

OUR PEOPLE

OUR PLACE

OUR PASSION

OUR Wexford



BUSINESS

Meet top Wexford-based businesses » BNY Mellon
» ClearStream
» Slaney Foods

HOSPITALITY

Where to stay...
Where to eat...
Where to shop...

WHAT'S ON

Over 30 top festivals and events in Wexford

FEATURE

New era for Johnstown Castle
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2018

€7.95



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Published By Wexford County Council,
Economic Development © 2017 / 2018

ISBN: 978-0-9933378-4-0

ISSN: 2009-9207

Magazine designed by TOTEM
www.totem.ie



Welcome from the Chairman

In this publication we introduce you to inspirational Wexford people who have developed hugely successful careers, but who have a very soft spot for their home place.

We look at some of the transformational projects, which will see Wexford infrastructure develop to a whole new level over the next number of years, making it easier to live, work and invest in our county.

We have discussed doing business in Wexford with some of the county's biggest employers and delved into what they believe makes the county a great place to do business.

We also explore the county's rich heritage and cultural offering, and feature Ireland's Ancient East along with a range of festivals and events, which ensure Wexford has a 360-degree offering for locals and visitors alike.

From living in Wexford and studying here, to working and enjoying leisure time, we hope that **'Our Wexford'** offers you some insights as to why some of the world's biggest brands have chosen Wexford as their place to do business.

Más fíor nach neart go cur le chéile, caithfidh Carmanaigh uilig cur le cheile ar mhaithe le Co Loch Garman.

If it is true that there is no strength without unity then all Wexford people must unite for the betterment of Wexford.

John Hegarty,
Cathaoirleach, Wexford
County Council.







Welcome to Wexford

The beautiful, historic and diverse county of Wexford is located on the southeastern-most corner of the island of Ireland. In recent years developments in infrastructure, education and the arts have led to it becoming one of the most innovative, bustling places in the country.

As the heart of Ireland's 'Sunny Southeast', it enjoys the most sunshine of any part of Ireland every year. Wexford's rolling countryside and vibrant towns have many attractions for those who want to live and work in a place which has a young and enterprising population, spectacular scenery, a rich heritage embodying Ireland's Ancient East and an unparalleled cultural life beloved by visitors and locals alike.

From Wexford town in the south of the county to Gorey and Bunclody in the north, Enniscorthy in the heart to

New Ross on the borders with Waterford and Kilkenny, the urban areas of Wexford all offer their own unique attractions. All remain within easy distance of Ireland's major cities and airports, as well as the busy Rosslare Europort, which is just minutes away and is a key link to the United Kingdom and continental Europe.

With a county population of 145,315, the key urban centre is Wexford town, which was founded over 1,000 years ago and has retained historic links with its Viking and Norman past.

It was those Viking 'visitors' who first laid out the narrow and picturesque streets and lanes, which today form a thriving town centre in Wexford that has become famous as one of the most attractive urban districts in Ireland. County Wexford welcomes over 850,000 visitors

every year, spending €190 million in the local economy.

The urban centre is a popular shopping destination and the town is home to a number of large employers across the agri- food, financial services and ICT sectors.

This coastal town is also just minutes from spectacular beaches such as Curracloe and Rosslare, nature reserves, and national heritage sites including 12 pillars of Ireland's Ancient East.

Not to mention the multi-award-winning Wexford Festival Opera, which attracts tens of thousands into the town every autumn to enjoy many musical treats, in an awe-inspiring venue – Ireland's National Opera House.

The designated heritage town of Enniscorthy is located in the heart of the county and today is a busy shopping and visitor town filled with interesting heritage

ABOVE:
Wexford town
quayside



sites and described in Ulysses as ‘the finest place in the world’. Enniscorthy played a key role in Ireland’s centuries-long struggle for independence, especially during the 1798 Rebellion but also during the 1916 Rising which eventually led to the War of Independence and the birth of the Irish Free State. The town’s streets are picture perfect, a feature which saw Enniscorthy used as the town for all of the Irish street scenes in the much acclaimed Brooklyn movie.

Not far away is New Ross, a vibrant market town on the banks of the river Barrow and indeed

the gateway for that majestic river’s exit into the sea off Ireland’s southeastern coast. The ruins of St Mary’s Church are worth seeing while the Dunbrody Visitor Centre on the town’s quayside features a replica of the type of ships which once brought thousands of people who wanted to escape poverty to different parts of the world.

The quays in New Ross are also home to the Emigrant Flame, a monument to all those who left this country – including JFK’s ancestor Patrick Kennedy – in search of betterment.

At the northern end of County Wexford can be found the bustling market town of Gorey. Its Market House and Square sets the tone of a town just six minutes from the blue flag Courtown and Ballymoney and minutes from hill and woodland walks. It is a busy commercial spot featuring a long wide main street with a host of charming, indigenous shops and is a thriving hub for new business start-ups and tech companies.

Not far from Gorey are a host of panoramic beaches laden with soft, golden sands. Some are hidden away, found following drives or walks of discovery, while some like Courtown Harbour are busy resorts.

Further north the likes of Wicklow and then Dublin are but a short drive from here while, heading south again, the coastal drive back down to Wexford town is one of the prettiest of its kind in this part of the world and a reminder of all that Wexford has to offer as a place to work, live, visit, and do business.

ABOVE:
The Dunbrody
Famine ship at New
Ross Quayside

LEFT:
Wells House and
Terrace Garden





OUR PEOPLE



01



EOIN COLFER

Eoin is one of the world's favourite children's authors and has written the internationally bestselling Artemis Fowl books, which chronicle the adventures of a 12-year-old master criminal.

Eoin was born in Wexford in 1965, where he and his four brothers were brought up by his father (a primary school teacher, historian and artist of note) and mother (a drama teacher). He first developed an interest in writing in primary school with gripping Viking stories inspired by the history he was learning in school at the time!

A former schoolteacher himself Eoin now lives in Wexford with his family. He began writing adult fiction but after teaching primary school realised that he had an affinity with kids. He created the acclaimed Artemis Fowl, W.A.R.P. and Legends series for children. He is a former Laureate na nÓg (2014-2016). He has also written an Ironman novel for Marvel Comics, the play My Real Life the musical Noel and much more.

A latecomer to success, Colfer didn't get published until he was 32. "I had been trying since I was 19. For four or five years I stopped. It wasn't until I hit 30 that I had a crisis. I had always said to myself that I would get published by the time I was 30. That really hit me — not only was I not published, I hadn't even written a proper novel. I then put the pedal to the metal."

Speaking about taking inspiration for his work from Wexford, Eoin says, "I've been inspired by many many locations in the region. Hook Head is my family home and I grew up climbing the lighthouse with my dad; it is something I have never forgotten and it is something I have

managed to shoehorn into about 10 books so far in different guises.

"After that one of my favourite places is what is now the National Opera House, it is quite unique and is often described as a hidden jewel and that's exactly what it is;

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when you're in Wexford you walk into this narrow street which is full of terraced houses and you think, this is a beautiful quaint street but then you turn left and the whole world of theatre opens before you in this massive opera house.

I also love the Wexford Quays with its incredible old wooden works where ships have been docking for hundreds of years; it's a wonderful place to visit on a Sunday and look out to sea, smell the salt and watch the fishermen on the ballast bank opposite; it is something my dad did with me and I do with my kids.

"There is an awful lot on offer here. We have the scenery, we have the history, we have the cuisine, we have the friendly people, we have the culture; in every coffee shop, there's an art exhibition as well as a fantastic

menu. The whole region is very very magical and sometimes it's forgotten, which actually we don't mind because we like having it all to ourselves, but in the spirit of generosity we would like to open it up to the rest of the world."

Speaking of his play My Real Life which is to be performed as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Eoin says, "In the 15-minute version of the play the character was based quite exclusively on a close friend of mine who has MS. What I wanted to put across in that first version was that he is still the same guy he always was, despite his condition; he's still funny, still has a great personality. I talked to him about it at the time and showed him the script, I was very anxious that he didn't feel I was using him as a hot topic or being patronising.

"When I had to extend it into a full-length piece I realised there had to be more to it than that; there had to be subtext and backstory and genuine emotions and not just a one-note moral fable. So then a lot of my own life went into it, a lot of my growing up in Wexford, a lot of my friends' stories went in too. I think if any of us look back on our younger years we could find 20 or 30 funny stories to use, it was just a matter of attributing all those to one person and giving them a timeline. It's still mostly based on my friend with a lot of my own time in 1970s and 1980s Wexford."

Eoin plans to continue his creative and writing works for many years to come, he says. "I will keep writing until people stop reading or I run out of ideas. Hopefully, neither of these will happen anytime soon."



MICHAEL LONDRA

Emmy®-nominated, Irish singer-songwriter Michael Londra is from the opera capital of Ireland. He decided in his early 30s to follow his heart and pursue a professional singing career. His leap of faith was rewarded when he soon became a leading man in musical theatre in Dublin, playing many roles. US director and choreographer Larry Fuller asked Michael to play Bobby Kennedy in the world premier of JFK where he was noticed by the producers of Riverdance.

He was offered the role of lead singer in the US National Tour which included performances at Radio City Music Hall and the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. In March 2000, Michael was again offered the position of lead singer in the new production of Riverdance on Broadway, taking the role from acclaimed Irish singer Brian Kennedy. This was the platform from which Michael's recording and producing career began.

Michael's first album Celt was produced by the world renowned Steve Skinner who co-produced the Grammy nominated soundtrack of RENT. The album was released in 15 countries worldwide selling particularly well in Korea where it reached No 1 in the World Music Charts. He appears with Pavarotti, Bocelli, Il Divo, Sarah Brightman and Kathryn Jenkins on the Universal Records Asia 2009 release Arias : Ancora.

His recording of Danny Boy was described by The Irish Emigrant in New York as "One of the best recordings of Danny Boy in history". The YouTube video of this recording has been downloaded by seven million people.

Chatting with Michael, his love for Wexford is palpable. "My whole identity is built on Wexford town. While my father is a Kilkenny man,

my mother was born and reared in Maudlintown, Wexford. My whole childhood was spent in the heart of the town itself. Even though I live in the USA, I am deeply connected to the town and can't stay away for longer than a few months.

"Wexford was the ideal town to grow up in, as a singer. The heart of the town for me, was the Theatre Royal. It is where I learned about music and performing. I loved as a kid that I lived by the sea and the maritime influences. My earliest memory is listening to seagulls first thing in the morning. I have probably more romantic impressions of my childhood, living so far away, but to me it was fairly idyllic. The town itself and the people living in it have always been open to the world outside so I remember seeing foreigners come especially for the Festival Opera and I think it gave me wanderlust."

FOR ME, THERE IS NOWHERE LIKE WEXFORD. IT HAS A QUALITY THAT VERY FEW TOWNS HOLD.

Michael thinks that Wexford has discovered its strengths over the years and built on them. "The cultural spine of the town has been realised with the crown of the National Opera House in the heart of it all.

"For me, there is nowhere like Wexford. It has a quality that very few towns hold. Over the years, it has been almost a well kept secret but that has changed in recent years. The town itself obviously has its musical charms along with a rich tapestry of history from Viking to Norman. A few miles away you have some of the best beaches in Ireland.

The shopping and restaurants dotted along our Main Street are second to none. I am bringing a tour of North Americans and Australians this year and I know they will be blown away by the place."

Michael is a proud Wexford Ambassador, commenting on this official role as such, "I always saw myself as an ambassador for the town. Not out of responsibility but out of a genuine love and appreciation for the place. When I was approached I honestly just thought that it was a natural fit.

"I talk about the town and county at every show I do. Whenever a newspaper does a story or I do a TV or radio interview, I make Wexford a part of the conversation. It is part of my identity. Internationally we have lost out to other parts of Ireland but now I feel like we are part of the conversation and people are coming to visit. I have no place in Irish media at home but I get a fair amount of attention in other countries. Whenever you read or hear about Michael Londra, you will also hear about Wexford. It's a given."

Michael is indeed partnering his love of Wexford with his new venture as a theatre producer, with Venuworks Theatricals. "Venuworks is a large US based company, managing arenas, theatres and conference centres across the US. The CEO and I have partnered to produce shows for Broadway and national touring. Our first project is a new musical, written by my lifelong pal Eoin Colfer and another Wexford based composer, Liam Bates. The show will now tour in the US and beyond. Organically, it was a great fit with facilities, talent and know-how for its premiere in Wexford in 2016. Broadway agents and tastemakers flew in to see the show and we now have global plans for it."



DERMOT O'LEARY

One of the most recognisable faces on British – and Irish – TV screens nowadays is that of Dermot O'Leary, the likeable presenter who has made *The X Factor* his own and is also a veteran of many popular television and radio ventures.

Many in the UK, and even in Ireland, may not realise that Dermot is first generation Colchester-Irish and that both his mother and father, Maria and Seán, are from Wexford.

They were among the many who made their way from Ireland to England back in the late 20th century, when the domestic economy was still struggling to catch up with its European counterparts and opportunities were few and far between for young adults just out of school and college.

While times have changed since then and we've seen a boom, recession and now a recovery to the extent that Ireland was recently named the fastest-growing economy in Europe, that legacy of Irish emigrants remains in many countries throughout the world, not least in the UK.

It's often the case too, that the Irish communities in far-flung parts of the globe insist on maintaining their original heritage and ensuring that the generations that follow, even though they're born away from Irish soil, are aware of and proud of their roots.

That's certainly the case with Dermot O'Leary – or Dermot Seán Fintan O'Leary to give him his full name – who says that, in relation to Wexford and his parents' origins in the county, he "always felt a connection to the area" when he was growing up.

CURRACLOE BEACH WAS MY FAVOURITE PLACE AS A KID. A MAGICAL BEACH.

He always speaks with pride about his connections to Wexford and indeed, holds dual British and Irish citizenship.

Following his childhood in Colchester where he attended St Benedict's Catholic College, Dermot broke into broadcasting when he landed a job as a DJ on Essex Radio, before earning a slot as a presenter on Channel 4's T4 slot on television.

He then went on to present Big Brother's Little Brother, a spin-off of the Big Brother behemoth, on E4 before taking over as *The X Factor*'s main host in 2007, running the gauntlet with the likes of Simon Cowell, Louis Walsh and Sharon Osborne, a position he held since 2007 with the exception of 2015, when he stepped down to pursue

other ventures. He later returned as the host in 2016 and then once again in 2017.

He remains loyal to his Wexford family and still recalls, all these years later, those holidays back to the southeast of Ireland as a child. "We visited the area every year when I was younger, spending six weeks in the summer."

As could be expected, he says "fond memories include going to the beach and watching hurling," so that's in line with most other people who choose to summer in Wexford and take advantage of the sunny climate, local activities and spectacular natural surroundings.

Of Wexford town itself, he says what he likes about it most is that it's such a friendly town, while he encourages visitors to the area to visit that beautiful, golden stretch of strand just outside the main urban centre. "Curracloe beach was my favourite place as a kid. A magical beach." Not many would disagree with him there.

Dermot recently posted a touching tribute to his Irish-born parents as he paid a final visit to his childhood home in Colchester, sharing a photograph of his mother Marie and father Seán outside the house he grew up in, saying that they were moving back to Ireland.

He captioned the family photograph with, "Squeezed in a last visit and supper to O'Leary HQ before Mam and Dad take the trip back to Wexford.

"They've loved it here. Since they've moved in '68 the people have been nothing but kind, welcoming and generous to them in a time when it wasn't easy to be Irish in Britain. But, home calls."



RIGHT:
Curracloe Beach



EAMONN SINNOTT



ABOVE:
Eamonn Sinnott,
Intel

From relatively low-key beginnings, computer chip and software manufacturer Intel arrived in Ireland over 25 years ago and began operating out of a warehouse in west Dublin while waiting for its headquarters to be readied.

Today it's one of the country's most important private-sector businesses, employing almost 5,000 people at its huge base in Leixlip, Co Kildare, and a

contributor of about €12.5 billion in capital investment to the Irish economy since 1990.

At the helm of Intel's Irish activities is a man who grew up in Wexford town, Eamonn Sinnott. He remains a frequent enough visitor to the streets and countryside of his native locality to know that it has as much, if not more, to offer any multi-national or smaller business, as any other area in Europe.

Educated at the CBS primary school and St Peter's secondary school in Wexford, before going on to graduate from university with maths and physics specialities, Eamonn worked with Digital Equipment Corporation in Galway before joining Intel as a shift manager in 1991, starting off at its base in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he became familiar with the landscapes and streets made famous on *Breaking Bad*.

He has held a number of positions with Intel since then, before becoming the corporation's Vice-President for Technology and Manufacturing in 2010, a post he today holds along with that of General Manager for Intel in Ireland.

Among his many responsibilities are oversight of Fab 24, Intel's first 300mm wafer fabrication facility outside of the United States, and home to the latest generation of Moore's Law – the principle outlined by one of Intel's founders, Gordon Moore, many years ago. This basically predicted that microprocessor chips would double in capacity every two years for the same cost. It remains the key principle driving the semiconductor industry worldwide today.

"What that has done in our lifetime" Eamonn explains, "is transform the entire world as we know it. Who could have imagined the sort of scale, expansion and transformation of the tech sector and the exciting things which it has enabled, and Ireland is at the very heart of this."

Other important activities in Intel in Ireland include chip design, security software, advanced graphics for games, and development work for the "internet of things".

Eamonn is passionate about using Intel as an inspiration for smaller businesses to create, innovate, grow and thrive and says Wexford is an ideal location for such development.

"Intel has enabled the worldwide infrastructure to connect the planet in ways we could only have dreamed about 25 years ago and you could really get excited about the opportunity that presents for expansion and growth for small

businesses, including those located in Wexford, who can look to a global market.

The Intel general manager points out that there are 200,000 small and medium enterprises in Ireland, accounting for about 70pc of the national workforce. "Just imagine if they were all to employ another one or two people, you'd solve the unemployment register."

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Things have been tough for such companies in recent years, he acknowledges, in the area of raising finance for example. "I believe that excellence is something that you can sell on a world stage - if you are the best in the world at what you do and can capitalise on that then you have a massive opportunity and I think

that is something that Wexford could excel at."

Ireland has done well at looking abroad for opportunities over the last few decades, Eamonn says. "We're a small country in the grand scheme of things but we definitely adopt a world view easily and Wexford, for me, is a fantastic cradle for business."

A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that Intel is worth almost €900 million to the Irish economy every year, making its way directly and indirectly across the whole country and not just the Leixlip, Kildare and Dublin areas, while internationally its reputation is gold-standard – recently rated by Forbes as one of the 10 most innovative companies in the world.

In his capacity as President of the American Chamber of Commerce Ireland, Eamonn recently made the presentations in a new US-Ireland research innovation awards scheme and says he was hugely impressed by the level of creativity now in existence across the nation. "We had 15 finalists and I was blown away by the calibre of those finalists. The reason we put that event on was to point out the level of talent that exists here in this country. I have met a number of people from Wexford in recent times to talk about things they are doing and it really did give me an adrenalin rush to hear about the kinds of things we're capable of. Ireland is a nimble, innovative and creative place and Wexford has that same lifeblood."

Meanwhile, he is quick to blow the trumpet of his native town as a place to live and work, citing its beauty, heritage, amenities and young, educated population.

"I'm a little biased but I do think Wexford is fantastic."

MARK REDMOND



The numbers are impressive. And proof of how important American businesses are to the Irish economy, in good times and bad. Over 700 companies across Ireland have their headquarters in the United States, directly employing 140,000 people in this country and also indirectly responsible for a further 100,000 jobs. A huge 26pc of Irish GDP is accounted for by exports from US companies based here, worth billions to the domestic economy.

ABOVE:
Mark Redmond, CE,
American Chamber

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Under the iconic
portrait of President
John F. Kennedy,
his grand-nephew
Congressman
Joe Kennedy III
(grandson of Bobby
Kennedy) with Mark
Redmond in the
White House on St
Patrick's Day 2015

Meanwhile, employees of American companies in Ireland donate about 200,000 hours through volunteer work in their local communities, meaning the payload is not just in financial terms but also social capital, with 4,000 local community projects supported by those businesses.

So that's quite an influence on Irish finance and Irish life in general and it's unsurprising,

therefore, that an important body of influence is the American Chamber of Commerce Ireland.

Now led by former head of the Irish Tax Institute and native of County Wexford, Mark Redmond, the ACCI has been representing American investment and businesses here for over half a century.

That history reflects the key role played by FDI from the US since the 1960s when the Seán Lemass-led government of the time took Ireland out of its insular, inward-looking past and looked abroad for new opportunities for growth and innovation.

"It's a very important sector of the Irish economy and Irish society," as Mark Redmond says.

The Chamber now has over 700 members who are American companies with activity in Ireland, as well as some members who are Irish companies doing business in the United States. "We're all about strengthening business

ties between the two countries," he adds. "US Foreign Direct Investment in Ireland is now at an all-time high, it's never been higher, and US confidence in Ireland is also, thankfully, at an all-time high."

Even during some of our darkest days, economically, the US kept faith in this country. The period 2008-2012, the age of austerity for Ireland and so many other nations across Europe and the rest of the world, actually saw an increase in American investment here, with FDI from the US exceeding that of the previous 50 years.

Ireland and Wexford have many advantages when it comes to attracting foreign investment, Mark points out.

"The number one thing is our talent. I talk every day to leaders of US companies in Ireland and in America and the most important thing we have got and have to nurture is the talent of the workforce here."

Other pluses are our relatively low costs and level of competitiveness, while the ever-improving infrastructure is also key, both the physical infrastructure of the likes of our road network and water supply, and also the digital infrastructure made up of our connectivity and broadband access.

“The fact that we’re a bridge between Europe and the US and, also, between the US and Asia, is very important. A lot of Americans would tell you we have the same kind of ‘can-do’ flexible approach to business which they have and appreciate.”

Mark cites a number of examples of businesses based in County Wexford which originate in America such as Coca-Cola, Waters Technology, Clearstream, and Lake Region among others, as proof of the confidence placed by US companies in the area and proof of what the area has to offer.

“The skill base in Wexford is strong and we’ve very strong Irish employers in Wexford and multi-national employers as well. Wexford has got a good supply of office and rental accommodation, which is very important, and in Wexford now we have a much-improved road link to the motorway system, which will take you to Dublin Airport and as far as Belfast.”

He hopes to see delivery of the long-awaited and much-debated Technological University of the Southeast, which would probably link the existing and highly-regarded Institutes of Technology in Waterford and Carlow and have an outreach campus in Wexford, as a way of deepening the skill and education base even more.

But then, there’s also the quality of life available in Wexford which he cites as a factor in any decision-



THE FACT THAT WE’RE A BRIDGE BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE US AND, ALSO, BETWEEN THE US AND ASIA, IS VERY IMPORTANT. A LOT OF AMERICANS WOULD TELL YOU WE HAVE THE SAME KIND OF ‘CAN-DO’ FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO BUSINESS WHICH THEY HAVE AND APPRECIATE.

making process when it comes to location. “For US companies, the lifestyle of their employees is very important. They like to have their employees living and working in great places and I think Wexford is one of the best places to live, it has many strengths.”

Mark himself has many family links around the county and grew up in Ferns and Enniscorthy, attending boarding school in the Cistercian College in Roscrea, County Tipperary, before going on to third-level education and graduating from Trinity

College Dublin and Dublin City University.

“It’s really fantastic,” he says about his position as CE with the American Chamber, where he’s been working for three years. “It’s a fantastically-interesting agenda and a very broad agenda, and a great team in the chamber. There’s a really wonderful membership who are committed to Ireland and committed to helping Ireland kick on into the coming years.”

THE SAVANNAH CONNECTION



In addition to being the ancestral home of President John F. Kennedy, the maritime county of Wexford boasts many other strong bonds with the United States. For example, the US Navy's "Father," Commodore John Barry, was born in Tacumshane, a village in the southeast of the county, in 1745.

Yet another connection developed in the 1840s and '50s, when three County Wexford shipping companies operated a direct transatlantic pathway to Savannah, chief port of Georgia – the Empire State of the South. While northeastern cities like Boston and New York often dominate perceptions of Irish America, we shouldn't ignore Savannah, famed for preserving the largest National Historic Landmark District in the US. Remarkably, the US Census of 1860 recorded a quarter of Savannah's white population as Irish-born, with Wexford

constituting by far the largest county of origin.

