fun, and make memories. The Bray Dads Network is all about creating these joyful moments. My favourite part of the day was the Battle of Playground Hill, up by the bandstand. Absolute chaos!"

The Bray Dads Network is already planning more activities, including another waterfight pencilled in for late June or July, alongside a range of family-friendly events for local fathers and their children.

The Bray Dads Network is a growing community group that brings dads and their children together through fun, engaging, and supportive activities in Bray, Co. Wicklow. Founded by Ciarán Hogan in October 2023, the group aims to build friendships, create lasting memories, and support dads in their parenting journeys.

New members are always welcome. Dads interested in joining can connect via the Bray Dads Network Facebook page or WhatsApp group to stay informed about upcoming events.

For more information, please contact the Bray Dads Network via Facebook or WhatsApp.



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

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

• Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Immersive Media Production

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

• Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Business and Psychology

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

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

MUSIC

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

COMPUTING

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

SPORT

- EA** Sport, Exercise & Fitness Instruction
- EC** Personal Trainer, Strength & Conditioning
- ED** Soccer Coaching & Sports Management
- EF** Sports Injury & Massage Therapy / Pre-University Physiotherapy

ANIMAL CARE

- HA** Animal Care
- HI** Animal Care & Management Pre-University
- HJ** Animal Science Industry
- HX** Equine Studies

SOCIAL STUDIES & CHILDCARE

- OA** Special Needs Assistant (Primary & Post-Primary)
- OB** SNA & Disability Studies (Level 6)
- HD** Early Learning & Care / Childcare
- HE** Social Studies & Community Care

HAIR, BEAUTY & WELLNESS

- FJ** Professional Make Up & Hairstyling
- FF** Hairdressing - Junior Stylist
- FG** Hairdressing - Senior Stylist
- FH** Barbering
- FD** Nail Technician & Salon Administration

SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

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

BUSINESS

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

HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

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

ADULT LEAVING CERT

- RB** Adult Leaving Certificate

HEALTH

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

FILM & COMPUTER GAMING

- MA** TV & Film Production
- MB** TV & Film Production - Advanced
- ME** 3D Game Design
- MC** BA (Hons) Immersive Media Production Degree
- MG** Games Development

ACTING & DANCE

- PB** Acting for Stage & Screen Advanced
- PE** Dance Technique, Performance and Choreography - Advanced

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- XA** English Language and General Studies

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- JG** Accounting Technician Apprenticeship

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Wicklow teen takes on 100-mile Cycling Challenge to raise awareness for rare brain condition

A remarkable young Wicklow teen is about to embark on a monumental cycling challenge to raise awareness for a rare neurological condition known as Agenesis of the Corpus Callosum (ACC). Ewan Lennox, 15, is taking on the physically demanding task of cycling 100 miles from Holyhead Port to the Corpal Conference in Wrexham, North Wales, in an effort to bring attention to this rare condition and support those living with it.

A Personal Challenge and Mission

Ewan's journey is not just about pushing his physical limits; it's deeply personal. Ewan was born with PACC, a rare brain condition where the corpus callosum, the bundle of nerve fibers connecting the two hemispheres of the brain, is either absent or underdeveloped. The condition can affect com-

munication between the brain's hemispheres and lead to a variety of developmental challenges, including issues with motor coordination, cognitive abilities, and social interactions. Despite these challenges, Ewan has shown incredible resilience and determination, not only in managing his condition but in using his own experience to help others.

His participation in the Corpal Conference, which takes place on June 28, is a significant part of his mission. Corpal is a charity dedicated to supporting individuals affected by ACC and their families, providing vital resources, information, and opportunities for connection. Ewan has been invited to share his story at the conference, hoping to shed light on the reality of living

with ACC, raise awareness, and offer encouragement to others in similar situations.

Raising Funds for Two Worthy Causes

While the cycle challenge is an impressive feat in itself, Ewan's mission extends beyond just raising awareness. He has set up a GoFundMe campaign, titled Ewan's Cycle Challenge, with the goal of raising funds for two important causes: Corpal and the Wicklow Blue Dolphins Special Olympics Club.

The Blue Dolphins Special Olympics Club has been an essential part of Ewan's life, offering him support, community, and opportunities to grow through sports and social activities. Ewan hopes that his fundraising efforts will help provide continued support for the club and ensure that other individuals with intellectual disabilities have access to similar life-enhancing experiences.

Since launching the GoFundMe page, Ewan has already raised over €2,100 with the help of 76 generous donors. His determination to complete the cycle challenge and give back to his community has inspired many, and he's well on



Ewan Lennox, 15, is taking on the physically demanding task of cycling 100 miles from Holyhead Port to the Corpal Conference in Wrexham, North Wales, in an effort to bring attention to the rare condition Agenesis of the Corpus Callosum (ACC).

his way to achieving his fundraising goals.

The Community's Support

Ewan's story is a testament to the power of community and the impact of individuals striving to make a difference. As he prepares for his 100-mile cycle, Ewan has been training relentlessly, and his friends, family, and local supporters are behind him every step of the way.

Ewan's mother, Selina Lennox, expressed her pride in her son's determination, stating, "We are incredibly proud of Ewan for not only taking on this challenge but for using his journey to help others. We are so grateful to all those who have donated and given such amazing support."

Community members are encouraged to support Ewan's fundraising efforts and help raise awareness for ACC. Donations can be

made through his GoFundMe page, and every contribution, no matter how small, will make a difference.

A Journey of Inspiration

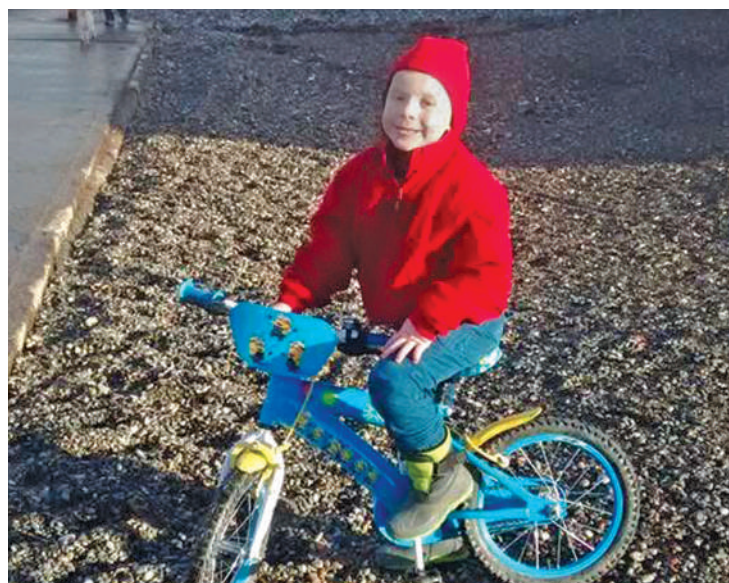
Ewan's 100-mile cycling challenge is not just about physical endurance, it's about making a real impact in the lives of others who are living with ACC.

