

COUNTYWISE



Available online at
www.wicklow.ie/countywise



Message from the Wicklow County Council Chief Executive



Some of the great people keeping Wicklow going during the pandemic



Welcome to a COVID-19 special edition of Countywise magazine. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted severely on every part of our society and our economy and changed how we do business. Council staff are working to ensure a continuity of service across our key operations. The Council's Crisis Management team meets regularly to monitor the situation as well as liaising with Government Departments and Agencies

across the Eastern Region. Wicklow County Council lead in joining together local organisations to assist citizens during Covid-19 by setting up a dedicated Covid-19 Community Response Forum. The support helpline was established in Wicklow County Council to assist at risk members of the public in accessing non-emergency and non-medical supports and advice during the current public health emergency. I recognise the great work being done by the Council staff and the thousands of volunteers throughout the county, thank you. Building on the fantastic community mobilisation that has taken place during

the COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Response Forum has developed the "Let's Keep Wicklow Talking" initiative. Together we can reduce the feeling of loneliness and isolation that some may be experiencing during the COVID-19 emergency. Wicklow County Council has designated a number of locations around the five Municipal Districts for people who are aged 70 and over or who are medically vulnerable to exercise outdoors in a quiet space, should they wish to do so. The continued protection of elderly people and those with underlying health conditions is hugely important to us all as we move through the various

phases of the Government's five stage plan to ease the COVID-19 restrictions and reopen Ireland's economy and society. It is hoped that by the Council introducing these small measures that it will assist to reduce the spread of the virus in the community particularly for the most vulnerable as they go outside for exercise and fresh air. In the face of this, the biggest challenge we have encountered in decades, Wicklow people have stepped up to the plate and adhered to the strict guidelines put in place by the Government, following the advice of the National Public Health Emergency Response Team (NPHT). Because of this strict

adherence to the rules, we have all contributed to the progress that Wicklow has made in containing the spread of COVID-19 and, in so doing, we have saved lives. Now, because of the progress made, we are beginning to move to the next phase in reducing the spread of the virus, while starting to gradually re-open our economy and our society. In doing so, we still need to make sure that we adhere to **the rules of the new way of living and working, so that we maintain the gains we have made, and continue to suppress the spread of the virus.** Work is a key part of life and most of us want to return to our jobs as soon as possible.

But we need to get back to work safely. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for staying at home and heeding the advice of the Health Service Executive and National Government. Thank you again to the volunteers throughout our communities and to the dedicated staff whose commitment to continuing the delivery of essential services to the people of County Wicklow is paramount. We are stronger when we work together. #StaySafe and #HoldFirm
**Frank Curran
Chief Executive, Wicklow County Council**

A message from the Cathaoirleach



Cllr Irene Winters
Cathaoirleach of Wicklow
County Council

We are very conscious of the challenges COVID-19 has presented for us all, individuals, families and communities and the impact it has had on our daily lives. Normal life as we knew it has temporarily ceased to exist and the impact on the more vulnerable in our society has been even greater. I would like to thank everyone for their efforts in minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19 and for their co-operation adhering to National advice. I would especially like to thank those who potentially put themselves in harms way daily



Members of Wicklow Fire Service fighting gorse fires in the uplands in April

in the delivery of services, retail staff, postal workers, community volunteers and all the frontline workers.

This has been a very unusual year as Cathaoirleach, locked down for the best part of 3 months. Myself and my fellow councillors have been working away in our elective roles behind the scenes embracing technologies such as Zoom to conduct district & committee meetings. The impact of this pandemic is going to affect the delivery of services within Wicklow County Council. Loss of rates and revenue will have a knock-on effect in next years budgets. Time has been lost on repairs, roadworks etc. The last number of weeks would have been ideal for the usually planned outdoor works, but we will do our best to meet the needs of the communities.

Government has issued their Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business and sets out how the COVID-19 restrictions will be lifted. It will be a strange time for all, but I hope we can pull together and get through this safely.