Known as the Wexford-Savannah Axis, the link remains relevant, for Savannah is vibrantly proud of its Irish heritage, shaped very consequentially by immigrants with Wexford names: Corish, Kehoe, Murphy, Rossiter, Sinnott, Stafford, and more. Savannah lives up to its moniker, the Hostess City, by proudly facilitating North America's second-biggest St. Patrick's Day Parade. Over 190 years old, that tradition-rich event plays a crucial role in the city's huge tourist industry—hardly surprising, for many of Savannah's 14 million annual visitors seek heritage experiences.

In response to the south's expanding population and economy, Ireland in recent years has opened two new consulates there: in Austin, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia. But no southern urban center is as Irish as Savannah, where nowadays

Wexford is being newly celebrated, as confirmed by the presentation in mid-March 2016 of the Key of Savannah to the people of Wexford in a ceremony conducted by Savannah's Mayor under the gold dome of City Hall.

The source of this refreshed interest is a major research project into the Wexford-Savannah Axis. Counting as partners the Georgia Historical Society, the John F. Kennedy Trust of New Ross, Co. Wexford, and humanities staff and librarians at Waterford Institute of Technology, the initiative is anchored at the Center for Irish Research and Teaching (CIRT), a unit of the 21,000-student Georgia Southern University, the largest university serving Savannah. CIRT's director, Dr. Howard Keeley, explains, "While all Irish counties feature within Savannah's history, none is more represented than Wexford."

Keeley continues, "Must-see Savannah locations, such as the

ABOVE:
Forsyth Park,
Savannah, Georgia

Kehoe House and Rossiter Place, are, in essence, pieces of Wexford. Thanks to mobile content we're developing, millions of culture-driven Savannah visitors will soon get precisely that message."

Keeley and his colleagues are sure that such digital curation will entice Americans to make in-person trips to great Wexford attractions, such as the Dunbrody Centre on the quayside at New Ross, where one can tour a full-scale reproduction of the sailing barque Dunbrody. The original vessel, the researchers have determined, sailed to Savannah at least five times. But the findings go deeper.

From an uncatalogued box in the National Archives of Ireland, James Devlin, an undergraduate student from Georgia Southern University's Honors Program, brought to light correspondence mailed in 1847 by Andrew Low II, the dominant cotton factor in mid-19th-century Savannah. The addressee was the Dunbrody's owner, William Graves of New Ross, and Low's intent seems to have been promotion of Savannah as an exporter of such goods as cotton, rice, timber planks, and barrel staves.

Devlin recalls, "Although nerve-racking to untie the fragile strings around bundles of documents not handled in over a century, the discovery of the letters and circulars from Low to Graves thrilled me. As an Irish-American awed by the contributions that Wexford people have made to Savannah, identifying the possible origin of the Wexford-Savannah Axis was humbling."

Using Dunbrody, Glenlyon, and other vessels, Graves grew the Wexford-Savannah Axis, even dispatching his son, James Palmer Graves, to reside in the Georgia city as his business representative.

Expanding to incorporate shipping concerns in addition to Graves – Howlett & Co. of New Ross and R. M. & R. Allen of Wexford Town – it responded to the Great

Hunger, but perhaps more to chronic anxiety on the part of Wexford tenant farmers over land security.

In Wexford, Kilkenny, and other regional newspapers, the companies vaunted Savannah and its hinterland as offering "cheap and fertile" land, as well as "universally high wages." By regularly underscoring that passengers for Savannah arrived alive, the advertisements complicate the received narrative of Famine-era vessels as "coffin ships."

THE LITANY OF WEXFORD MEN AND WOMEN WHO BUILT SAVANNAH IS RICH AND EXTENSIVE

Much of the power of the Wexford-Savannah Axis derives from human-interest stories of achievement. One exemplary narrative is that of William Kehoe, born in 1842, whose baptismal record identifies his origin as the townland of Mounthoward Upper, south of Gorey. Arriving in Savannah at age 10 with his parents and siblings, Kehoe would progress from the status

of apprentice to ownership of what the February 1916 edition of the journal *Iron Tradesman* characterised as "the largest and best equipped" iron foundry south of Virginia.

Currently, the extant buildings from his ironworks are undergoing renovation and repurposing to become the centrepiece of a multi-acre, world-class events campus.

The Director of the Georgia University Honors Program, Dr. Steve Engel, notes, "From John Barry of Oylegate, second Catholic bishop of Savannah, to and beyond Father Peter Whelan of Loughnageer, one of the great humanitarians of the Civil War in Georgia, the litany of Wexford men and women who built Savannah is rich and extensive."

Engel concludes, "Our students are excited to uncover and share what pushed and pulled the people who left Wexford, faced the Atlantic crossing in winter, and then integrated into multi-ethnic Savannah neighborhoods. The work is rekindling the Wexford-Savannah relationship in ways that yield very desirable tourism, business, and investment outcomes. But also important are the insights it provides into migration, a core challenge and opportunity in our time."

BELOW:
'Emigration to Savannah' newspaper advertisement



OUR CRAFT



Design and craft in Wexford is an ever-growing industry. The Craft Trail enables locals and visitors to ‘meet the makers’.

The trail offers an insight into 19 different craft makers on a driving route right across the county featuring galleries, craft workshops and exhibition spaces. Visitors can meet the makers in many of the workshops and gain a greater insight into the skills involved in their own craft. Milliners, potters, weavers, wood turners, sculptors and jewellers all feature across the trail, offering visitors an opportunity to view a broad variety of traditional crafting skills.



EILEEN GRAY – Irish design legend

One of the world's greatest designers, Eileen Gray grew up in Brownswood, Enniscorthy in County Wexford.

Gray's iconic furniture designs, rugs, lacquered screens and light fittings have left a lasting legacy in global design.

Gray spent most of her life in France but she remained proudly Irish and returned to this country on several occasions. She was keen in her later years, for instance, to have her carpets made in Ireland.

Her celebrated Dragon chair, owned by Yves St Laurent and Pierre Berge, broke records for a 20th-century decorative artwork when it sold at auction for €21 million in 2009.

An exhibition dedicated to her work is on permanent display in her hometown at Enniscorthy Castle.

Eileen Gray died of lung cancer on October 31st, 1976 and was buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.



TOP:
Eileen Gray

RIGHT:
Dragon chair



BLÁITHÍN ENNIS - Jewellery Designer

Often a leap of faith and courage is what's needed to transform a great idea into a great business and that's something that jewellery designer Bláithín Ennis performed when she established her own label within a year of graduating from college.

Railing against any negativity and despair still washing around the country from the worst days of the recession, this exciting designer and manufacturer of unique, contemporary jewellery pieces has worked with New York designer Diane von Furstenberg and then saw her own creations going down a treat when it came to selling them at markets, showcases and outlets.

Now she has her own, eponymously named studio a stone's throw from the beautiful north Wexford coastline at Ballymoney, close to the bustling town of Gorey.

Within a short couple of years of launching her first collection Bláithín Ennis designs can be found around the world.

In 2014 she won Jewellery Designer of the Year at the Fashion Innovation Awards in Galway

and took home the Wexford Young Entrepreneur of the Year award. Last year she was a cultural ambassador for the Three Sisters – Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford– in their bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2020. She has been showing sell-out collections at Create in Brown Thomas in both Dublin and Galway for the past two years and now has 40 stockists nationwide. At her fourth Showcase, she secured further customers including three in Sweden and one in the US and she now has ambitious plans to export. She has built up a significant reputation for herself from her base in her native County Wexford.

“At the moment the ready-to-wear jewellery pieces are what I am mainly focusing on,” she says. “I deal mainly in the market of selling to shops and I also have an online presence. My ethos as a designer is to have a contemporary jewellery and accessory range. I like to make unique accessories that can give a new lease of life to a simple garment.”

Bláithín sources all of her materials herself, from many parts of the world, and then combines and manipulates them to create

striking pieces of jewellery and couture accessories.

For example, her Topaz collection features pieces with a sterling silver or gold-plated finish, with a brilliant gem sparkle, making them much sought-after among those who appreciate contemporary, unique style.

“Price point is important to me,” she adds. “I don't want to be a designer associated with high prices. My customers appreciate hand-made items and like to buy Irish design, so it's anything from about €35 and upwards to purchase one of my pieces. They're reasonably-priced.”

Bláithín graduated from the National College of Art and Design following an intense, packed course which she describes as “a daunting experience” and, after her stint in New York, was offered a number of design jobs. However, she decided to stay close to her roots.

Her interest in gardening helped achieve her first big break at the Springmount Garden Design Fair in Ballycanew where shortly after her return from the US she showed a small collection of fashion jewellery using what

TOP:
Bláithín Ennis

was to become her signature – delicate mesh and crystal – in cuffs, belts and earrings. “It got a phenomenal reaction”, she says, “and sold out, so I had to go home and make more. The seeds to my business were planted in that garden centre.” So, the decision to start her own studio and retail business was born.

She operated out of the renowned independent boutique, Place, in Gorey with designer and artist Juliana Walters whose concept Place was, and that proved an important step for Bláithín. “She’s a wonderful person,” the jewellery designer says now of Juliana. “She has a really good eye for unusual objects and I learned an awful lot from working alongside her. She was also my first ever stockist and really liked my pieces.”

The Wexford County Enterprise Board also came along with support and Bláithín was soon heading for her first trade show at Showcase Ireland in 2013, picking up valuable business from the likes of the Kilkenny Shop in Dublin’s Nassau Street and the Fran & Jane collection of boutiques.

Since then, she’s seen her pieces worn by the likes of Nicole Scherzinger from the Pussycat Dolls, and X-Factor judge; had 15 of her designs selected by Brown Thomas fashion director Shelly Corkery; while the accolades have grown and grown.

“At the moment my focus is the home market but this year I’m planning to move towards the UK market,” she says of her current plans. “I have to say all of the local support I’ve received has been really fabulous. I’m one of these people who doesn’t like to pressurise my friends or family or anything, showing them my collections, but there is a customer base out there and if they like it they’ll buy it.”

Having attended college in Dublin for four years, she appreciates being out of urban life and back in County Wexford, yet less than an hour from the capital on the nearby road network. “I find it very inspiring living in the country and I’m just better designing in quiet and calm,” she explains. “There are fabulous amenities here, like the beaches and even the local hotels. It’s a really nice place to live.”

Quality is timeless, and for 18 years now the high-quality, beautiful products made by Paul Maloney Pottery in an idyllic location barely a stone’s throw from the urban bustle of Wexford town have been charming those who will always appreciate the imaginatively-designed and the well-made

It’s with a good proportion of tender loving care, along with years of experience and an appreciation of what people want as well, of course, as expert craftsmanship that Paul Maloney and his team have managed to wow them through thick and thin.

Located in Barntown, just off the main artery between Wexford and New Ross/Waterford, Paul’s workshop attracts a significant chunk of walk-in (or more usually, drive-by) business. It also achieves a lot of its turnover by selling to selective outlets such as Kilkenny Design and Carrig Donn and some independent craft shops.

Meanwhile, local clubs and organisations realise how much the products of Paul Maloney Pottery are valued and prizegivings organised by everyone from Wexford Racecourse to golf clubs, bridge clubs and Wexford Creamery will often feature some of the work.

Paul is also an accomplished painter; he has painted in acrylic and oil throughout his life and has been a first prize winner in Europe’s largest Plein Air Festival. He recently produced a range of prints titled Field of Dreams, striking images of the animals he sees in the fields about Wexford. These works of art are also made here in Barntown so there’s always a huge variety on offer



RIGHT:
Jewellery designs
by Bláithín Ennis

PAUL MALONEY

– Potter

for the casual visitor as well as for those secondary markets in many of our large towns and cities. Just some of the places where the pieces can be found include Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny, Foxford in County Mayo, Galway, Sligo, and historic Kells in Co Meath and Cashel in County Tipperary. Not to mention, down the road, Barker's on South Main Street in Wexford town.

Paul Maloney is originally from Wexford and graduated from the renowned National College of Art and Design. He worked as an art teacher as well as for a number of other potteries before going out on his own in 1998. During the intervening years, he's never regretted that decision nor has he ever wished he'd established his own business in a different location. "Wexford is good, it's here in the sunny southeast and we get a lot of Dublin people down. It suits us really well. Dublin people like to spend their money with us and they appreciate their pottery and their crafts."

Wexford has always been a place where those living in the capital, and indeed other parts of the country, like to holiday, and many return again and again every year, often to their own holiday homes.

Such tourists are a frequent sight at Paul's workshop in Barntown, particularly in the summer months, when they often arrive up in their cars and have plenty of

boot space to load up with pottery and art.

"It doesn't take them long to find us and they're good customers," the man himself says. "Most of the customers who come into the shop would be locals and Irish holidaymakers. The shop accounts for about half of our sales and the other half would be selling into the likes of Kilkenny Design and Carrig Donn."

THE POTTERY HAS MODERN FLUID LINES, WITH MUCH INFLUENCE COMING FROM SIMPLE THINGS

There are even some shops in the United States who like to stock Paul's products, while the internet has naturally enough started to make inroads into his business, with an increasing number of orders coming via his paulmaloneypottery.ie website.

That website points out that all of the items of tableware and giftware are made using traditional hand methods, with everything in the pottery section hand-thrown on the potter's wheel and then finished off by hand, glazed and fired. This ensures everything is unique.

The pottery has "modern, fluid lines," he says, with much

influence coming from simple things like "walking on the many beaches in Wexford and watching the changing coastline".

Visitors to the website can also find stunning photographs of some of Paul's work, such as items from his collections of pottery like the Sea Breeze collection, the Ocean collection and the Red Earth collection.

Unlike many other small businesses in Ireland, Paul Maloney Pottery rode through the recession and came out the other side, although that wasn't without its cost. "It hit us in 2008, we had nine people in total working here and two weeks later we had five working here so it wasn't as bad for me as it was for them. It hit us like a sledgehammer and we had to take action straightaway. But, having said that, we're probably a lot more efficient now. I've complained less in the last few years than I did during the Celtic Tiger years!"

Many of his products, such as giftware, held their own during the difficult times - "people still had to buy presents" - while others fell off somewhat, and today visitors to the craft shop or website can see that the quality remains untouched.

"Things are going well now, actually," he says with a note of confidence.

TOP:
Paul Maloney at
work in his studio



RICHARD MALONE — Fashion Designer

Richard Malone graduated from Central Saint Martins in 2014, where he was awarded the prestigious Louis Vuitton Grand Prix Scholarship.

From drawing and image-making to film and performance, Richard Malone's sources exist outside of the fashion world, resulting in his own unique fashion language. Based in London but producing in Ireland is vital to Malone's DNA. His hometown of Wexford seems an unlikely inspiration for his extreme tailoring but his environment is key to his unique direction. He draws upon visual references like school uniforms, work wear, hand-me-downs and religious dress, which he merges together to form a 'typical' Irish identity. Inspired by the ordinary and the lack of vanity in daily dressing, he reinterprets this in his use of patchwork and embroidery. He mixes skills associated with old age couture, and materiality associated with the working classes. Sustainability underlies each design. His BA graduate collection from Central



Saint Martins was sourced entirely from end of roll and unwanted fabrics and he aims to continue to avoid mass production and waste wherever possible, and refuses to compromise on production in favour of fast fashion.

His star is rising fast; he has exhibited at the National Textile Museum of Wales, he has been selected by the BBC as one of the most creative up and coming talents to watch as part of their Young Artists Day initiative and has presented his collections at London

and Paris Fashion weeks. According to Vogue magazine "Richard's designs are likely to be on every fashion editor's wish list come fall."

The designer says that growing up in Wexford, he was always inspired by people. "I was always, always drawing. I still am. I'm obsessed with people, always observing and sketching. It really informs my designs; I don't see how you can design without considering people. We have this box that my late grandmother, Chrissie, kept and it's all of these paintings and observations from when I was about two until about eight, very informative and quite funny, it shows I haven't changed much. No-one ever discouraged it either, which is helpful, I know in school sometimes they would try to push me to a safer career option, because I was good at Maths and English, but it made no sense to me. I think it's so important to embrace what you're passionate about, and it needs to be really encouraged in our schools."

ABOVE:
Spring Summer
2017 collection by
Richard Malone

RIGHT:
Richard Malone



Speaking about his plans for the future, Richard says, “I think one of the main reasons I’m a designer is because I see so many problems with fashion, so in a way I see it as a way of resolving those. To be honest the ‘industry’ isn’t really an interest of mine, nor is anything to do with celebrity, I’m far more interested in people.

“I didn’t move to London to become a ‘London’ designer, and I feel really lucky that I was accepted to Central Saint Martins without a foundation, as it never happens. I worked incredibly hard, from 8.30am - 10.30pm every single day in the studio. I feel very lucky because these massive companies really responded to my point of view and my work ethic. I won

a design competition with Louis Vuitton while I was in second year, and was offered a contract to go and work there immediately afterwards. So I was 22 and living in Paris working for the biggest fashion house in the world, it was crazy. This is within four years of doing my leaving cert in St Peters in Wexford.

“I was then shortlisted for the LVMH which was insane, as they own all the major companies – Vuitton, Celine, Fendi, Dior, you name it! I eventually won, which meant they would fund my entire final year. Then I was selected to open the BA Fashion press show, which is a major honour; previous graduates are people like John Galliano, Phoebe Philo

and Riccardo Tisci, so it’s crazy to present your first collection to major international press in this context. Following this I won the Deutsche Bank Award for Fashion, which Christopher Kane previously won after his MA, so again I feel very lucky.

“It’s allowed me creative freedom; I’ve turned down four major job offers in Paris to establish my own brand, which is going really well now.”

Malone’s intention as a designer is to change the fashion industry. He shoots his with “real women, intelligent and inspiring young women. A portrait I took of my 82-year-old grandmother was even on my show invite this season. I want to involve real people who are where I’m from; it should be accessible for everyone.”


On visiting and working in Ireland, Richard says that he loves to come home. “I actually have a studio in Wexford where the collections are made and where we do private orders and made-to-measure pieces. It’s so refreshing being back here and away from the fashion cycle, I’m really not that fashion-y at all. The studio is a converted shed, and it really is just that. I can be totally creative and there is no one nearby to disagree with it, its great.

“My intention is to keep the studio here and keep the products made in Ireland, I’m actually crossing my fingers that I can get a grant from the council to expand the business, they seem really supportive so far. It would be great to have a really directional and artisanal label coming out of Wexford, and why not? My long-term goal is to start taking on local staff, up-skilling local communities and providing creative employment right here, with a really enjoyable atmosphere for everyone.

“The best thing about coming to Wexford is seeing family and friends. Also the food in Wexford is particularly brilliant, I’ve lived in Paris and London and honestly Irish hospitality and cooking is many, many steps above both.”

ABOVE:
Spring Summer
2017 collection by
Richard Malone

OUR FOOD

A young girl with curly blonde hair, wearing a white chef's uniform and a white hat, is smiling and holding a large, round, golden-brown pizza. In the foreground, there are several baskets of bread, including a large loaf of braided bread, and jars of jam. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a stone wall and a blue door.

The production of great local and artisanal foods in Wexford has always been a big part of business here, however over the last number of years this has grown exponentially.

Opportunities in the agri-food sector are abundant; and it has become one of the prime growth sectors in recent years. County Wexford's unspoilt green countryside along with our long-standing tradition in agriculture and food production by a mix of both processing and artisan food producers guarantees the production of top quality Wexford food which is distributed nationally and globally.





YELLOWBELLY BY NAME, NOT BY NATURE.

YellowBelly Beer opened its brewery doors in 2015 at their busy pub 'Simon Lambert & Sons' in the heart of Wexford. The brewery's name pays homage to the nickname 'yellowbellies' bestowed upon the Wexford townsfolk, while also being full of irony in that owners Nicky and Simon Lambert never fear to be progressive and innovative with their business.

Situated on South Main Street, Simon Lambert & Sons is a family run pub which has been part of the Wexford backdrop for 52 years. It has seen steady business over its lifetime, however in the face of a rapidly imploding Irish economy the brothers felt it was time for something new.

"Pubs were closing all around us," says director Nicky Lambert. "Simon and myself agreed that it was time to diversify our product offering and look towards a sustainable business model that has been in operation across the continent and the US for the last two decades. In 2008 we started stocking craft beers from around

the world. In 2009, Simon and myself undertook a brewing course in Manchester and when we arrived home, we decided to build a brewery on site here at Simon Lambert & Sons."

IN 2017, YELLOWBELLY HAS FURTHER EXPANDED INTO A NEW BREWERY WITH STATE OF THE ART PACKAGING TECHNOLOGY, QUALITY CONTROL SYSTEMS AND LOTS MORE SPACE

The brewery, which took a number of years to plan and build, was initially located in the basement of the pub. It was entirely designed and installed by the owners with the help of local tradesmen, and has since undergone three expansions and brewed over 200 different beers under the careful watch of Head Brewer Declan Nixon.

They now supply pubs, restaurants and off-licences across Ireland, the UK and Europe with their Citra pale ale, lager and other speciality beers to continue offering beer consumers quality and variety. YellowBelly have also won multiple national and international awards.

As well as producing top quality beers, the company also produces award-winning branding across their product range, merchandise, comic book series and even a video game. Creative Director and Wexford native Paul Reck was initially hired to create the YellowBelly beer logo and brand assets, but soon became a full-time member of the team. He now oversees brand management, content creation and design, and works alongside the packaging team to ensure that customers initially choose YellowBelly beers on tap or shelves, before the quality of the beer keeps them coming back for more.

Discover more at www.yellowbellybeer.ie.

ABOVE:
The YellowBelly
team



WEXFORD: A MODEL COUNTY FOR FOOD

Wexford: the Food Capital of Ireland.

Has a nice ring to it, and while there's no such official designation when it comes to food, it's a goal being aimed at by the Wexford Food Family, a network of producers across the county who are putting the area on the map, so to speak, of gourmet goodies.

Established in 2011 with 14 members, the Wexford Food Family now counts 46 different members, ranging from one-person artisan outfits to large multi-nationals like Glanbia and Danone.

It all makes sense; County Wexford has the most hours of sunshine and the least amount of rainfall of any county, making for top weather conditions for coming up with high quality food.

Whether it's the grass-fed cows and cattle for the highest quality milk, cheese and dairy products or beef, or the potatoes and sun-kissed strawberries for which Wexford is famous (and to which you can add sweet tomatoes of late) the region lends itself to produce which is among the world's best.

So, why not promote it to the wider world?

"Wexford has the best climate and soil for growing food and rearing animals for food," explains Paula Ronan, CEO of the Wexford Food Family and someone has been there from the start. "We also have the best farming heritage. Wexford is known as the Model County and that actually started from agriculture, because Wexford was the first to use modern farming techniques, showing the rest of the country how to use them. The skills of Wexford farmers are well-known particularly in Irish farming terms."

WEXFORD HAS THE BEST CLIMATE AND SOIL FOR GROWING FOOD AND REARING ANIMALS FOR FOOD. WE ALSO HAVE THE BEST FARMING HERITAGE

A number of major events are held by the network to showcase their produce to the wider community. Members also embark on "learning trips".

According to Paula, the goal is to

"make County Wexford a food region" renowned internationally. "We firmly believe that Wexford is the food capital of Ireland and we have the ingredients for that to happen.

"There's a Wexford eco-system being developed, gathering momentum and helping the economy and jobs, and any job created is good."

She agrees that the "knowledge and experience" shared by members at their meetings and events is one of the largest pluses of the network. "If you're a start-up and looking for information, then just sitting around the table is great."

It's been hard to get support from the government but Wexford County Council have come on board, Paula says. "And they can see this is working," with about 1,700 jobs supported by members, 277 of which were created in the last year. Meanwhile, 2,500 farmers and fishermen are supported by members of the network, worth a total of €525 million to the economy.

So it's a win-win and only going to get better for the Wexford Food Family itself, its members and Wexford in general.

As Paula puts it: "Our small family is growing bigger and becoming stronger every day."