Through his courage, perseverance, and gen-

erosity, Ewan is showing what it means to give back, inspire others, and make a difference in the community.

For more information or to donate to Ewan's fundraising campaign, visit the GoFundMe page: Ewan's Cycle Challenge.

Every pedal stroke counts, and with the community's support, Ewan's journey will continue to inspire and create positive change for those affected by ACC.



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Michelle Smith, Cerie O'Reilly and Joanne Hurley of A&L Goodbody at the annual Calcutta Run held at the Law Society of Ireland on 24th May. It's the largest ESG event for the legal sector in Ireland, raising funds for the Hope Foundation and Dublin Simon Community. Over €6.5 million has been raised for homelessness services in Ireland and India since 1999.

Greystones advocate among those demanding justice after RTÉ nursing homes exposé

A Wicklow-based disability rights advocate is among those calling for urgent reform following the shocking RTÉ Investigates exposé aired last night, which revealed disturbing mistreatment of older and disabled people in private nursing homes.

Dr. Margaret Kennedy, a Greystones resident and long-standing campaigner, is part of Equality Not Care, a national alliance that has condemned what it calls the systemic abuse and neglect uncovered by the programme.

“What we witnessed was not care. It was pushing, shoving, grabbing, and emotional degrada-

tion. It was abuse,” the group said in a statement released following the broadcast. Equality Not Care formed in February 2024 in response to the Government's proposed Care Referendum. The group, composed of disabled people, their families, and feminist advocates, campaigned for a No vote, arguing that the referendum framed disabled people and older

disabled people as burdens.

“We believed then, and still do, that the referendum would undermine our rights by suggesting care is something to be ‘shouldered’ by families rather than supported through a rights-based, community-led system,” the group said. “We focus on rights and equality, not charity or pity.”

Following the RTÉ Investigates

revelations, the group is now calling on the Government to:

- Bring criminal charges against those who abuse or harm older disabled people in care;
- Replace HIQA with a new safeguarding body with real oversight powers;
- End the institutionalisation of older people and invest in home-based, independent living support;
- Improve training standards by mandating comprehensive, face-to-face qualifications for care workers.

“Older disabled people are not burdens,” the statement added. “They are citizens who deserve respect, autonomy, and the right to live with dignity, not be warehoused for profit.”

The outcry has been echoed by SIPTU, Ireland's largest trade union, which represents thousands of care workers across the country. SIPTU says the Government's reliance on for-profit providers has created a system driven by cost-cutting at the expense of quality care.

SIPTU Sector Organiser Liz Cloherty said: “The Government has outsourced elder care to operators who put profit before people. The consequences, chronic understaffing, poverty wages, poor regulation, are now playing out in the most distressing ways.” SIPTU has written to Minister of State for Older People, Kieran O'Donnell TD, seeking an emergency meeting and calling for immediate action to ensure safe staffing levels and improved regulation across the sector.

Support needed for family carers

17,304 family carers across Wicklow are providing round-the-clock care for loved ones who are ill, elderly or have additional needs. Often unpaid, unseen and exhausted, these family carers hold their families together under immense pressure and isolation. They form the backbone of our communities and our health services - yet many are struggling in silence.

To recognise and support them, Family Carers Ireland is urging the public to buy a Heart of Gold pin (€2). The campaign runs throughout June, culminating in Heart of Gold Day on Thursday, 12th June, during National Carers Week.

Each €2 gold heart sold helps towards funding essential services for family carers, including respite breaks, counselling, the National Freephone Careline, local drop-in centres, peer support groups, and training. These are not just services -

they are lifelines that help family carers cope with the daily realities of their role.

This year our Heart of Gold campaign is proudly supported by Lidl Ireland, with gold hearts available in all 186 Lidl stores nationwide during the month of June.

“Caring doesn't stop - it doesn't clock off at 5pm,” said Catherine Cox, Head of Communications and Policy, Family Carers Ireland. “In every town and parish in Wicklow, someone is quietly providing

full-time care with little or no support. We regularly see family carers pushed to breaking point - financially strained, emotionally drained and completely isolated. Buying a gold heart might seem like a small gesture, but it's genuinely meaningful. €2 won't fix everything, but it can help towards providing the respite, counselling or urgent support a family carer desperately needs.”

To learn more, donate, or access support, visit: <https://www.familycarers.ie/>

Women in Wicklow can now get free HRT

Majority of pharmacies nationwide participating in scheme with numbers increasing daily

Women in Wicklow can now receive free HRT medication as the vast majority of pharmacies have signed up to the scheme.

Deputy Edward Timmins said he was grateful to Fine Gael Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll MacNeill for engaging with all stakeholders so successfully to deliver this medication free of charge for the many women around the country who need it.

Deputy Timmins remarked: “The majority of pharmacies across the country are participating in this scheme, and this figure is increasingly daily, meaning that all women will be able to access this free medication in a pharmacy convenient for them.

“In Wicklow 94% of pharmacies will offer the free medication to women, which is extremely positive. It's important to note that the new arrangement includes a pharmacy dispensing fee, so medication will be completely free.”

Women who have been private patients and who wish to avail of this will need to possess a Drugs Payment Scheme (DPS) card. Medical card holders can continue to access HRT medication as normal - they do not need a DPS card. Women can identify their nearest pharmacy to them that is providing the service by using the HSE pharmacy finder (<https://www2.hse.ie/services/pharmacies-free-hrt/>).

Deputy Timmins added: “The symptoms women encounter during perimenopause and menopause are varied and women's lives can be hugely impacted. HRT is such an important medicinal regime for women and can positively improve their lives and make daily living much easier.”

Deputy Edward Timmins concluded: “This scheme is transformational for women. I commend the pharmacies here in Wicklow who have joined the scheme to continue to provide vital healthcare to our communities.”



Hannah Campbell and Alice Ridgeway from Greystones at the Vhi Women's Mini Marathon on behalf of Cystic Fibrosis Ireland.



**COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHILL MHANTÁIN
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL**

SECTION 75 - ROADS ACT, 1993 PROVISION FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF PUBLIC ROAD

Wicklow County Council hereby gives notice that it proposes the temporary closure of the following public roads.

Road to be closed:

Wolfe Tone Square Middle, Bray, Co. Wicklow.

Period of closure:

Monday 14th July 2025 to Friday 25th July 2025.

Alternative Routes:

The temporary diversion route will be via Wolfe Tone Square North and Wolfe Tone Square West.

Reason for Closure:

This closure is necessary to facilitate the reconstruction of a failed section of the roadway.

Any person wishing to object to the proposed road closure must lodge their objection in writing to Transportation and Infrastructure Delivery, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow or via email at roadtran@wicklowcoco.ie not later than 12.00 noon on Tuesday 17th June, 2025.