LET'S KEEP WICKLOW TALKING DURING COVID19

'Let's Keep Wicklow Talking' and together we can reduce the feeling of loneliness and isolation that some may be experiencing during the COVID-19 emergency, according to the County Wicklow Community Response Forum.

Community groups and individuals can reach out and:

• T - Take the time to chat – together we can get through this

• A - Ask your neighbour how they are doing

• L - Let your neighbour have your contact details

• K - Keep in regular contact by

telephone or video call

• I - Initiate conversations with a friendly wave or smile

• N - Never feel alone – Wicklow Community Call Helpline is here to help you

• G - Get talking – Its good for you and your community
County Wicklow Community Response Forum want to build on the fantastic community mobilisation that has taken place during the COVID-19 pandemic. All over the county volunteers have been helping people to stay safe by collecting and delivering

their shopping, medication, newspapers, walking their dogs and a myriad of other requests for assistance that have been answered. As the restrictions continue it is important that people continue to stay safe.

Therefore, the County Wicklow Community Response Forum is launching this campaign to Keep Wicklow Talking to encourage people to smile, have a chat (at a safe distance), let them know your contact details so that you can chat about the GAA glory days or who should have won "Strictly Come Dancing" this year.

Remember that some people find it difficult to ask for help so

an encouraging smile or wave can make that vital connection.

Friends, neighbours, family and community groups – we can all play a part in reducing loneliness and keeping Wicklow connected.

County Wicklow Community Response Forum also want to remind people that anyone who needs help or is experiencing loneliness can call 1800 868 399 or text 087 245 6874 or email covidsupport@wicklowcoco.ie 8am-8pm seven days a week, or you can call the ALONE National Helpline 0818 222 024.

Other supports can be found at YourMentalHealth.ie or gove.ie/ together.

ALMOST €80,000 ALLOCATED TO 50 COMMUNITY GROUPS

Almost €80,000 has been distributed by Wicklow County Council to 50 groups who are supporting their communities across the county during the COVID-19 emergency.

Each county in the country received a grant from the Department of rural and Community Development to assist Community and Voluntary groups involved in the delivery of COVID -19 community response efforts.

Amongst those sharing the grant in Wicklow are:

- 9 groups providing meals to those in need
- 8 sporting organisations aiding
- 9 groups supplying face masks for frontline staff
- 5 groups offering technology support
- 4 groups providing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

The other groups involved provide a mix of assistance such as transport, financial advice etc.

Wicklow County Council COVID-19 Community Call Helpline

- ✓ Collection & delivery of food, other items
- ✓ Social isolation supports
- ✓ Garda related issues
- ✓ Other medical or health needs



1800 868 399



CovidSupport@wicklowcoco.ie



If you are unable to call or email please TEXT us on:
087 245 6874



Wicklow libraries still serving patrons during the lockdown

Wicklow County Council Library Service has responded to the Lockdown by finding new ways to service its thousands of users.

All of the libraries closed to the public on March 13th, but the staff wanted to remain as relevant as possible to patrons during this time.

"Spring Into Storytime" is part of the "Right To Read" campaign and usually the month of April is dedicated to emphasising the importance of storytime sessions for children and parents.

With the buildings closed to the public, library staff have recorded themselves reading picture and chapter books and making simple crafts in their own homes or from their back gardens.

The stories have been delivered in Irish, French and English and so far have been collectively viewed almost 8,000 times on Facebook during the month of April.

Staff have also linked up with local pre-schools and set up Zoom Story Times: an arrangement between the preschool operators and the librarian.

Other activities delivered virtually have included the wildlife illustrator Aga Grandowicz giving a live demonstration on how to draw a frog.

Music Generation Wicklow produced podcasts have been shared on Facebook where people can learn to sing and play popular tunes. This is proving very popular with people cocooning or just at home due to the restrictions who have been practising or learning to play an instrument. The Borrowbox Book Club



Emilie Jost, librarian at Ballywaltrim Library, delivering an online story-telling session

facility is also very popular. This has been set up using title on the library's ebook and audiobook resource where multiple copies of titles have been made available.