ABOVE:
Ballycross
Apple Farm



BEAN & GOOSE CHOCOLATE

Sisters Karen and Natalie Keane established Bean and Goose Chocolate in 2014.

When they first started they made their incredible handmade chocolates in the kitchen of their home in Wexford. Their first creations of small batch single-origin bars and truffles were made on marble slabs using traditional techniques. They have grown to be a team of chocolatiers with equipment in order to meet demand.

Each creation is to the highest standard and their unusual-but-delicious flavour combinations really set them apart. The chocolate is made using complex, rich flavours of single origin paired with flavours that reflect and celebrate the Irish seasons.

The company has over 70 customers: a mix of independent retailers, design spaces, hotels, and cafés in Ireland and Northern Ireland, including Avoca, Brown Thomas, Shannon Airport & Teeling Whiskey. They also provide gifting services and host chocolate making workshops for corporate clients.

Employing six people, including Karen and her sister Natalie, who are joint founders, Bean & Goose is making plans to develop product for export.

They set out to do something different with chocolate, inspired

after learning how to temper chocolate from French chocolatier Benoit Lorge. Starting as a small concern they began selling their products on Saturday mornings at Glasnevin Market, Dublin; the sisters tried out various combinations and sought customer opinion on the results.

CURRENTLY EMPLOYING SIX PEOPLE, INCLUDING KAREN AND HER SISTER NATALIE, WHO ARE JOINT FOUNDERS, BEAN & GOOSE IS NOW MAKING PLANS TO DEVELOP EXPORTS

In 2014, they asked a design company, Designgoat, to work with them on their packaging. Design is a very important layer to their story. They work in collaboration with designers, illustrators, food producers and other brands to bring different elements to their products, in terms of packaging, design or flavour inspiration.

The chocolate bars are made in moulds, these have the topography of 'Last Tree Farm' as the pattern, a link back to the Wexford home of Bean and Goose. Even their name Bean and Goose has a story.

Wexford has one of the biggest overwintering populations of birds in Europe, including the bean goose.

In 2015 Bean and Goose was accepted on the Foodworks program, a Bord Bia, Enterprise Ireland and Teagasc-backed accelerator programme. In 2016 salary support from the Local Enterprise Office in Wexford allowed Bean and Goose to take on a full-time chocolatier, they received Competitive Start Up Funding from Enterprise Ireland and are working towards High Potential Start Up Funding.

The next step for the Keane sisters is to launch their online store. Karen and Natalie aspire to create a global Irish brand that can retain its integrity and roots whilst scaling up. "As we grow, we would be mindful of emulating companies that have fantastic corporate culture. It is the key to help turn a company vision into reality. Companies like Zappos or Whole Foods have passionate, engaged, and active cultures that are on display for the world to see.

"Our top performing bar is a dark chocolate from Ecuador, 70% paired with roasted spiced hazelnuts and Wexford honey, and our most popular truffle is Irish sea salt caramel," says Natalie.

www.beanandgoose.ie

ABOVE:
Karen & Natalie
tempering
chocolate



KILLOWEN FARM

Traceability is a key word these days in food production and at Killowen Farm at Courtnacuddy in County Wexford, it's a word which can be emphasised again and again.

The yogurts made at Killowen by the Dunne family and their team are 100pc from milk produced by the dairy cows on the farm, with fruit sourced locally as much as possible and without adding artificial preservatives, flavours or colours.

The family have been farming at Courtnacuddy for generations and got into the yogurt business over 10 years ago, when Nicholas Dunne sought ways to add value to the high-quality milk produced by his cows.

The Killowen yogurt name already existed in Wexford and when the opportunity arose to take it over, Nicholas duly did so and moved production from Crossbeg to Courtnacuddy.

A number of outbuildings were converted into production facilities and today, as it was 10 years ago, the yogurt is made right beside the farm's milking parlour.

160 cows are milked twice daily and the milk is then turned into yogurt, packed, chilled and sent off to an ever-growing range of retailers and hotels.

Initially they received support from the Wexford-based Pettitt's supermarkets and the list of outlets

grew to include Dunnes Stores, Tesco, SuperValu, not to mention independent retailers such as Donnybrook Fair and hotels across Wexford and Ireland.

According to the sales and marketing director Pauline Dunne, "the people of County Wexford have given great support to Killowen and got it up and running."

THE YOGURTS MADE AT KILLOWEN ARE 100 PERCENT FROM MILK PRODUCED BY THE DAIRY COWS ON THE FARM, WITH FRUIT SOURCED LOCALLY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

To allow for the expansion in sales countrywide, Killowen invested in new machinery as well as new storage and chill facilities, but the farm at Courtnacuddy remains home. "The most important thing to us is that it's the milk we produce on the farm that's used to make the yogurt," as Pauline puts it. "We make the yogurt on Monday, pack it on Tuesday and it leaves us on Wednesday. We only make to order because we have a 28-day shelf life for the products. We could take the

easy option and add preservatives and have a shelf life of six months, but we won't do that."

Another reason to remain in Wexford is that it's convenient for distribution to both Dublin and Cork, has a good climate for growing grass and, thus, producing milk, and has easy access to excellent locally-grown fruits. "Our cows are out in the fields 10 months of the year. They're only in for the real, real harsh weather in the winter and because the land is very good, we get optimal use. The cows flourish being outside and that adds to the flavour."

So that all makes for a recipe for success, along with a lot of hard work. "It didn't happen overnight," Pauline points out. "It's taken all this time over the last number of years. We were able to grow the brand and go into the stores and promote it."

But all the promotion and marketing in the world is no good without a quality product range. Killowen have that high-quality product with its emphasis on nutrition. There's no sugar added to the natural yogurt, while the fruit flavours such as strawberry, rhubarb, lemon curd, blueberry, forest fruit, and blackcurrant have minimal levels of sugar.

"That's not an accident. We made a decision that we wanted our yogurt to be different from everything else out there."

And it is.

ABOVE:
The team at
Killowen Farm



GOOD FOOD IRELAND & JEFFARES FAMILY FARM

Today it seems like a no-brainer. But when it was established in 2006 by Margaret Jeffares, Good Food Ireland was very much a pioneering concept, ahead of its time. It lost no time, however, in getting down to the business of achieving its primary goal: promoting Ireland as a food destination.

Before 2006, there was no such nationwide, all-island network for the purposes of getting quality food producers and outlets together and branding them as a collective, with the emphasis on quality.

“Many of the people who are promoted through Good Food Ireland have been doing this for 25 or 30 years, but nobody was giving them recognition for that commitment to using local ingredients in their products,” Margaret explains.

She herself has long been familiar with the quality food business, through Mr Jeffares Blackcurrants, which is run on the family farm at Ballykelly in Drinagh, Wexford by her husband Des Jeffares.

Good Food Ireland is based in Wexford but today has over 600 members spread right across the island of Ireland, all with one common goal, to continue to improve Ireland as a food brand and a food destination.

After all, two of our most important and oldest indigenous industries are agriculture and tourism so it makes perfect sense to combine the two and to involve as much collaboration and co-operation as possible to maximise that business.

After the first two years alone of Good Food Ireland’s existence, 92pc of its member businesses had increased their purchasing of Irish food, contributing €50 million to the economy, and within a further year that had increased to 98pc of members.

“The most important thing and the most unique thing about Good Food Ireland around local food experiences is that it’s an approved standard,” Margaret adds. “It’s the only approved standard in the island of Ireland for local food, with a commitment and

shared philosophy to that food experience.”

Margaret came up with the concept while on her travels overseas on business when she realised there was a curiosity abroad and an appetite for Irish food and Ireland as a country.

She found there was a new-found importance placed on quality and traceability following international scares such as SARS, bird flu, BSE and foot and mouth.

“People were beginning to ask about Ireland, was our food safe, where do we go, and so on. I felt people were asking for a guarantee around a good, safe, quality food experience.

“Farmers were looking at high value products and looking for a market. In my opinion, was stifling their growth was the lack of market opportunity. I thought if we could create Ireland as a food destination, we could create opportunities for farmers to bring these visitors into their businesses.”

As with any new venture, there were “challenges” from the

ABOVE:
Margaret Jeffares,
Good Food Ireland

outset for the Wexford-based organisation, which has its network throughout all of our counties, but Margaret found that, from the beginning, there was “huge support” for what she and the early pioneers were trying to do.

“What Good Food Ireland focuses on are the people who are genuinely committed to using the ingredients of our country and showcasing them, because they believe that’s the best food and the best food ingredients they can offer to their customers. It’s about giving the best choice of food to the customers.”

More than ten years on, and GFI recently entered a new phase of its development with the launch of its food tourism business, a “one-stop-shop” of sorts for people who want to enjoy a quality food experience in Ireland.

“We are putting together bespoke itineraries for international visitors,” Margaret says.

Somebody’s wishes for a trip to Ireland could be as simple as ensuring they are staying somewhere good and eating well throughout their stint in this country, whether they’re from home or abroad. “They could be golfing or sight-seeing or want to see the scenery and just want to have a good gastronomic experience as they go around.”

Then there are the experts, such as a group of culinary lecturers from Scandinavia who wanted to meet the chefs and the producers and get behind the scenes of our food culture. “Because of the unparalleled access that we have and the fact that we know our industry so well, we can offer this to our visitors and we can give the visitors something that nobody else can.”

So what makes Irish food so appealing to the international gourmand or casual eater?

“The biggest thing is the taste,” Margaret says. “Irish food just tastes so different. Our dairy is really second to none, down to our



milk and butter and cream. There’s nothing like it in the world. Then there’s our meat, fantastic provided it’s cooked correctly. We have got wonderful, grass-fed beef which we take for granted. You put this into any other country around the world and it’s premium beef. It’s very, very special and that’s why our food and our agri-food sector is so deeply engrained in our culture. To me it’s the taste.”

Farming and food production has changed in the last decade, she says, with more of an emphasis now on quality products, with more small operators going into the likes of cheese-making, cider-making, balsamic vinegar, ice cream and yogurts, to name just a few examples.

Of course, Margaret herself and the Jeffares family know all about quality ingredients. Ballykelly Farm has 100 acres devoted to the production of one of the healthiest, tastiest fruits of them all: blackcurrants.

For decades the Jeffares family supplied Ribena with a good chunk of the drink company’s blackcurrants but had to change direction some years ago when Ribena, after being sold, decided they didn’t need Irish fruit any more.

Des Jeffares decided to start supplying IQF blackcurrants - Individually Quick Frozen - which means they are harvested on the farm, frozen to the point that they feel like “little marbles” and not a combined mush, and then sold on.

Last year, the company launched its own cold-pressed, no-added-sugar drink, Des Jeffares’ Irish

Blackcurrant Cordial, which has proved to be a hit with discerning consumers. “When Des was researching this product he very much wanted to produce a drink which he grew up on, and which his Mum used to give them as kids.” With three-quarters of a kilogram of blackcurrants in each bottle, the emphasis is firmly on the fruit. “He tried adding other fruits to it but all of them took away from the blackcurrant taste he had from childhood memory. It was all about allowing the blackcurrant to shine. It’s fantastic to have customers taste it and, when they open the bottle, go ‘wow’.”

Again, taste is the key.

Meanwhile, one of the secrets to the success of Good Food Ireland is, as Margaret puts it, “the connectivity between members,” and the level of co-operation at all levels. “It’s going from one family member to the next, they’re all part of Good Food Ireland and all think the same and are like-minded people. That’s a unique experience.”

Another offering is a special pre-paid Mastercard, which users can present at any member outlet, along with a touring map which highlights of all the best places to eat and drink. “They become like a member of the family.”

Then, before they go home, visitors get a “gourmet souvenir” to take with them - from GFI’s online gourmet food shop - and which they can in time share with their family and friends and discuss. Spreading the good news about Ireland, its food and Good Food Ireland.

ABOVE:
Des on the Farm
in Ballykelly

DOING BUSINESS IN WEXFORD



The largest town in the southeast, Wexford is superbly located. With an excellent transport infrastructure, a well-populated catchment area, educated workforce, a third-level college and a progressive local authority, Wexford simply offers investors more.

Wexford has established a solid reputation in the agri-food business, medical technology, ICT and financial services sectors. Food produced here is trusted worldwide and we feed everyone from newborn babies to members of royal families. Wexford companies are saving lives in operating theatres around the world, providing safe, sanitised water to those in need and delivering time-saving business services for global organisations.



SCURRI

That package you received this morning? At business, or at home, shortly after making your latest online order? Chances are, Scurri had something to do with it.

E-commerce is becoming more and more widely-used, not just in the world of business where for years it's been a daily part of life, but also at home where more and more people are choosing to order clothes, technology, gifts, furniture, and more online with the convenience of often better value and delivery to their door.

How to ensure a smooth transition between order, despatch, shipping and delivery? That's where Scurri comes in. Think of the company, which has its head office in Wexford and also has offices in Dublin and London, as a kind of "one-stop-shop" for the e-commerce business.

Scurri provides peace of mind both for the retailer, who wants to ensure there's no glitch between sending off an item and that item's arrival at the customer's base or home, and for the purchaser who can track the order from initial payment to delivery.

The business was established by Rory O'Connor, initially from his home village of Duncannon on the County Wexford coast, in 2010. Rory worked for years at world-famous Waterford Crystal, in the sales and marketing department of the luxury goods brand, and also for some time with AOL on a number of IT projects.

His stints at both of those firms taught him the importance of good logistics: no point in having quality products to sell if you can't get them to the customer on time.

Originally, the thinking behind Scurri was to solve the problem of excess capacity, and freeing up capacity for use by consumers.

"If you had a canoe or a box or a set of wheels to deliver, we were a one-stop-shop for that," he explains.

They realised after a short time that the area of barcode software was one that could do with attention, so Scurri became a primarily B2B company, using cloud computing to take all purchase, order and delivery information, generating a unique barcode for each transaction and ensuring that the barcode could be used to track a delivery item from start to finish.

"Since 2013 we've focused on the UK market. We provide solutions to e-commerce merchants to provide barcode labels and

manage deliveries. The barcode label is the key to getting something delivered."

When the courier arrives to collect the item, they use the barcode to scan it into their system and then proceed with delivery, so the same code is used throughout the transaction.

"Years ago, if you ordered something from Amazon it would go off into the ether and you'd be hoping it would arrive safely."

The barcode technology ensures nothing is left to chance. "We keep the wheels oiled in e-commerce and it all happens behind the scenes."

Scurri use about 30 different carriers in the UK, choosing whichever one works best for each particular order based on weight or size or location.

The company is now based in Wexford town, employing about 30 people, with exciting plans to expand to as much as double that size in the coming years.

Most of the employees work from Wexford, with some developers based in various locations across the world. Rory finds that Wexford has many attractions when it comes to attracting the best international staff.

The area already has a heritage in the logistics business, mainly due to the presence of Rosslare Europort and its easy access to the UK and continental Europe.

Meanwhile, as a place to live and work Wexford has few equals, according to the CEO. "All of our people are top-class developers who have a look at our video and come and visit us and they love Wexford. We're right beside the sea and it's a nice town, not too big and not too small, and has

“All of our people are top-class developers who have a look at our video and come and visit us and they love Wexford. Some people want to go to the city but other people are looking for a different experience.”

Rory O'Connor, CEO and Founder, Scurri



a great buzz outside the door. It brings a different edge to coming to work in Ireland. Some people want to go to the city but other people are looking for a different experience.”

Rory started the business on November 22, 2010, a day of infamy in Irish economic history as it was on that date that the international troika came to this country to resuscitate our then-dying economy. Now, it’s all different and there’s a palpable mood of confidence.

“We started right in the darkest

**AS A PLACE TO LIVE
AND WORK WEXFORD
HAS FEW EQUALS. IT
BRINGS A DIFFERENT
EDGE TO COMING TO
WORK IN IRELAND.**

days of the recession but things have changed an awful lot. However, in the tech industry there hasn’t really been a recession. We’ve been quite cushioned from it.”

It’s a fast-changing industry but Rory feels that Ireland and our people are adept at changing with the times and staying ahead of the technological curve. That’s a trait that is likely to serve Scurri well into the future.

“I’m very optimistic,” he says. “E-commerce has been growing and we find that we have the most progressive customers. I don’t see that abating. It’s only going to keep growing.”

ABOVE:
Rory O’Connor,
CEO and Founder,
Scurri

CLEARSTREAM TECHNOLOGIES

Established when the country was on the cusp of an unprecedented economic boom, ClearStream Technologies has pretty much seen it all. It has ridden out the Celtic Tiger and the subsequent crash, successfully completed a management buyout and, in recent years, become the subject of a takeover by a superb global giant, CR Bard. Recently they have bucked another trend by expanding their workforce (as a result of an increased workload) over the last year or so.

One person who has been on that rollercoaster since ClearStream was set up in 1996 is Pauline Oakes. She now reflects on a period of success from the time ClearStream was acquired by CR Bard in 2011.

“When we started with CR Bard we employed about 220,” the Director of Operations says. “We are now at 410.”

That upsurge in recruitment has come mostly from the Wexford/southeast area where there is a highly-educated, flexible

workforce. Many of these have graduated from Ireland’s third-level colleges and are ready to enter the market with a visionary employer located within striking distance of many of our cities and airports. This is just one element of the company’s fortunes in recent years.

ClearStream Technologies was initially founded in 1996 as a subsidiary of Angiodynamics Ltd, to manufacture products for the coronary healthcare market. The company was previously focused on diagnostics and interventional procedures. “We were their first subsidiary outside the US,” Pauline recalls. That remained the case for four years, before a management buy-out took place which led to ClearStream becoming a wholly Irish-owned company.

As an independent company, ClearStream was a great success. Then came a “seismic change” in the market thanks to the arrival of a new generation of stent coronary care products and this threatened the very future of the business. “We lost a lot of sales in a 12-month period. A lot of our customers disappeared and our sales dropped dramatically. We had to refocus and re-think our future growth strategy.”

Having previously sold on a business-to-business basis, ClearStream decided to develop their own

ClearStream brand products for the market and also entered the “peripheral” sector, manufacturing products not just for the heart but also for the leg. This was the obvious route forward as the company already had developed the technological know-how to pursue such a move.

“We felt that the peripheral sector was where we could really make an impact,” Pauline says. “We did that and signed some very significant deals with well-known large companies to distribute our products.”

In 2004, the company floated on the London exchange. This allowed the company to gain funding for its research and development activities in order to further develop its suite of products. “We released 12 new products, the tide started to turn for us and we started to grow again.”

By now it was 2006 or 2007 and the end of the decade-long boom was in sight. However, because of ClearStream’s experience, expertise and innovation they were once again going against the grain. “Our fortunes started to turn as we developed a bigger range of peripheral products and signed some deals with large medical device companies.”

Pauline herself had a diverse and exciting journey since joining ClearStream as a computer science and economics graduate from University College Cork. She initially took responsibility for running the company’s IT network. She subsequently moved into IT management, then into supply chain management. She became supply chain manager and then joined the board as an executive director. She then acceded to the role of Operations

“Ireland is as accessible from the east coast of America as are Seattle or San Francisco on the west coast – which is a key factor in today’s global economy.”

Pauline Oakes, Director of Operations, ClearStream



Director in ClearStream technologies and she now very proudly holds the role of Director of Operations, CR Bard.

In 2009, ClearStream signed a deal with CR Bard on a customer basis and in 2011 the multi-national decided to buy the County Wexford-based company. "Since then we've grown rapidly," says Pauline.

The business opened a new production facility in 2014 which is responsible for manufacturing new products for the peripheral healthcare market. This has facilitated a huge growth in activity and in staff numbers.

"It's been quite a rollercoaster journey but I'm never complacent about that, considering our history. I've been here from the outset and I know what it's like to go through the ups and downs. Last year our biggest challenge was maintaining control during a period of rapid growth and development."

Today the core of ClearStream's activity remains the development of cutting-edge medical devices used by vascular surgeons, radiologists and cardiologists when carrying out angioplasty procedures.

The export market accounts for about 99pc, if not 100pc, of ClearStream Technology's sales and this is helped by the company's strategically-beneficial location in County Wexford – located close to ports and airports and sizable centres of learning from which to recruit its staff.

"I think the improvements in the infrastructure are really positive. Even from a basic point like getting a corporate visitor to the plant (and we have a lot of corporate visitors, particularly in the last year during our expansion). Wexford is very accessible from the US; from Dublin Airport to Wexford is now only about an hour and a half."

Meanwhile, a healthy work-life balance is easily-attainable in County Wexford with its many natural and built amenities.

Pauline points out that Ireland is as accessible from the east coast of America as Seattle or San Francisco on the west coast, which is a key factor in today's global economy.

"Our products would be going to every region of the world. We still do some business-to-business sales. Our big markets would be the US, obviously, but also China, Russia and continental Europe."

The relationship with CR Bard has been "very good and very productive" since the takeover and has well-positioned ClearStream to both ride out the recession and now, hopefully, avail of the "economic upturn enveloping the Irish economy".

ABOVE:
Pauline Oakes,
Director of
Operations,
ClearStream

IDA - SOUTH EAST

Wexford can look forward to a positive business future according to the new IDA South East Region Manager Brendan McDonald.

Brendan and his team in Ireland and overseas are promoting Wexford and the southeast region in order to take advantage of the opportunities that are arising from Brexit as well as further improvements in infrastructure, close proximity to the capital, direct access to a roll on roll off port, a talented workforce and the unrivalled quality of life on offer in Wexford.

Brendan says that all of these aspects are absolutely key when it comes to the decision-making process behind choosing a location for Foreign Direct Investment.

IDA Ireland is the country's Investment Development Agency and its main role is to attract and sustain FDI since 1969 when the Irish state first opened up to the international market in a significant way. The relationship between Ireland and overseas companies has stood the test of time, with the numbers providing compelling evidence; there are over 199,877 people employed in foreign-owned

enterprises in Ireland, representing almost one in 10 workers in the economy.

The role of the South East Regional Manager, to which Brendan McDonald was appointed in 2017, is to drive foreign investment into counties Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny, Carlow and Tipperary.

Brendan says that the IDA is midway through their current strategic plan, 'Winning Foreign Direct Investment 2015–2019' in which he says there are some very specific and ambitious goals. "This plan has ambitious targets with goals to deliver 80,000 new jobs, 900 investments, €3 billion R&D investments and balanced regional growth."

As well as the significant presence of Irish owned companies in Wexford, sectors such as financial services, medical, technical, and internationally-traded services all feature strongly in the current Wexford portfolio and hopes are high that they'll grow even more.

"Our goals within the 2015-2019 strategic plan is to win 900 new investments for Ireland, this represents a 40pc increase on the 2010-2014 targets. Regional development is a major component of our present corporate strategy. In 2015 for the first time, ambitious investment targets have been set for each region, with a strong focus on securing an increased share of

investments. Central to this is a strong ambition for employment growth throughout all regions over the lifetime of the strategy. We are targeting a minimum increase in investment of 30pc to 40pc for the southeast region."

Brendan says that the people of the region are central to success. "Our high levels of productivity and a deep talent base have endowed us with major strengths. We have key talent available in Wexford and across the region who can help to provide more value add to company headquarters, be they in the US, Europe or elsewhere around the globe. Outside of attracting talent, companies also need to know that they can feel part of the community when they embed in too; and Wexford very much has the quality of life that company executives and employees desire. I can't overstate how important this is; people don't want to commute two hours to Dublin each day; people do want a good role to build their career but also excellent quality of life, and Wexford certainly offers this in spades."

Wexford is uniquely positioned just one hour from Dublin with a direct port access located within the county and according to Brendan this infrastructure is key.

"Long-term investments, made by Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Wexford County Council, are contributing to an environment that enables IDA Ireland to drive growth. Some very important pieces that are coming down the track are the M11 extension from Gorey just south of Enniscorthy along with the new N25 New Ross bypass. These are key infrastructural pieces from an access perspective, because the easier you can make it for people to travel, the easier they can see that they are connected, not only

“Wexford very much has the quality of life that company executives and employees desire. People do want a good role to build their career but also have an excellent quality of life and Wexford certainly offers this in spades.”