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

Teen innovators need sponsors to reach World Finals



Greystones racing team win national championship but need vital funding to compete on global stage

Red Kite Racing, a young team from St. David's Holy Faith Secondary School in Greystones are set to represent Ireland on the global stage, if they can secure vital funding.

Six Irish secondary school students have raced to the top of the podium at the F1 in Schools National Finals, earning the honour of representing Ireland at the prestigious F1 in Schools World Finals in Singapore this September. Now, they face their greatest challenge yet - funding the journey.

The team, named Red Kite Racing from St David's Holy Faith, has

spent months engineering a miniature F1 car to top international standards, winning acclaim for innovation, design, and teamwork.

The school won in 2009 and now have another shot at global glory, but without sponsorship, they may be forced to stay home.

The Red Kite Racing team consists of Conor Hawkins (Team Manager), Alannah Lynch

(Marketing Manager), Sarah Walker (Resource Manager), Deaglan O'Neill (Design Engineer), Eoin O'Neill (Manufacturing Engineer) and Liam Simpson (Graphic Designer).

STEM Racing - Supported by Formula 1 is a STEM-based competition for 11-19 year olds, where the aim is to design and manufacture a 1/20 scale model F1 Car.

Teams come together, design, manufacture, test and brand their car. Teams then race at events such as Regional and National finals with the best teams then qualifying for prestigious Aramco STEM Racing World Finals where they can compete for the crown of world champions.

In the 2024 season, Red Kite Racing competed as Euro Dullahan Racing where they achieved a 4th place finish nationally, whilst winning the brand identity award and winning reaction-racing.

They say "After reflecting on the 2024 campaign, we regrouped as a team with two new members, Alannah and Sarah. After a long decision, we decided to rebrand and go again from the start with Red Kite Racing."

This rebrand paved the

way for them to win the National Final, along with the portfolio award and fastest reaction time which secured their place at the 2025 World Finals in Singapore.

"We've worked so hard for this opportunity. To know we're good enough to represent Ireland, but might not make it because of money, it's tough," said Alannah.

National Talent, Global Stage

F1 in Schools is the largest global STEM competition for secondary students, supported by major players in the real-world Formula 1 industry. The World Finals in Singapore will be judged by representatives from F1 teams including Red Bull Racing, Ferrari, and Mercedes-AMG.

The cost to attend, covering travel, materials, uniforms, and competition entry, is estimated at €40,000, most of which must be raised by the team through corporate sponsorship and fundraising.

An Investment in Ireland's Future Innovators

With a strong focus on science, engineering,

design, and teamwork, F1 in Schools is more than a competition - it's a launchpad for Ireland's next generation of innovators, engineers, and entrepreneurs.

"This isn't just about us. It's about showing what Irish students can do. We're ready, we just need the chance to get there," added teacher Darren Timlin.

Call for Sponsors

The team is now urgently seeking support from Irish companies, industry partners, and private sponsors who want to champion youth innovation and represent Ireland on a world stage.

If you choose to sponsor, they can offer your company a wide variety of promotion. Depending on how much you sponsor different perks will be received.

Sponsors will receive branding on team uniforms, pit displays, and car designs, and will be promoted through national and international media coverage of the finals.

For inquiries about sponsorship, please contact: sponsorship.f1schools@stdavids.ie



Aughrim referee's contribution to sport recognised with Arklow Cathaoirleach's Award

Cllr. Pat Kennedy awarded the Arklow Municipal District Cathaoirleach's Award to Inter County Referee and proud Aughrim man, John Keenan.

On Thursday 29th May, Cllr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of Arklow Municipal District, presented John Keenan with an award to recognise his contributions to sport in Wicklow.

The event, hosted by Arklow Municipal District at Arklow Library, was supported by the elected members from Arklow and attended by John's family, friends, and colleagues. During the ceremony, Cathaoirleach of the Arklow Municipal District Cllr. Pat Kennedy presented John with a piece of crystal in recognition of his achievements.

John began his refereeing career in 2007 and was chosen to officiate the All-Ireland Hurling Final in 2023, which was held at a packed Croke Park. This match is remembered as one of the finest examples of a Hurling Final, and his

contributions to the game are highly regarded. He has represented Wicklow at all levels of refereeing and continues to dedicate his time to the sport.

Cllr Pat Kennedy, Cathaoirleach of the Arklow Municipal District, spoke about John's distinguished career, unwavering integrity, and deep respect for both sporting codes, particularly hurling. "Over the years, we've watched John officiate some of the most intense and high stakes matches in hurling. From Leinster Championship battles to All-Ireland showdowns, his presence in the middle of the field brought calm to chaos, authority without arrogance, and decisions made with conviction."

The Cathaoirleach continued beyond the sidelines and stadiums, John has contributed something

even more valuable, a model of refereeing built on respect. Respect for the game, respect for the players, and respect for the craft of officiating."

Wicklow County Council Chief Executive Emer O'Gorman extended her congratulations to John Keenan on his achievements. She also acknowledged the unwavering support of his wife Annette, daughters Emma and Ava, and his extended family including his father Liam.

Leonora Earls, Arklow Municipal District Manager, emphasized the importance of recognising members of the community who have represented the District with distinction. She noted that John's contribution continues today through his mentorship and the guidance he offers to those aspiring to follow in his footsteps.



John Keenan and his father Liam with his brothers Tom and Liam Jnr, with Cathaoirleach of Arklow Municipal District Cllr Pat Kennedy.

Sugarloaf Gymnastics Club: A Foundation of Movement, Confidence, and Community

In the heart of Kilcoole, Sugarloaf Gymnastics Club (SGC) stands proudly as North Wicklow's largest professional gymnastics centre. With a full-time facility featuring Olympic-standard equipment, SGC is a hub of movement, learning, and excellence - open six days a week and operated by a team of fully qualified professional coaches (all Safe Guarded and Vetted through Gymnastics Ireland and Sport Ireland).

Gymnastics is widely recognised as the foundation for all sports, helping children develop essential physical skills like strength, flexibility, coordination, and balance.

These core abilities not only support success in gymnastics but also translate seamlessly into virtually every other athletic activity, from football and rugby to dance and athletics.

While SGC is known nationally for its competitive success - including gymnasts who have represented Ireland on international stage, as well as having many national title holders and champions in its competitive Women's Artistic Competitive Program - the heartbeat of the club lies in its thriving recreational and preschool programs.

Children as young as 3.5 years are welcomed into structured, independent classes that focus on developing coordination, strength, balance, and confidence - all in a fun, supportive environment. For children under 3.5 years, SGC's popular parent-and-child sessions provide an engaging introduction to gymnastics, offering quality bonding time while helping little ones take their first steps in movement



and social play.