Patrons download the book in either format and engage in a discussion via Zoom and the librarian.

Borrowbox is a resource in use for many years by the library service but the pandemic restrictions have seen a huge increase in usage – Wicklow County Library Service has seen an almost tripling in usage since mid-March with almost 5,000 people actively using

these resources. An invitation to compose a limerick and submit it be viewed on Facebook was hugely popular with adults and children alike – and a month later the library service is still getting submissions.

Wicklow poetry lovers are feeling a bit deprived because of the shutdown. To bridge this gap, Wicklow Libraries have partnered with Poetry Ireland and been given permission to publish archived work by Irish poets on social media, thus giving enthusiast, as well as general public, access to this valuable material.



Freya Brhanavan (6) from Wicklow pictured unleashing some creative talents for Cruinniú na nÓg

CRUINNIÚ NA NÓG: COLOURFUL, CREATIVE, AND NOW, VIRTUAL

Wicklow County Council has announced its Cruinniú na nÓg line up for 2020 as part of the Creative Ireland Programme, supported by RTÉ. This is the third year of Cruinniú na nÓg and there are hundreds of free creative activities taking place throughout Ireland for young people under 18 within the Government and NPHE guidelines of social distancing and staying safe.

All competitions are FREE and open to young people under 18 years with fantastic prizes including iPads and much more.

To see the full programme and find details of how to sign up for any of the initiatives see www.wicklow.ie

The closing date for entries is Tuesday June 2nd 2020 at 4pm giving people three full weeks to unleash their creative talents.



Celebrate Spring with your local library!

www.librariesireland.ie/spring-into-storytime

Libraries Ireland
Makes Every Library
Your Local Library

Local Authority Home Loan Mortgage Payment Break

The Minister for Housing, Planning & Local Government has announced a Mortgage Payment Break of up to three months for local authority mortgage holders who are in financial difficulty as a result of the current Covid-19 pandemic. If you believe you have been affected and wish to avail of this scheme please see wicklow.ie/COVID2019

COUNTY SEES SHARP SPIKE IN DUMPING

Wicklow County Council, along with local authorities throughout the country, has recorded a significant increase in illegal dumping and fly tipping since people were asked to stay at home as a result of COVID-19.

All domestic waste services are showing increases in waste generated at home as we spend more time there and do all our eating and consumption in our own homes.

Staying at home has been linked to an increase in DIY and many people are taking the opportunity to declutter. Online deliveries have grown generating extra packaging waste.

The increase in dumping is most noticeably in the form of small-scale fly tipping with individual items dumped or small quantities of household waste by individuals.

The dumping is occurring more locally with offenders travelling short distances.

The number of bulky items being dumped, such as

mattresses, has also grown. In one day recently Wicklow County Council picked up mattresses from eight different locations.

Street bins have seen big increases in volume even when few people are out and about.

As we eat and drink at home the amount of waste we generate in our households has increased dramatically.

Food waste is up by 25 per cent while glass waste has also increased dramatically.

The bottle bank network has been under significant pressure.

Large quantities of glass and cans with packaging and other items have been left on the ground littering the sites. Glasco who service the banks have increased collections but are limited by staff availability in how much extra they can do.

Where bottle banks are full Wicklow County Council are asking the public to bring their glass home and store it for a later visit to a bottle bank or recycling centre.

Wicklow County Council has worked to keep all recycling centres open, maintain street cleaning and servicing of all street bins in our towns.

The Council is appealing to the public to help protect staff still working by using all centres and its bin network fairly and correctly. Staff should not be asked to handle other peoples waste in an unsafe and unnecessary manner particularly during this crisis.

The Council's waste enforcement team is operating at full capacity and investigating reports of dumping, removing dumped waste as quickly as possible while an increasing use is being made of CCTV in order to catch and prosecute more offenders.