Brendan McDonald, Regional Manager, IDA South East Region

to Dublin but also to Europe and the south of the country. We have the M9 motorway coming down from Dublin through Carlow to Waterford but this new development will open up the east outside of the region to everybody from Dublin right down to Waterford. That can not only be beneficial for companies in Wexford but also in the wider region - opening up access to more talent across the region. People will be able to travel further within a shorter period of time without having to commute to Dublin or Cork for a role that is commensurate with their talent and their experience. These are the kinds of things that we sell to companies all of the time, and this is so important to companies.

“We also pitch the direct access in County Wexford with the roll on roll off port at Rosslare Europort, this is of great value to companies particularly in the manufacturing sector as they need to know that they can get product to market as quickly and as efficiently as possible and Rosslare offers sheer convenience and ease of access to the various markets in Europe.”

When it comes to the property solutions available for FDI Brendan says, “We aim to partner with companies and help them develop the business case for investment in Ireland. We also work hand-in-hand with companies to identify property and office solutions, particularly in regional locations. The new M11 Business Park in Gorey is an exemplary site of that nature; this is what we call a Grade A building and this is a site that we are actively promoting at present. The plans and developments on track for the Trinity Wharf site and other key sites are strategic for Wexford’s positioning and it is something we welcome and offer credit to Wexford County Council in terms of their foresight to develop these sites.

With the as yet unknown extent of changes that Brexit will enforce, the IDA view Brexit as an opportunity for Ireland.

“Brexit is a big challenge on the one



hand but it is also an opportunity on the other. We are looking at Brexit as opportunistic and we are pitching Wexford as a viable second site solution for companies who are already located in Dublin in the first instance. We are also pitching it in the second as a viable solution to companies who may wish to locate or relocate in order to set up a European office from the UK.

“We are out in the market place continually and we have an office in London which has increased its staffing within the last year. The team there is actively promoting the region on a daily basis to various different companies. The challenge here is to get the companies to think that they can do business outside of London, where they are used to a massive population on their doorstep; our job on the ground is to convince them that if they come here they can build an offering that serves global markets, and we have the reference companies who already do that from Wexford. For instance, BNY Mellon who serve

global financial marketers and Lake Region and Waters Technology who send product all over the world. We have those references and those companies who have hundreds of people hired, who did a great job for those companies showcasing that you can be a global player from Wexford.”

The message from Brendan and the IDA Southeast team is to continue to promote the huge array of positive attributes connected with operating globally from Wexford and the region. Along with the combined strength of the inter-agency workings and close co-operative attitude to doing business that exists between Wexford County Council, the Local Enterprise Offices, Chambers of Commerce, existing businesses, education and training providers and the IDA, Wexford is well positioned to continue to put its best foot forward as the ideal base for new multinationals in the services or manufacturing space.

ABOVE:
Brendan McDonald
Regional Manager,
IDA South East
Region

WATERS TECHNOLOGIES



What James Waters began in an office basement of a police station in Framingham, MA, USA, has evolved into a \$2.2 billion corporation serving tens of thousands of scientists all over the world, and its company values of ‘Delivering Benefit’ have not wavered since.

Almost 60 years in business, Waters Technologies is the world’s leading specialty measurement company, delivering benefit through innovations and people that enable customer success in the life, materials and food sciences. Specifically, the company designs, manufactures, sells and services ultra performance liquid chromatography (UPLC), high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC), chromatography columns and chemistry products, mass spectrometry (MS) systems, thermal analysis and rheometry instruments.

With a hard-earned reputation for applications expertise, dedication to customer success, and post-sales support, Waters stands out among its peers and year after year is one of the best-performing companies in the industry. It is a publicly

traded corporation with more than 7,000 employees; operating directly in 31 countries, its products are available in more than 100.

Celebrating 20 years in Wexford, Waters Technologies employs 330 people, having grown from just 20 staff upon opening in 1997. The plant is a state of the art 145,000 sq ft manufacturing facility, which is instrumental to Waters’ global manufacturing strategy.

AT WATERS, WE STRIVE TO CREATE A WORKPLACE CULTURE THAT REWARDS HIGH PERFORMANCE AND ENCOURAGES AND FACILITATES INCLUSION, PARTICIPATION, AND RESPECT

Senior Director of Wexford Operations Liam Hore tells us that, in terms of operations at the Wexford facility, “Our products are quite complex

and they essentially perform chemical analysis. They separate and measure the constituents of a sample; this could be water, blood or a pharmaceutical mixture, and our technology deciphers what is in that sample and how much of each element it contains. Simply put, an HPLC system will separate a sample into its chemical components and an MS system identifies compounds by their molecular weight. The Wexford product output is used in laboratories around the world to test materials in the pharmaceutical, food, environmental and other sectors.

“Our technology has many important applications, for example, it is used to determine the results of newborn baby screening. It plays a fundamental role in quality control testing of many products including pharmaceuticals such as the common Aspirin tablet. When there is a scare with food product contamination, Waters Technologies instruments are used to check if proper standards and specifications are being adhered to.”

ABOVE:
Waters
Technologies

Liam took up the position of Senior Director of Wexford Operations in 2016 having moved through the ranks of Waters since he joined the company in 2004. “The fact Waters is based in Wexford was hugely attractive to me; in 2004 I was working in Kerry for a Japanese pharmaceutical company and, originally hailing from Wexford and having become a new father at the time, it was a location I very much desired to live in and raise my family. Wexford offers an unrivalled quality of life and it also affords an excellent standard of living.

“One of the attractions of Waters is that we continue to provide growth opportunities for employees; my own career progression through the company is a testament to this commitment. I joined Waters as Quality Manager; I was subsequently promoted to Director of Quality Assurance and then moved to a Senior Director of Quality Assurance role with global responsibility for Ireland, the US, and the UK. In 2016 the Senior Director of Wexford Operations role came up. It is an excellent fit for me and it is a role I am relishing at the moment.”

According to Liam, Waters’ sustained commitment to investment in manufacturing and job creation in Wexford is hugely significant. The Wexford operation is a strategically important component of Waters Corporation’s global manufacturing footprint.

“At Waters, we strive to create a workplace culture that rewards high performance and encourages and facilitates inclusion, participation, and respect.”

Liam says that the Wexford plant enjoys excellent staff retention levels, “We have team members who started with us a junior level and have progressed through the company to management level. Waters offer employees an opportunity to work in a multinational within the science and engineering sector.

“We work very closely with



Institute of Technology Carlow with their Wexford Campus and also Waterford IT through our Education Assistance Program and we feel that a university for the southeast will provide more talent in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) areas and create a cluster effect.”

The improvements in infrastructure have made Wexford more accessible to Waters executives and customers globally. Liam says, “We’ve seen a large increase in the number of customers who now come to visit us in Ireland and this growth not only helps to promote Waters business but also Ireland as a whole. Our global customers arrive and are very pleasantly surprised by the calibre of our people, our lean processes and also the modern facilities that we have to offer.”

The company progression in Ireland has been phenomenal; Liam says that the credit for the company deciding to locate in Wexford some 20 years ago can largely be accredited to the IDA. “When Waters was looking to set up an Irish operation, the IDA had readily available infrastructure and this made it an easy decision for Waters Corporation.

“As we know, when multinationals decide to open new operations in a country, they usually want to do so within months rather than years. While it is great to have green-field sites it was more important for Waters to have a facility available – that was certainly a deciding factor for the decision for Waters to open the Wexford plant.

“The reason for choosing Ireland at the time was based on the positive experience some of the senior Waters Corporation executives had of working with previous Irish operations. They knew that there was excellent well-educated talent in Ireland and that the people had a strong entrepreneurial spirit. These advantages still apply today; with the plant having grown not only organically but also through a number of technology transfers. This growth and progression can largely be attributed to the capabilities of the site and the team based here. More recently we have also expanded our operations to include research and development of reagent kits in support of our customers requirements.”

“We get an excellent return on what I call discretionary effort within the plant, our staff have a really positive can do attitude. That culture is a little bit infectious here.”

Over the years Liam says that Wexford County Council and the local agencies have also continued to facilitate the growth of the company. “We have gone through three plant extensions here in Wexford and Wexford County Council have always been very pro-business and have facilitated our discussions around planning efficiently. We also work closely with Wexford Chamber, the American Chamber of Commerce, the IDA, and IBEC through open days at the plant and site visits for further potential FDI research trips.

Waters has helped to advance science in a wide range of fields, including life sciences, industrial chemicals, environmental management, food safety, and water quality. As it celebrates more than a half-century of growth and achievement, the company remains dedicated to supporting the next generation of groundbreaking analytical technology.

ABOVE:
Liam Hore Senior
Director of Wexford
Operations

WEXFORD CHAMBERS

Wexford town and county hosts four Chambers of Commerce located in Wexford Town, Enniscorthy, Gorey and New Ross. All four are members of Chambers Ireland, the country's largest business organisation.

ENNISCORTHY CHAMBER

Enniscorthy is a market town and continues to make strides with new developments in industry and infrastructure. The Chamber works with the District council to promote developments in the area and relationships.

Enniscorthy & District Chamber is the largest business representative organisation in the town and is affiliated to Chambers Ireland. Enniscorthy & District Chamber works for the interests of business and for the economic development of the town and county. It is the stated vision of the Chamber to make Enniscorthy a better place to do business.

Chamber President Maree Lyng shared with us her views on business in Wexford. "Doing

business in a county like Wexford has the added benefits of a great quality of life, with arts, heritage, tourism and nature at every turn; a business community that works together for the improvement of our towns, and most of all a wonderful sense of pride in how and what we achieve together."

GOREY CHAMBER

Gorey Chamber is the leading business organisation of its kind in north Wexford, supporting businesses of all sizes and sectors across the locality. Jim Hughes, Gorey Chamber President, explains that "services range from Build your Business meetings, Lunch with the Chamber and Business Start-Up to our annual Christmas and Easter markets. The Chamber also works closely with Gorey Municipal District and LoveGorey.ie.

Jim highlights Wexford's location as key to success. "Business in Wexford has many different attributes with an excellent road infrastructure, proximity to two ports and to two airports, it is wonderfully placed as a location for business start-ups, indigenous industry and international operations."

NEW ROSS CHAMBER

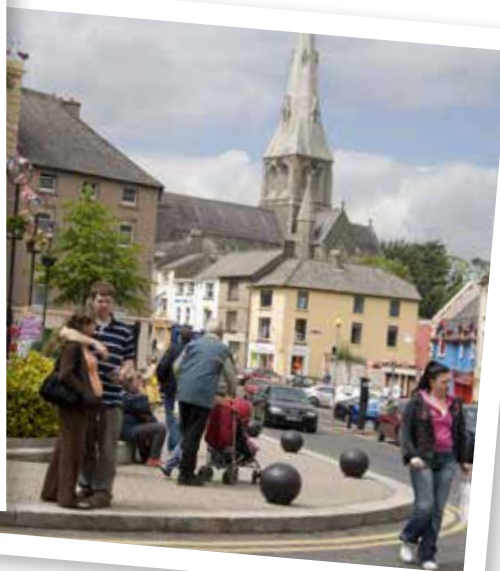
New Ross town is the gateway to breathtaking scenery, secluded coastal bays and the rolling hills of south Wexford. It is a thriving town of 7,000 people and the Chamber of Commerce in New Ross works closely with the town and the district's business community.

New Ross & District Chamber is embedded in the corporate, consumer and tourism sectors of the town and region, hosting networking occasions, creating business and tourism events like the very successful Sunshine Saturdays, a Chamber voucher scheme which has seen nearly €2 million kept in the local economy since its establishment in 2004.

John McSweeney is the New Ross & District Chamber President and told us about the exciting opportunities that are on the horizon for the town. "New Ross is a jewel in the crown of the southeast region. The town has a number of large projects about to come to fruition including a Greenway, a Street Focus Historical Project and the New Ross bypass which will all ensure an even more vibrant town centre."

**BELOW LEFT
TO RIGHT:**

Enniscorthy town,
shopping in Gorey
town and dining in
New Ross



WEXFORD CHAMBER



Wexford Chamber of Commerce was established in 1835 and today almost 200 years later, it holds steadfast to the core principle of supporting the local business community.

Headquartered in a state of the art building on Hill Street, Wexford Chamber aims to promote the economic and social development of Wexford, with a view to making the community a better place to live, work and do business, through a series of activities that acknowledge and promote the town as a thriving enterprise hub.

In addition to organising 70 events per annum, it is the receptive and responsive nature of Wexford Chamber that is most appealing to its growing member base. CEO of Wexford Chamber of Commerce, Madeleine Quirke, echoes this sentiment, by stating that, “The Chamber has fostered a culture of open and honest engagement with our members, which has served us well in both identifying the issues that are impacting upon them on a daily basis and providing them with the

support and advice that they need to find a solution.”

The Chamber is committed to continued innovation and to developing proactive responses to the challenges presented by the prevailing business climate. The plethora of vacant commercial properties in Wexford town is a scar from the recession that the Chamber is looking to eradicate. At the beginning of the year, over 100 commercial premises remained unoccupied, but the Chamber has liaised with local estate agents to determine the optimum use for these buildings and having identified the ideal tenants, has now successfully reached out to a number of new businesses about locating in the town.

Critical to the success of this initiative has been Wexford Chamber’s presence at industry events, such as the Completely Retail and Leisure Marketplace expo and the annual Call Centre Management Association expo. Such events have enabled Wexford, which has been the only Chamber of Commerce to exhibit at these national arenas, to speak

to key decision makers about considering the Model County as a possible location.

Another of Wexford Chamber’s objectives is to increase the number of existing businesses that have an active online presence. Omni-channel marketing is now a must for every business as it offers market opportunities far beyond the confines of the local bricks and mortar store. Therefore, throughout the year, Wexford Chamber offers a series of practical workshops which will result in the attendees setting up an online shop for their business and learning how they can effectively manage and market this new channel.

Wexford Chamber’s ability to plan for and adapt to the latest market developments is evident, and this will ensure its continued relevancy to the local business community. And as Madeleine Quirke states, “We’re already laying the foundations for the next couple of hundred years of the Wexford Chamber of Commerce.”

ABOVE:
Karl Fitzpatrick,
President, and
Madeleine Quirke,
CEO, Wexford
Chamber

INNOVATE BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY

Last year, INNOVATE celebrated a seminal moment in their 12-year history, by moving its southeast headquarters to Innovation House at the M11 Business Hub in Gorey. It was a significant event for INNOVATE's co-founders. In 2005, Jim Hughes (Chief Executive Officer) and Enda Cahill (Chief Technical Officer) joined forces with a vision to carve out a niche in the Irish market: Transforming technology to power organisations for growth.

INNOVATE design, deliver and manage secure cloud-based IT and communications environments to create IT enabled organisations.

With a growing workforce of over 40 people, INNOVATE is set to continue their growth in 2018. INNOVATE's list of customers is impressive. Clients include private, public and not for profit organisations such as Glanbia plc, Lifestyle Sports, Campus Oil, DCC plc, the Irish Greyhound

Board, Kirby Engineering Group, and Barnardos among others. "Moving to our new offices at Innovation house is a physical representation of our commitment to our people at INNOVATE, and to our community," said Jim Hughes.

Jim explains, "At INNOVATE, we have a keen focus on how digital transformation can drive commercial outcomes for our clients. While our core competencies are fundamentally rooted in IT and Telecommunications, it is our commercial understanding of how technology can drive organisational strategy that differentiates us in the market."

There are many definitions of digital transformation. In a business sense, it defines how an organisation can enhance or transform its commercial model using technology. In doing so it can gain a competitive advantage, greater financial outcomes and improved customer experiences while simultaneously improving business processes and increasing organisational capacity.

It depends on strong leadership, alignment between ICT and the business, and the ability to

measure the business outcomes. Jim is quick to point out that "technology has the potential to transform organisations in ways you cannot even imagine, and we know how to unlock the value of ICT to enable you to succeed."

He continues, "Through our partnership approach, we evaluate our clients' current ICT environment and recommend how and which cloud technologies and ICT solutions will offer substantial operational gains or solve existing headaches. We make world-class IT affordable through our 'as-a-service' business model that packages all IT infrastructure, cloud and managed service investment into one single monthly operating cost."

In 2015, INNOVATE grabbed national media attention when they struck a deal with Wexford GAA to rename the county sports grounds 'INNOVATE Wexford Park'. It was one of the first deals of its kind in Ireland and the partnership was a perfect fit for INNOVATE.

"2017 was a sterling year for INNOVATE. We sealed a string of high-profile national contracts, we added world-class executives to our dynamic team, and we moved to our new home at Innovation House. We're carving out our place at a national level yet remaining true to our roots in north Wexford," Jim reveals.

For Jim, there are numerous reasons for basing a business in Wexford: "Wexford's people, location and reputation meet world-class standards. If you're looking to build a business on character and values, choose Wexford. You won't regret it".

“Wexford’s people, location and reputation meet world-class standards. If you’re looking to build a business on character and values, choose Wexford. You won’t regret it.”

Jim Hughes, CEO, Innovate



ABOVE:
Jim Hughes,
CEO, Imovio

SLANEY FOODS



Almost five decades ago, Bert Allen and his brothers established a new meat plant in Clohamon on the banks of the river Slaney which has grown in the intervening period to become one of Ireland's leading beef processors.

Slaney Foods International in Clohamon in County Wexford has become a byword for quality and is synonymous today with the highest standards in beef, as well as being one of the area's most important employers. Today, together with Irish Country Meats in nearby Camolin, the Slaney Foods Group employs over 600 people in County Wexford. Wexford's prime location in the "sunny southeast" and its high-quality land make it an ideal location for such an agri-food business.

ABOVE:
Rory Fanning, CEO,
Slaney Foods

Back in 1967, Ireland was preparing its entry to the European Common Market – now the EU – looking forward to opening up many new export markets. This was particularly important for Irish agriculture covering dairy, beef and lamb, in particular. The Allen family were well-established in farming and livestock at the time and with these markets becoming accessible to Irish producers, they saw the need to develop modern processing facilities which were geared towards exporting quality Irish beef and lamb.

Slaney Foods International, having grown into one of Ireland's leading beef processors, prides itself on its reputation for sourcing and producing the highest quality Irish beef.

As CEO Rory Fanning puts it today, "County Wexford and the surrounding counties are among the most fertile and productive on the island of Ireland" while, allied with this, there is a "solid infrastructure" of family farms with a ready supply of sheep and cattle. "Irish beef has for many years enjoyed an international reputation for excellence. "Traditional farming practices coupled with nutritious high quality grass and an unspoiled environment, provide the optimum conditions for quality beef production resulting in a product of delicious and distinct flavour." Slaney Foods combines best-quality Irish beef with ultra-modern processing facilities to offer a product range of superb quality, prepared precisely to

the customer's specification. "Selected from the best Irish farms, our beef is traditionally matured and carefully prepared using the skills and craftsmanship of master butchers to ensure optimum tenderness and product presentation."

While half a century old, the company remains "young and vibrant" and believes in constant innovation. "Today it is the largest single primary beef processing plant on the island of Ireland," Rory points out.

Slaney Foods is now a Joint Venture between the ABP Food Group, one of Europe's leading agri business companies and Linden Foods, the leading Northern Ireland beef processor. While serving markets at home in Ireland, Slaney Foods is predominantly an export business. The United Kingdom, continental Europe and the Far East are among its key export markets today, while exciting developments coming up for this company include the resumption of exports to the US and the opening of the Chinese market. Slaney Foods has developed strong and successful long-term relationships with a variety of customers, including leading supermarkets and food service companies, covering all sectors from Michelin-starred restaurants to top fast food chains; and the main food manufacturers in all of their markets.

There are very important plans in place for the development of agriculture in Ireland under Food Wise 2025. "While we recognise that there are many challenges to agriculture at farm level, we are confident that Irish farmers, being very progressive, will respond to

the growth in production needed to feed an ever-growing world population," Rory added. "We have invested in recent years to prepare our plant for this, under the umbrella of the first National Food Harvest plan to 2020, and beyond that under Food Wise 2025. It is all about taking our excellent farm produce and converting it into top-class quality meat that has access to the best available world markets. Our quality trained workforce, using best available technology, is ready to deliver into the future." Rory stresses that all of this will be done with "a particular focus on our environment," and this focus is shared by the company's farmer suppliers. "We are proud and committed members of Origin Green, the Irish Food Board (Bord Bia) Sustainable Food Production Programme. This programme encapsulates this focus in a very real way for businesses like ours.

"In our company we feel that we are knitted into the community," he says when asked about the importance of Wexford as a location for Slaney Foods. "This is particularly true for us being part of the agriculture and food industry. The county and surrounding counties provide the raw material which is the life blood of our business." As a result, Slaney is "very much part of the local community" in Clohamon, Bunclody and beyond.

"We feel that the spirit of hard-working industry and the desire to serve our customers are inherent in the culture of County Wexford."

Rory points to the excellent location, people, road infrastructure and easy access to Dublin and Rosslare as key benefits for any business in Wexford, while newcomers "will get tremendous support and encouragement from the local authority. Future employees will have the attraction of living in a very pleasant environment with good facilities for them and their families."

See www.slaney.com for further details.

“Traditional farming practices coupled with nutritious high quality grass and an unspoiled environment provide the optimum conditions for quality beef production, resulting in a product of delicious and distinct flavour”

Rory Fanning, CEO, Slaney Foods

LAKE REGION MEDICAL

An INTEGER Company

It's been an impressive 23 years for the Lake Region Medical devices plant in New Ross in County Wexford which was initially set up with a workforce of 15 people but has grown to now employ almost 900 staff.

Both in Wexford and abroad, the company is much different today to when it was founded internationally in 1946 and in Wexford, when it was set up to service the European market in 1994.

Starting life in post-war America, the business was founded by Joseph Fleischhacker Snr to manufacture lures and fishing tackle. "About 10 years later, he was approached by the owners of Medtronic to develop and manufacture pacing leads for the

world's first pacemakers," Director of Operations for Lake Region, an Integer Company, Eddie Kiely, explains today. Since those early days, it's been success after success for the company.

The acquisition of Lake Region Medical by Greatbatch Medical Inc. in late 2015, led to the creation of Integer Holdings Corp. Integer is now one of the largest medical device outsource (MDO) manufacturers in the world serving the cardiac, neuromodulation, orthopaedics, vascular, advanced surgical and portable medical markets.

The New Ross plant is now one of 27 manufacturing sites across America, Europe and Asia. The County Wexford plant is a great source of pride to management and staff alike growing as it has since 1994 to become one of the key employers in the southeast of Ireland. "Over recent years the plant has gradually grown to a workforce of 880 associates,"

Eddie points out. Integer, New Ross, can now be described as "a very diverse company, employing people of 18 different nationalities," all of whom combine their expertise and experience

to ensure the company sticks to that upwardly-mobile trend graph.

In 2012 Lake Region Medical New Ross became the first medical device manufacturer in Europe to be awarded a global standard in Enterprise Excellence, the prestigious Shingo Accreditation Bronze Medallion. Meanwhile, also in 2012, the company was honoured by the Irish Medical Device Association as "Ireland's MedTech Company of the Year". So what exactly do they do in that state-of-the-art plant on the western side of Co Wexford?

"We manufacture medical guide wires which provide a point of access to a patient's coronary and peripheral vascular system to allow physicians conduct a range of diagnostic and therapeutic medical procedures, for example, inserting other devices like catheters and stents," Eddie says. This may sound simple but such devices save lives and the products designed and manufactured by this innovative company are now a vital tool for cardiologists and surgeons worldwide. "It has been estimated that an Integer guidewire is used somewhere in the world every 1.5 seconds," as the Director of Operations puts it.

An impressive track record and one that hasn't been developed without a constant commitment to excellence, innovation and customer service. At the moment, the New Ross site ship products to customers in more than 30

“Wexford is very much a pro-business environment with excellent relationships with local and national authorities, educational and training organisations”

Eddie Kiely, Director of Operations, Lake Region Medical, an Integer Company.



countries around the world and, according to the company, find that the decision to locate in County Wexford was one that proved rewarding. They cite the co-operation of the likes of the County Council, Local Enterprise Office, national state agency offices, as well as those agencies who ensure that a highly-educated workforce is on hand.

“Wexford is very much a probusiness environment with excellent relationships with local and national authorities, educational and training organisations,” he says.

New Ross is an “ideal location” from which to do business.

IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT A LAKE REGION MEDICAL GUIDEWIRE IS USED SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD EVERY 1.5 SECONDS

With Rosslare Europort nearby as well as Belview Port in south Kilkenny, along with airports in Waterford and Cork, and Dublin Airport a couple of hours’ drive away, their enthusiasm is justifiable. The rapidly-improving roads network along with high-quality housing in one of the most beautiful parts of the country add to the attractions

of the area and Integer would “absolutely” recommend New Ross and Co Wexford to anyone who wants to establish a new base for their business.

“It borders both Waterford and Kilkenny. There is a great pool of highly-educated people, close proximity to the national airports and shipping routes, good infrastructure and affordable housing which gives a great quality of life in one of the most picturesque parts of Ireland.”

ABOVE:
Eddie Kiely,
Director of
Operations,
Lake Region
Medical, an
Integer Company.

DANONE



There are things we take for granted and we don't even think about their origins. For example, we know that breastfeeding gives your baby the best nutritional start in life, providing them with tailored nutrition on demand. But for those who don't breastfeed they can be busy preparing a child's bottle of milk, ready to feed it to them on demand when the need arises at any time of the day or night. For those in that position, do they ever wonder about where that powdered milk, so essential to the child's wellbeing and progress, actually originates?

Well, the truth is that in several countries in Europe and, increasingly, the Far East, a significant portion of that milk has come from a cutting edge production facility in Wexford.

Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition is one of many success stories in the region and has been expanding in recent years from a point where the Wexford plant employed about 110 people in 2012 to today, when 300 people are

working on producing high-quality infant and toddler milks for export to a number of large markets.

The factory itself has been on site in Wexford for over 40 years but came under the umbrella of multinational Danone, which operates across five continents, about nine years ago.

"Our competitive advantage," as Wexford Site Director Liam Carmody puts it, "is our state-of-the-art blending and packaging facility for infant and toddler milk.

"The company's rapid expansion in recent years has come about through a series of major investments. These are a vote of confidence in the future. In November 2014, we opened a new packaging line at a cost of €26 million and a further expansion project is currently under construction. These are the most recent parts of an investment of €250 million in our Irish operations."

One of the key "ingredients," in so many words, for the Wexford facility is the easy availability of quality raw material.

While breastfeeding is always recommended as the best nutritional start in life, for those who can't it is comforting to know that Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition are manufacturing a high-quality infant milk thanks to the excellence of the farmland and the farming itself in the region.

Meanwhile, the support of the Government through the Department of Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation and funding from Enterprise Ireland helps to ensure that Ireland remains a competitive location for Danone. The company also enjoys supportive relationships with the local council and continues to be one of the area's largest employers.

"There's a real can-do attitude in Ireland in relation to attracting jobs and investment," Liam says. "Ireland has a positive reputation within the Danone Group as a good location. We have a great team here who consistently deliver to a high standard, strong supports from the Government and together we have continued to invest and grow the operations. This has led to positive

ABOVE:
Liam Carmody,
Wexford Site
Director, Danone

career development opportunities for the team who have had the opportunity to grow their roles and responsibility as the operations have grown.

“Enterprise Ireland have been consistently supportive – open and engaged, helping to meet our needs. They are keen to try to help make things happen. This approach has paid off with a series of significant investments.”

While some of the milk products packaged by Danone in Wexford are sold around Ireland, a significant proportion of the factory’s output is destined for the export sector and it currently services 19 different markets. These include the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, and - increasingly - further afield destinations such as Vietnam, Hong Kong and mainland China.

The company constantly focuses on research and development, ensuring that it continues to innovate and expand.

Liam puts much of the success down to the quality of personnel working in Danone, both from the local area and from elsewhere in Ireland, many of whom have located to the Wexford region in pursuit of good employment and quality of life.

“We have a very good team of people here in Wexford. We consistently attract high-calibre people – many of whom are from Wexford or who are located within an hour’s drive of the facility.

“As we add more people we can go further afield to secure specific skill sets or expertise. What is often appealing to people who are considering a career opportunity with us is their attitude toward our location. If they are moving from a city or a more urban situation they love the location of the facility

and it is very easy to sell the sunny southeast. The combination of a relocation to this area together with the opportunity to work with Danone can be very appealing and gives us a choice of very strong candidates. We have found a number of people who may have come from Wexford originally but who have had experience of working in supply chain management or production abroad. For them the chance to return to Wexford while also advancing their career is a dream come true.”

He points out that, within an hour, there are graduates coming out of Waterford IT and IT Carlow while, not much further than that, Cork and Dublin are producing people with the right skills and an interest in Wexford.

“When you look at Wexford as a place to live, you have all the benefits and all the advantages of urban life, without the disadvantages of a big city, from the point of view of traffic or high property costs.”

Not to mention the amenities, he says. “You’re in the southeast and have access to mountains and rivers and beaches. If you’re moving with a family there are great schools and a great sense of community, all those things that add up to quality of life. You can get a really good calibre of person who just wants to drive 20 minutes to work.”

Meanwhile, in terms of

infrastructure, Waterford Port and Rosslare Europort are a short distance away while the recent and ongoing upgrades to the road network, including the New Ross bypass along the southern corridor, but also between Wexford and Dublin, have made all journey times much shorter.

Liam sums it up: “I enjoy working here, I enjoy the area and I enjoy the work that I do with Danone. We’re in a high-growth environment at the moment, adding jobs and adding facilities and we have huge support from the local authority [Wexford County Council]. For any company looking to invest in Ireland, you have an opportunity here in Wexford to connect with and become an important part of the community.”

“ When you look at Wexford as a place to live, you have all the benefits and all the advantages of urban life, without the disadvantages of a big city, from the point of view of traffic or high property costs ”

Liam Carmody, Wexford Site Director, Danone

BNY MELLON

Global investments company BNY Mellon provides investment management, investment services and wealth management services that help institutions and individuals manage and service their financial assets throughout the investment lifecycle. BNY Mellon is responsible for \$31.1 trillion assets under custody and/or administration and \$1.8 trillion assets under management, operating in 35 countries and over 100 markets worldwide.

Natasha Hughes and Tim Greig both jointly lead the Wexford office which opened in January 2002. Speaking of the growth since they first opened Natasha says, "Our Wexford office originally opened with fewer than 50 employees and has grown to over 350. Today we have a diverse range of departments encompassing fund accounting, transfer agency, corporate trust, trustee and depositary, client services, financial reporting and technology services."

Natasha is originally from Mayo. She joined BNY Mellon in 2001 as a graduate fund administrator. "Within the first couple of years I had the opportunity to travel to London, Hong Kong, New York and Boston, learning from colleagues across different markets. I progressed up to senior manager level in the TA department and in 2014 whilst on maternity leave I applied for another internal role as Group Manager of the Trustee and Depositary business and was successful."

"I now manage the Depositary Compliance oversight team with staff located in all of our Irish offices in Cork, Dublin, and Wexford. I was appointed as Wexford Site Co-Head in June

2015 along with Tim. I have received a number of recognition awards during my career and in 2015 I was one of 50 BNY Mellon STARs recognised across our 52,000 employees. In 2016 Tim and I were recognised as Diversity and Inclusion Champions for all our efforts as site heads - testament to what can be achieved on a global stage from Wexford."

WEXFORD IS NOT JUST A GREAT PLACE TO DO BUSINESS BUT ALSO A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE

Tim joined BNY Mellon in 2006 and is currently a Client Services Group Manager having joined the Corporate Trust team in 2013. Tim is Wexford Corporate Trust Site Head as well as being Wexford Site Co-Head.

Tim left London City in 2006, having worked in a number of financial services positions, to join BNY Mellon in Wexford. He was seeking a greater quality of life for his young family, balanced with continuing his ambitions for a career in financial services.

Tim says, "Having made the decision to move away from London we decided against moving to a big city like Dublin, so the role at BNY Mellon based in Wexford was really the perfect solution. I'm from Cardiff in Wales originally and there are a lot of similarities between Ireland and Wales that made settling in a lot easier. Finding a great rugby club in Enniscorthy was definitely very helpful!"

BNY Mellon in Wexford is accredited as a Results Only

Workplace Environment (ROWE) meaning that management allow staff flexibility, and it seems that this, along with many other initiatives, are paying off as illustrated by the levels of staff retention and employee engagement, something that Natasha and Tim are very proud of. Tim says, "One of our primary focuses as Site Heads is to ensure that all lines of business in the site work collaboratively towards improved employee engagement and wellbeing."

The Wexford site is very closely connected to the global operation; the teams have a seamless international network powered by the collaborative and collective efforts of BNY Mellon's 52,000 people around the world.

Speaking of day-to-day operations, Tim says, "A lot of what we do involves collaboration and engagement on tasks and responsibility of work with our colleagues across the globe. We are very much part of daily global operations."

Natasha says that seeking out new team members to be part of the BNY Mellon success story is something that the company is consistently focused on. "We've worked closely with the local colleges including the Wexford campus of IT Carlow and WIT. We have taken on student interns as part of college placements and many of these students have secured full-time jobs and progressed up to manager levels in recent years."

"We also support Springboard upskilling courses and place mature students, who have brought a diverse range of transferable skills to our team."



There is a highly educated workforce on our doorstep in Wexford. We work hard on our recruitment strategy with our Talent Acquisition team to ensure we fill our vacancies with the right people. We have a diverse workforce from right across Ireland and overseas.”

In terms of experience, Tim says that over 40pc of the team in Wexford has more than nine years’ service and the average length of service of site management is 12 years. “We find that team-members value their work-life balance greatly and at BNY Mellon in Wexford it is easier for staff to enjoy a challenging career in financial services at a global level while also embracing an excellent quality of life. The length of service of our colleagues also offers the company a team with a real depth of experience so it’s certainly a win-win situation.”

Natasha says that Wexford is also a wonderful location to raise a family; “Having three daughters I can vouch for that in terms of great schools and childcare in Wexford. Wexford is not just a great place to do business but also a great place to live.”

Tim believes that part of the company’s success in Wexford

can also be attributed to the continued focus on community partnerships and Corporate Social Responsibility goals. With a strong history of philanthropic support, Wexford employees regularly back community initiatives through volunteering and fundraising. In 2015, BNY Mellon was named Corporate Philanthropist of the Year in recognition of its longstanding partnership with Acquired Brain Injury Ireland in Wexford. BNY Mellon also won the Corporate Social Responsibility category at the 2016 Wexford Business Awards.

“Our CSR activity is very important to all of the staff. In Wexford, we are the CSR partner with Wexford Chamber of Commerce and work to support and educate small and medium-size enterprises in what socially responsible business practices are and how they can get involved,” Tim says.

Integrating into the local community and doing business from Wexford along with partnering with other Wexford based businesses and agencies is something that BNY Mellon has clearly excelled at. Tim says that being active about integrating into your local community is

something that is of great benefit to the company. “We work closely with Wexford Chamber of Commerce, particularly to see where we can add value to the Wexford business community. We also have regular contact with Wexford County Council and the Local Enterprise Office. We also sponsor the Student Enterprise Awards, recognising the importance of this initiative in introducing students to business principles. We enjoy strong links with the IDA and we have been used as a reference site by the IDA for companies considering setting up in Wexford. We are very happy to share our knowledge and experience on this front.”

In 2017 BNY Mellon celebrated 15 years in business at the Wexford site. To mark the occasion employees created a time capsule that they now all look forward to being opened in 2032 and seeing how the business, staff, and teams have developed over the intervening 15 years. Tim says, “We have no doubt that our links with Wexford will continue to strengthen over this time and look forward to further integrating the business as a key player in the southeast.”

ABOVE:
Natasha Hughes
and Tim Greig,
BNY Mellon

WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

Wexford County Council provides a wide range of essential services to the public and business community in County Wexford. Tom Enright, Chief Executive, speaks about the close working relationships with the Chambers and enterprise agencies such as the IDA and Enterprise Ireland in attracting investment and employment to the county.

The Council's Local Enterprise Office provides grant aid and other supports to micro-enterprise. "We are very proud of the fact that many well known international companies have chosen Wexford as their base and that they find Wexford an excellent place for their businesses to operate, prosper and grow," says Tom. "Wexford is a very attractive location where people experience an unrivalled quality of life enhanced by wonderful natural scenery, a

vibrant artistic community, a unique history and culture, it's also a place where strangers receive a great welcome. One major advantage that Wexford has is proximity to our capital city, Dublin. Gorey and north County Wexford is only an hour from Dublin and its international airport, and the proposed completion of the Enniscorthy bypass will reduce the journey time from Wexford town to Dublin to around 90 minutes. Then there is the bypass being constructed around the town of New Ross, a €230 million project which will increase connectivity between Wexford and Waterford and Wexford and Cork, along with the rest of the southwest of Ireland."

Not only is the county well connected in terms of transport, Tom says, but Wexford is one of two locations nationally in the rollout of a €20 million investment in high fibre broadband, with speeds of up to 75MB available to 14,000 premises in urban areas.

"In Wexford we pride ourselves on being very supportive of business, innovation and entrepreneurship. One important area where the County Council plays a key role is in sourcing property for companies.

Businesses want to know where they are going to be

located in six months' time, not in two or three years, so we need to be able to say to them: 'there's an office unit that's already built which would suit you' or 'here are some industrial units that are available and are the right size'. Getting to that stage of providing ready-made property solutions for new or expanding businesses is a major priority for the Council and we have advanced plans in place for a major new business park at Trinity Wharf in Wexford, advanced technology buildings in New Ross and a new 40 acre business park in Enniscorthy."

Lease rates on commercial property are much less than they are in the greater Dublin area and that helps keep the cost of doing business in Wexford at very competitive levels.

"Ireland's skill base has been an important feature of our success. It is key to encouraging international companies to establish European and global headquarters, and manufacturing facilities here. The southeast region of Ireland has a population of 500,000 and, of the available workforce, over 23pc have third-level qualifications. Wexford is located close to both Waterford and Carlow IT, and hosts a dedicated third-level campus in Wexford town. In 2015, there were in excess of 16,000 students across the third-level institutions in the region. In addition, top Irish universities such as Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin are within easy commuting distance. A readily available, skilled employee base is a consistent retainer of businesses for Wexford.

All of this combined has ensured that the beautiful, historic and

“One major advantage that Wexford has is proximity to our capital city... the proposed completion of the Enniscorthy bypass motorway will reduce the journey time from Wexford town to Dublin to around 90 minutes”

Tom Enright, CE, Wexford County Council



diverse county of Wexford has become one of the most innovative and bustling places in the country. But it's not all about work, says Tom, "In Wexford you can enjoy a good work-life balance and it's easy to achieve when working and living here, thanks to short commuting distances and times. Good quality housing is very affordable either to rent or purchase. One of our most attractive features is the quality of our long, sandy beaches as well as some of our hidden coves which make for great bathing, fishing and just relaxing.

"Some of the more famous beaches include Curracloe (just outside Wexford town where Saving Private Ryan was filmed), Morristown, Rosslare, and St Helen's and while we're talking about natural amenities we can't forget about the beautiful Hook Peninsula to the southwest of our county." Wexford

PROVIDING READY-MADE PROPERTY SOLUTIONS IS A MAJOR PRIORITY FOR THE COUNCIL

is steeped in heritage, particularly in terms of the many old historical buildings such as towers, castles, country houses – many of them open to the public. Being on such a large section of Ireland's south-eastern coastline, Tom notes that it is a natural place for fishing, sailing and other watersports and that these are availed of by so many, not only in summer, but all through the year. "You may have heard the phrase the sunny southeast," Tom says, "but it's not a cliché, it's true. I won't quote statistics but the facts are that we enjoy more sunshine in this corner of Ireland than any

other part of the country.

"Wexford Festival Opera is world-famous and the Spiegeltent Festival, which takes place in October, also has large numbers attending every year. But even throughout the rest of the county there are many different cultural activities such as drama groups, musical theatre groups, art groups, storytelling houses, festivals and much more, all of which are doing extremely well." Wexford is the southeast region's top destination for overseas visitors, who generate €60 million for the local economy. A further €127 million is generated from domestic visitors to the county and Wexford is one of Ireland's top home-holidaying destinations. In summary Wexford has all you could ask for: a great place to live, to work, to invest, to relax, to visit and to visit again.

ABOVE:
Tom Enright,
CE, Wexford
County Council

HOSPITALITY







DINING IN WEXFORD

The restaurant scene and café culture of Wexford is abundant, offering many ideal spots to pull up a chair and enjoy the hustle and bustle of the town's friendly atmosphere. From a street side cuppa to Michelin dining, there's a variety on offer for all tastes.

Located in the heart of Wexford town at Selskar Square, the Michelin recommended **Greenacres Restaurant** is one of the most popular in the southeast. The ground floor of the imposing red brick building is a stylish restaurant where the diners are

surrounded by shelves of the world's finest wines and the ambience is friendly and relaxed. The food is prepared under the watchful eye of local chef Ritchie Trappe and, with the wonderful agricultural and maritime hinterland of the county, their supplies are sourced locally. The award-winning wine list, which has been assembled by James O'Connor and Donal Morris, is the most extensive in the country.

Heading south onto Main Street **An Cistín Eile** is an intimate restaurant offering the finest contemporary Irish food with a

rustic twist. Cistín Eile wears its Irishness proudly. It's not just the name, or the motto emblazoned on the wall – Is maith an t-anlann an t-ocras (hunger makes a great sauce) – but, more importantly, the menu. Irish dishes take pride of place and local Irish artisan produce forms the basis of those dishes.

A stroll to the end of Main Street is worth the walk for a visit to **Stable Diet Cafe**. True to an ethos to provide excellent quality food products based on a philosophy that nature knows best, Stable Diet

ABOVE:
Reeds Restaurant,
Ferrycarrig Hotel

RIGHT:
Greenacres
Restaurant



OUR WEXFORD



flourishes as one of the town's most popular cafés. Enjoy a small stylish interior and a mouth-watering menu.

On the Quayside a visit to **La Cote Seafood Restaurant**, a multi-award winning fine dining restaurant catering for all tastes, is a must. It has seasonal menus that have locally sourced and foraged ingredients. The 40-seater restaurant has been applauded for its ability to wow diners in search of an affordable and relaxed culinary experience. It is run by Chef/Patron Paul Hynes and his partner Edwina who are both passionate about what they do.

Taking a trip out of town to **Kelly's Café** at the Drinagh roundabout on the edge of town offers punters attention to detail, friendliness and superb quality. Owner Bill Kelly is well known for his delivery of quality hospitality. The café occupies a bright space with an eclectic mix of furniture and diversity of fresh vibrant flavours and appetising creations on the menu.

Heading a little further out of town to the four-star **Ferrycarrig Hotel**, its in-house restaurant **Reeds** has been awarded the best hotel restaurant in Leinster for a number

of consecutive years. Executive Chef Tony Carty says his ethos is to use 'local, seasonal, quality ingredients' and the proof is in the pudding as the menu is stacked with suppliers from all across County Wexford.

The entire county is renowned for its local produce such as strawberries, fish, honeys and jams. **The Wexford Food and Wine Festival**, which takes place annually in May has fast established itself as a must-attend premier food and drink event and, taking place each June in Enniscorthy town, the annual **Enniscorthy Rockin' Food Festival** is a family celebration of local food and the arts. If it's local seafood you wish to sample, Kilmore Quay and its wonderful **Seafood Festival** each summer or a visit to the **Silver Fox** in Kilmore is a must!

Another gem in Kilmore is **Mary Barry's Seafood Bar & Restaurant** where quality is very much in evidence. Mary Barry's is renowned for its locally caught fresh seafood from Kilmore Quay prepared and cooked by local head chef Nicky Cullen, offering specials on a daily basis at superb value. In the summer months you can even choose your own oysters and lobsters fresh from

the in-house sea tank.

For those looking for a slightly different type of dining experience visit **Wild & Native Restaurant** and Wine Bar in Rosslare Strand which offers a wide variety of artisan food using locally sourced produce.

Heading north to Gorey, **The Duck Restaurant** a terrace restaurant, café and bar in the restored courtyard buildings at **Marlfield House** is perfect for alfresco coffees, pastries, cocktails, lunch or dinner. The tempting menus feature fresh and exciting ingredients from the kitchen gardens and the locality.

Aldridge Lodge located overlooking the wonderful Duncannon village is a foodie hotspot! This small restaurant and guesthouse is holder of a prestigious Michelin Bib Gourmand since 2007 and has won many food awards. With a daily changing menu featuring local and homegrown produce this restaurant is widely regarded among the best in the country. For details on the huge variety of restaurants and cafes in Wexford see: www.visitwexford.ie

ABOVE:
Monart Destination
Spa; A kitchen
garden at
Dunbrody



ACCOMMODATION

Wexford offers a wonderful variety of accommodation from pretty cottage rentals, bed and breakfasts to luxury hotels, a five-star destination spa and everything in between.

When hotels often announce that they are close to the beach and you arrive and find it's visible from the top right hand corner of your bedroom window (but only if you stand on your toes)... well at **Kelly's Resort and Spa** this is not the case! It is quite literally on the five miles of Rosslare Strand's exquisite sandy beach. The hotel offers an abundance of family entertainment and if the sun is shining there's always that sandy beach and sea air a stone's throw away. In north Wexford **The Amber Springs Hotel**, named consistently as the best family friendly hotel in the country, is a firm favourite for families of all ages. The four-star family run hotel is situated just a 10-minute walk from the town of Gorey and offers a bar, restaurant, leisure centre spa and of course a kids club.

Another firm favourite amongst locals and visitors is **Dunbrody**

House, one of the leading luxury country house hotels in Wexford and excellently located on the dramatic Hook Peninsula. Dunbrody house is owned and operated by husband and wife team Kevin and Catherine Dundon. Their hotel reflects their joint passion for excellence in all areas combined with luxury accommodation all within the centuries-old walls of this beautiful Georgian property set amidst 300 acres of tranquil parkland.

Wexford is also home to Ireland's only destination spa, the five-star **Monart Destination Spa** is located at The Still, just outside

Enniscorthy, and has been named in the Top 3 Spa Resorts in the world by Conde Nast Traveller. Set in over 100 acres of private woodlands, providing luxurious facilities, excellent dining and a world class spa, Monart is dedicated to offering their guests the ultimate in relaxation. All 70 bedrooms are deluxe rooms to guarantee all guests experience unforgettable comfort and style.

The Talbot Suites at Stonebridge is the newest accommodation offering by The Talbot Collection, located in the heart of Wexford town and just 100 metres from the main Talbot Hotel, Wexford. Featuring 73 high-end, luxury apartments they are ideal for holiday and festival breaks and executive short and long stays in the town. With panoramic views over the River Slaney and Wexford Harbour, the stunning new apartments are sure not to disappoint even the most discerning of travellers! For details on the huge variety of accommodation in Wexford see www.visitwexford.ie



ABOVE:
Monart
Destination Spa

RIGHT:
Catherine Dundon

OPPOSITE PAGE
Kelly's Hotel;
Kevin Dundon in
Dunbrody House;
Talbot Suites;
Marlfield House





KELLY'S RESORT HOTEL

Kelly's Resort Hotel in Rosslare is iconic in the tourism industry in Ireland. According to its owner Bill Kelly the key lies in its history and individuality.

Established in the early 1890s, Kelly's has survived and thrived through 120 years of changing social trends. It is a family-run jewel with a proud history of excellence; proprietor Bill Kelly is the fourth generation to carry on that tradition. The fifth generation of the family Laura Kelly has also recently returned to Wexford to take on a role in running the hotel.

Families have been visiting this special seaside place for generations. The hotel is rooted in history but has its feet firmly planted in the 21st century. It offers real hospitality and personal service with a confidence borne of experience.

So, what's the secret to Kelly's success? "It's very much the same ethos while keeping up with changing demands," says Bill,

whose great-grandfather William Joseph established the business.

"We have 1,800 man years of experience across the staff, there is a continuity of service and friendliness that I think is essential. You can build a palace but it's only people who will bring people back again," he says.

It all started when William Joseph and his wife Mary opened a tea rooms in a timber structure on the site, to cater for 19th century visitors arriving on the train to go to the beach. Within a few years,

they expanded and began offering accommodation.