These programs aren't just about gymnastics; they're about building confidence, independence, and a love of movement. While classes are busy, structured, and fast-paced, SGC aims to be inclusive, welcoming children with a range of needs within the scope of the resources available. The goal is to ensure as many children as possible can experience the benefits and joy of movement through gymnastics in a supportive setting.

The club values creating a positive and

encouraging environment, where children of different ages and abilities are given the opportunity to participate, develop, and thrive.

During July and August, Sugarloaf Gymnastics runs a full calendar of summer camps, packed with energy, learning and fun. For those looking to sharpen specific skills, focused workshops are available, while 'Try It Out' classes offer a perfect entry point for families curious to experience gymnastics before committing to a term.

Affiliated with Gymnastics Ireland, and the proud recipient of national awards such as "Club Governance," "Club Innovation," and "Gym-START Coach of the Year," SGC continues to set the standard for excellence - not just in competition, but in creating a nurturing space where children can thrive, learn, and grow.

To find out more about enrolling, upcoming camps, or to book a 'Try It Out' session, visit sugarloafgymnastics.ie or email ask@sugarloafgymnastics.ie

Olympic Federation backs landmark winter sports arena plans

The Olympic Federation of Ireland (OFI) has formally endorsed the proposed development of Ireland's first Olympic standard winter sports and entertainment facility at Cherrywood, South Dublin. The €190 million project, led by Prime Arena Holdings, represents a major advance in delivering on the goals of the OFI's Winter Sports Strategy 2022-2026 with the potential to unlock new opportunities for athletes and communities across the country.

Following the 2022 launch of the Irish Winter Sports Strategy 2022-2026, a permanent ice facility was identified as a key objective. Featuring two Olympic-sized rinks and a flexible multi-purpose arena, the Cherrywood facility will support public access as well as elite training.

There is no permanent ice facility

in the Republic of Ireland. There are 62 permanent rinks in the UK alone. In Belfast, the Dundonald International Ice Bowl and the SSE Arena show that it can be very successful, with the Dundonald International Ice Bowl hosting approximately 600,000 visitors per annum.

As the project proceeds, engagement with the Winter Sports Federations will be a key element in delivering a facility that supports the athletes, the growth potential and needs of the sports, as well as being a major driver for hospitality, entertainment and tourism for the region. President of the Olympic Fed-

eration of Ireland, Lochlann Walsh said "Dublin is the only EU capital without a permanent ice facility, a gap that has held back both grassroots participation and elite progress in winter sports. There's clear, unmet demand across Ireland, evident from the 300,000+ visits to seasonal pop-up rinks over just ten winter weeks. This new arena changes that. It's about opening pathways, expanding access, and creating a lasting legacy that reflects the full ambition of Irish sport, introducing the public to disciplines

like figure skating, speed skating, curling, and sliding sports such as luge and bobsleigh."

The Olympic Federation of Ireland is working collaboratively with the Winter Sport National Federations to explore long-term opportunities with Prime Arena Holdings, ensuring the facility meets the evolving needs of athletes, communities, and sport development programmes. By aligning with the goals of the International Sports Diplomacy Framework 2025, the arena will help elevate Ireland's

global sporting reputation, support cross-border partnerships, and showcase Irish values through international cooperation in sport.

The planned facility will feature two Olympic-sized ice rinks, event space for concerts and exhibitions, and is expected to attract over 1 million visitors annually. It is projected to generate €230 million in annual economic activity, contribute over 200,000 hotel bed nights to the region, and create significant employment during both construction and operation phases.



Grace and Eimear Neary from Blessington at the Vhi Women's Mini Marathon on behalf of Cystic Fibrosis Ireland.

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Whitmore calls for additional funding for special schools

'Unacceptable that special schools do not have vital recreational areas for students'

Social Democrats TD Jennifer Whitmore, has raised the issue of inadequate funding for outdoor recreational and sensory play areas in special schools in the Dáil, calling on the Department of Education to urgently address the funding gap.

"It is a completely unacceptable situation. Special schools are being forced to fundraise for basic sensory and inclusive play and recreational facilities, spaces that are vital for the development and wellbeing of their students," Deputy Whitmore stated.

"The other week, I had the privilege of cutting the ribbon on a new sensory garden at the fantastic New Court School in Bray. While it's a fantastic achievement by the school community, it's deeply concerning that they had to raise the money themselves. They now have to launch another fundraising campaign to pay for swings. The school has no general play facilities, and it is unfair that the obligation to pay for vital resources like these falls to parents and staff," Deputy Whitmore continued.

"Unlike mainstream schools,

special schools often don't have a local catchment area to rely on for fundraising and they are often very small. Their students come from across the region, which makes it incredibly difficult to raise the necessary funds for even the most basic facilities," Deputy Whitmore explained.

"Families of children with special needs already have to fight so hard for everything, from healthcare to supports to school places. They shouldn't also have to fight for basic school funding," Deputy Whitmore added.

"I raised this directly with the Minister for Education in the Dáil and asked her to provide special schools, like New Court in Bray, with additional funding to pay for these resources that are so fundamental to the students' development. We need dedicated funding streams for special schools to ensure that every child has access to safe, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate outdoor spaces. I will continue to raise this with the Minister and to fight for investment and support for our special schools," Deputy Whitmore concluded.



Deputy Whitmore with staff of New Court Special School.

'Futureproofing' a top priority for people in Wicklow considering Springboard+ programme

Two-thirds of people considering a Springboard+ course, including those in Wicklow, want to futureproof their careers in an ever-changing workplace. That's according to research published by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) as it launched its 2025 programme of higher education courses for participants wishing to upskill or reskill in areas where job opportunities are growing in Ireland.

The programme is funded by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and in 2025, a total of 7,719 places are available on 249 courses delivered by 37 higher education institutes nationwide. Springboard+ is making 26 'micro-credentials' from this course list available for those interested in shorter courses to upskill in very specific areas.

This year, courses are available in areas such as Infrastructure planning; Sustainable Building; Renewable Energy; Digital Skills, Cyber security and Artificial Intelligence.

Springboard+ courses are delivered both online and through blended

learning and last up to one year. Courses are available on a part-time or full-time basis, offering more flexibility to learners.

Applications are made through the Springboard+ website (<https://springboardcourses.ie/>) and applications will open on 3rd June. All courses will commence between 1st July and 31st October 2025.

Springboard+ is part funded by the European Union European Structural and Investment Funds (ESF). The primary objective of Springboard+ is to provide upskilling and reskilling courses to develop the talent base in Ireland in key growth sectors of the economy.

Hollywood No Name Club's Jodie recognised at National Youth Awards

Jodie Travers, a member of No Name Club Hollywood, was recognised at the No Name Club National Youth Awards 2025, held recently week to celebrate leadership, resilience, and community spirit among young people involved in No Name Clubs across Ireland.