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment has provided funding for extra CCTV.

Better practice with waste management will help to protect all of us from COVID-19.



CHINESE COMMUNITY HELP THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

"Showing love to our second hometown", declared Summi Wong of the Southside Chinese Residents Association about their incredible gift to Wicklow.

Summi and the many Chinese people that have settled in Bray and surrounding areas met recently to figure out how they could contribute to the COVID-19 emergency locally.

They wanted to show their solidarity with the people of Ireland and particularly of their hometown, Bray.

After some thought they decided to source masks from China. They raised the money and bought over 25,000 three-layer disposable masks and shipped them here.

With the help of local Gardai, 15,000 of these masks have now been distributed to local nursing homes in the Bray and Greystones area, at no cost.

A further 10,000 are being sent to

local not-for-profits with the help of the County Wicklow Volunteer Centre. These organisations include Sunbeam House Services, Bray Home Care Service and Wicklow Community Carers.

All were delighted as sourcing masks is difficult and expensive, so to get masks free was a huge gift.

Summi explained that her Association was a small but very active group which wanted to "give back to the community". When the call went out to fundraise for the PPE equipment they were surprised and delighted with the generous response with even children emptying their piggy banks to donate.

We would like to thank the members of the Southside Chinese Residents Association, the Gardai and all the frontline workers caring for the most vulnerable in our society for their amazing response to this crisis.



Home-school supports

The COVID-19 restrictions have not prevented the Wicklow County Council library service from seeking ways of serving the community, including home-schooling.

Staff are making two online supports available to parents who want to help their child improve their reading, writing, spelling and comprehension.

These supports are TTRS of Touch, Type, Read and Spell and Lexia. Both programmes are recommended by educational psychologists as resources for children who may be a bit delayed or struggling with their reading.

These resources are free - just please email libraryoutreach@wicklowcoco.ie.

COMMUNITY CALL:

1800 868 399

CLEAN, GREEN AND KEEN TO HELP THE COMMUNITY



Wicklow County Council have redeployed one of the fully electric GOcars to be used by Wicklow Civil Defence. Our Civil Defence volunteers are very busy assisting people in the communities during this pandemic.



Special times & locations for the over 70's and vulnerable to exercise outdoors

From **11th May** the following locations have been designated and will operate between the hours of **9am and 11am** for the next couple of months.

- The promenade from the pier to the playground, Wicklow town
- Burnaby Park, Mill Road, Greystones
- Tinahely Railway Walk
- Baltinglass Park
- Shillelagh Park
- The Riverwalk, Arklow
- Bray Promenade (not restricting access to the beach area)
- People's Park Bray

#StaySafe #InThisTogether



For daily updates and news, follow us on our website and Social Media Channels



@WicklowCoCo



WicklowCountyCouncil



WICKLOW

ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

www.wicklow.ie/Living



@WicklowCoCo

ESSENTIAL SERVICES



While Wicklow County Council's public buildings may be closed to the public, essential services are still being carried out behind closed doors. Please contact us on 0404 20100 Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm. Outdoor staff have been busy getting our public areas ready to help you keep your distance while out exercising



UISCE
ÉIREANN : IRISH
WATER

How we can all conserve water?

By working together to use only what we need in our homes and businesses, we can all contribute to ensuring a sustainable water supply for everyone.



www.water.ie/conserve
#ConserveWater

Housing tenants can contact us if in difficulty - we're to help you

Wicklow County Council understands that this is a very difficult time for all and that some Council and HAP/RAS tenants will be experiencing reduction in income, which will impact on their ability to keep up with household bills, including rent.

If you have experienced such a reduction, please do not hesitate to submit your details, (by email, photo, scan, given the current restrictions) and

your rent will be reviewed in this context.

Every effort should be made to pay current rent to avoid build-up of arrears for the future.

You should note that delays in recalculating your rent should be expected given current staff pressures, however any adjustment will be backdated accordingly.