Bill's grandfather Nicholas and his father William J. followed on, making their own contributions to the development of the hotel. His mother Breda is still involved.

Today Kelly's employs 190 people, has three restaurants, two bars, 118 bedrooms, two indoor swimming pools, a fitness centre, steam room, sauna, outdoor Canadian hot tub and indoor and outdoor tennis courts.

ABOVE:
Bill Kelly and
his daughter
Laura Kelly

RIGHT:
Kelly's Hotel





A WORLD-CLASS SPA – MONART

Having won the accolade of being one of the top three spas in the world and a firm favourite in Ireland as the country's only destination spa, the adult-only Monart Destination Spa is nestled in the midst of over 100 acres of private woodland and rolling landscape in Enniscorthy and is a jewel in the crown of the Irish and global hospitality sector.

Monart is owned and run by the Griffin family, which has

been immersed in Wexford's hospitality industry for generations since 1925, when Jenny Griffin and her mother operated Laburnham Guest House in Gorey. In 1936 Jenny married Garda Michael Griffin and they relocated to Rosslare Strand, remaining in the hospitality industry. They purchased the Pier Hotel in Rosslare, and in 1976 Michael's son Liam Griffin who is now the chairman of the Griffin Hotel Group purchased the

property from his parents, having graduated from Shannon College of Hotel Management and spent a decade working around the world to broaden his knowledge of the hospitality industry. Having developed the Griffin Hotel Group to include the Ferrycarrig Hotel Wexford and Hotel Kilkenny, it was in 2005 that Monart Destination Spa opened its doors, providing an innovative product with unbeatable service standards.

All 70 bedrooms are deluxe rooms to guarantee all guests experience unforgettable comfort and style.

So what is it that makes this hotel group so unique? According to the Griffin family it is exceptional standards. "We pride ourselves on our staff and the service standards we as a team provide," says Liam. "We ensure all of our guests enjoy an exceptional world-class spa break which sees them return again and again."

ABOVE:
Liam Griffin

LEFT:
Monart
Destination Spa



“Our main conference room, The McClure Suite is one of the largest in the southeast”

Joe O'Brien,
General Manager,
Clayton Whites
Hotel

CONFERENCING IN WEXFORD

Wexford has had an excellent reputation for hosting a wide range of conferences and events over many years and is the premier venue in the southeast for many national and international events.

The hospitality industry together with other stakeholders, such as Wexford County Council and Wexford Chamber of Commerce, has worked very hard to bring a co-operative approach to attracting events to Wexford. This can be seen through the hotels working together so that the necessary critical mass of facilities such as bedrooms are made available for large scale conferences. Hotels work with the Chamber of Commerce and the County Council to organise access to facilities like the quay for events like the National Road Haulage Conference or the Canonball Run. A more recent example would be the provision of “Welcome” signage for key conferences and events.

At the forefront of this drive to attract large scale events to Wexford is Clayton Whites Hotel. While the hotel has appeared in many guises over the years it has, nonetheless, been a beacon of hospitality in Wexford for well over 200 years. With the largest conference facilities in the southeast, Clayton Whites is



pivotal in attracting events and being the host venue for large conferences. The hotel works very closely, not only with other hotels but also other facilities such as the National Opera House in facilitating the many events that take place during the course of the year in Wexford.

The General Manager of Clayton Whites Hotel is Rosslare native, Joe O'Brien, who returned to Wexford last year to take the reins at the hotel. Joe says he is “delighted to have been able to return to Wexford and to such a prestigious hotel” and he relishes the opportunity of building on the hotel’s excellent reputation for hosting large scale events. He adds that “I have worked in many hotels across the globe and Clayton Whites and Wexford are right up there with some of the best.”

The hotel boasts 157 bedrooms, which are currently being refurbished, and a capacity to

host conferences and events for up to 1,000 delegates together with smaller conference facilities and excellent leisure and spa facilities.

Speaking of their facilities Joe says: “Our main conference room, The McClure Suite is one of the largest in the southeast and it’s primary location in Wexford town together with its 150MB fibre optic broadband and AV facilities make the venue a very attractive proposition.”

Another advantage to Wexford as a major venue is the National Opera House which, in conjunction with Clayton Whites, can provide an even wider range of facilities to offer potential clients including conference facilities for up to 850 delegates.

Joe goes on to say, “The last 12 months have been really good with some excellent bookings which included the Canonball Run, the Welcome Home Cycle, the INTO National Conference, the Irish Road Haulage Association and many more, and advance bookings are looking even stronger.

With events such as the Vintners Federation of Ireland, the Canonball Run again, the Sea Anglers Championship and, of course, the Wexford Festival Opera this year alone, Wexford and Clayton Whites has a bright future and much to look forward to.

ABOVE:
Joe O'Brien,
General Manager,
Clayton Whites
Hotel



FESTIVALS

A calendar full of festivals, events and cultural activities is on offer year round, so there is always something fun to see and do in Wexford.

The International Wexford Festival Opera takes place in Wexford town annually during October and November coinciding with the annual Wexford Fringe Festival – offering a variety of entertainment and cultural events.

In the summer season a series of fun-filled festivals take to the streets including the **Wexford Strawberry Fair** in Enniscorthy and the **Wexford Food and Wine Festival** in Wexford town. Wexford's unique US links are celebrated during **Irish America Day** in New Ross each July fourth. Enjoy an open-air fashion show, live music and Family Fun Day at the **Market House Festival** in Gorey during the August Bank

Holiday Weekend.

The **Maritime Festival** celebrates the life of Commodore John Barry, a Wexford-man and founder of the American Navy, and offers a variety of maritime activities.

Enjoy a fun-filled weekend for all the family at **Jest Fest** with a host of street theatre and comedy on offer across Wexford town or take to the streets of Enniscorthy for the **Rockin' Food Festival** with beats and eats for all rhythms and tastes.

At the world's oldest working lighthouse 'Hook Lighthouse' and all along the Hook Peninsula enjoy a celebration of all things maritime from great local seafood to seaside crafts to heritage and sea life at the 'Hooked on the Sea' Festival!

Each mid-summer the quaint fishing village of Kilmore Quay celebrates the **Kilmore Quay Seafood Festival** with its famous seafood platters, entertainment and family fun days.

The Art in the Open Festival celebrates 'Plein Air' painting, with a host of paint outs, workshops with international artists, and culminating in a giant art exhibition.

The **Wexford Spiegeltent Festival** on Wexford town quayside hosts a variety of marvels and wonders, the best in music, comedy, opera, theatre, film and kids' shows in a giant Victorian style circus tent – it is a festival like no other!

Wexford Winterland sees a joyous celebration of the festive season with ice-skating, festive movies and a wonderful traditional Christmas market in Wexford town. Fun-filled festive events also take place in New Ross, Enniscorthy and Gorey towns with lots of fun on offer for all the family.

For a full list of the annual vibrant festival and events calendar see **visitwexford.ie**

ABOVE:
Wexford Food and Wine Festival

POLAROIDS LEFT TO RIGHT:
Wexford Strawberry Fair; New Ross Piano Festival; The Duncannon Sandsculpting Festival



OUR PLACE



02



JOHNSTOWN CASTLE

If you're planning a visit to Johnstown Castle this summer you can take a nostalgic journey through Irish farming and social history in the Irish Agricultural Museum, enjoy the stunning views or meander through the woodland garden and around the lakes.

Teagasc Director Prof Gerry Boyle set up a working group with a view to re-imagining the offering at Johnstown Castle. Partnering Teagasc on this working group were Wexford County Council and Fáilte Ireland.

Prof Gerry Boyle says, "We have always been honoured to be custodians of the Johnstown Castle Estate and while the estate and the Irish Agricultural Museum are open to the public we knew that the future offering with public access to the castle itself could be vast. We have in the past hosted Department of Agriculture events at Johnstown Castle, partnered with organisations like Wexford Festival Opera to host the full Opera Festival here in 2007 whilst the Opera House was being built and for many years hosted civil wedding ceremonies. We always had a bigger vision, it was just about finding the right partners."

In the meantime, Teagasc issued a public tender looking for a visionary partner to come on board with them to re-imagine the future of Johnstown Castle and Estate. The Irish Heritage Trust were announced as the successful applicants from this tender process and a partnership with Teagasc to deliver a bright future for the estate was born. The Trust was

specifically brought on board by Teagasc to assist them with the capital redevelopment of the castle and grounds.

The Trust will then be appointed

WE SEE THE PROJECT AS SOMETHING THAT WILL CREATE WIDER ECONOMIC BENEFITS THROUGH JOB CREATION AND THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT – WHERE OTHER BUSINESSES AND SUPPLIERS IN THE AREA BENEFIT FROM TOURISM ACTIVITY

by Teagasc to operate the re-imagined Johnstown Castle estate and grounds for seven years.

The Irish Heritage Trust, an independent charity, was launched in 2006; its ethos is to care for special places in a way that also delivers real benefit to people and the country. The Trust took responsibility for Fota House in December 2007; today the property

is thriving, requires no annual revenue funding from the state, has received tremendous public and private support is buzzing with volunteers and visitors. The Trust also successfully developed and operated the Dublin Tenement Experience and in 2015 took responsibility for Strokestown Park and the Irish National Famine Museum.

Kevin Baird, CEO of the Trust, explains that their fundamental approach on any project is to combine people, place and participation. "We know that Johnstown Castle is a stunning place. At the Trust we don't take on projects and work on them in isolation; we endeavour to get people involved. For instance at Fota House we have a very impressive community of people dedicated to preserving and interpreting this special place for everyone. At Johnstown Castle we hope the people of Wexford will come onboard with us to help create a unique visitor experience."

Jennifer McCrea of the Irish Heritage Trust continues, "We specialise in creating great visitor experiences and differentiating the attraction: working with Teagasc, this is our vision for Johnstown Castle. In addition, the aim will be to make the property financially

THE HISTORY OF JOHNSTOWN CASTLE

Resting six kilometres south of the centre of Wexford town is the lush Johnstown Castle Estate and Gardens. Sitting in the epicenter of the 1,000-acre estate, the doors of the ornate Norman Castle remain closed.

The ancient heritage of Johnstown Castle begins in 1169, the same year the Normans first arrived to Ireland (via Wexford) at the request of Diarmait Mac Murchada, the ousted King of Leinster. The castle was first built that year by the Esmonde family. Local legend has it that the place is named after King John who stayed overnight on his way to Wexford about 40 years after Robert Fitz-Stephen and the other Anglo-Normans arrived at Bannow Bay some 20 miles away.

The Castle was confiscated from the Esmonde family by Cromwell and given to Lieut. Col. Overstreet in settlement for arrears of pay. Overstreet's widow married Edward Withers and with no children of this marriage, the estate was bequeathed to local merchant John Reynolds, his wife and three daughters, Mary, Jane and Susan. John Grogan of Wexford

married Mary Reynolds and in 1692 he became the sole proprietor of the castle having purchased the other two-thirds of the estate from his sisters-in-law.

The property remained with the Grogan family until 1945, apart from a brief period during the 1798 rebellion.

The last private owner, the late Lady Maurice Fitzgerald, a descendent of the Grogan family, willed the estate to her grandson Captain M.V. Lakin in 1942. In 1945 he generously gifted the estate to the nation and the Department of Agriculture under the '1945 Johnstown Castle Agricultural College Act' and undertook to maintain but not alter 'the ornamental nature of the 120 acres of gardens and pleasure grounds of the estate' and to this day Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority have been doing just that. Having operated their offices from the castle for a number of years, Teagasc have taken the job of custodians very seriously, maintaining the gardens and grounds to a high level and ensuring the careful preservation and restoration of the estate infrastructure itself.

PLAN A VISIT

The wonderful gardens at Johnstown Castle and the Irish Agricultural Museum will ensure a spectacular family day out. Daniel Robertson laid out the castle's stunning gardens between 1844 and 1851 and to this day they retain their early design and beauty. A lakeside walk lined with statues offers a perfect vantage point to take in the panorama of the castle with its turrets and battlements. The parklands are home to a variety of trees, including Japanese cedar, golden Lawson cypresses and Atlantic blue cedars as well as a number of towers and waterfalls. A wonderful walled garden and an ornamental garden are gems not to be missed and in the grounds' centre you'll find a traditional Irish farmyard and courtyard which is also home to a café offering lots of local produce and, fittingly, the Irish Agricultural Museum. This houses a vast collection of old farm tools and machinery and is a must visit for any family.

www.irishagrimuseum.ie



Turn
here to
read more...



MAIN IMAGE:
Johnstown Castle

sustainable and we will achieve this through admission charges and annual membership options where visitors will enjoy a much wider range of events and activities on site. We also see the project as something that will create wider economic benefits through job creation and the multiplier effect – where other businesses and suppliers in the area benefit from tourism activity. We are also delighted to play our part in Fáilte Ireland's Ireland's Ancient East. We will be telling the fascinating stories about the people who lived and worked here." In fact if you have any memories or connections to Johnstown Castle the Trust would love to hear from you; you can email Jennifer at johnstowncastle@irishheritagetrust.ie

The Irish Heritage Trust is an organisation which punches well above its weight in terms of delivery; it has in its short lifetime trebled in size, yet has honed its dependency on the exchequer to 32%.

Teagasc are excited by the prospects of what a partnership with the Irish Heritage Trust can bring to the table for the estate, as Chairman of the Project Steering Committee, Paddy Browne of Teagasc, tells us: "We are going to be offering a lot more than what is currently on offer at the Johnstown Castle Estate and this will be delivered in project phases.

WE KNOW THAT THE PEOPLE OF WEXFORD HAVE A SPECIAL PLACE IN THEIR HEARTS FOR JOHNSTOWN CASTLE

"Initially we will be placing capital budget in areas of the estate where restoration and preservation is critical. We will then move on to building an experience for everyone to enjoy and each year we will be adding to and improving this experience."

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform Brendan Howlin TD announced €7.5 million for the proposed development of Johnstown Castle. Funding of €5 million is available for the project through the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and €2.5 million in Fáilte Ireland funding.

Speaking at the launch of the project, Minister Howlin said, "This is a major boost not just for Wexford and the southeast of the country but it will significantly contribute to Ireland's tourism offering, particularly to Ireland's 'Ancient East'.

"This development aims to make Johnstown Castle the most visited attraction in the southeast of Ireland and to greatly increase the amount of pleasure which people, from Ireland and abroad, obtain from the buildings and grounds of Johnstown Castle. For the first time, the castle itself will be opened to the public to visit."



According to Teagasc, the project will be developed in two phases. New pathways will be laid as well as new car-parking and entrance arrangements, a new restaurant and visitor centre experience, a new natural amphitheatre in the gardens, the restoration of the lower lake and garden areas along with extensive remedial conservation works to the castle from the basement to the three storeys above it. New interpretation for the site is also planned.

In terms of the planned timeline, Paddy continues:

“We will be filing for planning permission for all of the works with Wexford County Council and we hope to be open to the public to some degree shortly afterwards. Teagasc and the Trust are keen to very much involve the local community and invite members of the public to share their knowledge and memories of the castle’s heritage with them via johnstowncastle@irishheritagetrust.ie

“This is an enormous project and we know that not every element of this can be delivered under the

current funding model, but it is an ambitious plan which will safeguard the future of Johnstown Castle for many years to come. We know that the people of Wexford have a special place in their hearts for Johnstown Castle and access to the castle grounds will remain as they are. We, along with the Irish Heritage Trust look forward to welcoming locals and visitors alike during the working project phases and thereafter,” adds Prof. Boyle.

ABOVE & BELOW: Servants gathered on the front lawn at Johnstown Castle on the occasion of the marriage of Kathleen Fitzgerald to Michael Lakin in 1914. If you have any connections to or memories of Johnstown Castle we would love to hear from you at johnstowncastle@irishheritagetrust.ie





WELL-CONNECTED WEXFORD

The phrase “well-connected” is a good way to describe Wexford, in more ways than one.

Just one of the many things the area has going for it, is its connectivity to key locations in Ireland through rail links, which converge on both Wexford town and nearby Rosslare.

For those without access to cars, or who just want the comfort of travelling at high speed while being able to catch up on work or rest, the train services to and from this corner of the country are most welcome.

And don't forget the convenient and frequent connections between Dublin airport and the two main railway stations in Dublin which serve the rest of the country.

For Wexford, Connolly Station in Dublin is the place to head after arriving at the capital, and at the moment there are five services every week day heading along the east coast to the county town.

Currently the trains leave Connolly Station for O'Hanrahan Station in Wexford in the morning (9.40am at time of going to press), early afternoon, late afternoon, with two early evening services.

Meanwhile, the timetable heading in the opposite direction is designed for those who want to be in Dublin in time for morning meetings as well as those with later schedules. The first service leaves Wexford town just before 6am, with further trains at 7.43am, 1.20pm and 6.20pm, subject to seasonal change.

Even on Sundays there are three regular services between Dublin and Wexford town, each way, ensuring the utmost flexibility.

Most of the trains that travel from Dublin to Wexford also continue on as far as the station at Rosslare Strand, and vice versa, so it's easy to get from Wexford to the port service or to arrive via the Europort in Rosslare and head north.

But it's not just Dublin that's reachable on this rail line as, in between, the stop-offs include many attractive destinations such as Arklow, Wicklow town, Greystones and Bray.

Business or pleasure, the railway is hard to beat.

A digitally connected Wexford

Digital connectivity is key to operating a successful business. Wexford is serviced by the Metropolitan Area Network (MAN), which provides ADSL to broadband infrastructure to businesses, educational facilities and industry.

Wexford was one of two locations nationally in the rollout of a €20 million investment in high fibre broadband, with speeds of up to 75MB available to 14,000 premises in urban areas delivering services for improved connectivity, efficiency and reliability for business. Some 60,000 out of 80,000 premises will be connected by commercial operators by mid-2018 and the remaining 20,000 premises will be connected by the national broadband rollout.



ROADS

Those commuters on the N25 New Ross road will have noticed significant changes along the route of the €230 million New Ross bypass in recent months as construction progresses apace in advance of its opening in early 2019. Upon completion, the 15km long scheme will improve safety for all road users, significantly ease traffic congestion in New Ross town and enhance the economic potential of the New Ross area and the wider region.

Commuters in particular will notice temporary traffic management operations on the main road links into New Ross: on the N25 Waterford Road at Glenmore, the R733 Campile Road at Camlin, the N25 Wexford Road at Ballymacar and the N30 Enniscorthy/Dublin Road at Corcoran's Cross. These are to facilitate the construction of road junctions, thus ensuring that the bypass will have high-quality connectivity with New Ross town and environs as well as with all of the key strategic commuter routes in the region.

Local residents will also have noticed localised temporary diversions along a number of local roads in the area. These are to facilitate the construction of road bridges over or under the bypass, thus ensuring that local communities are not severed by the new route.

Perhaps the most striking transformation has been seen at the site of the River Barrow

Bridge, where the eight bridge piers have recently emerged from the ground on both sides of the river and risen to heights of up to 36 metres (roughly equivalent to a 12 storey building). These piers will support the bridge deck and pylon towers which will be constructed in the coming months.

This landmark structure will be the longest bridge in Ireland at nearly 900m. The bridge will have nine spans including two main central spans of 230m and three central towers supporting these spans. The central spans are among the longest of their particular type in the world, and the design and construction of the bridge has proved to be an exciting challenge for all of the engineers involved. The central span over the river channel will accommodate shipping navigation for the port of New Ross with a clearance of 36m above water level in the river.

A few figures provide some context of the scope of works undertaken in the first 20 months of the contract. Over 1,000,000 cubic metres of earthworks have been excavated and re-used to date, including approx. 700,000 cubic metres of rock. The total length of piling constructed for the foundations of the Barrow Bridge reaches to nearly three kilometres, and over 10,000 cubic metres of concrete has been placed to date in the foundations and piers. Other works include 10 road bridges, a railway bridge, 16 farm underpasses and extensive

environmental mitigation works to protect and retain the wildlife in the area.

A number of interesting archaeological sites have been discovered during the project. These include the remains of a wooden house erected by some of the first Stone Age farmers almost 6,000 years ago. An example of a Bronze Age sweat lodge or sauna, probably dating from between 2,500 and 4,000 years ago was discovered during construction. The remains of a previously undocumented 14th century farm are also of particular interest. Monitoring by a specialist archaeology team will be maintained throughout the works.

In excess of 600,000 working hours have been devoted to the construction of the project to date, with a workforce in excess of 300 people at peak times. Local contractors, suppliers and small businesses are benefitting both directly and indirectly from the economic activity generated by construction and further benefits will accrue during the subsequent operation and maintenance of the road.

Another large-scale project is the extension of the M11 from the southern end of Gorey to Enniscorthy. The new dual carriageway motorway section is 27km and is also on track for completion in quarter one 2018.

For further info see:
www.m11gtoe.ie and
www.n25newross.ie.



AIRPORT ACCESS

Wexford is ideally positioned midway between two of Ireland's airports. Dublin Airport is a one hour and 30 minute drive with full motorway access, and Waterford Airport is just over one hour's drive from Wexford town.

WATERFORD AIRPORT

Waterford Airport services corporate jets, and charter aircraft, leisure flying and flight training, and is home to the Coast Guard's Search And Rescue Helicopter (Rescue 117) Base.

DUBLIN AIRPORT

Dublin Airport is an international airport serving Dublin and is operated by DAA.

The airport has an extensive short and medium haul network, served by an array of carriers as well as some intercontinental routes focused on the Middle East and North America. It serves as the headquarters of Ireland's flag carrier Aer Lingus, Ireland's regional airline Stobart Air and also Europe's largest low-cost carrier Ryanair, along with ASL, together with a fifth airline, CityJet, which doesn't maintain major operations here.

United States border pre-clearance services are available at the airport for US-bound passengers, making Dublin one of only two European airports with this facility (the other is in Shannon).



For further details on access see
waterfordairport.ie
dublinairport.com
rosslareeuport.irishrail.ie

**ABOVE
& ABOVE RIGHT:**
Dublin Airport





ROSSLARE EUROPORT

One of Ireland's key strategic transport hubs, Rosslare Europort is located on the southeastern tip of the country in County Wexford, and has been a major access point for traffic for many years.

Just a 10 minute drive from Wexford town, Rosslare is already a readily-accessible town and the many cars, trucks, vans, motorbikes and camper-vans rarely have much trouble getting into and out of the port, but that's going to improve even further with the development of a new access road in the near future.

The soft sandy beaches nearby are often the first things that new visitors to Ireland, whether on business or pleasure, see of the country and that's a good first impression for them to have.

But they are also impressed with the level of service and the easy, fast and efficient way they can get through the Europort and then continue on their journey to all points across Ireland.

As the closest point on the southern coast of Ireland to both the UK and mainland Europe, Rosslare is the main hub for all key roll-on-roll-off ferries which operate the routes across the Irish Sea and to the continent, both for passenger and freight use.

The Stena Line company operate services between Rosslare and both Fishguard in the south of Wales and Cherbourg in northern France, while Irish Ferries carry passengers to Pembroke in Wales and Roscoff and Cherbourg in France.

Connectivity for foot passengers is provided by Íarnród Éireann (Irish Rail), who operate the Europort, with frequent train journeys to and from Dublin, where further services can be accessed to other parts of the country.

Meanwhile, Bus Éireann operate several bus routes out of Rosslare.

The port terminal itself has all of the facilities to be expected of such an infrastructure hub such as immigration, car-hire, parking and café, while all of the freight services necessary for trucks and their drivers are also on hand. The port also has ample low-cost parking spaces, and also services Rosslare Europort also services visiting leisure cruise vessels.



ABOVE & LEFT:
Rosslare Europort



PROPERTY SOLUTIONS

Although Wexford County Council has been successful in attracting enquiries and IDA client interest in the county, there is still lots to be achieved. Tony Larkin, Director of Services for Economic Development and Planning with Wexford County Council, discusses the challenges around property solutions and the ambitious plans the County Council has for the next five years.

Traditionally, property solutions centred on the development of sites for new-build manufacturing plants and offices. In more recent times there is very little appetite for this type of option. Tony indicates that things have changed when dealing with inward investment: “Timelines have truncated and typically an inward investor now wants to be operational on-site within a year. Coupled with the strong market preference towards leasing property rather than owning, Wexford needs to be proactive if it is to meet this need.”

