

Grangecon man named Farming for Nature Ambassador

WICKLOW farmer Nigel Gillis has been announced among the 12 farmers who have been chosen as Farming for Nature Ambassadors for 2024.

The project founded in 2018, seeks to acknowledge and support farmers who farm, or wish to farm, in a way that will improve the natural health of the countryside. The network has now grown to having 102 ambassadors from all over the country.

21 nominations were received from farming and conservation organisations around the country, and 12 have been chosen as winners of this year's awards.

Mr Gillis operates a stockless, conventional

tillage farm in Grangecon. Previously following a prescriptive approach, he has transitioned his 73 hectares (180 ac) to using principles of conservation agriculture in the last eight years.

Speaking after receiving his award, Nigel said: "This initiative has been thoroughly rewarding and every event has been informative and a great learning environment."

After noticing more and more pests and diseases, and their chemical cures eating away at his margin, Nigel became disillusioned and wanted to try something else. After running into a member of BASE Ireland, he became thirsty for knowledge. After learning that "every target species killed with insecticide kills 1700 non-tar-

get and potentially beneficial others, as well as building insecticide resistance", he immediately ceased its use.

He has followed that by not using rodenticide in the last three years, herbicide use is down by 20pc and has reduced nitrogen use by 60pc and consequently getting away without using fungicide some years.

He produces resilient crops of barley, wheat, beans and oats by using biological dressings on home saved seed, specific soil sampling to monitor micronutrients and biological stimulants. Apex predators such as buzzards and kestrels, have returned to the farm along with the barn owl.

Nigel leaves 20pc of his farm as space for nature and doesn't manage the internal hedge-rows, some of which are the old style 'double ditch'. Testament to this respect for habitat, Birdwatch Ireland have recorded 32 species in one hour on the land.

There is a breeding wader area on the farm where the land has been left fallow to facilitate it. An ACRES farmer, Nigel also leaves wide margins alongside the tributaries of the River Greese that run through his land, as well as sizable margins in all the fields. Pleased with lower costs, the higher margins and renewed pride in his system, he aims to continue to lower synthetic inputs even further, building resilience for the future.

The group of chosen ambassadors represent a broad range of farm types and systems that include not only dairy but beef, sheep, tillage, as well as mixed systems.

Of the 12 ambassadors, five are organic or in organic conversion and seven are conventional farms, with farm sizes varying from 10 to 240



Nigel Gillis of Grangecon accepting his Farming for Nature Ambassadors award.

hectares.

Over the next year, each of these farmers will host a farm walk on their land, participate in a 5-minute video about their farming system, share their work on a podcast and take part in an online Q&A session.

These are invaluable resources with some of the new ambassadors having attended previous Farming for Nature events to help them get to where they are now.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PLANNING APPLICATION TO AN BORD PLEANALA IN RESPECT OF STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT (GO. WICKLOW) KILSARAN CONCRETE UNLIMITED COMPANY intends to apply to An Bord Pleanála for permission for Strategic Infrastructure Development at its existing quarry in **BALLINCLARE AND CARRIGMORE TOWNLANDS, KILBRIDE, CO. WICKLOW A67 HN12**.

The development, within an application area of 32.6 hectares, will comprise:

- I. Installation and operation of a soil washing plant at the former concrete / asphalt yard to produce construction grade sand and gravel aggregate from imported excess soil and stone. The soil washing plant comprises a loading hopper, a number of soil screens in series with connecting conveyor systems, a primary wastewater treatment tank (thickener), a buffer tank holding sludge and recycled water, an elevated plate press and filter cake discharge area;
 - II. Development and operation of a construction and demolition (C&D) waste recovery facility at an existing paved area to the west of the access road. This facility includes an industrial shed (portal frame structure with roof-mounted solar panels) to house crushing and screening equipment and process / recycle inert C&D waste (principally solid / reinforced concrete, bricks, ceramics and solid bituminous waste mixtures) and the use of external paved and surrounding hardstanding areas for the external handling and storage of both unprocessed and processed C&D wastes;
 - III. Construction and operation of an inert landfill facility to backfill the existing quarry to 80mOD principally through disposal of approximately 6,500,000 tonnes of imported inert soil and stone waste, residual particulates / fines from the soil washing process and the use of non-waste natural (greenfield) soil by-product for engineering, capping and/or landscaping purposes; and
 - IV. Progressive restoration of the backfilled quarry to long-term native woodland habitat.
- The proposed development also provides for:
- (i) Continued use of established site infrastructure and services including, site / weighbridge office, staff welfare facilities, surface water run-off and wastewater treatment systems, weighbridge, garage / workshop, wheelwash, hardstand areas, fuel and water storage tanks to service the proposed development;
 - (ii) Clearance of vegetation and felling of a number of mature trees to facilitate widening of the internal site access road and make provision for off-road queuing of inbound HGVs within the application site boundary;
 - (iii) Decommissioning of any remaining fixed plant and infrastructure associated with former rock extraction or concrete / asphalt production activities and the off-site removal of any waste materials or bulky wastes associated with former quarrying or production activities;
 - (iv) Installation of a new weighbridge along the inbound lane of the quarry access road;
 - (v) Installation of an additional wheelwash facility on the eastern side of the former concrete / asphalt yard;
 - (vi) Modification / upgrade of existing drainage channel along the site access road, installation of silt trap and hydrocarbon interceptor to treat run-off and provision of additional pumping capacity to transfer run-off from existing surface water pond at site entrance to quarry sump
 - (vii) Installation of a silt trap and hydrocarbon interceptor at the proposed C&D waste recovery facility to treat run-off prior to being pumped to the soil wash plant or surface water ponds elsewhere on site.
 - (viii) Installation of a sub-surface concrete wastewater holding tank (to supplement existing treatment capacity);
 - (ix) Construction and establishment of an on-site (passive) wetland treatment system and associated drainage infrastructure to treat / polish water collected from the active backfilling / landfilling cells prior to its discharge off-site to the Ballinclare Stream;
 - (x) Re-use of an existing storage shed as a dedicated waste inspection and quarantine facility to inspect and store suspect waste consignments as required.
 - (xi) Re-alignment, upgrading and ongoing maintenance of internal haul routes across the application site;
 - (xii) Temporary stockpiling of topsoil pending re-use as cover material for final restoration of the inert landfill / backfilled quarry void;
 - (xiii) Implementation of a series of measures to enhance local biodiversity including the retention of habitats and features of biodiversity value (e.g. ponds, buildings), quarry face retention for nesting peregrine falcon, establishment of an artificial sand martin colony, creation of roost space / deployment of bird boxes for bats and creation of habitat / erection of bird nest boxes for breeding / roosting birds.
 - (xiv) Environmental monitoring of noise, dust, surface water and groundwater for the duration of the landfilling and restoration works and C&D waste recovery / recycling activities and for a short period thereafter;
 - (xv) All ancillary site works, landscaping and perimeter fencing.

Planning permission is sought for an operational period of up to 25 years. The proposed development requires a waste licence from the Environmental Protection Agency.

An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) have been prepared in respect of the proposed development. The application, together with the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) may be inspected or purchased, at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, between 19th November 2024 and 9th January 2025 (a period of 7 weeks and 2 days), during public opening hours at the offices of An Bord Pleanála and Wicklow County Council. The application may also be inspected online at the following project website set up by the Applicant <https://www.ballinclarematerialsrecovery.ie>

Any person may, during the above-mentioned period commencing 19th November 2024 until 9th January 2025, make a submission or observations in writing to An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1 relating to

- (i) the implications of the proposed development for proper planning and sustainable development,
- (ii) the likely effects on the environment of the proposed development, and
- (iii) the likely significant effects or adverse effect on any European site, if carried out.