No Name Clubs are run by, and for young people aged 15-18 years, and enable young members to organise and enjoy positive alternatives to alcohol and drug-centred activities. Jodie is an active member of the Hollywood club, where she has grown in confidence and taken on new challenges. Jake Costin of St Joseph's No Name Club in Mayfield, Cork, and Milan Freeman of Finglas No Name Club in Dublin were named Hosts of the Year 2025, the highest recognition awarded to members who have made an outstanding contribution to their club and local community.

The awards mark the culmination of a year-long journey, with members first nominated at regional level before progressing to the national final. The event brought together club members, families, volunteers, and supporters to celebrate the positive impact of youth-led, alcohol and drug-free spaces.

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Garrett Keenaghan, Chairperson of No Name Club, said: "These awards are about more than achievement - they're about character. Our winners reflect the very best of what young people can become when they're trusted and supported. No Name Club is about helping young people find confidence, connection and purpose and this is proof that the model works."

The event also marked the launch of the organisation's new Strategic Plan 2024-2029, which sets out key priorities for the years ahead, including expanding youth participation, promoting mental wellbeing, deepening community impact, and securing long-term sustainability.



Jodie Travers from Hollywood No Name Club.

Wicklow students graduate as mental health ambassadors



Conall Nolan, Colaiste Chill Mhantain (left) and Darragh Emerson, Temple Carrig School (right).



Students from Wicklow joined 110 Transition Year students from across Ireland to graduate as a St Patrick's Mental Health Services' mental health ambassador during a special online ceremony held to celebrate the class of 2024/2025.

The three Wicklow students that took part this year were: Conall Nolan, Colaiste Chill Mhantain; Tianne Kelly, The Dominican College; Darragh Emerson, Temple Carrig School.

For 14 years, St Patrick's Mental Health Services has run a Transition Year Programme, with over 100 students from across Ireland taking part annually. The week-long programme runs five times during the academic year between October and March, with 20 to 25 students per programme.

The programme takes place in a hybrid format, with students beginning their week with a day spent onsite at St Patrick's University Hospital campus, and the remainder of the week's sessions attended virtually. Students receive first-hand insight into how a mental healthcare service operates and the experiences of those with mental health difficulties.

They meet mental health experts

and clinicians; hear from people who have gone through mental health difficulties and their experiences of mental health recovery; and discuss mental health stigma and ways to tackle it.

During the programme, participants undertake a range of activities, which include viewing a mock multidisciplinary team meeting with psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, nurses and social workers; taking part in sessions with pharmacists, the medical director and the CEO; and participating in group presentations. Throughout the week, students build their mental health awareness and leave the programme empowered to act as mental health ambassadors in both their schools and local communities. Students are also given the opportunity to contribute to design concepts for a large-scale mental health promotion project that is being progressed by St Patrick's Mental Health Services

at present.

Sinead O'Kelly, Mental Health Promotion Manager at St Patrick's Mental Health Services, said: "St Patrick's Mental Health Services' Transition Year Programme is a valuable opportunity for students to learn more about mental health in a real-life hospital setting. Not only does it give young people insight into the field, but it also helps them better understand their own mental wellbeing. By engaging in a programme informed by mental health professionals and learning in a supportive environment, students are supported to build empathy and resilience and develop tools for managing everyday stressors."

To celebrate their completion of the programme, students took part in an online graduation ceremony in May. To date, over 1,300 students have completed the Transition Year programme. The 2025/2026 programme is now open for applications.

Significant funding boost for building works and ICT in Wicklow schools

Wicklow schools are set to receive a substantial funding boost, with €800,000 allocated for minor building works and more than €1 million dedicated to ICT and digital infrastructure, Tánaiste Simon Harris announced.

"This investment of nearly €2 million will support both primary and special education schools in Wicklow," said Tánaiste Simon Harris. "Our schools are the backbone of our communities, and this funding will ensure they remain vibrant, safe, and well-equipped to serve our students and educators."

The funding will be distributed across two essential areas: €800,000 for minor building works and over €1 million to enhance ICT resources.

Tánaiste Harris added, "These two funding streams will make a tangible difference in the delivery of education across Wicklow. This continued investment will build on the exceptional work already being done by our teachers and staff."

"Maintaining our school buildings is crucial, not just for health and safety, but for creating welcoming and inspiring learning environments. It's vital that our students feel safe and supported, and this fund-

ing ensures that Wicklow's schools can continue to provide that.

"As Tánaiste and leader of Fine Gael, Simon Harris emphasised the importance of ongoing investment in education: "We are seeing significant progress with the development of new school buildings, but we still have much work to do to meet the growing demand for educational spaces."

He also highlighted the importance of empowering schools to address their

unique needs: "Each school in Wicklow is different, and it's important that schools have the flexibility to use their minor works funding in the way that best meets their specific needs."

The funding will also bolster ICT capacity across the county. Harris said, "Over €1 million for ICT will ensure that schools primary, secondary, and special schools can equip their students with the digital skills necessary to succeed in today's fast-evolv-



Tánaiste Simon Harris with students from St. David's Secondary School.

ing world. Technology is a game-changer in education, and this funding will help schools integrate ICT into teaching, learning, and assessment practices, giving students the tools

they need to reach their full potential."

Minister for Education and Youth, Helen McEntee, added: "This investment in Wicklow is part of a wider €65 m

national funding package aimed at improving school facilities across the country. These funds will support maintenance and enhancements to ensure our schools remain safe,

modern, and welcoming. Additionally, they will help ensure that students have access to the digital tools necessary to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven world."

Arklow teen progresses to global Technovation semi finals

A 3rd year student from St Mary's Arklow secondary school was awarded 3rd place at the Teen-Turn Technovation Regional Pitching Event which took place at AMD HQ Dublin in May.

Sofiia Shevchuk, a 14-year-old student, received the award for her outstanding work in developing an app, SweetHealth, designed to help people manage diabetes and improve their overall health. Sofiia was one of 65 app enterprise projects pitching at the event in Dublin which formed part of the global Technovation competition and as a result will be presenting her app at the global semi-finalist round later this year.

Sofiia was inspired to create the app after noticing how often people, including herself, underestimate their sugar intake. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the percentage of

adults living with diabetes has doubled from 7% in 1990 to 14% in 2022.

"After learning about the health risks of excess sugar, I wanted to create a tool that would make it easier for everyone to keep tabs on what they're consuming."

SweetHealth allows users to easily track blood sugar, meals, activity, and mood in one place through smart AI technology providing personalised advice based on each user's data. Her app also includes features like barcode scanning for diabetes supplies and accessibility options for users with vision challenges.

Teen-Turn, an Irish non-profit organisation

that provides teen girls the opportunity to gain hands-on experience and support to acquire qualifications and jobs, provided Sofiia with support in developing an app for the first time for Technovation.

Through a 12-week programme, Sofiia, along with other participants, received guidance from industry and academic mentors - learning skills in market research, business planning, and coding, to develop her app.

"Every session felt so uplifting and inspiring, filled with hands-on activities, lively group discussions, and genuine encouragement. The mentors were always helpful, espe-

cially Yuri from Microsoft, who provided clear guidance and practical advice whenever I faced technical challenges."

Reflecting on the experience, Sofiia says she is now considering a career in science and technology. She continues "I discovered how much I enjoy with problem-solving and using technology to make a real difference in people's lives. In fact, the experience inspired me so much that I now want to study medicine at Trinity College, because I believe that we should help those in need and use our skills to make a positive impact on the world."

Looking back on the day, a highlight for her

was seeing the other teams' projects. "It was inspiring to witness so many creative ideas and to learn from the diverse approaches others took. Being part of such an innovative community was truly motivating."

By placing young girls in these environments and enabling them to learn such skills, Teen-Turn helps them develop a vision of themselves pursuing STEM careers in the future.

"After finishing my pitch and answering the judges' questions, I felt a huge wave of relief. Their encouraging words and positive feedback left me feeling accomplished, grateful, and even more



Sofiia Shevchuk pictured at the Technovation Ireland Regional Pitch Event at AMD in Dublin recently. Photo by Robbie Reynolds Photography.

passionate about continuing with my project."

When asked about her plans for the future with the app, Sofiia says she plans to add new features to the app as well as reach more users. She continues "I'm also looking forward

to participating in more TeenTurn events and collaborating with others on new projects, such as developing an app for pregnancy. Looking ahead, I hope to grow my company and work with national government orga-

nis-ations to help supply medication to those in developing countries, because I believe everyone deserves access to essential healthcare. The experience has opened up so many opportunities, and I'm excited for what's next."

Kilcoole student finalist in Law Society national essay competition



Colaiste Chraobh Abhainm student Lauren Coffey with the other finalists in the Law Society Grainne O'Neill Memorial Legal Essay Competition.

Kilcoole student Lauren Coffey from Colaiste Chraobh Abhainm was among the finalists in The Law Society of Ireland's national Grainne O'Neill Memorial Legal Essay Competition 2025.

Kerry Transition Year (TY) student Hazel Barrett from Presentation Secondary School, Listowel, was named the winner of the competition. The winners were announced at a special ceremony held at the Law Society in Dublin on Wednesday 14th May.

Now in its third year, the annual competition invites TY students from across the country to submit a 1,500-word legal essay on a specific topic. This year, over 350 essays were submitted by students from 52 schools across 16 counties, each exploring the topic: 'The role the law can play in addressing Hate Crime'.

The competition aims to inspire young people's legal learning by encouraging students from a wide range of backgrounds to consider contemporary justice issues.

President of the Law Society, Eamon Harrington, said, "This year's topic challenged students to explore how our laws respond to hatred and discrimination in society. Their essays demonstrated an understanding of the role that legislation can play in protecting marginalised groups and promoting inclusion for all in society."

"Through the competition students are encouraged to research, reflect and critically apply their learnings to this complex legal issue. The judges were impressed with the breadth of ideas and considered arguments put forward by students. The Law Society remains committed to widening early access to legal education for young people from all backgrounds. Congratulations to all students who entered, and in particular to this year's finalists and winners. We hope many of them will continue their legal education, continue to ask questions and consider a future career in law."

Thirty finalists attended the special ceremony in Dublin.

A Celebration of Music at BIFE: Ukrainian and Irish artists take the stage

Bray Institute of Further Education (BIFE) hosted a spectacular Ukrainian-Irish musical concert last Tuesday evening, bringing together musicians and singers from both cultures in a powerful showcase of talent and solidarity.



Tim Doyle, BIFE staff member accompanied by Ukrainian student on piano.

The event featured performances from BIFE students, staff, and a host of Ukrainian artists, highlighting the vibrancy and resilience of Ukrainian culture. Year One performers from BIFE included Larysa Sych, Olesia Bahlai, and Bernard Naughton, while Year Two featured Noah Sheehan, Áine O'Brien, Oisín Deignan, Andrew O'Brien, Aaron McDermott, and Shane Mulligan.

A standout moment came from the Ukrainian Soul Choir, whose spirited renditions of popular Ukrainian songs captivated the audience. The evening also featured the lively UA Sunrise Ensemble, whose dynamic mix of rock and traditional songs in both English and Ukrainian brought energy and passion to the stage.

Svitlana Rulievskaya and Olesia Bahlai delivered a series of exquisite Ukrainian songs alongside heartfelt English pieces, while Olena Topolska gave a mesmerizing solo performance on the Ukrainian flute. The concert also showcased rock performances from BIFE's higher national performance course students, representing both Year One and Year Two.

The evening was a resounding success, culminating in a warm welcome from BIFE Principal Mr. Ray Tedders, who introduced special guest Antonia Shliakotina, Political Attaché of the Embassy of Ukraine. Ms. Shliakotina expressed her delight at the concert and extended her gratitude to Bray Institute for its continued support of Ukrainian refugees.



BIFE Principal Ray Tedders and Olesia Bahlai, a BIFE student and member of the Ukrainian UA Sunrise Ensemble.



The event featured performances from BIFE students, staff, and a host of Ukrainian artists, highlighting the vibrancy and resilience of Ukrainian culture.

New Café to open at Mermaid Arts Centre

Mermaid Arts Centre is delighted to announce a new partnership with Críoch Catering as they open Críoch Café at Mermaid on June 16th 2025.

Críoch Catering, founded in 2019 by Arklow chef Tadgh Byrne, is a member of Wicklow Naturally and specialises in sustainable, fresh, locally sourced food, paired with warm & friendly customer service.

Críoch Café will initially be starting with coffee and light bites over the summer and come September there will be a fuller menu and longer opening hours. Their summer opening hours are Monday to Friday 8am to 3pm, with a theatre bar service on performance evenings.

The word "Críoch" originates from Middle Irish and means territory or land and reflects Tadgh's deep connection to County Wicklow and sustainable produce. Críoch's decisions are guided by the UN's Sustainable Development

Goals and the EU's Farm-to-Fork Strategy.

Speaking about the new café chef Tadgh Byrne said: "At Críoch, we're more than just a name. We're a team of passionate individuals committed to making a difference. Our mission is to make the world a better place through healthy, sustainable and ethical food and memorable experiences. We are thrilled to be opening at Mermaid Arts Centre and look forward to delivering a high-quality food and drinks service. Our vision is for Mermaid to become a food hub as well as an arts hub and we are looking forward to showcasing local produce. We will open for coffee and snacks until September and then broaden our offering. We want to take this time to finish decorating, hire

the right people and fine tune our provenance-driven menu"

Speaking on behalf of the Board at Mermaid, Chair Anne Ferris said "The café at Mermaid has always been a vibrant and core part of our offering and we are delighted to welcome Tadgh Byrne to deliver his vision of high quality, locally sourced food and drinks. We wish him every success".

Aoife Demel, Artistic Director and CEO at Mermaid said "welcoming Tadgh and the team at Críoch Café on board is very exciting for the team at Mermaid, our artists and our audiences. One of Mermaid's core goals is to work sustainably and Críoch's focus on locally sourced high-quality ingredients aligns with our vision. We look forward to working with Tadgh and his dedicated



Aoife Demel (Artistic Director of Mermaid), Tadgh Byrne (Chef and Críoch Cafe owner) and Anne Ferris (Chair of Mermaid's Board).

team to build a buzzing, sustainable café"

Tadgh is no stranger to the arts. In 2024 he collaborated with Dublin Filmmaker, Max Barry, on

a documentary exploring how Ireland will eat in 2050 - looking at issues such as how technology will change farming, food security, robot chefs, drone

deliveries and sustainability in the food supply chain. Críoch Catering have recently been nominated as finalists in the Gold Medal Catering Awards in

three categories: Menu Provenance of the Year. Public Sector Food Service of the Year - finalist. Ireland's Event Caterer - 100 Guests or

Less category. Come along to Mermaid from 16th June and support this new local business. Visit mermaidartscentre.ie for more information

Chairperson and Board members reappointed to Screen Ireland

The Minister for Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport, Patrick O'Donovan TD, has today announced the reappointment of four members to the Board of Fís Éireann (Screen Ireland). The reappointments are: Ray Harman, Dr Zélie A, John McDonnell and Eoin Holohan.

In addition, Minister O'Donovan reappointed the existing Chairperson, Ray Harman as Chairperson of the Board.

Commenting on the appointments, Minister O'Donovan said: "I want to sincerely thank the four Board members for their contribution to the Board since 2021. This is an exciting time for Screen Ireland with the recent launch of their new Strategic plan, Fís Athnuaithe 2025 ñ 2029 which has a stronger

focus on building the necessary infrastructure to empower the audiovisual sector and has a renewed vision for the next phase of the Irish screen industry, building on existing work and using recent successes as its guide. I am also reappointing existing Chairperson Ray Harman as the Chairperson of the Board. Ray has shown great leadership over the past 9 months as Chairperson and I wish him well as he continues this role over

the coming 4 years."

Ray Harman has worked as a songwriter and composer for film, TV, animation and theatre for over 20 years. His work has been nominated for and won several awards including 2 IFTAs (Irish Film and TV Academy Awards) and Best Original Score for Liam Gavin's horror, 'A Dark Song'. Recent TV and film work includes the acclaimed series Blood, The Young Offenders, Penance,

Taken Down, The Farthest, Shooting the Mafia, Inspector George Gently and Love/Hate.

Dr Zélie Asava is a Screen Studies academic. She is the author of The Black Irish Onscreen: Representing Black and Mixed-Race Identities on Irish Film and Television (Peter Lang, 2013) and Mixed Race Cinemas: Multiracial Dynamics in America and France (Bloomsbury, 2017). Her work addresses the intersections of race, gender and sexuality in Irish, French, Francophone African and US cinema.

John McDonnell co-founded one of Ireland's leading production com-

panies Fantastic Films in 2002 and has produced and collaborated on a diverse range of film and television projects, receiving over 100 international awards, including an Oscar in 2006 for

Martin McDonagh's short film, Six Shooter. Recent films include Vivarium, directed by Lorcan Finnegan, starring Jesse Eisenberg and Imogen Poots.

Eoin Holohan has

worked in the Irish creative screen industry for over 25 years. He has worked as a Location Manager on numerous productions, including major award-winning projects such as Normal

People, The Lobster and Sing Street. Eoin has recently served as Chairperson for the Locations Guild of Ireland and sits on the Board of Directors for Screen Guilds of Ireland.

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IADT: The Institute of Art, Design + Technology annual graduate showcase 'On Show 2025' last week featured the most exciting work by the next generation of creative talent. Pictured is Olivera Stevic BA (Hons) Graphic Design and her printed newspaper exploring the everyday experiences of diaspora in Ireland 'Neither Here Nor There'.



Tristan Dowling with Shamie O'Brien's Heinkel at the Arklow Cars & Coffee charity car show in aid of Futures in Mind (formerly Talk to Tom), at Arklow Rugby Club.

Wicklow children invited to throw tea party for kids in need

Children across Wicklow are being asked to support vulnerable youngsters around the world by hosting a tea party in their final weeks of school. The new initiative is organised by Team Hope, the charity working to transform children's lives by tackling poverty and inequality in African and Eastern European countries.

Now in its 15th year, the organisation, best known for its Christmas Shoebox Appeal, has revealed that people in Ireland have donated €2million in life-changing aid since 2010.

The 'Team Hope Tea Party' has a €240,000 target to fund vital projects such as clean water, education and income-generation opportunities in countries including Kenya, Burundi, Malawi, and Rwanda, where many live on less than \$2 a day.

And the event, running from June 14-22, is not confined to schools - sports clubs, businesses and individuals across the country are all asked to take part.

"Over the past 15 years, we've not only delivered millions of Christmas Shoebox gifts but have also helped provide access to clean water, healthcare and support for communities that need it most," said Deborah Lowry, Team Hope CEO.

"In June, we'd love if people can think beyond the box and host a tea party to help raise vital funds to support that work. In the five years to the end of this year, we will have improved the lives of 10,000 children in our sustainable development projects.

"The locally-based water projects in Kenya not only provide clean

water to communities but also mean that girls, who previously spent hours collecting water every day, can go to school. There are multiple layers to the improvements our work makes to people's lives."

Some of Team Hope's other projects include the creation of pineapple farms in Rwanda, an income generator allowing parents to support

their families and send their children to school.

It also supports the development of village savings and loans groups, using members' savings to lend to each other, allowing people to buy goats and pigs or start a soap making production business.

"We know that we are impacting hundreds of people in their own communities and thousands

of children as a result of this work," said Ms Lowry.

"While the shoebox appeal opens the door so we can help the poorest communities create their own future, we want to tell a different story; that these children are well loved, that they are full of hope. We are only the little seeds that helps them build a better future."

Team Hope asks everyone to host a tea party to ensure that the charity can continue its grassroots projects in the world's poorest regions. Participants will receive a digital pack of downloads, including recipes and party ideas, as well as a donation page for their individual event. For more information on how to host a Tea Party or simply get involved, visit teamhope.ie.



Motorcycle tour for mental health

In a powerful display of community spirit for youth mental health, a number of dedicated motorcyclists are set to arrive in Wicklow on Wednesday, June 11th at approximately 10:30 AM. They're part of a nationwide tour, called the Grand Tour 2025, to raise crucial funds and awareness for Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health.

These motorcyclists are visiting all 14 Jigsaw services across Ireland over a few days. Their stop in Wicklow at Jigsaw Wicklow service (Unit 2 Aubrey Court, Parnell Road, Bray, A98 XH50) is a key moment in their mission).

This initiative is led by Damian Sheridan, whose strong personal commitment drives the effort to ensure young people across Ireland get the mental health support they need. The Grand Tour 2025 is also made possible thanks to the generous support of main sponsors Joe Duffy BMW and Carole Nash Ireland, offering a unique chance to highlight a vital cause.

Jigsaw's work really makes a difference right here in Wicklow. In 2024, Jigsaw's local service offered over 2,031 appointments to young people seeking mental health support.

This crucial work relies on the generosity of supporters, fundraisers like Damian and his fellow riders, and our valued sponsors.

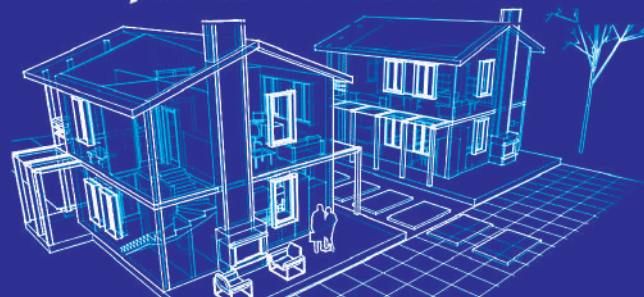
Jigsaw offers free, confidential, and vital mental health advice and support to young people aged 12-25, their families, and those who work with them.

The public can show their support for this initiative by donating to Jigsaw at idonate.ie/TheGrandTour2025.

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Closing date for receipt of completed online applications:
12 noon on Tuesday 17th June 2025.

Dr. Deirdre Keyes,
Chief Executive.



James Kelly of LMH Engineering Group.

Wicklow man travels to Japan on Ireland's biggest annual unofficial trade mission

A delegation of 140 of Ireland's top entrepreneurs, including Wicklow's James Kelly of LMH Engineering Group, travelled to Japan last week for the annual EY Entrepreneur Of The Year CEO Retreat. Running from Monday 26th to Saturday 31st May, the retreat saw the entrepreneurs travel between Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto as they participate in a comprehensive programme of executive coaching, education and networking, while also experiencing Japan's vibrant culture and traditions.

This year's retreat visited sites of major business, academic and diplomatic importance across Japan. Key visits included SoftBank Corporation HQ where the group will meet with SoftBank President Kunihiko Fujinaga and Executive Vice President Daichi Nozaki, a 'Mini MBA' experience at Hitotsubashi University, delivered by leading Japanese academics Prof-essor Yoshinori Fujikawa and Professor Hiroshi Ono, and Ireland House Tokyo, the centre of Ireland's diplomatic relations in Japan, where the group

will meet with Ambassador of Ireland to Japan, Damien Cole.

Later in the week the group immersed themselves in Japanese culture in Kyoto before concluding with a visit to the World Expo in Osaka.

Japan is the world's fourth largest economy with enduring strengths in areas including innovation, technology, automotive and manufacturing. The existing trade relationship between Ireland and Japan is strong with Japan positioned as Ireland's second largest trading partner in the Asia-Pacific region.

Many of the entrepreneurs travelling to Japan are already conducting business there, while others are seeking to expand their markets.

The delegation included this year's 24 EY Entrepreneur Of The Year finalists as well as programme alumni representing a broad spectrum of industries and representatives from Enterprise Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland and Julius Baer International.

Roger Wallace, Partner Lead for EY Entrepreneur Of The Year said: "The CEO retreat is one of the highlights of the

EY Entrepreneur Of The Year programme and this year we are taking the biggest ever cohort of entrepreneurs on the retreat to Japan, for what will be Ireland's largest annual unofficial trade mission. Supported by Enterprise Ireland, Invest NI and Julius Baer, our 140 entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to meet with local business leaders, academics and experts, while also experiencing Japan's vibrant culture and traditions.

"Japan is renowned as an innovative leader across various industries, including manufacturing,

electronics, automotive and robotics, with world-class Japanese companies such as Sony, Honda, Yamaha. It is a country rich in opportunity for entrepreneurs looking to expand beyond traditional markets and into the wider Asia-Pacific

region, an area which continues to move from strength-to-strength. This retreat is an opportunity for Irish entrepreneurs to delve deeper into new market opportunities in Japan and expand their knowledge of business and trade in the region."

Wicklow businesses make prestigious export Industry Awards Shortlist

The Irish Exporters Association has announced that Wicklow businesses Glenhaven Foods and Ventac have been shortlisted at the prestigious Export Industry Awards. Glenhaven have been shortlisted in the Private Irish Business category while Ventac has received nominations in the Export Innovation and Manufacturing Exporter categories.

The Export Industry Awards recognise excellence across Ireland's export sector. This year, there are 12 award categories, ranging from manufacturing to life sciences, covering topics such as sustainability and innovation. The category winners and the 2025 Overall

Exporter of the Year will be announced at the 23rd Export Industry Awards and Gala Dinner on the 3rd October 2025 at the Dublin Royal Convention Centre.

Speaking at the announcement, Simon McKeever, CEO of the IEA, said, "The Export

Industry Awards are a celebration of the remarkable achievements of Ireland's exporters. I would like to congratulate all shortlisted companies on this outstanding accomplishment. The companies have not only demonstrated exceptional innovation and resilience but have also

set a benchmark for excellence in the export sector."

The shortlisted companies will also have an opportunity to participate in the IEA Masterclass given by Trinity Executive Education on the 16th June. The Masterclass aims to support exporting companies and those who support the industry, in developing adaptive strategies for fast changing international markets.

The Awards are sup-

ported by Platinum sponsors KPMG Ireland and Trinity Executive Education, Trinity College Dublin and Corporate sponsors and partners: Ace Express Freight, Bord Bia, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Dixon International Logistics, Enter-

prise Ireland, InterTrade-Ireland, Descartes Thyme and Moffett Automation. Live judging will take place in early September and the winners will be announced at the Export Industry Awards Ceremony & Gala Dinner in Dublin.

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THE MIRACULOUS PRAYER

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

Gospel Mark 14: 22-25

As they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to them. 'Take it,' he said, 'this is my body.' Then he took a cup and when he had returned thanks he gave it to them, and all drank from it and he said to them, "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many. I tell you solemnly, I shall not drink any more wine until the day I drink the new wine in the kingdom of God."

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Camp 2: Wicklow Town	July 7th - 11th	12.30 - 3.30pm
Camp 3: Enniskerry	July 14th - 18th	9am - 12 noon
Camp 4: Enniskerry	July 14th - 18th	12.30 - 3.30pm

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