In order to plan for the future, the County Council has done its research in the property area. During 2015, Wexford County Council commissioned Lisney and

Future Analytics to carry out an analysis of the prime office and industrial property available for inward investment in the four main towns of the county. In summary, the report highlighted a shortfall in high quality office and industrial space in all four urban centres and recommended various options in each of the towns to alleviate the shortfall.

The Council was quick to see this as an opportunity, says Tony, “Wexford can see a valuable return if the County markets itself to mobile companies seeking investment locations on the east coast of Ireland, who either cannot find suitable properties or find existing Dublin city rent and wage levels unsuitable for their needs.” This opportunity, he continues, will not last long. “It is essential that we have a selection of high quality offerings available that meet modern industry standards at affordable rent levels. From our research, and from our knowledge of the property and construction sector in Wexford, Wexford County Council is of the opinion that a fully private sector solution will not generate sufficient supply in Wexford in the short-medium term.

The central belief underlying this strategy is that the Council should intervene and take a leading role in ‘priming’ the development of the commercial property market with key initiatives of significant scale across the county. This will form the centrepiece of our economic strategy for the next five years and in particular be focussed around the four urban centres.”

ENNISCORTHY

Tony is very familiar with the town of Enniscorthy, having been Town Manager for many years and living within the district. The Lisney report highlighted that the construction of the M11 Enniscorthy bypass and the development of the Flood Prevention Scheme with a new bridge opens up the potential to the southern area of the town to create a modern business park. “Based on this, Wexford County Council has purchased a 40 acre site on the N11 from the Health Service Executive. Planning on the new Park has commenced and negotiations are underway with private sector interests on several sites, including a potential NZEB Training facility.”

ABOVE
Innovation House,
Gorey

NEW ROSS

Wexford County Council currently owns a landbank of 7.26 hectares at the IDA business park in Butlersland on the N25. With the bypass of the town imminent, the potential for New Ross is growing in the areas of tourism, logistics and manufacturing.

Planning permission is currently in place for two advanced technology buildings of 24,000 sq ft and 10,000 sq ft. Wexford County Council is now working on developing the larger of the two units in partnership with the private sector, with a view to having the first building available for IDA client companies in early 2019.

Tony also indicates other opportunities for the town: “Wexford County Council also believes that there is potential to develop a start-up space in one of the old, historic buildings in the centre of town.”

GOREY

Although Wexford has a number of successful indigenous and international ICT companies there is room for further development, explains Tony. “Our strategy in regard to Gorey is to target it as a location with significant potential in the ICT sector - a potential that arises from a number of factors, but primarily the newly opened M11 section of the motorway, making the M50 now just 50 minutes from north Wexford.”

In order to take advantage of Gorey’s position, Wexford County Council partnered with local developers Redmond Construction to deliver a new M11 Business Campus. The first of three 36,000 sq ft office developments was constructed in just 10 months and from August 2017 has become home to the HQ for Innovate Business Technologies Ltd along with The Hatch Lab - a start-up and co-working space powered by Bank of Ireland in association with Wexford County Council.

Viewings of the grade A office



development can be arranged directly through Lisney commercial property section in Dublin, or visit www.m11businesscampus.com.

WEXFORD

Development of large-scale office space in the main town of Wexford has been dispersed over the past two decades. “Commercial office development built in the past 10-15 years had been sited adjacent to industrial or retail development, and it’s time for new thinking”, Tony explains. “There is now a strong need to designate and develop a business park of significant quality and scale in Wexford town, where companies can cluster together and where necessary infrastructure costs can be shared. To address this need, Wexford County Council has purchased a 10 acre site at Trinity Wharf, Wexford exactly for this purpose.

“Trinity Wharf,” says Tony, “previously intended for a large residential and retail development, is ideal for a commercial office

development of regional scale and the land is already zoned town centre use”. Detailed planning for core infrastructure and services is under way, with the site clearance and enabling works due to start in the first half of 2018. It is intended that the €35 million Trinity Wharf development will accommodate several large multi-storey office blocks, a boutique hotel, residential apartments, a marina and amenity areas for tourists and the citizens of the town.

The projects the Council has in mind are ambitious and at varying levels of preparation. “Although there will be significant cost, risk and implications for Wexford County Council,” concludes Tony, “we are making an investment now for our future and the future of our children: to position Wexford as a leading economic centre for future generations.”

ABOVE:
Artists’ impressions
of Trinity Wharf
Wexford Town
and Advanced
Technology Unit,
New Ross

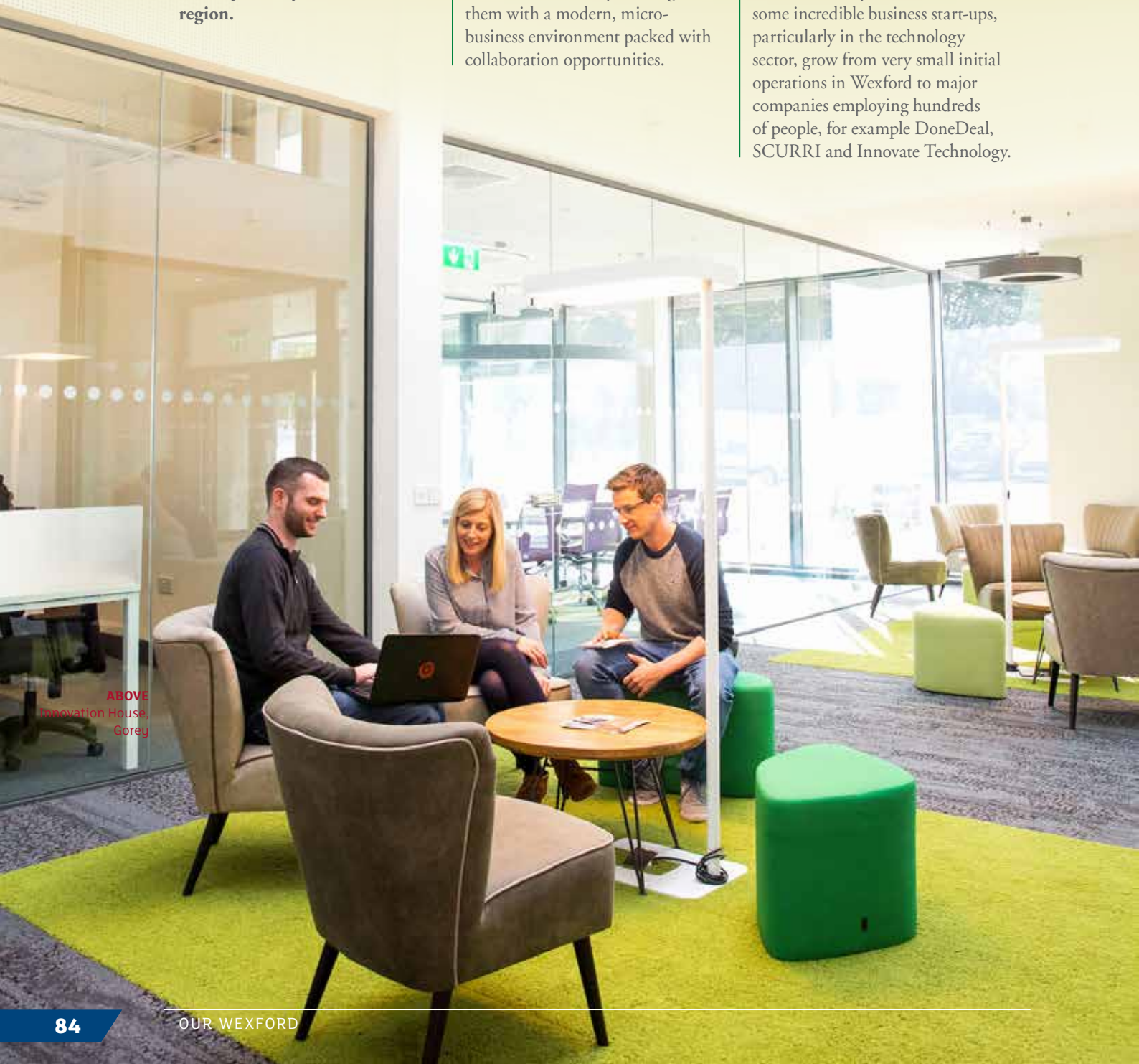
THE HATCH LAB

The Hatch Lab is a new shared office and tech incubator space located in the M11 Business Campus in Gorey, County Wexford.

Underpinned by an exciting new five-year partnership between Bank of Ireland and Wexford County Council, The Hatch Lab will deliver a unique enterprise start-up facility for the southeast region.

Designed to support technology companies moving to the region, encourage start-ups and deliver a quality co-working environment, 'The Hatch Lab' offers a low-cost base for businesses, providing them with a modern, micro-business environment packed with collaboration opportunities.

Commenting on 'The Hatch Lab' opening and its concept, Carolyne Godkin, Economic Development Officer at Wexford County Council, said, "Within the last number of years we have had some incredible business start-ups, particularly in the technology sector, grow from very small initial operations in Wexford to major companies employing hundreds of people, for example DoneDeal, SCURRI and Innovate Technology.



ABOVE
Innovation House,
Gorey

WE HAVE HAD SOME INCREDIBLE BUSINESS START-UPS, PARTICULARLY IN THE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR, GROW FROM VERY SMALL INITIAL OPERATIONS IN WEXFORD TO MAJOR COMPANIES EMPLOYING HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE

“We are conscious of nurturing this entrepreneurial spirit and capitalising on the fact that these companies cite location as one of the factors contributing to their successes.

“The Hatch Lab concept is in keeping with this thinking and will be the incubation centre for start-ups, which may in the future have fantastic potential to create opportunities for tangible, sustainable employment.”

JJ Keyes, Head of Wexford, Bank of Ireland said, “Bank of Ireland has always played an active role in supporting businesses across Leinster, and our partnership with Wexford County Council through The Hatch Lab will further strengthen that support. As Ireland’s largest lender, Bank of Ireland strongly supports businesses to grow and develop, and initiatives like The Hatch Lab along with our Workbenches in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick and startlabs in Galway and New York, add to our supports for the business community.”

The Hatch Lab offers a mix of hot desks, meeting rooms and networking spaces within a 5,500 sq ft open plan space in an ultra modern setting, providing a dynamic environment for any early stage enterprise. Powered by Bank



of Ireland, the space has a dedicated Community Manager and Welcome Ambassador and provides events such as Start-Up Weekends and Founder Fridays, together with a suite of expert business mentoring provided by both Bank of Ireland’s dedicated Innovation Team along with Local Enterprise Office Wexford. The space is already proving a hit with the first batch of start-up companies on-site which includes Schedulie, Abodoo, BoomMedia and DressUpMarket.

The Hatch Lab is located within the larger M11 Business Campus, which is just off the M11 in Gorey, County Wexford. The purpose

built business campus will comprise three detached office blocks of 3,250sq m with accommodation spread over four floors. This can be subdivided into spaces of between 500 and 2,000sq m with integrated efibre and next generation network capabilities.

Located about 30 minutes’ drive from the M50 and 70 minutes from Dublin Airport, Gorey also has a commuter rail link to the capital, while the the 39km Gorey to Enniscorthy motorway extension is due to open in 2019.

Visit www.thehatchlab.ie for further details.

OPPOSITE:
Coffee space at
The Hatch Lab

ABOVE:
The boardroom and
open meeting space
at The Hatch Lab



HIGHER EDUCATION IN WEXFORD

An often-repeated mantra used by business people and employers in Wexford and the southeast is the quality and quantity of third-level and fourth-level graduates emerging from the many reputable institutions within the catchment area.

Wexford town finds itself at the apex of a triangle of highly-regarded higher education colleges, boasting its own campus on a beautiful site overlooking the urban area and the sea.

Just over an hour away is the main campus of Institute of Technology Carlow (IT Carlow) and its dozens of courses across a multitude of disciplines. A half-hour's drive along the southeastern corridor will take you to Waterford Institute of Technology which has expanded beyond all recognition in recent years to become one of the go-to third-level colleges for school-leavers not just across the region but across the entire country.

Wexford's own third-level institution is a campus of IT Carlow, off Summerhill Road,

where about 900 students take courses in the likes of business, sustainable architectural technology, economics, visual communications and design, social studies, art, and early childhood studies.

Those coming out of second-level education can undertake full-time and part-time courses from certificate level right up to honours degree level and the college's Lifelong Learning programme is aimed at adults who want to upgrade their skills and training or embark on a new educational path.

About 40 miles away in Carlow town is the main IT Carlow campus which is regarded as one of the most innovative and forward-thinking of its kind in the country.

Just one example of the vision shown by its management and academics is an initiative known as the INSPIRE (Initiating Pathways for Innovators, Researchers and Entrepreneurs) programme.

Aimed at small and medium

enterprises as well as entrepreneurs and innovators, the project helps to transform ideals and creativity into "a competitive tool for innovative new products and services," according to the college.

Participants are also given an individual mentor for the duration of the programme, which launches early each year, to guide them through the process, as well as access to business incubation centres in Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny and Wicklow.

Part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, through the Ireland Wales Programme, it's jointly delivered by IT Carlow and Pembrokeshire County Council.

The main business of the institute, of course, is third-level education, and programmes of study are offered across the School of Business and Humanities, School of Science and School of Engineering.

In the school of business, just a flavour of the courses available includes international business; management; supply chain

ABOVE:
Wexford
campus,
IT Carlow



management; human resource management; business with law; and accounting – from higher certificate to honours degree level.

Other schools at IT Carlow have courses as diverse as law, industrial design, social studies, digital marketing, sports and exercise, media and public relations, and marketing.

Waterford IT on the edge of Waterford city, just across the Wexford county boundary, has grown from small origins in the 1970s to become one of the largest third-level institutions in the country. Its main campus is on Waterford's Cork Road, one of the main arteries from the city centre, but it also has others dotted around the area.

Schools at WIT include business, health sciences, humanities, engineering, science and computing, as well as lifelong learning.

Over 6,000 students call the college their educational “home” and graduates are highly-prized among employers and businesses both in Ireland and abroad.

Courses cover the whole range from accounting to economics,

international business to languages, law to social studies, management to architecture, built environment to technology, computing to sport, psychology to hospitality, marketing to culinary arts, and a wide range of professional development subjects in the school of lifelong learning.

Meanwhile, the college's research centres for fourth-level

education and further research have developed a reputation for excellence and include the telecommunications software and systems group; pharmaceutical and molecular bio-technology; eco-innovation and applied material research.

Looking towards the future of further education in the area, plans are well advanced to develop a Technological University of the southeast, following campaigns to this end by colleges in the region over recent years.

Once given the green light, this venture will only serve to increase the calibre of third and fourth-level education on offer in this corner of Ireland as well as boosting the local research capabilities.

In the meantime, the main universities of Dublin – UCD, TCD and DCU – have enviable reputations on the international stage and many of their graduates end up in Wexford and the surrounding areas availing of that much talked-about “work-life balance”.



ABOVE & LEFT:
Students at IT
Carlow, Wexford



HOUSING

COLUM MURPHY
KEHOE & ASSOCIATES



The County Wexford property market is very active at present. The economy has bounced back, the corner has been turned and much confidence has been restored to the housing sector. The area has long been known as one of the most attractive places in the country in which to live and work, with the favourable climate, fabulous seascapes and landscapes, bustling towns and excellent amenities, and that hasn't changed.

Meanwhile, there's a good mix of residential property available in Wexford town and elsewhere in the county, at eye-catching prices to suit most budgets.

Kehoe & Associates have been in business in the county town since the early 1980s and have built up a

reputation for integrity and service during the intervening years, so Managing Director Colum Murphy is well-placed to give an overview of the property scene as we head towards the latter part of this decade.

He points to a fact which may not be well-known, in that of all the counties in Leinster, Wexford is second only to Dublin when it comes to the amount of residential properties available to buyers.

But the prices in Wexford and Dublin are much different, reflecting the huge demand on property in the capital and other counties where supply isn't so good.

The average asking price for a residential property in Wexford, across all areas of the market, is currently about €175,000,

while rental properties are also providing value at an average of €650 per month.

Two-bedroom apartments can be purchased in Wexford for €75,000; a townhouse will set you back about €100,000; three-bedroom semis are selling for €145,000; and the much sought-after, larger detached homes are becoming readily available in the late €200,000s and early €300,000s, according to Colum.

"Those executive-style houses are becoming very important from an employment-creation point of view," he says, pointing to the need for available properties for company executives and employees when establishing a presence in an area.



"I'm not concerned about supply," Colum says. "The number of planning permissions granted has increased significantly; nationally this figure is up 41pc on the same quarter last year. There are sectors of the market that are under pressure from a supply point of view, like the three-bedroom starter homes, where there's a lack of supply of new build." But that reflects the general lack of activity in the building sector in recent years across Ireland, something that's set to change in the near future. "Developers and house builders are now back in the market. Kehoe & Assoc. are planning the launches of new housing for 2018 to meet this demand in the market."

The number of residential properties sold in County Wexford in the first half of 2017 was 760, up from 681 for the same period the previous year, so activity in the market is on the increase. There is a fantastic choice of homes available to a potential buyer. For €350,000 to €400,000 there are exceptional detached homes, the equivalent in

Dublin would be €1.5 million to €2 million.

There are many elements making Wexford a great place to live. One is its easy accessibility, with its proximity to Rosslare Europort and Cork and Waterford Airports, rail and bus services to and from Dublin, and also the roads which are getting better all the time both within the county but also to the capital.

"We're an hour and a half's drive from Dublin and more improvements are on the way with both the New Ross and Enniscorthy bypasses almost complete. We're adjacent to the coastline with miles of sandy beaches but it's not all about the scenery! Location is always one of the key components to determine property values and that is our unique selling point."

Meanwhile, Wexford town boasts superb amenities and facilities, with its five highly-regarded secondary schools, choice of primary schools, third level at IT Carlow Wexford Campus, new facilities such as

local authority offices, public swimming pool, fire station, a new courthouse and new Garda station headquarters. In addition there is an attractive mix of large and small shops as well as the new National Opera House and a range of heritage sites in and close to the town.

Main Street, north and south, has retained its centuries-old character and the town managed to resist the temptation pursued by so many other places nationwide of allowing mass shopping-centre development on the outskirts. Instead, the retail heart of Wexford remains in its centre.

"Wexford town is a perfect sized town, with a population in the town and its environs of about 25,000," Colum adds. "Take a short drive or hop on your bike and you can be out in Curracloe or Rosslare strand and the fishing village of Kilmore Quay. It represents the best of both worlds - not city living but not rural living either. All in all, it's a superb place to live, work and raise children."



IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

Explore the cornerstone of Ireland's Ancient East

An age-old gateway into Ireland, County Wexford is steeped in history dating back to the Stone Age, over 6,000 years ago. Journey through time and meet our ancestors - Celts, Christians, Vikings, Normans, French, Welsh and English - who have left us a remarkable heritage, unrivalled anywhere else in Ireland. Exploring the cornerstone of Ireland's Ancient East and journeying through the ages of Wexford's history, heritage and culture is an opportunity not to be missed.

ABOVE:
Tintern Abbey

Visit castles, churches and abbeys, battlefields, historic towns and villages, great houses and gardens, windmills and forts. Explore the world's oldest lighthouse, Ireland's biggest open-air museum, and its most famous Famine ship!

The pillars of Ireland's Ancient East include stories of 800 years of light keeping at one of the oldest

lighthouses in the world. Take a tour of the Medieval lighthouse tower, built in the 13th Century by William Marshal, the Earl of Pembroke, on the tip of the Hook Peninsula at **Hook Lighthouse**.

Close by, also on the Hook Peninsula, experience an interactive tour of Loftus Hall, the most haunted house in Ireland! The 1870s abandoned mansion with a dark and troubled history is a must visit. Take the guided tour of the ground floor and hear the history and legend of Loftus Hall.

Closer to the town of New Ross visit the **Kennedy Homestead**, birthplace of President John F. Kennedy's great grandfather, which celebrates the story of this famous Irish American family. The visitor experience is set in the original farmyard incorporating a unique guided tour, audio-visual display and photographic exhibition.

Hear the tales of the passengers aboard the replica **Dunbrody Famine Ship** berthed at the quays of New Ross town. The characters of the ship bring the story of the Irish Famine and emigration to the 'New World' (America) to life in a gripping tale taken from the annals of the ship and reflecting on the experiences of real passengers.

A peaceful visit to the **JFK Memorial Park** is certainly a must; enjoy wandering the 623 acres dedicated to the memory of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. The Arboretum contains over 4,500 types of trees and shrubs.

Take a step back in time at the **Irish National Heritage Park**. Surprises await around every turn from campsite to ringfort, from mill to Fulacht Fiadh, from crannog to Viking house and more. Take an incredible journey through 9,000 years of Ireland's

past! Build a house of wattle, pan for gold or even shoot a Viking bow or just relax with a coffee beside the lake. With entertaining guided tours available, the world you enter is an authentic recreation of Ireland's heritage.

Wexford is filled with many a magnificent Abbey and **Dunbrody Abbey** founded on the instructions of Strongbow, the 2nd Earl of Pembroke, is a must see. Dunbrody Abbey was built in the late 12th century; the largest of its kind, it is one of the finest examples of a Cistercian abbey still standing in Ireland today. It flourished as a Cistercian monastery until the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII. The visitor centre hosts a hedge maze, a craft gallery with the Dunbrody castle dolls house, tearooms and a pitch & putt course.

Strongbow's son-in-law, William Marshal, dubbed "the greatest knight that ever lived," founded the nearby **Tintern Abbey**. It is a magnificent example of a 13th century abbey and was one of the most powerful Cistercian foundations in the southeast of Ireland. It is also home to the wonderful Colclough walled gardens and a variety of walking trails.

The harmony between great Victorian revival castles and their surrounding ornamental grounds is rarely seen to such perfection as at **Johnstown Castle**. The full gothic glory from the 19th century has to be seen. The 20 hectares of stunning surrounding gardens originally laid out by the famous Daniel Robertson in the 1830s offers visitors an insight into perfect landscaping. The Irish Agricultural Museum is a premier cultural site also located at Johnstown Castle.

A visit to the **Heritage Town of Enniscorthy**, which features a number of prominent sites in Ireland's history, is a must on Ireland's Ancient East to do list! Enniscorthy Castle explores the



development of the castle and town from its earliest 12th century Anglo-Norman origins, through the 16th century. The National 1798 Visitor Centre in the shadow of the historic battlefield on Vinegar Hill tells the heroic tale of the 1798 Rebellion and its aftermath using the latest multi-media and interactive exhibits.

Leaving Enniscorthy and heading north to the historic village of Ferns ensures a step back in time to a period which saw the foundations of Leinster created at that very site. **Ferns Castle and Tapestry**, a 13th century castle, features a uniquely intact fine circular chapel with original cornices and features. A guided tour will reveal amongst others the story of the resident King of Leinster Dermot McMurrough who brought the first Normans to Ireland.

A visit to the Victorian era at **Wells House & Gardens** is a wonderfully elegant experience. This great Victorian house and gardens offers something for all generations of visitors with a living Victorian house tour, garden tours, falconry, archery, two

enchanted woodland walks, craft courtyard, animal farm or enjoy an adventure in the playground. Open daily with a great calendar of events to choose from throughout the year! Enjoy lunch or desserts from their on site restaurant as part of your visit.

THE NORMAN WAY

In 1166, Diarmait Mac Murchada was ousted as King of Leinster, fled Ireland and sought help from Henry II. Henry gave Diarmait permission to recruit mercenaries and authorised his subjects to help Diarmait. In May 1169 the Normans first arrived to Ireland at Bannow Bay in Wexford. They set about conquering Leinster and the territories Diarmait had claimed sovereignty over.

This intriguing tale of the journey from invaders to becoming 'more Irish than the Irish themselves', can be rediscovered along the gems on the Norman Way of Wexford - it will win you over as we did the Normans all those years ago.

ABOVE:
Kennedy
Homestead

OUR PASSION 03





CULTURE AND ARTS

A bustling arts and cultural scene is something that many towns and cities in Ireland pride themselves on but in Wexford the word “vibrant” only starts to describe the area’s cultural life and contribution to the world of arts.

Recently named the best festival in the world, the

Wexford Festival Opera and the National Opera House provide major headlines and draw huge crowds on an annual basis. Elsewhere there is a huge level of activity among the local arts community, which is not as high-profile but nonetheless makes for an attractive side to local life.

The programme of events at Wexford Arts Centre

runs throughout the year, along with a plethora of musical and entertainment societies, galleries and venues across the county.

Also, not to be missed is a tribute to **Brooklyn**, the Oscar-nominated movie, written by Wexford’s very own Colm Tóibín. Filmed in Enniscorthy, a permanent Brooklyn exhibition is now open at Enniscorthy Castle.

ABOVE:
Brooklyn premiere night

POLAROIDS LEFT TO RIGHT:
National Opera House;
Wexford Arts Centre



WEXFORD'S MUSIC SCENE

CORNERBOY



Cornerboy

Musician and lead vocalist of the band Cornerboy, Michael D'Arcy met up with a group of contemporary Wexford musicians, Wallis Bird, Liam Bates and Basciville to gain an insight into the music scene in Wexford and how it is shaping their musical direction.

Michael says, "As I speak with Wallis, Liam and Basciville, Cornerboy is sitting in a green room in Volendam in the Netherlands waiting to go on stage. From Cornerboy's perspective, the current Wexford music scene is as strong as it's ever been, with many Wexford

acts touring internationally, signing record deals as well as playing at major festivals. "It's great to see such success and variety and the list is endless; Wallis Bird, Basciville, Clive Barnes, Kevin Lawlor, The Man Whom, Paul Creane, The Ocelots, Wolff, Frankenstein Bolts... We hear Cry Before Dawn may be making a return too."

In 2017 Cornerboy were touring North America and more recently by their own admission, they've locked themselves away to write and record their next single. Michael says, "Hopefully our debut album will follow early next year."

WALLIS BIRD



“People speak with a serious tone about Enniscorthy... which is known all over Ireland for its beauty and its deeply intense past.”

Wallis Bird

Wallis Bird is a singer and songwriter with global appeal. Wallis has released five studio albums, including Architect in 2014 and most recently, Home in 2016. Speaking about her native Enniscorthy with its storied past - rebellion ... identity - perhaps it's something the young Wallis empathised with. "One thing that I noted about Enniscorthy from a very young age was that it is an important town," says Bird. "People speak with a serious tone about Enniscorthy; courageous and memorable people from all walks of life came from here and to here for their inspiration. And they are welcomed and encouraged by the town, which is known all over Ireland for its beauty and its deeply intense past. It's a very proud town, and so it should be."

The word 'home' holds strong metaphoric significance

throughout Wallis Bird's work, being the most recent title of her fifth album. "Physically, home is where my parents and my partner are, along with my own self confidence. Creatively, this year, I've loved simply being in my home – which is my house in Berlin: doing the dishes, then sitting in front of my piano, taking a walk, going for a swim, and I've found great wealth in that."

Wallis says there is much she wants to achieve in music, "There is lots I want to do, but three things I have clearly on my bucket list include: starting a few bands where I'm not the front woman; finishing an instrumental album called Love and Fear; and taking a sabbatical from my own work to produce records for other artists for a couple years."

Exciting times for Wallis!

LIAM BATES

Liam Bates is a globally recognised name in music writing and production. His musical talent has brought him into the realm of film, music and conducting, working with names such as the late and great Pavarotti, Pete Townsend from The Who and legends of rock Bon Jovi as well as writing theme tunes for a variety of RTÉ and BBC dramas and programmes and scoring for big-budget movies including *Last Passenger*, *Showgirls* and *Leap Year*. He received the prestigious Promax World Gold Award in 2004 for Best Original Music for his work on the RTÉ 1 programme *Part of Life* and was IFTA nominated for *Earthbound* in 2014. Having relocated to Wexford over 15 years ago, Liam speaks of his compositional music style and the influence the area he lives in has on a man born and raised in London.

“My style of writing is constantly changing and is naturally influenced by what I absorb, which must include the local culture,” says Liam. “When I listen to the great local tradition of the Kilmore Carols sung each year and understand how

they have been passed from one to the next generation, I can hear the voices of men spanning 300 years.”

Speaking about the scale of the Wexford musical talent pool, he reveals he is still discovering new musical groups. “Wexford is a hub of creativity, abundant with talent in layers. With any Wexford based project, I inevitably meet an individual or group that I previously knew nothing about and I know I am only starting to scratch the surface. The work which comes to me from further afield can very often be achieved with the skillset here in the county; that makes life easier and usually creates the foundation for a future music venture at a local level too.”

Liam is currently producing a Sinfonia performance; the commissioned orchestral suite *Heroes of the Helen Blake* will be performed with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, and the musical *NOËL*, which Bates created with Wexford greats, Eoin Colfer and Michael Londra, will head stateside for a North American tour.



“Wexford is a hub of creativity, abundant with talent in layers. With any Wexford based project, I inevitably meet an individual or group that I previously knew nothing about and I know I am only starting to scratch the surface.”

Liam Bates

BASCIVILLE

Basciville are Wexford siblings Cillian and Lorcan Byrne, an exciting, vibrant songwriting band who are influenced and inspired by an eclectic mix of rhythm and blues, jazz and folk music.

Forming officially in 2014, after spending time touring with established acts across Ireland and Europe, Basciville took time to record their debut EP *Blues in Red* in 2015, which launched to sell-out performances in Wexford and Dublin.

They say that being brothers is certainly an advantage, “Being brothers in this business means we’ve grown up on the same music and media, so we both tend to enjoy the same soundscapes and

imagery. It’s pretty much like having a second opinion that is your own, but can be a little more objective.”

The brothers both hold degrees in music and their influences range from Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder and Ella Fitzgerald to Jeff Buckley, Led Zeppelin and Ry Cooder.

Speaking about their unique sound and how they are influenced by Wexford, they say, “We try to keep our palate as wide as possible and we’re very much influenced by film and TV scoring. We’re based right on the water in the south of County Wexford and that location influences our compositions in many ways, be it imagery in the words or sounds in our writing.”



Basciville



WEXFORD FESTIVAL OPERA

The National Opera House and Wexford Festival Opera

Since the middle of the last century, Wexford Festival Opera has been recognised as one of Ireland's cultural highlights. It has become a beacon of excellence whose light is felt internationally on an annual basis thanks to the consistent quality of its offering. Now awarded with the title of 'Best Festival in the world' it is no surprise that the festival is booked out each season.

The state-of-the-art opera house building was opened in 2008, following government investment of over €27 million, as a fitting home for the award-winning Festival Opera, as well as an all-year-round multi-disciplinary performance art-form theatre. It has recently been granted further official recognition by being designated Ireland's National Opera House.

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Heather Humphreys TD said that the designation was "in recognition of Wexford's position as the home of Ireland's only custom-built opera house".

The designation announced by the Minister means Ireland takes its place among Europe's great nations with its own specific opera house. Chief Executive David McLoughlin said in the wake of the announcement that official recognition of the venue "will help secure a legacy in opera in Ireland for generations to come, but perhaps more importantly deservedly recognises the State's previous significant investment in the creation of what has been internationally acclaimed as 'the best small opera house in the world'."

The National Opera House contains two performance spaces:

the 759-seat O'Reilly Theatre which can be extended to an 855-seat capacity, and the versatile 176-seat Jerome Hynes Theatre, along with numerous meeting and hospitality facilities, a café, and bars.

The main auditorium is walnut-lined for acoustic purposes, and designed to remind the visitor of the interior of a stringed instrument, while the sight-lines, layout, flexibility and facilities are all aimed at optimising the experience for viewers and performers alike.

The venue is a fantastic focal point of Wexford's attractive town centre streets, although new visitors to the area may at first not be aware of its existence, as it is located on a narrow residential street in the centre of the former Viking town.

ABOVE:
Scenes from
Wexford Festival
Opera



Once they come upon its sympathetically-designed exterior and step inside to experience its spectacular interior, including a roof-top café overlooking Wexford town and harbour, however, they are ‘wowed’ by what they see and hear.

The National Opera House is also a year-round ‘cultural receiving house’ for opera and all performance art forms, as well as for conferences and other corporate events. It has won several national and international architectural awards.

Wexford Festival Opera dates back to 1950, when Sir Compton Mackenzie, the Scottish novelist and founder of Gramophone magazine, gave a talk to the Wexford Opera Study Circle that November. Dr Tom Walsh was chairman of the Wexford circle at the time and between the two of them, they decided to stage an opera in Wexford and went on to launch a Festival of Music and the Arts in October of 1951. The decision was made at an early stage to choose operas which were not as well-known

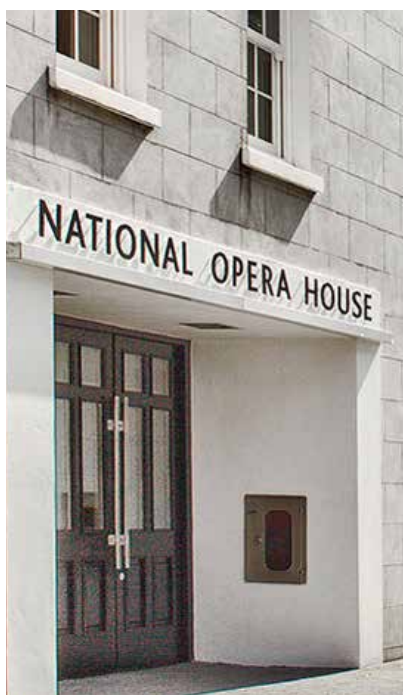
as those regularly performed on international stages. Up and coming young singers were also given the chance to showcase their talents. This has led to Wexford setting itself apart from other opera festivals. Wexford’s reputation continues to grow to this day, becoming one of the top opera festivals in the world with approximately one third of its

audiences travelling each October from abroad to see and hear what they are unlikely to experience anywhere else in the world. The annual festival has become famous in international circles for its presentation and promotion of rarely-performed operas, while also providing audiences with a unique opportunity to experience performances from leading names and emerging talent in opera from Ireland and around the world.

The upcoming 67th Festival next October will feature operas that comfortably fit into this category.

The 2018 festival programme has been extended and will run from October 18th to November 4th 2018 offering an extensive programme including the not to be missed main-stage operas, daytime ShortWorks operas, concerts, lunchtime recitals and lectures.

It has been independently estimated that the festival in itself contributes €8.5 million annually to the local economy.



ABOVE:
Auditorium,
National Opera
House

LEFT:
Front door,
National Opera
House

ACTIVITIES







GOLF

LARRY & TIERNAN BYRNE CLUB CHOICE IRELAND



From traditional links to parkland, country club to heart-of-town, golf in Wexford offers a choice and variety that is hard to match anywhere. Even in Ireland, which has carved out a reputation over the last decade or so as a “golfer’s paradise”, it’s hard to trump the offering that Wexford can come up with for the golf enthusiast.

And all sorts of abilities and interests are catered for in Wexford; from the scratch player to the holidaymaker, the medium-handicapper to occasional weekend golfer, you’ll find a course and layout right up your alley in this corner of Ireland.

Of course Ireland and its climate are traditionally favourable to the development of high-quality golf courses. We do get quite an amount of rain at certain times of the year, but allied with a decent level of sunshine in the spring, summer and even early autumn months, this creates the conditions needed for green, lush layouts where the course architects are helped at all times by mother nature herself.

As a golf destination, this country is favoured by golfers from the likes of the United States, the far east, continental Europe and the United Kingdom, all of whom love the variety and excellence of the courses.

None more so than in Wexford, where the long coastline has lent itself ideally to links golf while, inland, parkland courses have sprung up on some of the best earth the region has to offer.

CLUB CHOICE IRELAND

Ireland likes to promote itself as a golf destination, a place where tourists and enthusiasts can play a couple of rounds on some of the world’s most renowned courses and enjoy our famous hospitality.

But how to ensure that those visitors come back, that they tell their friends, that we don’t rest on our laurels and assume that this niche of our tourism “offering” will look after itself?

That’s where Club Choice Ireland comes in.

Founded by Wexford father and

son Larry and Tiernan Byrne, Club Choice Ireland is now in its fourth year of business in its current structure and is enjoying healthy growth in its enterprise of selling Ireland as a haven for golfers to the UK market.

But complacency is not welcome here and they are already looking towards expanding into the French and lucrative US markets in the coming years to ensure that the region, with Wexford at its heart, continues to trade on a reputation for first-class golf, hospitality and value.

You could say that golf tourism is in the company’s blood. Larry has been well-known and respected in the region for decades as, with his wife Mari, the founder of the fantastic St Helen’s Bay Golf Resort outside Rosslare which the family and partners built up from scratch, so to speak.

“I remember Dad taking me out into a field in Rosslare in short

ABOVE:
St. Helen’s Bay
Golf Resort

pants,” Tiernan says. “I used to caddy for him and he’d tell me about what was going here and what was going there and I’d be looking up at him wondering, does Mum know about this?! I got a love of the golf business very young in that I saw how every aspect of the golf business works... I got a great feeling for what it took to attract visitors to a destination and that’s what St Helen’s was.”

Off the beaten track in terms of conventional tourism and golf travel, St Helen’s had to be sold to an audience abroad and Larry took it upon himself to make regular trips to the UK, particularly South Wales, and promote the brand.

That’s where the idea for Club Choice originated.

“We had the idea that this was something that would benefit other resorts, like ourselves, whereby we would pool resources and go out under one banner brand and promote golf in the southeast.”

Originally a co-operative, Club Choice became a business four years ago, run on the ground in Ireland by Tiernan with Larry flying the sales and marketing flag across the water, once his involvement with St Helen’s ended.

“I had built up a lot of contacts over the previous 25 years so it made sense for us to continue in the golf business,” Larry says.

Now he visits up to 200 golf clubs in the UK each year, selling the product of Irish golf and hospitality directly, building up the profile and raising awareness of the brand.

“We started in 2013 with 278 and this year we’re bringing in 2,000 visitors from the UK alone.”

As Tiernan explains: “Our unique selling point is that everything we do is personalised. It’s all tailor-made. We’re not selling something that’s already packaged; every group I bring in from start to finish I practically hand-hold in terms of their budget and their age and what their preferences are.”



Initially based between Dunshaughlin in Co Meath and Wexford, the business is currently re-locating entirely to Wexford, going “home” to an area which remains at the core of what they do well.

Every year the business has more than doubled in terms of visitor numbers and now includes 44 clients - hotels and golf clubs/resorts - across nine different counties.

“We’re selling a product that’s very saleable,” Larry says. “It’s fantastic value for money, people can’t believe it, and at the same time it’s a top-quality product as well.”

The average group size is nine people, playing an average of three rounds of golf and staying three nights, often arriving by ferry through Dublin or Rosslare which is also part of the package.

“The spend of your golfer is four times more than your average tourist. They’re a premium demographic,” as Tiernan points out. “One of the most satisfying parts of our growth is the number of repeats and referrals. The groups are coming back to us so we must be doing something right. I’m also getting people ringing up saying they got our name from someone who came over with us last year. That says a lot about what we’re doing well.”

The attraction to the UK visitor is clear - take the hassle and expense of finding the best golf destinations, best hotels and easiest modes of travel out of their hands, provide them with a tailored package according to their taste and budget. All they have to worry about is arriving at the port or airport on time and bringing some spending money to use in the local pubs, restaurants and shops. Win-win.

Director Larry Byrne recently returned from the US where he was selling Wexford as a golf destination as part of a Wexford business delegation led by County Council Chief Executive Tom Enright and Minister Paul Kehoe, so that gives an idea of Club Choice Ireland’s future plans.

“We’d be biased because I’m a Wexford man and Dad is a Wexford man through and through. At the same time, if a golfer didn’t enjoy it, they wouldn’t come back. They lead the charge for Wexford because of the experiences they’ve had. We’ve had groups who have come to Wexford for years and they’re coming back again and again, letting us tailor things for them. They love what the county offers. From a Club Choice point of view, we’re excited about the future and we hope the work we’re doing in places like the USA and France will start to bear fruit.”

ABOVE:
Bunclody
Golf Club



ADVENTURE IN WEXFORD

COLIN GIBBON
SHEILBAGGAN OUTDOOR
EDUCATION CENTRE



ABOVE:
Ray D'Arcy
angling in
Wexford

From surfing to sailing and fishing to quad biking and archery there is a fun challenge for all enthusiasts in Wexford. The professional providers of these adventure sports will only be too happy to assist you and your family to plan a fun-filled day out!

Twenty-seven years ago the powers-that-be in vocational education in Wexford made the far-sighted decision to establish an outdoor education centre at Hook Head on the western side of the county's coast.

Today, the hugely-popular Sheilbaggan Outdoor Education

Centre remains the fruit of that venture and in the intervening years has seen thousands of young people and adults pass through its walls and partake of its many and varied activities.

While much has happened in the meantime, tastes have changed and trends have been invented and reinvented, the basic premise of Sheilbaggan remains constant: use the outdoors and our beautiful landscape and natural amenities as a hands-on tool for educating, building bonds and nourishing a love for the outdoors.

Centre director Colin Gibbon, who has been working at the centre for

14 years, says that everything they do has an educational aspect. Colin was on Mount Leinster as we spoke, leading a group of second-year students who were filling out a geography sheet while they walked and observed.

"I'm a geography teacher by trade but we can make geography more real by standing on top of Mount Leinster, for example, and talking about the glaciers and the boulders and so on, where all of this happened."

To say Colin is originally a geography teacher is a bit like saying



Bill Gates is handy with computers. He has also spent much time over the years travelling, teaching in the UK, mountaineering, sailing professionally, and has an MBA which included crisis management training in its course work.

All manner of outdoor activities are offered at Sheilbaggan, to school groups, work groups, company executives, even stag parties. From sea-kayaking to rock-climbing, canoeing to abseiling, high-rope walking to archery, orienteering to coasteering. The latter is a relatively recent phenomenon and involves, as the name suggests, plotting a way along a stretch of coastline which could include jumping off cliffs, swimming through caves and climbing over rocks.

"It's quite adventurous," as Colin puts it, with understatement.

Monday to Friday, particularly between September and June, the focus at Sheilbaggan which is

located at Ramsgrange on Hook Head, is on school groups and education.

The other side of the coin is the weekends and the summer season, when the centre is popular with local visitors and tourists while summer camps are also run for young people, offering a huge range of activities in the great outdoors.

At the moment, Sheilbaggan is averaging about 11,000 visitor days per annum and staff numbers vary from three or four during winter to 15 or 20 in high season. A common trait is that they are all "passionate" about the outdoors and passing on their knowledge to their charges.

These days the centre is run under the auspices of the VEC's successor, the Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (ETB) and is one of 12 such places located around the country. But while there's a grant via the ETB, that's not enough

to allow the centre stand on its feet so it has to maximise revenue from other sources, whether that's school bookings or corporate team-building days.

One such was organised recently by Sheilbaggan's staff for a group of executives who flew in from all corners of the globe for a meeting of a multi-national company with a base in the southeast of Ireland, and wanted something with a difference away from their business campus.

Weeks of planning went into the event which involved the hiring of nearby Loftus Hall (known as Ireland's most haunted house) on Hook Head, and challenging the execs with a number of exercises and projects.

So variety is the spice of life at Sheilbaggan. "We have 65 kids walking up Mount Leinster in different waves and they will have an experience that many of them will never have had before."

Future plans for the centre includes a potential move to Fourth Mountain, north of Wexford town, where there would be access to a five-acre lake, thousands of acres of forest and more of the famous southeastern coastline. "It's an ideal spot to put in an outdoor facility."

This would allow the team to continue to expand their programme of activities and once more use the natural amenity offered by Wexford's great exterior. "We have an amazing coastal landscape here and we need to keep promoting that," Colin says. "If you're a local, you know where to go but if you're a visitor you need to be given more access to the sea and the woods and forestry. Raven Point, for example, looking down over Wexford is one of the most beautiful places in the world. We need to make that part of the tourist experience."

Sheilbaggan Outdoor Education Centre are certainly helping to do that, with their mission statement "to actively resource the education, environmental, social, sporting and fun needs of all participants."



CYCLING IN WEXFORD

Wexford is a beautiful county full of breathtaking coastlines, stunning countryside and historic sites. A number of wonderful looped cycling routes are already in place across Wexford including the 53km Slaney Route, a trip around north Wexford taking cyclists across the bridge and on towards Enniscorthy.

County Wexford is part of the European network of cycling routes, the Eurovelo. The 'Eurovelo 1' cycling route extends over 9,000km from Scandinavia to the Algarve. Cycle along the County Wexford section of the route, which begins in Rosslare and continues along the coast to Ballyhack for spectacular sights and scenery, hidden from the car driver.

The 36km coastal route takes cyclists out to the internationally important Wildfowl Reserve of the Wexford Slobbs and then on past some fantastic beaches.

A 78km tour of south Wexford initially takes cyclists uphill towards a roundabout near the picturesque Johnstown Castle, and then on to the old town of Rosslare and its busy ferry port nearby at Kilrane and on to the fishing village of Kilmore Quay. Later, cyclists can afford to linger at Johnstown Castle with its gardens and Agricultural Museum, knowing that a few minutes freewheeling will take them back down to Wexford town.

For cross-country and downhill mountain-bike riders a visit to Kilbrannish just outside Bunclody is a must. Kilbrannish has hosted various XC events in the past including Leinster XC League. The trails are forever evolving and contain loads of exciting single tracks with some downhill trails also constructed in the area.

ABOVE:
Cycling at Mount
Leinster

WEXFORD GREENWAY

Walking and cycling have become hugely popular throughout Ireland in recent years and the country is now a popular destination for visitors who hope to pursue these activities.

Destined to be a much-travelled route in the near future is the 24km stretch between New Ross and Waterford city, which will use the amazing scenery of the area, and an old disused railway line to provide a beautiful greenway and add to the growing number of such facilities nationwide.

The €3 million-plus greenway project is located along the former rail line between New Ross and Waterford, much of it running through County Kilkenny, and supported by Irish Rail who formerly operated passenger and freight rail services along its length until it fell into disuse some years ago.

According to Wexford County Council Director of Services Eamonn Hore, walking and cycling are worth about €300 million annually to the Irish economy so there's no reason why the county can't benefit from a chunk of that business by using its natural heritage to best advantage.

The greenway will start at the Boardwalk in New Ross and continue through south County Kilkenny to Waterford city, ultimately forming part of a major national walking and cycling route between Dungarvan and Dublin.

The route will take in the old Red Bridge outside New Ross and include an 800-metre tunnel at Mountelliott, which is set to be the longest greenway tunnel in Ireland.

The original railway line was built in 1904 but hasn't carried any passengers for over 50 years or any freight for over two decades.

But for the greenway plan, the entire route was on its way to becoming totally overgrown and unusable.



WALKING WEXFORD

A selection of beautiful walks through varied countryside awaits you in Wexford Walking Trails – wooded walks, historic walks, coastal walks, and mountain walks. You can choose a different walk each day and savour the varied beauty of Europe’s most western isle. You can walk through bird-rich polders beside Wexford town or traverse the slopes of Mount Leinster and the Blackstairs Mountains in the west. In between, you can choose from a wide range of quality walks through quiet rural landscapes of diverse character and all steeped in the history of the island long regarded as ‘the end of the known world’.

A selection of 20 different walking trails are on offer across Wexford, from easy grade to moderate to strenuous. More than half of Wexford’s border is bounded by the sea; starting at Kilmichael Point in the north of the county,

the long stretch of golden coastline stretches to Raven Point south of Curracloe. Broken then by Wexford Harbour, the southern coast runs on towards Waterford Harbour and is fringed with small inlets and rocks.



In the north of the county the Blackstairs form an integral part of Ireland’s heritage. The highest peak is Mount Leinster (795m), dominating the surrounding skyline. The name ‘Leinster’ comes from the Irish Laighin, the ancient name of the province whose King was buried beneath a cairn here before the time of Christ.

A Wexford Walking trail guide which details the variety of walks in Wexford can be found at www.visitwexford.ie

ABOVE:
Enniscorthy
River Walk

LEFT:
Courtown
Walking Trail



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www.Wexford.ie

www.InvestWexford.ie