Any submission or observations must be accompanied by a fee of €50 (except for certain prescribed bodies).

Submissions or observations duly made will be considered by An Bord Pleanála in making a decision on the application. Such submissions or observations must also include the following information:

- (a) the name of the person, authority or body making the submission or observations, the name of the person, if any, acting on behalf of that person, authority or body, and the address to which any correspondence relating to the application should be sent,
- (b) the subject matter of the submission or observations, and
- (c) the reasons, considerations and arguments on which the submission or observations is or are based.

An Bord Pleanála may, at its absolute discretion, decide whether to hold an oral hearing in respect of the proposed development.

An Bord Pleanála may

- (i) grant permission for the strategic infrastructure development as proposed;
- (ii) make such modifications to the proposed development as it specifies in its decision and grant permission in respect of the proposed development as so modified; or
- (iii) grant permission in respect of part of the proposed development (with or without specified modifications of the foregoing kind); or
- (iv) refuse to grant the permission.

An Bord Pleanála may attach to a grant of permission such conditions as it considers appropriate.

A person may question the validity of a decision of An Bord Pleanála by way of an application for judicial review, under Order 84 of the Rules of the Superior Courts (S.I. No. 15 of 1986), in accordance with sections 50 and 50A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (No. 30 of 2000), as amended. Practical information on the review mechanism can be found in the Judicial Review Notice on the An Bord Pleanála website: www.pleanala.ie or on the Citizens Information Service website: www.citizensinformation.ie

Signed : Kilsaran Concrete Unlimited Company

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Late Late Show owl visits Blessington kids at The Avon

YOUNGSTERS attending a 'spooky spectacle' for the whole family in The Avon in Blessington, Co Wicklow got the opportunity to rub shoulders, or maybe that should be feathers, with an iconic figure of Irish TV.

Great excitement greeted the arrival of Betsy the owl, who is the star of the Late Late Show's opening theme, and whose image is beamed into hundreds of thousands of Irish homes each Friday night.

An experienced showbiz pro at this stage, Betsy took it all in her stride, and was more than happy to pose for photographs. Staff at the Avon also made sure they captured an image together with the feathered star in their midst.

A Halloween fun room provided plenty of activities for young boys and girls to enjoy,



Marie Flemming and Elfie Flemming with Betsy the owl.

including spooky movies, arts

and crafts and fun and games.

A major attraction was the return of the Animal Roadshow with a reptile show featuring everything from lizards, snakes,

iguanas and terrapins and turtles. Kids and teenagers were able to get up close and personal with the animals, and hold some of them as their habits were explained to them.

Abbey Grounds gets new roofs installed

WORKS on the Abbey Grounds in Wicklow town remain ongoing and the elected members of Wicklow Municipal District were provided with an update at October's monthly meeting.

In May of 2021, agreement was reached over the transfer of the Abbey Grounds to Wicklow County Council, after parishioners were asked for their input, following on from an allocation from Fáilte Ireland to Wicklow County Council. The plan is to develop the Abbey Grounds into an event space so it acts as more of a multi-functional public space.

Contractors commenced working on site in June and the works remain on schedule.

District engineer Pat Clarke said: "We got the sewage and water connections and the roofs are in place. We will be moving to get the windows in over the next few weeks."

Current works are focused on ensuring the structure is safe and fit for purpose. The toilet block and plant room/storage buildings have been erected. Roofing and installation for these buildings ongoing. Steel support beams have been installed to coach house structure.

A detailed designs still progressing for the amphitheatre and performance area and material finishes being worked through at present on certain elements of the design.

The service entrance onto Wentworth Place is complete in advance of planned works for the park and amphitheatre. Construction of a new entrance wall for the Parochial House is complete with kerb and footpath along entrance completed also. A new gate is to be installed and final entrance surfacing was due to be completed by end of October.