Please attach as much documentation & information

to the relevant email below.
• ras@wicklowcoco.ie (RAS, Rental Accommodation Scheme)
• hap@wicklowcoco.ie (HAP, Housing Assistance Payments)
• rentreview2019@wicklowcoco.ie (All Local Authority Housing)

Wicklow County Council will continue to work with you to do everything possible to assist you through these changing times.

COMMUNITY CALL: 1800 868 399



Homeless Services

The Homeless Team continues to provide key support by phone, working from both office and home. The Homeless HAP Placefinder and the HAP team continue to progress cases.

Key focus at present is on maintaining payments to landlords and reviewing differential rent of those clients who have reduced income during this time

If you are at risk of, or, experiencing homelessness contact the Homeless Team for advice and support at (0404) 20120

€150

On The Spot Fine If You Don't Bin It



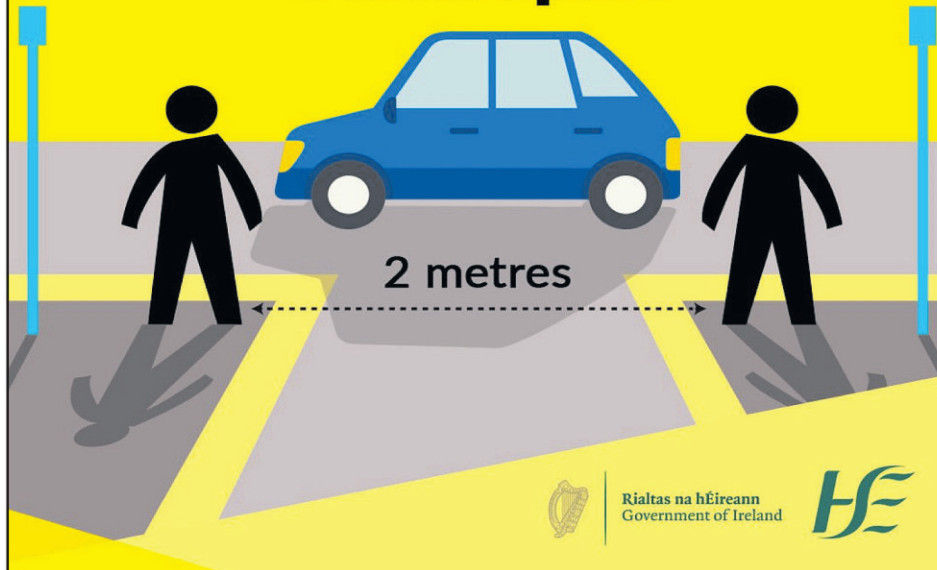
leave
only
pawprints...

Bin the Poo
Bin the Poo Bag



Coronavirus
COVID-19
Public Health
Advice

Protect each other Stand apart



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Our Motor Tax offices are currently closed to the public.

Please use www.motortax.ie or
submit applications by post to
County Buildings, Station Rd.,
Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow.

Forms RF111A, RF120 and RF134 do not require a
Garda signature/stamp for the duration of the Covid 19 restrictions.

Contact Motortax@wicklowcoco.ie with queries



Reopening Business Getting Ireland Back to Work—Safely

1 Phased Return to Business

There is a guidance roadmap in place for gradual business reopening - in five phases - beginning on 18th May, with different starting dates for different business sectors and always subject to change based on health advice at the time.

2 Staying Safe, Staying Healthy

Employers and Employees - make yourselves aware of the full advice contained in Return to Work, the National Return to Work Safety Protocol - available at Gov.ie

3 Financial Supports

There is a wide range of financial supports available through your Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland, Microfinance Ireland and other agencies to help with cash flow, payroll, working capital and long-term investment.

4 Advice & Guidance

If your business model needs to change the national network of 31 Local Enterprise Offices and other relevant state agencies can help.

Find out more at gov.ie/business



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland